

CYBERBULLYING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ASIA: A SCOPING REVIEW AND BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The rapid growth of information and communication technology has significantly increased internet usage among teenagers, especially high school students. While digitalization offers many benefits, it also brings challenges, including cyberbullying, which poses serious risks to adolescents' mental health and social well-being. This study employs a scoping review combined with bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer to map research trends on cyberbullying among high school students in Asia. Data were retrieved from Scopus and ScienceDirect databases, focusing on English-language empirical articles published between 2020 and 2025 in psychology and social science fields. Out of 456 records, 105 articles met the inclusion criteria. The analysis revealed six major thematic clusters, including psychological impacts, the role of social media, digital violence, and family and school influences. Key research gaps were also identified, such as the need for culturally adapted interventions, greater involvement of parents and teachers, and attention to social diversity. These findings provide a comprehensive overview to guide future research, policy-making, and educational practices on cyberbullying in the Asian context.

Keywords: Adolescents; Asia; Bibliometric Analysis; Cyberbullying; High School Students; Scoping review; VOSviewer

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technology has significantly influenced the social lives of adolescents, particularly high school students. Recent surveys indicate that 95% of young individuals aged 18–30 are active internet users (Shaikh, Rehman, & Amin, 2020). In Indonesia, the 13–18 age group has the highest internet usage rate, with a penetration level reaching 98.64% between 2021 and 2022 (Jannah & Setiyowati, 2024).

Alongside the benefits of digital connectivity, cyberbullying has emerged as a serious concern, facilitated by the widespread use of digital technology and online communication platforms (Aljasir & Alsebaei, 2022). Cyberbullying has profound psychological consequences for adolescents, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. As such, effective prevention and intervention strategies are urgently needed strategies that are not only reactive but also grounded in psychosocial and digital literacy frameworks (Bejaković & Mrnjavac, 2024).

Among the most troubling consequences of increased internet penetration and social media use is the rise in cyberbullying a form of aggression conducted through digital means (Li, Wu, & Hesketh, 2023). Li (2023), argues that cyberbullying represents one of the most severe negative impacts of internet use, characterized by intentional and repeated acts of harm, exclusion, or intimidation using digital platforms.

Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying has a broader reach, is harder to detect, and can occur at any time, often intensifying its psychological impact (Ali, 2025). As a global phenomenon, cyberbullying transcends age groups and cultural boundaries (Sivabalan, Ahmad Zaki, & Choo, 2020), with prevalence estimates ranging from 5% to 72% for victims and 4% to 33% for perpetrators. Adolescents, particularly those aged 17 to 30, are among the most affected groups, with younger children increasingly participating as both victims and perpetrators (Kumar & Goldstein, 2020). Cyberbullying is distinct from traditional bullying in that it occurs in digital spaces and can spread rapidly through multiple platforms such as email, social media, text messages, images, and videos (Daudu, Osimen, & Shuaibu, 2023). As a result, it has become one of the most prevalent forms of aggressive behavior in the digital age (Hannako, Latifah, & Riany, 2024; Kulaeva, Khasueva, & Kulaev, 2023).

Bullying, as defined by Olweus (1994), involves aggressive behavior by an individual or group toward a victim who is unable to defend themselves, repeated over time. With technological progress, such behaviors have transitioned into the digital realm. When this aggression is conducted via digital tools such as social media or the internet, it becomes known as cyberbullying (Hannako et al., 2024). Despite its different medium, cyberbullying retains the core characteristics of traditional bullying: aggression, power imbalance, and repetition (Abaido, 2020). Thus, cyberbullying should not be viewed solely as a digital issue, but rather as a continuation of longstanding power dynamics and psychosocial aggression issues that remain central to discussions in education and adolescent development (Chan, Cheung, & Lee, 2021; Kizza, 2024).

Research shows that cyberbullying can have even more severe psychological effects than face-to-face bullying, due to its persistent nature and the omnipresence of digital media (Wahanisa, Prihastuty, & Noho, 2021). Victims are at heightened risk for mental health disorders, academic problems, depression, and suicidal ideation (López-Vizcaíno, Nóvoa, Carneiro, & CACHEDA, 2021). Suicide cases linked to cyberbullying illustrate the urgent need to address online aggression seriously. Social media platforms often serve as key channels for verbal abuse, leaving victims without a safe space for retreat (Sala, Porcaro, & Gómez, 2024).

Under constant social pressure and digital exposure, many adolescents feel powerless against anonymous perpetrators and remain silent due to fear of stigma or rejection (Mikhaylovsky et al., 2019; Talpur, 2018). Ironically, although anonymity in digital spaces could promote freedom of expression, many users still hesitate to speak out, even on platforms designed to protect identity (Abaido, 2020).

While some Asian countries have begun implementing policies and intervention programs to tackle this issue, regional-level data and academic studies focusing specifically on cyberbullying among high school students remain scarce. Therefore, a systematic mapping of the literature is necessary to gain insights into research trends, focal areas, and existing knowledge gaps related to cyberbullying in Asia.

A scoping review enables researchers to explore the breadth and characteristics of available literature without critically appraising methodological quality (Gottlieb, Haas, Daniel, & Chan, 2021). In parallel, bibliometric analysis offers a quantitative perspective on publication patterns, authorship networks, institutional collaborations, and emerging research themes (Passas, 2024). By integrating these two approaches, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of research on cyberbullying among high school students in Asia.

Although the topic has gained increasing scholarly attention, no prior study has specifically applied a bibliometric method to map the research landscape in this context. The findings are

expected to inform educational policies, the design of psychological support programs, and future research directions that are better aligned with real-world social and cultural needs.

2. METHOD

A. Study Design

This study employed a scoping review approach to map the breadth and trends of scientific literature related to the phenomenon of cyberbullying among high school students in Asia. A scoping review was selected due to its suitability for comprehensively examining the extent, range, and nature of research activity, including topic trends, methodologies, and knowledge gaps without necessitating a detailed assessment of methodological quality.

Data were collected and analyzed using the latest version of VOSviewer software, which supports bibliometric visualization and quantitative analysis. This bibliometric approach was adopted to identify publication patterns, research collaborations, and the quantitative distribution of themes, thereby enriching the literature mapping in the scoping review. VOSviewer enables the visualization of relationships among keywords, authors, institutions, and countries, allowing for a structured and systematic identification of research patterns and scholarly networks.

Data were analyzed both descriptively and narratively, using systematic classification across several core aspects: (1) research themes (e.g., psychological impact, the role of social media, school and family involvement), (2) country of origin, to map the geographical distribution of studies across Asia, and (3) year of publication, to identify developmental trends from 2020 to 2025. The narrative analysis served to elaborate on key findings within each category, while VOSviewer's bibliometric mapping provided a visual depiction of keyword co-occurrences and author collaboration networks.

Together, this combined approach offers a comprehensive and systematic overview of the literature on cyberbullying among Asian high school students and establishes a foundation for future research development and policy formulation related to this issue.

B. Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using two prominent academic databases: Scopus and ScienceDirect, selected for their comprehensive coverage, high-quality indexing, and relevance to the research fields of psychology and social sciences. The search employed the following keywords: “cyberbullying”, “high school”, “student”, “internet”, “cyberbullying behavior”, and “cyberbullying victimization”. Filters were applied to limit the results to articles published between 2020 and 2025, ensuring that the literature reviewed was both current and relevant to recent developments in the field. To ensure the validity and relevance of the included studies, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established in line with scoping review methodology best practices:

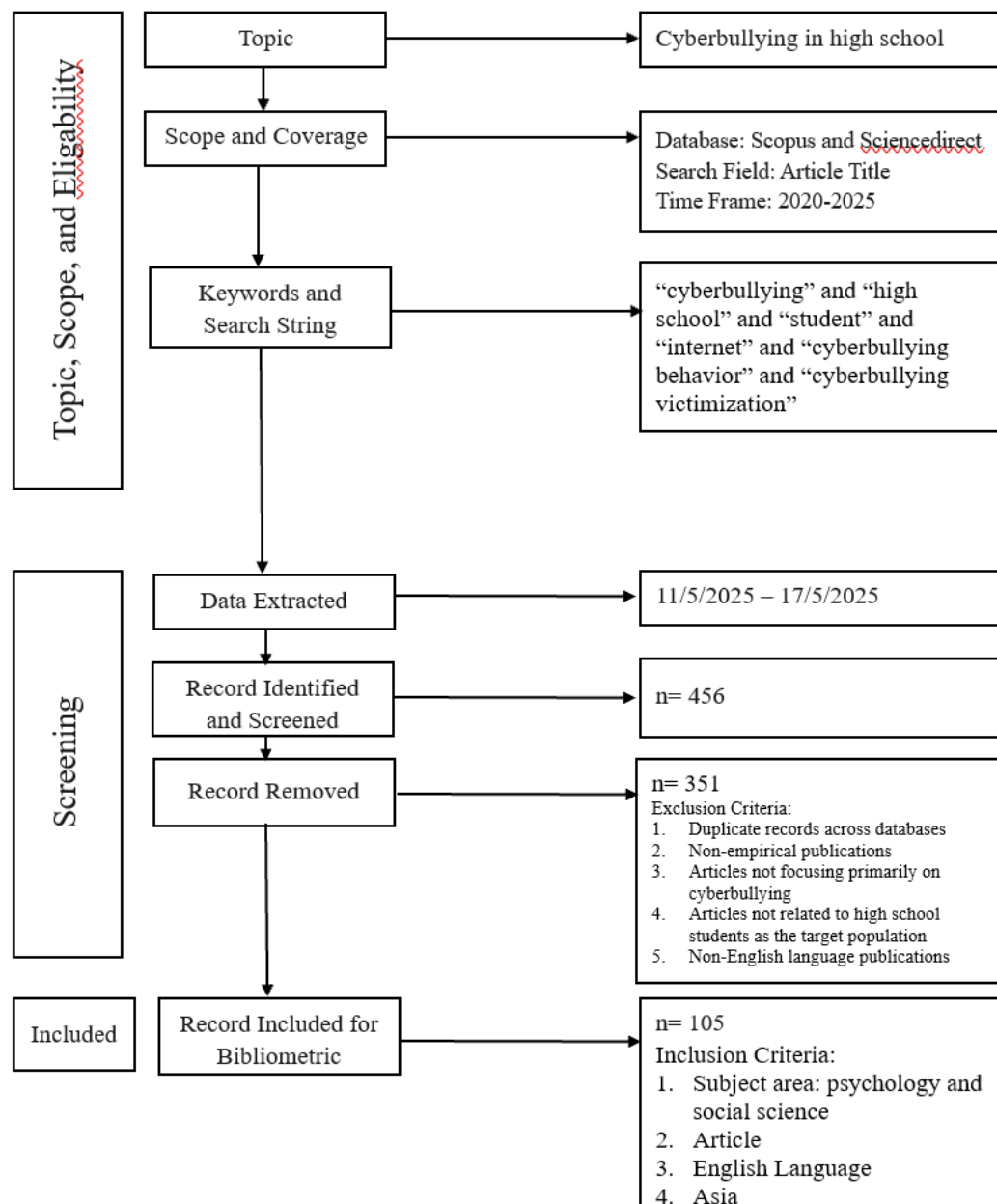
Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

No.	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1	Articles focusing on topics within the fields of psychology and social sciences	Duplicate records across databases
2	Original research articles (empirical studies)	Non-empirical publications (e.g., opinion papers, editorials)
3	Published in English	Articles that do not primarily address the topic of cyberbullying
4	Studies conducted within the Asian context	Studies targeting populations other than high school students

Although scoping reviews allow for some flexibility in refining criteria post hoc, the above parameters were established a priori to guide study selection and minimize bias. These restrictions were critical to ensuring the quality, reliability, and consistency of the final dataset. Following the screening process, a total of 105 articles met all inclusion criteria and were selected for analysis.

To ensure methodological transparency, the study adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. The PRISMA flow diagram (provided below) illustrates each stage of the literature selection process identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion thereby enhancing the transparency and replicability of the review methodology:

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process



C. Data Screening and Selection

From a total of 456 documents identified during the initial search in the Scopus and ScienceDirect databases, a multi-stage screening process was conducted to ensure that only relevant, high-quality articles meeting the predetermined inclusion criteria were retained for further analysis.

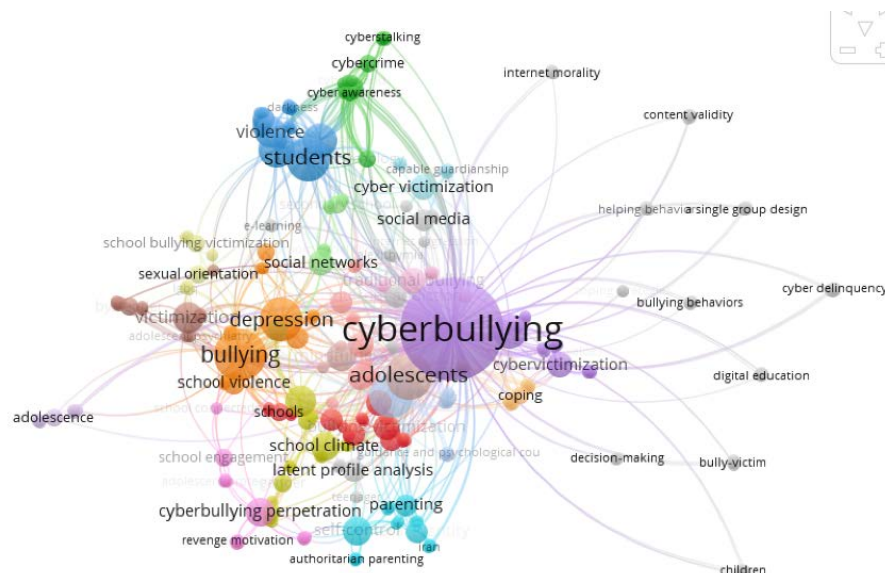
The first stage involved the removal of duplicate records across databases to avoid double-counting and potential bias in both the bibliometric and thematic analyses. This step was essential for maintaining the accuracy and reliability of the results. The second stage consisted of a preliminary review of article titles and abstracts to assess the relevance of each study to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Articles that merely mentioned the term “cyberbullying” in passing without making it a central focus of analysis were systematically excluded. Likewise, studies addressing digital issues or technology use without an explicit link to cyberbullying behaviors were eliminated from the selection.

The third stage focused on the type and characteristics of each study. Non-empirical publications such as editorials, opinion pieces, non-systematic literature reviews, and short commentaries were excluded due to the absence of primary data or methodological rigor. Additionally, studies lacking sufficient methodological details or failing to present explicit analytical results were also removed from consideration. Following this rigorous screening process, a total of 105 articles were identified that met all inclusion criteria, including: (1) a clear focus on cyberbullying, (2) an empirical study design, (3) methodological clarity, and (4) contextual relevance to high school students in Asia.

These selected articles were then subjected to further descriptive and thematic analysis to map prevailing research trends, methodological approaches, and thematic concentrations within the body of literature on cyberbullying among secondary school students during the 2020–2025 period.

3. RESULTS

Figure 2. Bibliometric Results Generated by VOSviewer



To map the landscape of scientific research on cyberbullying among high school students in Asia, a combination of scoping review and bibliometric analysis was conducted. This section presents the main findings based on the analysis of 105 selected articles. The results are categorized into four key parts: identification of central themes and keywords, thematic cluster relationships, prevailing research trends and gaps, and patterns of scientific collaboration. The findings aim to provide a structured and in-depth overview of how cyberbullying has been studied within the Asian context, highlighting dominant research focuses, underexplored areas, and potential directions for future inquiry.

A. Identification of Central Themes and Keywords

From the analysis of 105 selected articles, VOSviewer identified six major thematic clusters that represent the primary research focuses related to cyberbullying among high school students in Asia. The central theme across the literature is the phenomenon of cyberbullying, followed by frequently occurring keywords such as “adolescents” and “students”, confirming that existing studies predominantly address cyberbullying among teenagers particularly those in high school. This emphasizes the age-specific relevance of the issue and the targeted population of this review.

B. Thematic Clusters and Inter-Topic Relationships

The bibliometric analysis produced six distinct clusters, each representing sub-topics frequently explored in cyberbullying research:

(1) Purple Cluster (Central Theme)

This cluster highlights the experiences of victims and the coping strategies employed by adolescents in dealing with cyberbullying. The majority of studies in this cluster focus on psychological impacts such as stress, anxiety, and isolation, and on victims’ strategies for managing these effects. For example, Doğan et al. (2023), employed a qualitative approach to explore the subjective experiences of adolescent victims of cyberbullying, including the emotions they encountered and the coping strategies they adopted. Similarly Huang, Zhang, & Yang (2020), examined how empathy and moral disengagement influence students’ responses to various cyberbullying scenarios, reflecting underlying social and psychological coping mechanisms. In addition (Zhang, Ding, & Zhou, 2024), emphasized the connection between cyberbullying and acute stress responses in adolescents, underscoring the urgent need for interventions that support the development of healthy and effective coping strategies among victims.

(2) Blue Cluster

Focuses on the link between cyberbullying, school violence, and cybercrime, using keywords such as “students,” “violence,” and “cybercrime.”

(3) Red Cluster

Highlights the psychological and social impacts of cyberbullying, especially depression, victimization, and school-related violence.

(4) Green Cluster

Concentrates on the role of social media as the primary medium for cyberbullying and underscores the importance of cyber awareness. Key terms include “social media,” “social networks,” and “cyber awareness.”

(5) Yellow and Brown Clusters

Explore environmental factors such as school climate, parenting, school engagement, and latent profile analysis, showing the influence of family and school contexts in cyberbullying dynamics.

C. Research Trends and Scientific Gaps

The following section outlines current research trends in cyberbullying studies and highlights key scientific gaps that need to be addressed in order to develop more effective and culturally relevant interventions. These include:

(1) Research Trends

The literature on cyberbullying in Asia reflects an evolving multidisciplinary orientation, incorporating not only behavioral and psychological impacts but also protective factors such as coping strategies, parental involvement, school climate, and intervention programs.

(2) Identified Research Gaps

a. Theoretical Gap

Most studies adopt Western theoretical frameworks without culturally adapting them to the Asian context. Concepts such as bystander behavior, coping, and victimization are often applied without considering collectivist values, social interaction norms, and cultural relationship patterns in Asia. This limits theoretical relevance and explanatory power for local populations.

b. Evidence Gap

While prevalence and risk factors are well-documented, there is a shortage of empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of intervention programs in Asian schools. Many interventions lack robust evaluation designs, such as longitudinal assessments or experimental validation, creating a disconnect between observed problems and tested solutions.

c. Empirical Gap

The reviewed studies are dominated by cross-sectional and quantitative survey designs, with limited use of qualitative or longitudinal approaches. As a result, deeper insights into the long-term behavioral trajectories, and subjective experiences of victims and perpetrators, remain underexplored. Critical constructs such as digital literacy and resilience are also rarely examined in detail.

d. Knowledge Gap

Several relevant topics are underrepresented, including the role of school policy, family dynamics, and socioeconomic influences on cyberbullying behavior. Additionally, the connection between specific social media platforms and different forms or intensities of cyberbullying as well as how cultural norms shape online adolescent behavior is insufficiently explored.

e. Methodological Gap

Most studies rely on quantitative instruments adapted from foreign contexts, with little methodological innovation. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies are rarely used, despite their potential for revealing rich, culturally grounded insights. Furthermore, the scarcity of mixed-method research limits the comprehensiveness of current findings.

D. Scientific Collaboration and Productivity

VOSviewer visualization indicates a growing network of international and institutional collaboration among researchers. The presence of multiple interlinked nodes demonstrates the global and interdisciplinary nature of cyberbullying research. Such collaborations are critical for generating more inclusive, diverse, and culturally responsive solutions to combat cyberbullying.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this scoping review and bibliometric analysis on cyberbullying among high school students in Asia were systematically compiled to enhance clarity and facilitate reader comprehension. The analysis began by mapping scientific productivity and keyword frequency, revealing that “cyberbullying”, particularly in the context of adolescents and high school students, is the dominant theme across the reviewed literature. This confirms that cyberbullying in this age group remains a critical issue that continues to attract considerable academic attention in Asia.

The cluster analysis performed using VOSviewer software identified interrelated thematic areas, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of cyberbullying research. These themes include: (1) victim experiences and coping strategies, (2) the intersection of cyberbullying with

cyber violence and crime, (3) psychological impacts such as depression and victimization, and (4) the role of social media and digital literacy awareness.

A. Victimization and Coping Strategies

One of the most prominent thematic clusters revolves around the psychosocial impact of cyberbullying and the various coping mechanisms employed by adolescents. Aizenkot & Kashy-Rosenbaum (2019), for instance, found that increased usage of messaging platforms such as WhatsApp correlates with higher incidences of cyberbullying in Israeli school peer groups, particularly among elementary students and girls. Around 30% of students reported being victims, highlighting the serious emotional, behavioral, and academic consequences. These findings underscore the need to understand victimization patterns and to design contextualized interventions and policies that empower students with appropriate coping skills in digital spaces.

B. Cyber Violence and Cybercrime

Other studies, such as those by Cagirkan & Bilek (2021), reveal the migration of traditional bullying behaviors into digital domains, including social media, online games, and blogs. Cyberbullying, as a form of intentional aggression, can evolve into forms of cybercrime, necessitating not only educational but also legal and policy responses. Their study in eastern Turkey identified several demographic and socioeconomic variables that increase susceptibility to being a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying. These insights reinforce the importance of addressing digital violence within youth protection frameworks.

C. Psychological Consequences

The psychological consequences of cyberbullying such as depression, anxiety, and diminished mental well-being are widely documented. Studies by Chai, Xue, & Han (2020); Liang et al. (2024); Liu et al. (2023), found that adolescents, particularly those belonging to minority groups, are at increased risk of repeated victimization, which significantly undermines their mental health and life satisfaction. Furthermore, inadequate coping support can increase the risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation (Liu et al., 2023). These findings point to the long-term emotional impacts of cyberbullying and the urgent need for school-based and psychosocial interventions.

D. Role of Social Media and Digital Awareness

The role of social media as both a facilitator of cyberbullying and a potential platform for intervention was emphasized in several studies. While social platforms shape adolescent interactions, they are also highly vulnerable to abuse (Alhothali & Enezi, 2023; Karaosmanoglu, Adiguzel, & Simsek, 2022; Ratmono, Kurniasih, & Setyoko, 2023). As such, the importance of digital education in increasing students' awareness, particularly among female students, becomes critical. Notably, interventions such as creative drama and peer emotional support were found to help adolescents develop better emotional regulation and resilience (Karaosmanoglu et al., 2022; Ratmono et al., 2023). These findings advocate for digital literacy programs that focus not only on technological competence but also on empathy, ethical online behavior, and healthy relationship skills.

This cluster-based analysis offers valuable insights into how various dimensions of cyberbullying ranging from psychological impacts to socio-environmental influences interact and emerge as focal points in existing research. Furthermore, the results reflect an evolving multidisciplinary trend, whereby studies do not solely concentrate on the prevalence or negative consequences of cyberbullying but increasingly explore protective factors, preventive strategies, and intervention efforts grounded in school and family contexts.

Despite these advancements, the analysis also identifies several critical research gaps, particularly in the development of culturally tailored interventions relevant to the Asian context. The roles of parents, teachers, and digital platforms in the prevention and mitigation of cyberbullying remain underexplored. Similarly, social dimensions such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural diversity receive insufficient attention, underscoring the need for more inclusive and intersectional approaches in future research.

In terms of scientific collaboration, the bibliometric visualizations reveal a broad and dynamic network of cooperation among researchers, institutions, and countries in Asia. This reflects the collective urgency and shared responsibility in addressing cyberbullying through cross-disciplinary and cross-national partnerships.

The findings presented in this study highlight several practical and academic implications. Future research should prioritize the development of context-sensitive interventions that align with local cultural norms and educational systems. There is also a pressing need to strengthen digital literacy programs targeting students, educators, and parents, and to foster multistakeholder collaboration among schools, families, and policymakers in creating safe and inclusive digital learning environments.

Written in a clear and structured manner, and supported by bibliometric visualizations and thematic mappings, this report offers readers an accessible yet comprehensive overview of the current state of cyberbullying research in Asia. Ultimately, this study lays a strong conceptual and empirical foundation for advancing both the science and practice of cyberbullying prevention in increasingly digital educational ecosystems.

5. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study, conducted through a systematic and comprehensive scoping review, concludes that cyberbullying among high school students in Asia constitutes a critical issue that has garnered significant scholarly attention, with adolescents identified as the primary at-risk population. Cluster analysis using VOSviewer revealed a complex and multidisciplinary research structure encompassing themes such as victim experiences and coping mechanisms, associations with school violence and cybercrime, psychological impacts including depression and victimization, and the role of social media and digital literacy. These findings underscore the urgent need for a deeper understanding of victimization patterns, coping strategies, and the demographic and socioeconomic variables that influence involvement in cyberbullying either as perpetrators or victims. Moreover, the study highlights critical gaps in the development of culturally responsive interventions, the promotion of digital literacy, and the facilitation of collaborative efforts among schools, families, and policymakers to foster safe, inclusive, and supportive digital environments for adolescents in the Asian context.

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