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Prevention of Cyberbullying in Social Media: Perspective of Female Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

In recent years social media is a very popular platform for any kind of business. During the pandemic, it became even more trendy for small business owners who run businesses from home. Particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh where socially and culturally women face a lot of obstacles to doing business. The number of female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is growing day by day as this is an opportunity for them to earn and support their families. Initially, they prefer social media for their business platform because there is no need for business premises, and it is easy to target a large number of customers in a short period of time. While the prospect of female entrepreneurship is bright for this country, they are encountering cyberbullying on social media by some ill-minded people. This paper aims to find out how female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh experience and can prevent cyberbullying on social media. This is exploratory research. Qualitative data were collected through an online semi-structured interview method by using open-ended questions. Data were analysed thematically based on different codes and themes by using NVivo 12 software. The result shows how female entrepreneurs get cyberbullied on social media in this country. It also recommends some preventive actions that female entrepreneurs can exercise to protect themselves from cyberbullying while operating their businesses on social media.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Female entrepreneur, Social media, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The internet is playing one of the most important roles in business growth. Like other countries in Bangladesh marketers also use different online platforms to create awareness for their brands, product and services which directly affect their sales. Entrepreneurs, especially female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh prefer social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc. as one of the main platforms to reach their target markets. While they get some benefits from this platform, some people here also harass them in different ways. This kind of online abusing-activity is also known as cyberbullying (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2022). However, it is a crime and there are some laws to act against those criminals but day by day cyberbullying is increasing (The Business Post, 2022) and it is becoming very difficult for female entrepreneurs

to continue their business on social media. This research explains cyberbullying experiences of female entrepreneurs on social media in Bangladesh and finds out what preventive measures they can consider to stop cyberbullying.

FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Internet users are significantly increasing in this country. In 2020, just under 25% of the population of the country had access to the internet (Kameke, 2023). In addition, social media literacy is very high in major cities for all age groups. Current population of the country is around 170 million and nearly half of her population is female (O'Neill, 2022). The country has a male-dominated culture where women are not encouraged to become entrepreneurs (Khan et al. 2022). However, women now use the internet and run a variety of businesses for example clothing, home furnishings, jewellery, handicrafts, cosmetics, food, and catering on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok. Data from Bangladesh Bank shows, there has been an impressive growth in the number of female entrepreneurs, which grew by more than double, from 21,400 to 57,732 in the span of six months from March to September 2021 (Alo & Prince, 2022). Most of them started their online businesses on the Facebook platform for supporting their families financially and to prove their own identities as entrepreneurs (Haque, 2021).

Social media has enabled women (mainly students and housewives) in Bangladesh to set up and manage their businesses, showcase products, and interact with consumers straightforwardly while they are studying or maintaining families. Reaching their targeted customers to sell products online is so easy and quick. During the lockdown because of COVID-19 people used the internet particularly social media a lot which helped some women to get the idea of doing business online. Moreover, with pandemic-induced behaviours, customers became habituated and prefer to buy products online whenever they see required products while browsing social media (Hossain, 2021). Trading online for women entrepreneurs in this country is more convenient than traditional businesses. They do not need shop premises or any utility bills to pay which would cost a lot. Through social media, they are meeting a large volume of product demand among urban customers. Most of their monthly income is nearly BDT 20,000 equivalent to US $190 (Tabassum, 2018; Hossain & Rahman, 2018) and the monthly median sales of the businesses is BDT 15000. 60% of the women improved their quality of life (ESCAP, 2021).

While female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are increasing, using the advantages of social media, supporting their families and contributing to the economy, some of them are experiencing different types of challenges of social media, cyberbullying is one of them. In Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, most women between 14–25 years are facing cyberbullying such as sexual abuse, online hacking, sending porn, threatening, and blackmailing (Obaidullah & Zubayer, 2021). In the following section, cyberbullying is defined briefly.

Table 1. Participants' Demography.

Age	Participants	Percentage
18–25	22	42%
26–30	21	41%
31–40	8	15%
41–50	0	-
50+	1	2%
Total	52	100%
Education		
High School/College	18	35%
Bachelor	23	44%
Masters or above	11	21%
Total	52	100%
Marital Status		
Single	23	44%
Married	29	56%
Divorced	0	-
Widow	0	-
Total	52	100%

DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING

Pestering and harassing someone by using digital technologies such as cell phones, computers, and tablets is called cyberbullying (UNICEF, 2023). According to Smith et al. (2008) "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p. 376). It can happen online and/or offline via mobile text messages, chats, comments on social media, forums, etc. where people can see, take part in, or share content. It is identified as cybercrime as it includes abusing, frightening, harassing, or humiliating people (Aliyu et al. 2020). Galarza et al. (2022) used cyberbullying as an umbrella term to illustrate different types of repeated and intentional online activities by one or more individuals to hurt or cause harm to another person.

DATA COLLECTION, FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

To explore the experience of cyberbullying women entrepreneurs on social media in Bangladesh and how it can be prevented, the researcher contacted 130 female entrepreneurs who use social media for their businesses. They were identified through different social media by observing their social media activities. Only 77 female entrepreneurs replied and 52 participated among them. The researcher applied a semi-structured interview method where participants were interviewed online, and 14 open-ended questions were used.

Table 2. Different Types of Cyberbullying On Social Media That Female Entrepreneurs Experience In Bangladesh.

Cyberbullying activities	Description
Inappropriate comments	People use abusive comments and threats on female entrepreneurs' posts and lives.
Sending inappropriate messages	Some participants receive porn video clips, nude pictures, and prostitution offers.
Trolling	Some female entrepreneurs get trolled on social media which is so painful for them.
Memes without consent	People make female entrepreneurs' memes on social media without their consent.
Roasting	Digital content creators and YouTubers roast female entrepreneurs aggressively and offensively.
Spreading personal information	Abusers spread female entrepreneurs' personal information including their phone numbers.

Table 1 above shows the demography details of participants in this research. Based on the information provided by the participants, different types of cyberbullying can be identified that female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are experiencing which have been summarised in Table 2 below.

Willard (2007) identified different forms of cyberbullying they are "flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyber stalking, and cyber threats" (from Smriti & Nahar, 2019, p. 126). In Bangladesh, female entrepreneurs get cyberbullied quite similarly to these forms. Surprisingly some of the participants realised and noticed after a long time that they have been victimised. According to them, even some women do not have any idea of cyberbullying before they start their business and they don't know what to do when they get harassed.

Participants shared some ideas to prevent cyberbullying female entrepreneurs on social media. Different themes and sub-themes were developed from the interview transcripts considering some keywords related to the main and sub-themes (Table 3).

Participants of this study are mostly educated but almost all of them think it is very important to increase awareness about cyberbullying by arranging campaigns, training, and workshops.

They also think not only educating themselves but also passing information to others about cyberbullying is another significant preventive step. This will help to understand this crime, its consequences and available support for victims.

It is very common that women in Bangladesh rarely report any violence against them. This can be the result of high inequalities in society (Khan, 2021). However, female entrepreneurs disbelieve in superstitions but still, reporting and taking legal actions are not happening randomly yet. Some of the participants think ignoring cyberbullying is the best action, while other participants protest it by replying harshly but both are not the proper action (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018). Keep all the evidence and report. All big social media platforms now act against cybercrimes and have a zero-tolerance

Table 3. Themes developed from the interview transcript.

Key Themes	Sub-Themes	Keywords
Awareness	• Speak about cyberbullying • Awareness campaign • Training/workshop	Sharing incidents, discussing with others, Government initiatives, increasing consciousness, social media awareness, training by NGOs, being prepared, was not aware of cyberbullying.
Know it and inform others	• Understanding cyberbullying • Be educated • Educate others	How it happens, Consequences of cyberbullying, Passing information, Forums, Group discussion, Supports, Exploring around.
Report	• Legal action • Complain • Do not attack	Keep evidence, Block, Keep proof, Take it seriously, Ignoring, aggressive reply, Legal support, Warning.
Personal information	• Privacy setting • Information security	Shared information, Hacking accounts, Personal information, Mobile numbers, Identification.

policy for harassment and bullying (UNICEF, 2023). Finally, almost all participants focused on keeping personal information safe. Privacy and security settings of social media accounts need to be checked and updated regularly. Everyone including male and female entrepreneurs should share only professional information on social media. If somehow personal contact details are spread, immediately they should change those information.

CONCLUSION

The growth of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is a very positive sign for the economy of this country while the overall entrepreneurship situation is still far behind than other countries in the world. Therefore, it is very important to provide them with all kinds of support to overcome any challenges they face. This research attempted to discuss female entrepreneurs' experiences of cyberbullying on social media and tried to identify some actions to prevent it from their points of view. The findings of the study show raising awareness of cyberbullying is one of the most important actions. Government and non-government organisations should arrange some awareness campaigns through different types of media can be very effective. At the same time, women entrepreneurs also need to be informed and share information with others about cyberbullying. Reporting cyberbullying along with keeping personal information safe is very important while entrepreneurs are using social media for their businesses.

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