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### **Cyberbullying and its Psychological Implications for Kazakh Youth: A Call for Cultural Context.**

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In recent times, the digital landscape has undergone a significant transformation, revolutionizing the way we connect, learn, and interact with one another. While the internet has undeniably brought numerous advantages, it has also paved the way for the emergence of new forms of harassment and bullying, particularly cyberbullying. This phenomenon has become a matter of global concern, affecting millions of adolescents across the globe, including those in Kazakhstan. With the rapid increase in digital penetration in Kazakhstan, the country is witnessing a surge in cyberbullying, which is a type of harassment that takes place through digital platforms. The statistics on cyberbullying in Kazakhstan reveal a concerning trend. According to a survey, it was found that **72%** of youth in Kazakhstan have experienced cyberbullying, indicating a high prevalence of online harassment among young individuals in the country [7]. This poses considerable challenges to the psychological well-being of adolescents, thereby necessitating an approach that is sensitive to the cultural context to comprehend and mitigate its impacts. The issue of cyberbullying among Kazakh adolescents is of utmost importance, requiring a deeper understanding of its psychological consequences and the development of effective strategies to combat it. This article explores the prevalence of cyberbullying among Kazakh youth, its psychological implications, and the significance of incorporating cultural context into strategies aimed at addressing cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying - entails the utilization of digital technologies, such as social media, messaging platforms, and websites, to harass, threaten, or embarrass individuals. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying provides perpetrators with the ability to hide behind screens, often granting them a sense of empowerment to engage in harmful behaviors without immediate repercussions. Cyberbullying among Kazakh youth is a growing concern, with a notable percentage of adolescents reporting experiences of online harassment. Studies suggest that the accessibility of smartphones and the internet has led to increased vulnerability among children and teenagers to cyberbullying. The number of cases of cyberbullying has been on the rise, with **140 thousand** incidents identified in 2021, which is twice the number reported in 2020. This data underscores the significant impact of cyberbullying on children in Kazakhstan, with **every ninth pupil** in the country facing bullying at least once. Despite these alarming statistics, many cases of cyberbullying go unreported, many

parents and victims remain hesitant to report incidents to the police, and the country's legal framework lacks a specific definition for "cyberbullying," often treating such cases as administrative offenses with few reaching the court [5].

Cyberbullying can take on various manifestations, such as flaming, trolling, denigration, masquerading, outing, and cyberstalking. Flaming entails the utilization of offensive and aggressive language in online interactions, whereas trolling involves provoking individuals or groups in a disrespectful manner. Denigration entails the dissemination of harmful information to tarnish a victim's character, while masquerading involves impersonating someone else, often the victim. Additionally, outing and cyberstalking are other contemporary forms of cyberbullying that further exacerbate the emotional distress and harm inflicted on victims. [1]. Some more examples of cyberbullying on Kazakh social media platforms include:

1. Spreading lies and posting embarrassing photos: Cyberbullies may spread false information or post embarrassing photos of individuals on social media platforms to humiliate or harm their reputation [6].

2. Sending hurtful messages or threats: Another form of cyberbullying involves sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms to intimidate, harass, or emotionally harm the recipient [6].

3. Unjustified criticism and derogatory comments: Cyberbullies may engage in unjustified criticism against specific individuals, often in the form of comments and messages that are aggressive and demeaning [5].

4. Cyberstalking and online harassment: The use of gadgets to stalk individuals online, regular threats against victims or their family members, and the publication of private photos or videos for blackmail or revenge purposes are common cyberbullying tactics seen on Kazakh social media platforms [5].

5. Griefing in online games: In multiplayer online games, griefers may use coarse language, disrupt gameplay, and harass other players to spoil their gaming experience, constituting a form of cyberbullying [5].

These examples illustrate the diverse ways in which cyberbullying manifests on Kazakh social media platforms, highlighting the need for effective measures to prevent and address such harmful behaviors online.

Cyberbullying has been identified as a significant issue affecting the mental health and academic performance of Kazakh youth [2]. Studies have shown that cyberbullying negatively impacts the psyche of adolescents, leading to adverse consequences on their emotional well-being and academic success [2]. The psychological impact of cyberbullying on adolescents is profound. Victims often experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation. The anonymity and ubiquity of digital platforms can exacerbate these effects, making cyberbullying an omnipresent threat to vulnerable youth. Research indicates that cyberbullying can lead to significant emotional distress, adversely affecting academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being [6].

A study found that 8.6% of college students were victims of cyberbullying, experiencing higher levels of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation compared to their non-victimized peers (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). The psychological distress led to significant emotional consequences and coping strategies that varied slightly between genders but generally involved seeking support and avoiding social interactions [8]. Adolescents who experienced cyberbullying victimization exhibited a greater propensity to engage in self-harm and suicidal attempts when compared to those who experienced direct and relational victimization. In particular, female adolescents who were subjected to relational bullying displayed a heightened risk of engaging in suicidal attempts in comparison to their male counterparts. It emphasizes the importance of considering gender differences when formulating tailored intervention approaches to effectively address the issue of bullying victimization [12]. There is an emerging form of crime that is gaining traction, as individuals initiate relationships with young women and then proceed to extort money from them by threatening to expose their intimate photos on social media platforms. Unfortunately, one such incident in Atyrau resulted in a

tragic outcome. It is not the first and certainly not the last case of such cyberbullying example that ended in suicide of a young women. [11].

The overlap between cyberbullying and traditional bullying is notable, with both forms of bullying affecting psychological, physical, and academic well-being. However, the unique aspects of cyberbullying, such as its potential for anonymity and the broader audience, can exacerbate its effects. Victims often experience anxiety, depression, and physical symptoms, impacting their school attendance and performance (Kowalski & Limber, 2013) [9]. The case of a 13-year-old girl who drank a handful of pills attempting to end her life because of excessive cyberbullying from her peers is common and highlights the profound impact that bullying and cyberbullying can have on young people. The transition from a nurturing environment to one that is hostile can dramatically affect a child's psychological well-being and academic performance [10]. Detailed case studies of Kazakh adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying provide deeper insights into the individual and societal dynamics at play. For instance, a case involving a 15-year-old from Astana revealed how cyberbullying led to severe social withdrawal and academic decline, compounded by the reluctance of the victim's family to acknowledge the problem due to fears of social stigma [11].

The influence of Kazakh cultural norms on the experience and impact of cyberbullying is profound. In a society where family honor and social standing are highly valued, the public nature of cyberbullying incidents can have devastating effects on the victim's self-esteem and social relationships. The cultural stigma attached to mental health issues further complicates the willingness of victims to seek help or report incidents as can be noticed from the previous cases. Given the cultural values rooted in Sunni Islam in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, it is crucial to consider cultural norms and religious precepts when addressing cyberbullying issues among Kazakh youth [3]. Bullying among young people is a multifaceted issue that extends beyond social implications, offering a lens through which cultural norms can be examined. In Kazakhstan, a country renowned for its nomadic heritage and contemporary societal changes, investigating the influence of cultural norms on the perception of bullying among young individuals presents an intriguing avenue for research.

Youth cultures in Kazakhstan, serving as alternative models of socialization, play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to bullying. These subcultures not only reflect but also redefine the prevailing cultural narratives, often acting as catalysts for changes in the broader public's understanding of bullying [14].

Within these youth cultures, value orientations hold particular significance. They encompass a complex amalgamation of traditional Kazakh values and the impacts of globalization, collectively shaping the perception of acceptable social conduct among young people, including their stance on bullying [15].

Moreover, the modern Kazakh social landscape grapples with issues of identity and tolerance, which are particularly pertinent in a rapidly diversifying society. The education system plays a crucial role in strengthening cultural identity and promoting tolerance, thereby influencing how young Kazakhs perceive and respond to bullying [16].

Furthermore, the State and the media have a significant role in instilling spiritual and ethical values in young individuals. These values are essential in cultivating a sense of morality and ethics, which are necessary for understanding young people's reactions to bullying [17].

Lastly, the historical process of value identification within Kazakh culture, where tradition serves as a steadfast component of self-identification, provides a backdrop against which contemporary attitudes towards bullying can be compared and contrasted [18].

There are legal efforts in Kazakhstan to combat cyberbullying. The Kazakh government has taken steps to address cyberbullying by reviewing amendments and modifications to laws to protect children's rights. These amendments include requiring foreign social media and messaging services to register in the country or face being blocked. Additionally, the law attempts to define cyberbullying as actions of a humiliating nature, harassment, intimidation, and coercion. The government has also signed a controversial bill aimed at controlling social media companies to combat cyberbullying,

although critics have raised concerns about potential restrictions on freedom of speech under this law [13].

To conclude, research indicates that victims of cyberbullying experience psychological and social problems, which can have long-lasting effects on their well-being [4]. Victims often exhibit characteristics such as low self-esteem, poor social contacts, anxiety, and difficulties in family relationships, making them more vulnerable to bullying behaviors [4]. Understanding the cultural context is crucial in addressing cyberbullying among Kazakh youth, considering the specific social and psychological determinants that influence this phenomenon [3]. Recognizing these psychological traits is essential for developing effective coping strategies and interventions to support victims of cyberbullying in Kazakhstan.

Developing specific policies and legislation that define bullying and cyberbullying within the local context can enhance prevention efforts. Moreover, incorporating cultural sensitivity into anti-cyberbullying measures can help create a more effective and inclusive approach to tackling this problem. Kazakhstan's examination of societal attitudes towards bullying highlights the complex interaction between history, culture, media, education, and empathy. As a country undergoing significant changes, Kazakhstan faces the task of reconciling long-standing cultural beliefs with modern interpretations of the repercussions of bullying. Despite historical factors and cultural traditions sometimes hindering open discussions on bullying, an increasing recognition of its adverse effects is guiding the nation towards more compassionate viewpoints. The transformation of societal attitudes is an ongoing journey, and as Kazakhstan maneuvers through this intricate landscape, fostering inclusive settings that respect cultural values while emphasizing personal welfare is crucial.

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#### ПОДСЕКЦИЯ 9.4.

### ЦИФРЛЫҚ ДӘУІРДЕГІ ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ САЛАУАТТЫЛЫҚ: МӘСЕЛЕЛЕР, ШЕШІМДЕР ЖӘНЕ БОЛЖАМДАР / ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ БЛАГОПОЛУЧИЕ В ЦИФРОВУЮ ЭПОХУ: ВЫЗОВЫ, РЕШЕНИЯ И ПРОГНОЗЫ

ӘОЖ 159.9

ПСИХОЛОГИЯДАҒЫ МОББИНГ МӘСЕЛЕСІНІҢ ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ ТАЛДАМЫ

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