

## Cyberbullying Using the Phenomenological Approach: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

Traditional bullying is characterized by physical, verbal, and interpersonal aggression. With the rapid development of information and communication technology, bullying has extended to cyberspace, where it is known as cyberbullying. The increasing prevalence of cyberbullying has attracted the attention of scholars around the world, and a number of researchers have employed the phenomenological approach to explore its nature. The purpose of this systematic literature review is to identify and bridge gaps in themes, data collection strategies, research subjects and regions in research on cyberbullying that adopts a phenomenological approach. The PRISMA systematic review method is adopted to review 19 papers retrieved from the Scopus, Google Scholar and Dimensions databases. Only original research journal articles and theses, which were published by the end of 2020, in English, and on cyberbullying using qualitative research method by phenomenological approach, were included in this systematic review. The Prediction Study Risk of Bias Assessment Tool (PROBAST) was adopted to appraise the quality of the reviewed articles. From the review's quantitative and qualitative (content analysis) synthesis, eight themes, two major data collection strategies, seven groups of research subjects and six research regions emerge. The major limitation is that this study focuses on research on cyberbullying that uses the phenomenological approach, to the exclusion of other qualitative research approaches and quantitative research methods. It is recommended that future studies should broaden the parameters and scope of research on cyberbullying to pursue a more comprehensive review study.

**Keywords:** *Cyberbullying, research on cyberbullying, phenomenological approach, PRISMA, systematic literature review.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT), the new technologies have provided an opportunity for traditional bullying to extend into cyberspace, with a rapid expansion of cyberbullying online (Abu Samah et al., 2020; Lim, Lau & Islam, 2023). Scholars have defined cyberbullying as harassment or repeated attacks on individuals online using electronic equipment or other information communication technologies and negative, pejorative, sexual or other harmful content (Abu Samah et al., 2020; Saleem, Khan, Zafar, & Raza, 2022). Cyberbullying is a very common phenomenon on all social media platforms and has gradually become a public health issue, with approximately 50% of adolescents having experienced challenges, emotional problems or serious anxiety in relation to cyberbullying (Chen, et al., 2023; Brandau & Evanson, 2018). Cyberbullying is manifested in a wide range of venues and audiences, as it is not confined by location and can have a far-reaching impact through the use of social media (Lee et al., 2018). Li (2019) reported that numerous kinds of profanities or pejorative terms, including but not limited to sexual remarks

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and abusive labels, are used in cyberbullying among users of Sina Weibo in China. The effects of cyberbullying are recognized as a serious public health problem that is evident in high rates of low self-worth, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, low academic achievement, anger, social anxiety, despair, lowered self-esteem, headaches and school avoidance (Chen et al., 2023; Brandau & Evanson, 2018; Payne & Hutzell, 2017). Consequently, the phenomenon of cyberbullying has attracted attention from the academic field, and researchers have begun to focus on experiences of cyberbullying among Internet users.

The phenomenological approach, one of the basic approaches in qualitative research, was introduced by Edmund Husserl, and has subsequently been expanded and developed by scholars including Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Spiegelberg, 2012). The approach is used to elucidate the shared understanding of individuals who have been going through the same lived experiences. Understanding what these individuals have in common through experiencing the same phenomenon or concept is the main focus of the approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdall, 2022; Van Manen, 2016), which aims to reduce human experiences of a phenomenon to a description of the nature of the universe. This kind of description covers both what the individuals have experienced and how they have experienced the particular phenomenon. Qualitative researchers have specified that the lived experience can be a phenomenon such as depression, anxiety or undergoing therapy (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdall, 2022; Moustakas, 1994). Cyberbullying is one such phenomenon; accordingly, a number of researchers have employed the phenomenological approach to explore its essence.

### *Problem Statement*

Although there has been a significant amount of research on cyberbullying, there is still no proper systematic review that has been done pertaining to this issue, especially those that adopt the phenomenological approach. The present study addresses this gap and lays a foundation for future academic work by providing a reference point for research on cyberbullying that adopts the phenomenological approach. The findings of this review will also make it easier for scholars to understand issues that are related to cyberbullying and the phenomenological approach.

### *Systematic Review Framework*

The purpose of a systematic literature review is to comprehensively orient, search and synthesize previous studies by using reproducible procedures at each step in a well-organized and clear process (Samsuddin et al., 2020; Abu Samah et al., 2020). The general research question in the present study is this: What are the themes, data collection procedures, research subjects, study regions and year of publication of previous studies on cyberbullying using the phenomenological approach?

Research on cyberbullying is the focus of this review due to the fact that cyberbullying has become more serious with the rapid development of ICT. Access to ICT makes it easy for the Internet users to get involved in cyberbullying, thus harm can be inflicted with a simple text message, an image and/or a post on the Internet (Hicks et al., 2018). In addition to the emotional and psychological distress caused, victims may also fall prey to suicidal thoughts and self-harm (So'od, Hua & Hamid, 2020; Zych et al., 2019). Moreover, there is evidence that young adults who have been victims of cyberbullying are likely to become cyberbullies themselves (Abu Samah et al., 2020; Ghazali et al., 2017). Therefore, a systematic review of research on cyberbullying that adopts the phenomenological approach will provide future

researchers with research directions and new perspectives. In terms of preventing cyberbullying, it will also be of practical significance.

#### METHODOLOGY

In searching for the literature, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method was employed in this current study, and three databases (i.e., Google Scholar, Scopus and Dimensions) were used to search the literature systematically.

##### *PRISMA*

The PRISMA method has three significant advantages: clear description of the research questions, distinct criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and examination of major scientific literature databases within a specified period of time (Page et al., 2021; Tariq et al., 2022). Thus, PRISMA allows a strict search of the scientific research and coding information in relation to studies on cyberbullying that use the phenomenological approach. The process of article retrieval used in this review is shown in Figure 1.

##### *Resources*

Three databases, Scopus, Google Scholar and Dimensions, were used in this study. Google Scholar is a search engine for different kinds of documents including journal articles, books, conference proceedings and other types of literature with free and open access. Scopus also provides broad coverage of a range of literature types, including book series, journals, and conference papers. The Dimensions database, which covers 120 million of research publications with greater than 1.4 billion citations and is the most comprehensive research grants database (Dimensions, n.d.), was also included to strengthen the quality assurance of the results.

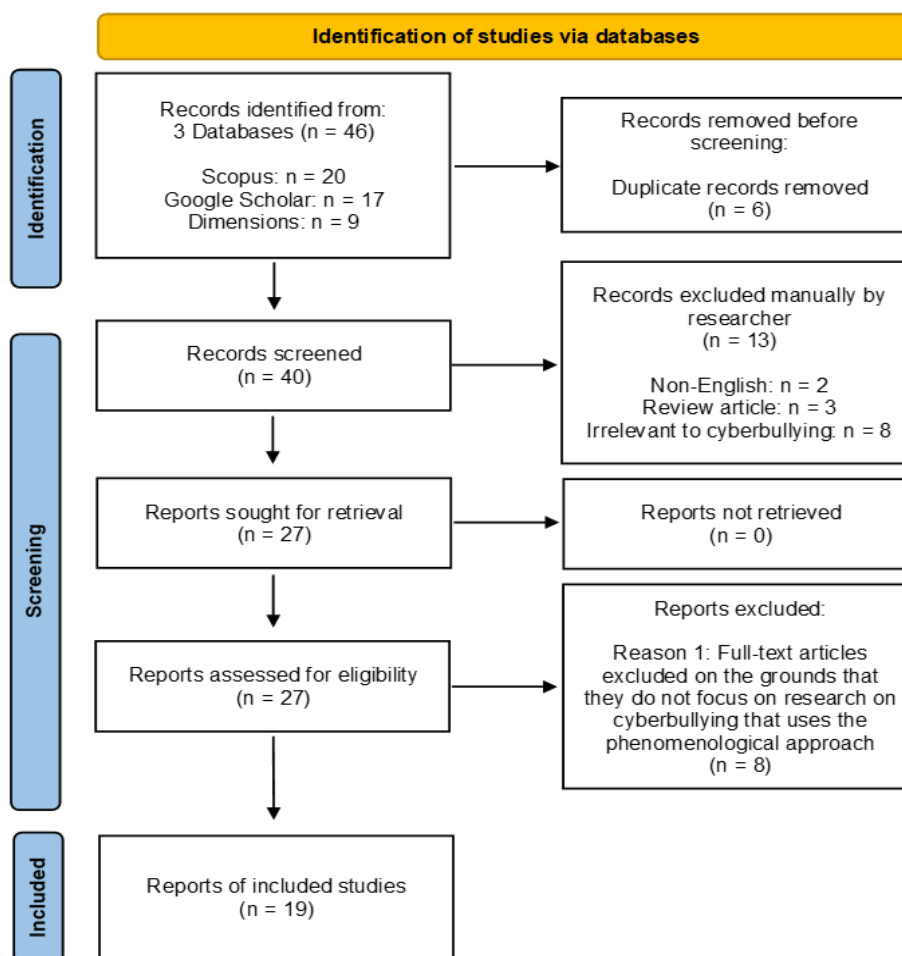


Figure 1: The Flow Diagram of this Review  
 (Source: Page et al., 2021)

### Systematic Review Process

#### a) Identification of Keywords

The first phase of this study was the identification of keywords related to cyberbullying and the phenomenological approach for the information search, which was conducted in January 2021 (see Table 1). In this phase, 20 items of literature were retrieved from Scopus, 17 from Google Scholar and 9 from Dimensions. After removing duplicates, there were 40 valid items (Figure 1).

Table 1: Keywords and search strategy

Database	Keywords used
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("cyberbullying" OR "cyberbull*") AND ("phenomenolog* approach" OR "phenomenolog*"))
Google Scholar	allintitle: "cyberbullying" "phenomenological" OR "phenomenology"
Dimensions	("cyberbullying" OR "cyberbully" OR "cyberbullies") AND ("phenomenology" OR "phenomenological approach")

### *b) Screening (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)*

The second stage of the systematic review involved screening on the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2). First, as the information search stage was conducted in January 2021, the timeline of the retrieved articles was controlled before December 2020. Second, only research articles in journals and theses were included. Third, only literature in English was included in order to avoid misunderstandings and confusion. Fourth, research irrelevant to cyberbullying was excluded to achieve the research objective of this study. Lastly, only research using qualitative methods within the phenomenological approach was included. In the process of screening, a total of 13 documents were removed (see Figure 1).

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Included</b>	<b>Excluded</b>
Timeline	By December 2020	≥ 2021
Literature type	Journals (research articles), theses	Journals (review papers), books, preprints, book chapters, series, conference proceedings
Language	English	Non-English
Research topic	Cyberbullying	Irrelevant to cyberbullying
Research method	Qualitative	Quantitative or mixed methods
Research design	Phenomenological approach	Non-phenomenological approach

### *c) Eligibility*

Eligibility has been defined as “a process that includes or excludes articles manually according to the authors’ specific criteria” (Samsuddin et al., 2020, p. 4). After the initial screening, the title, abstract, and full text of each of the retrieved articles were reviewed thoroughly and rigorously to check that they met the eligibility criteria. As a result, eight articles that do not focus on cyberbullying using the phenomenological approach were eliminated, leaving 19 articles for the quantitative and qualitative synthesis (see Figure 1).

### *d) Quality Appraisal*

The Prediction Study Risk of Bias Assessment Tool (PROBAST) was adopted to appraise the quality of the retaining papers in this review (Meier et al., 2019; Wolff et al., 2019). According to PROBAST, the researchers rigorously checked the quality of all 19 remaining papers, rating each one as low, medium or high quality (Goldsmith et al., 2007). Three researchers evaluated and rated the papers. For a paper to be considered of good quality, it was necessary for at least two of the three researchers to rate it as medium quality or higher. As all 19 papers met this criterion, they were deemed to have passed the quality appraisal.

### *Data Analysis Strategy*

The articles retained after the quality appraisal procedure were reviewed and analyzed. The process of data extraction was divided into three steps: reading the title, reading the abstract, and reading the full text of the paper in depth to determine the data content in relation to research on cyberbullying that uses the phenomenological approach. A qualitative synthesis method of content analysis was adopted to determine the themes, data collection techniques, research subjects, regions of study and years of publication. Quantitative synthesis method in terms of descriptive statistical analysis techniques were employed to illustrate the results in detail.

## RESULTS

The review identified eight themes on cyberbullying: students' understanding or perceptions of cyberbullying, the nature of cyberbullying, cyberbullying experiences in working contexts, customer cyberbullying, motives for cyberbullying, impacts of cyberbullying, cyberbullying experiences from the perspective of school managers, and cyberbullying in online labor markets. In terms of data collection techniques, 17 of the 19 studies used in-depth interviews or focus groups, and six kinds of research subject were found. Eleven of the studies (55%) were conducted in the United States (US), and the year of publication ranged from 2007 to 2020.

The review identified eight main themes on cyberbullying: (1) students' understanding or perceptions of cyberbullying, including university students, college students, high school students and secondary school students (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; McKennie, 2017; Rivituso, 2014; Schofield, 2019; Selby, 2017); (2) origin, processing, nature and prevalence of cyberbullying (Boyd, 2012; Harcey, 2007; Reason et al., 2016); (3) cyberbullying experiences in working contexts (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018; Heatherington & Coyne, 2014); (4) customer cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014); (5) motives for cyberbullying (Farkas, 2016); (6) effects or influences of cyberbullying on the victims (Krause, 2015; Pickens, 2017; Rivituso, 2012); (7) cyberbullying experiences from the perspective of school counselors (Chan et al., 2020), administrators (Reichert Jr, 2019) and principals (Knippenberg, 2014); and (8) cyberbullying in online school markets (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018). All of the themes analyzed are shown in Figure 2.

In terms of data collection techniques, 17 of the 19 studies used in-depth interviews or focus groups to collect primary data, which accounts for 89.47%. Only two of the studies used a survey questionnaire (Harcey, 2007; Selby, 2017). As shown in Table 3, three studies used face-to-face or one-on-one interviews (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; Reason et al., 2016; Schofield, 2019), while only one study used a focus group interview (Chan et al., 2020). Two studies used in-depth interviews (Heatherington & Coyne, 2014; Knippenberg, 2014), and three used conversational interviews (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013, 2014; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018). Six studies designed a semi-structured interview protocol (Krause, 2015; McKennie, 2017; Pickens, 2017; Reichert Jr, 2019; Rivituso, 2012; Rivituso, 2014). Farkas (2016) was notable for adopting both one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Similarly, Boyd (2012) combined in-depth interviews with focus groups.

The research subjects of all the studies can be categorized into seven types of individuals: university and college students, adolescents, employees, secondary and high school students, educational staff, recent graduates, and freelancers (Table 3). The review carried out statistical frequency analysis for the research subjects of all the studies. In accordance with the World Health Organization's definition of adolescence, those aged between 10 to 19 are treated here as adolescents (Kassa et al., 2018). As a result, there is some overlap between the groups of secondary and high school students and adolescents. Several studies recruited two different populations as informants simultaneously, meaning that these cases were double counted.

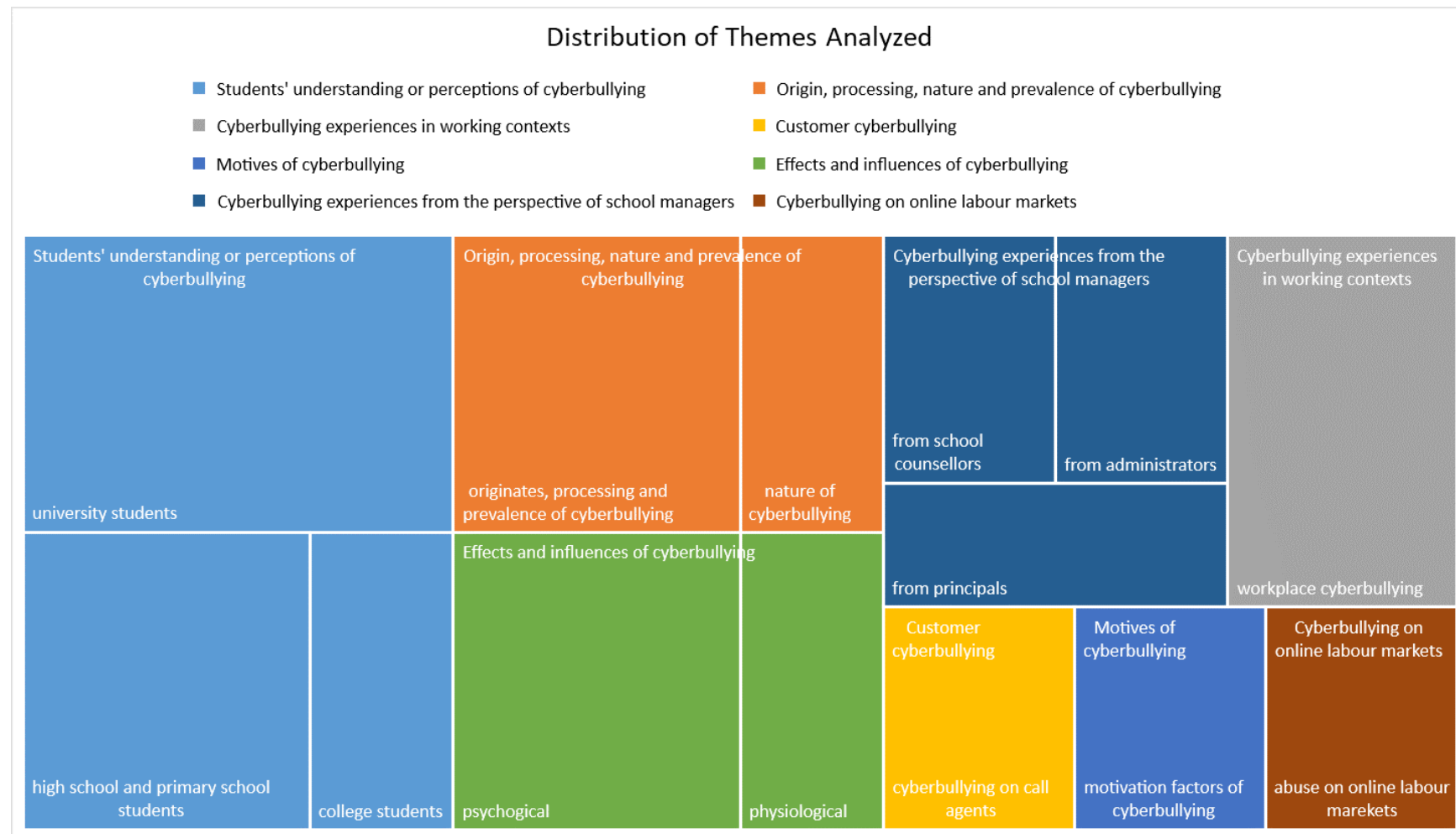


Figure 2: Themes identified

Table 3: Characteristics of the selected studies

Number	Author	Theme	Data collection technique	Subject	Results	Region
1	(Chen & Luppicini, 2017)	University students' experience with cyberbullying	Face-to-face interview	University students	Online risk behavior, intention to bully, comments on cyber abuse, and quality of adult and interpersonal relationships are the main factors linked to students' experiences of cyberbullying.	Canada
2	(Chan et al., 2020)	Secondary students and school counselors' experiences with cyberbullying	Focus group interview	Secondary school students and school counselors	Students and counselors are convinced that the reason cyberbullying occurs is the interconnectedness of students' lifeworld's at school, out of school and in cyberspace. Students who cyberbully others also bully others, as their intention is to harm and attack others; cyberbullying is a continuation of bullying.	Malaysia
3	(Reason et al., 2016)	Origin and processing of cyberbullying	One-on-one interview	Adolescent (3 months after graduation from high school)	Jealousy over romantic relationships, cultural differences and religious or sexual orientation intolerance are the main factors that contribute to cyberbullying. The anonymity of cyberspace makes cyberbullies crueler and more vicious. A lack of knowledge and understanding of cyberspace leaves victims with no idea how to protect themselves.	Georgia, US
4	(Heatherington & Coyne, 2014)	Individuals' experiences with cyberbullying in working situations	In-depth interview	Victims of cyberbullying at work	In the working context, there are similarities between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. However, the core of the individual subjective experience, virtual or physical, lies in the complexity of managing relationships.	UK
5	(D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014)	Customer cyberbullying	Conversational interview	Call agents employed in international-facing call centers	There are three dimensions of the interface between information and communication technologies and devices (ICTDs) and customer cyberbullying: genesis, course, and outcomes of customer cyberbullying.	India
6	(Rivituso, 2014)	College students' cyberbullying victimization	Semi-structured interview	College students	Students stated that cyberbullying has serious psychological impacts, including feelings of stress, depression, frustration, and embarrassment.	New York, US



Number	Author	Theme	Data collection technique	Subject	Results	Region
7	(D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013)	Cyberbullying in working contexts	Conversational interview	Information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services-business process outsourcing (ITES-BPO) employees	Specific manipulation strategies can be used to draw attention to the nature of cyberbullying in working contexts.	India
8	(McKennie, 2017)	College students' understanding of cyberbullying	Semi-structured interview	College students	The classroom, social media, email, and texting are the four main areas in which these students experienced cyberbullying. Not all students were affected in terms of their academic performance after being cyberbullied.	Minnesota, US
9	(Farkas, 2016)	Motives for perpetrating cyberbullying	One-on-one interview and focus group	Tenth grade students	Jealousy, entertainment, joking, revenge, broken relationships, and group affiliation were the main indicators of cyberbullying among sophomore students in a high school, with group affiliation being the strongest and most obvious factor.	Southern California, US
10	(Boyd, 2012)	Origination and manifestation of the cyberbully/victim relationship	In-depth interview and focus group	Recent graduates	Broken relationships are the biggest cause of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying causes the victims to suffer intense emotional pain.	Georgia, US
11	(Reichert Jr, 2019)	Understanding of cyberbullying from the administrators' perspective	Semi-structured interview	Educational administrators	Cyberbullying has a negative influence on the learning environment. Policies and procedures can be used to raise students' awareness of cyberbullying, and education is the best strategy to reduce cyberbullying.	Northeast US
12	(Knippenberg, 2014)	Understanding of cyberbullying from the school principals' perspective	In-depth interview	Middle school principals	The themes of the data reveal difficulties in the prevention of cyberbullying among middle school students and identify strategies for developing partnerships and building safe schools to prevent cyberbullying.	Denver metropolitan area, US

Number	Author	Theme	Data collection technique	Subject	Results	Region
13	(Krause, 2015)	Effects of cyberbullying	Semi-structured in-depth interview	Public school children	Experiences of cyberbullying led victims to experience distraction, depression, and suicidal tendencies. Cyberbullying left a negative impression on these victims.	Central Pennsylvania, US
14	(Schofield, 2019)	Perceptions and experiences of cyberbullying	One-on-one, semi-structured interview	High school students	Cyberbullying has a greater psychological influence on its victims than traditional bullying, although there are similarities. Several factors related to online activity motivate cyberbullies to engage in cyberbullying. In addition, some individuals play a passive role as bystanders.	South Africa
15	(Pickens, 2017)	Psychological and physiological influences of cyberbullying	Semi-structured, face-to-face interview	Employees	The nature of the lived experience of employees is to protect themselves from cyberbullying and abuse in the workplace.	South-eastern Nebraska, US
16	(Harcey, 2007)	Nature, prevalence, and perceptions of cyberbullying	Online survey (web-based)	Adolescent students (sixth to eighth grade) and middle/junior high school principals	Interventions to prevent cyberbullying by both adolescent students and principals are recommended.	Logan, Lincoln, and Longfellow/SOTA II, US
17	(Rivituso, 2012)	Experiences and psychological influence of victimization	Semi-structured interview	College students	Cyberbullying leads to feelings of fear and symptoms of depression. Frustration caused by cyberbullying can result in self-blame.	US
18	(Selby, 2017)	Lived experiences of cyberbullying	Questionnaire with open-ended questions	Students aged between 11 and 16	Media providers should improve anti-cyberbullying systems. Apart from this, holistic measures and strategies are necessary to strengthen anti-cyberbullying work.	Bath and North East Somerset, UK
19	(D’Cruz & Noronha, 2018)	Cyberbullying on online labor markets	Conversational interview	Upwork freelancers	Targets respond to cyberbullying on online labor markets in ways that allow them to maintain power and control.	India

The distribution of research subjects is shown in Figure 3. Twelve studies focused on experiences of cyberbullying among students, adolescents or young people (in this case, recent graduates) (Boyd, 2012; Chan et al., 2020; Chen & Luppicini, 2017; Farkas, 2016; Harcey, 2007; Krause, 2015; McKennie, 2017; Reason et al., 2016; Rivituso, 2012; Rivituso, 2014; Schofield, 2019; Selby, 2017). Strohmeier and Grading (2022) reported that adolescents use ICT much more than adults, and they have observed that cyberbullying happens wherever there is ICT. This increases the risk of adolescents or students becoming involved in cyberbullying; students involved in cyberbullying as perpetrators account for 11%, while 15.4% are involved as victims (Palermi et al., 2017). Other scholars have studied cyberbullying from the perspective of education staff or employees in the workplace. The findings are consistent with the literature, which indicates that cyberbullying can negatively affect anyone, from children in primary school to adults in the workplace (Strohmeier & Grading, 2022; Abu Samah et al., 2022).

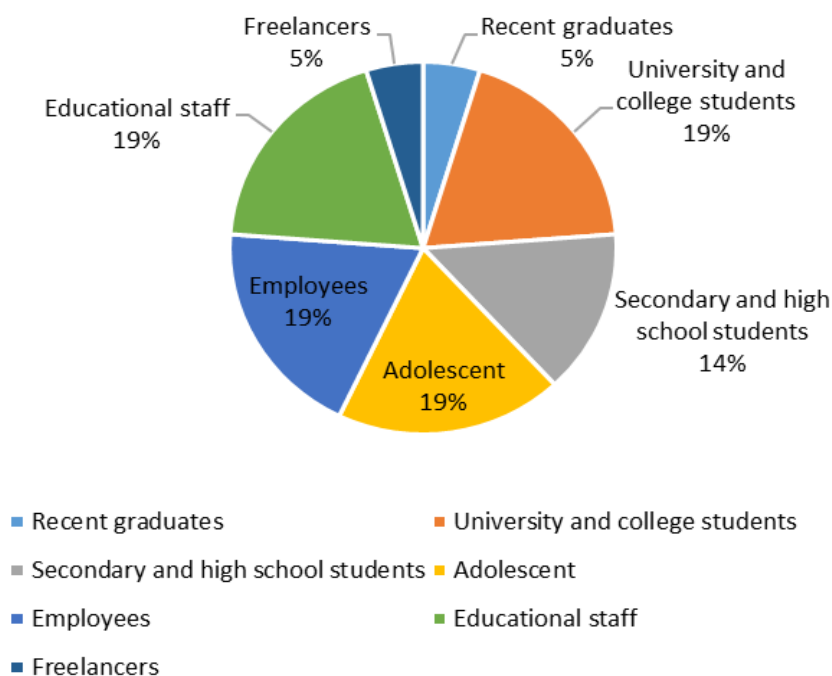


Figure 3: Research subjects

The main region covered by the selected studies is the US, followed by India, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Malaysia and South Africa. Eleven studies were conducted in the US, accounting for 57.90% of the total (Boyd, 2012; Farkas, 2016; Harcey, 2007; Knippenberg, 2014; Krause, 2015; McKennie, 2017; Pickens, 2017; Reason et al., 2016; Reichert Jr, 2019; Rivituso, 2012; Rivituso, 2014). Next came India with three studies, the UK with two studies, and Canada, Malaysia and South Africa with one study each. This finding corroborates the conclusion of Schofield (2019) that most research on cyberbullying comes from North America and Europe.

The year of publication ranged from 2007 to 2020. The years with the highest numbers of publications were 2014 and 2017, with four studies each. The regions and numbers of publications per year are presented in Figure 4.

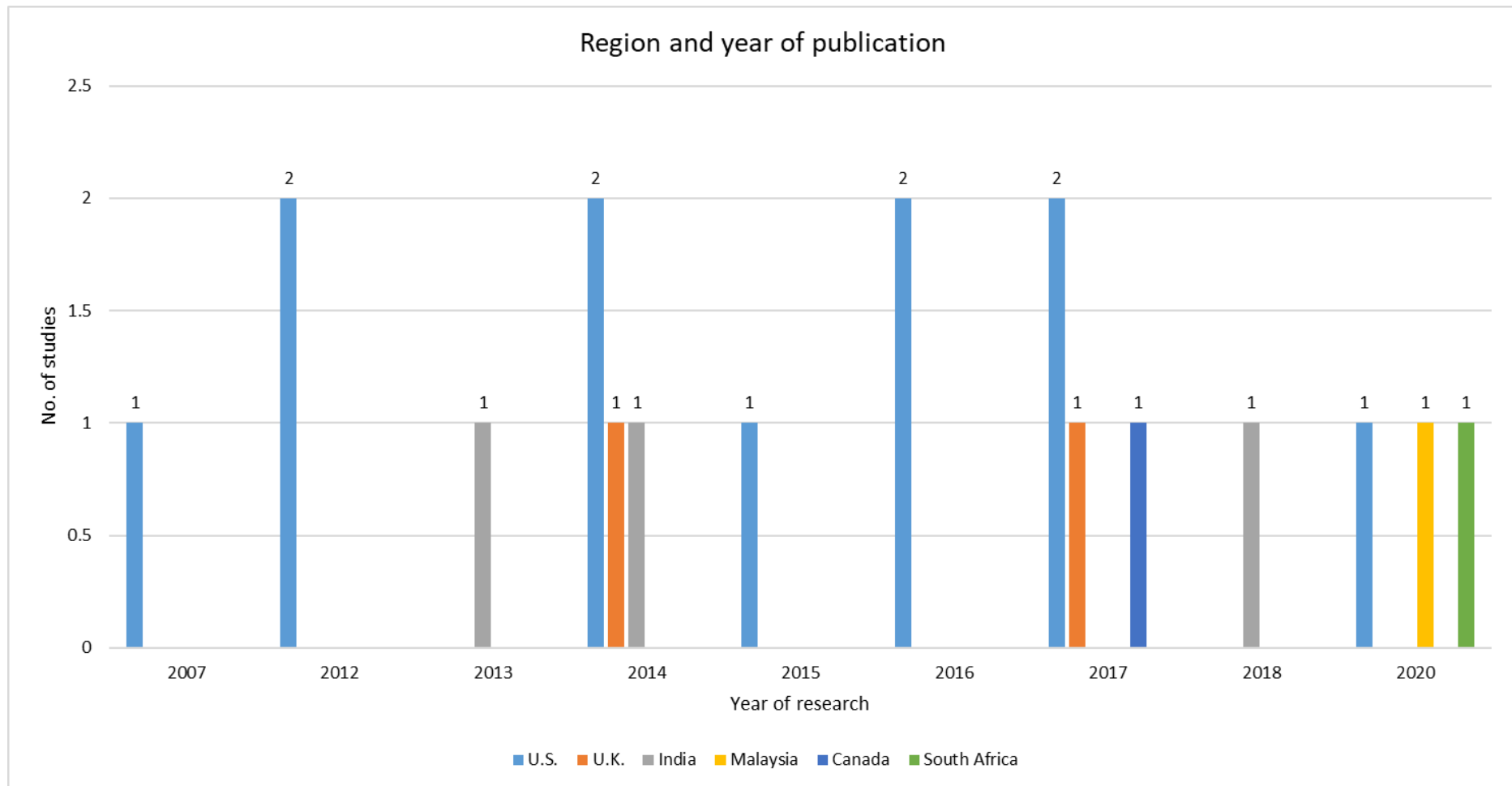


Figure 4: Region and year of publication

## DISCUSSION

### *Why Cyberbullying Happens?*

Among research on cyberbullying using the phenomenological approach, some studies focused on the origin and nature of cyberbullying, as well as the processing and prevalence of cyberbullying (Boyd, 2012; Harcey, 2007; Reason et al., 2016). Harcey (2007) described the nature of the cyberbullying is verbal harassment and assault through electronic media by calling names of, making fun of, and spreading rumors about the victims and so on. Boyd (2012) claimed that damaged or broken relationships are the primary cause of cyberbullying. This study found that in most cases of cyberbullying, it was rumors of a broken relationship and jealousy of a remaining relationship that triggered the cyberbullying victimization (Boyd, 2012). Likewise, according to Reason et al. (2016), cyberbullying mainly stemmed from jealousy of romantic relationships and intolerance of cultural, religious or sexual orientation. This result was supported by Abu Samah et al. (2020) as well, as they stated that cyberbullying victimization was usually caused by preexisting relationships.

The researcher also emphasized that “strong emotional actions cause strong emotional reactions” (Boyd, 2012, p. 111). Social media was a major “disaster space” for cyberbullying. For instance, Facebook, MySpace and other social media platforms were the preferred emotional response for informants who were very actively involved. Using social media platforms, cyberbullies can expose the victims to public embarrassment so that others can see their humiliation. Similarly, another scholar also found that social media (e.g., instant messaging, chat rooms) and email were the most prevalent spaces to experience cyberbullying (Harcey, 2007).

Meanwhile, anonymity online and hidden identities played a key role in cyberbullying since they offered a sense of safety and protection to the cyberbullies. Consequently, cyberbullies attacked others maliciously with insulting words online, but they dare not in person. Furthermore, anonymity online also led to a more inhuman and crueler environment for attacks than in the physical world (Boyd, 2012). This finding was confirmed by Reason et al. (2016) with revealing that cyberbullies were inclined to be more brazen and brutal while online due to perceived anonymity. Besides, the findings are consistent with the research of Abu Samah et al. (2020), and they convinced that perceived anonymity such as lack of identification and proximity and diffused responsibility were the main factors affecting cyberbullying anonymity Abu Samah et al. (2020).

Furthermore, Farkas (2016) explored motives of perpetrating cyberbullying by adopting transcendental phenomenological approach. In this research, jealousy has once again proved to be the primary origin of cyberbullying, followed by the motives of entertainment, joking, revenge, broken relationships, and group affiliation. The broken relationships have also been proved to be an important origin causing cyberbullying in this study and it also corroborated that cyberbullying usually occurred when participants were active in using social media, which is unanimous with the results described above (Boyd, 2012; Harcey, 2007; Reason et al., 2016).

In accordance with the illustration above, the theme of why cyberbullying happens is completely in line with the characteristics of phenomenological approach to explore the nature of lived experience. Phenomenological studies always end with a descriptive paragraph that discusses the nature or essence of live experiences. The “nature” or “essence” is the core, crucial and ultimate level of phenomenological research.

### *Experiences of Cyberbullying*

This current review found that several studies on cyberbullying that used the phenomenological technique concentrated on the experiences of a variety of groups of people, mainly including students, educational personnel, and workers for corporations. This finding is entirely in line with one of the objectives of phenomenological approach, which purports to understand the fundamental structure of the meaning of informants' lived experiences (Van Manen, 2016). Olweus and Limber (2018) argued that cyberbullying is a sort of bullying that is related to verbal, physical, and indirect/relational bullying. They believed that the majority of cyberbullying exists in bullying situations or environments, which can be schools, corporations, and the online world (Chan et al., 2020). This is why most research on cyberbullying using the phenomenological approach has focused on the cyberbullying experiences of students, educational staff, and employees for enterprises.

Cyberbullying was experienced by students mainly through social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WeChat and Snapchat (Strohmeier & Gradinger, 2022; Chan et al., 2020; Rivituso, 2012). Cyberbullying experienced by students was primarily in the form of humiliation and swearing, threatening comments posted online and the spreading of fake news and rumours, such as students being asked to provide nude or revealing photographs (Chan et al., 2020; Chen & Luppicini, 2017). More importantly, students' lived experiences of cyberbullying stemmed not only from cyberspace, but also from the world of students' off-campus or campus life; Because students' lives, from school campus to off-campus, to cyberspace, back to campus, were interconnected. Bullying that began in cyberspace was continued not only by the cyberbullies, but also by bystanders who witnessed the bullying behaviours, who began to question the victims in cyberspace both inside and outside the school, thus doubling the negative impact on the victims (Chan et al., 2020).

From the perspectives of educational personnel, some studies uncovered that the school staff like counsellors also experienced cyberbullying through name calling, insults, threats, abuse and sexting (Chan et al., 2020). In like manner, in a study by Reichert Jr (2019), educational administrators declared to have encountered cyberbullying in the form of anonymous defamation, insults, and harassment based on the misuse of digital technology. Educational staff disclosed that the catastrophic cyberbullying is not conducive to cultivating a good school learning environment, and current policies on cyberbullying need to be ameliorated.

In working contexts, as stated by D'Cruz and Noronha (2013), some IT and ITES-BPO employees reported experiencing both person-related and task-related cyberbullying, which occurred mostly through phone calls, text messages, emails, website posts and social media platforms. This finding was in accordance with the study of Heatherington and Coyne (2014). Employees who have been cyberbullied claimed that the experience left them feeling haunted and besieged as bullies could assault their victims or targets with all their force, regardless of the limits of space and time due to modern advanced technologies (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Likewise, employees working at international-facing call centres demonstrated that they have suffered from cyberbullying by customers even though they have made every effort to improve the quality of their services. Customers cyberbullied staff with verbal abuse, sarcasm, rude threats and intimidation (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014). Experience of cyberbullying in working contexts was featured by borderless transmission, ubiquity, persistence and invisibility (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013, 2014; Heatherington & Coyne, 2014).

### *Influences of Cyberbullying*

The findings of this current review disclosed that psychological and physiological influences on victims were the two predominant outcomes of cyberbullying, which brought long-term affective hassles and physical ailments to the victims (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014; Pickens, 2017; Reichert Jr, 2019; Rivituso, 2012).

In terms of psychological influences, cyberbullying victims (i.e., the research informants) highlighted that they often felt embarrassed, sad, frustrated, irritated, angry, low self-esteem, anxious, vulnerable, fear etc., and a range of emotional distress and affective disorders (such as antisocial personality disorder and substance disorder) became as a result of their experiences with cyberbullying (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014; Pickens, 2017; Reichert Jr, 2019). The brazen rudeness and aggression of the bullies left the victims extremely distressed; some of the cyberbullying even approached the level of abuse, which once made them panic. What's worse, the experience of being bullied could make victims feel depressed and suicidal, and cyberbullying has been shown to be a major factor in suicidal ideation (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; Pickens, 2017; Reichert Jr, 2019).

With the increasing popularization of social networking sites, social media platforms, instant messaging and smart media applications, the risks associated with cyberbullying were on the rise (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; Ming et al., 2020). In regard to physiological influences, cyberbullying victims reported negative behaviours such as substance abuse, alcohol abuse, insomnia, and eating disorders (Chen & Luppicini, 2017; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014). In addition, previous studies debunked a significant relationship between cyberbullying and physical health problems in victims (Pickens, 2017).

### *Coping Strategies*

In the past studies, many scholars have shown that cyberbullying has become a very common social phenomenon. Especially with the development and popularization of ICT, cyberbullying has become a common phenomenon (Krause, 2015; So'od et al., 2020), and its negative effects cannot be ignored. Therefore, many scholars have put forward corresponding intervention and prevention measures for cyberbullying.

First of all, from the perspective of the government, some scholars suggested that the government should prevent and intervene in the form of legislation. At the same time, policies and standard operating procedures on cyberbullying should be remedied to guide people to regulate their use of the Internet, and urge people to improve media literacy and develop high-quality online usage habits, and strict sanctions should be imposed on online users and behaviours that violate relevant laws and policies (Chan et al., 2020; Chen & Luppicini, 2017; Reichert Jr, 2020).

Second, from the angle of the society, communities and schools should invite academic experts to conduct special training or education courses on cyberbullying on an ongoing basis, so as to clearly define the nature of cyberbullying and its management policies, so that people could have a clearer understanding of cyberbullying, and ultimately help people raise their awareness of prevention as the best method for reducing cyberbullying is education (Redmond et al., 2018; Reichert Jr, 2019).

As for students in the special group, the schools, parents and the government should cooperate on a long-term basis to carry out or organize a variety of awareness campaigns on cyberbullying, and recommend the design of prevention or intervention programs to help students sensitize and mitigate the impact of cyberbullying (Chan et al., 2020).

Ultimately, with respect to all individual victims, when encountering cyberbullying, they should seek help and mental health counselling from parents, teachers, relatives, friends and professionals in time to get support and affirmation to assist them cope with cyberbullying and avoid causing more serious psychological and physical trauma (Pickens, 2017).

To sum up, this section utilized the thematic analysis technique to interpret the causes of cyberbullying, the experience of cyberbullying, the impact of cyberbullying, and how to cope with cyberbullying in the articles on cyberbullying that have been studied using qualitative phenomenological approach.

### CONCLUSION

This study has reviewed 19 papers in depth using the PRISMA systematic review method. It has elucidated the themes, data collection techniques, research subjects, regions and year of publication of all the selected studies on cyberbullying that use the phenomenological approach.

Two main limitations should be noted. First, only three databases, namely Google Scholar, Scopus and Dimensions, were searched, and the literature source was therefore incomplete. As the researchers did not have access to Web of Science, publications in that database are not covered in this review, which is its biggest limitation. The second limitation is that this study focuses on research on cyberbullying that uses the phenomenological approach, to the exclusion of other qualitative research approaches and quantitative research methods. Future studies should seek to broaden the parameters and research scope to pursue a more comprehensive review study. Finally, although the PRISMA systematic review method is appropriate for studying research on cyberbullying that uses the phenomenological approach, it remains necessary to develop a more comprehensive systematic review method like Reporting standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES), the Quality of Reporting of Meta-analyses (QUOROM) and so on.

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