

Legal Mechanisms to Combat Digital Bullying Against Children: A Comparative Study under International Law and Some National Legislations

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Abstract:

The world is going through a digital revolution in which a noticeable increase in bullying directed against children is evident. This is no longer limited to the traditional environment but has extended to cyberspace, bringing double risks to the child's psychological and social health. Digital bullying is one of the most prominent challenges facing child protection systems because it involves a violation of children's rights and a threat to their safety and dignity. This has prompted the international community and many countries to establish legal frameworks and legislative mechanisms aimed at preventing and combating this phenomenon and providing the necessary protection for the child victims.

This study seeks to highlight the effectiveness of international and national legal mechanisms in addressing digital bullying against children by conducting a comparative study between the legal rules adopted by international law and some national legislations. The study identifies their strengths and weaknesses and proposes ways to enhance the legal protection of children in the digital environment. It concludes that achieving effective protection for children from digital bullying requires adopting a comprehensive approach that combines legislative, preventive, and awareness-raising measures, in addition to strengthening international cooperation to keep pace with rapid technological developments.

Keywords: Digital Bullying, Child, Legal Protection, International Law, National Legislations, Children's Rights, Digital Environment.

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology and the spread of social media have brought about a profound transformation in the patterns of human interaction, especially among children who have become one of the demographics that utilise the digital space the most. Despite the opportunities the digital environment provides for learning, communication, and entertainment, it has in turn produced many risks and challenges that threaten the child's safety and fundamental rights. One of the most prominent is digital bullying, which has become one of the most dangerous forms of violence practiced against children in the digital age.

Digital bullying refers to the various aggressive acts and behaviours committed through electronic media and social media networks with the intent of harming, defaming, threatening, or excluding. This may leave serious psychological, social, and educational impacts on the child, sometimes extending to prejudice their dignity and right to healthy development. The seriousness of this phenomenon has prompted the international community and individual nations to introduce a set

of legal mechanisms aimed at preventing and combating it, ensuring effective protection for the children who fall victim to it.

All national and international legislations have unanimously agreed that the term "child" applies to every person who has not yet reached the age of 18. This was stated in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour adopted by the International Labour Organisation, which stipulated that "the term child shall apply to all persons under the age of 18" (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 1999). This was also stipulated by Article 2 of Law No. 15-12 relating to child protection, which stated: "In the concept of this law, the following is meant: Child: every person who has not reached the full eighteen (18) years of age" (Law No. 15-12, 2015).

The importance of this topic is highlighted by the increasing rates of digital bullying among children in conjunction with the continuous expansion in the use of digital means. There is also a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the international and national legal systems in facing this emerging phenomenon, and to reveal the legislative shortcomings that may limit the provision of adequate legal protection for children in the digital environment. The study also holds practical importance given its link to protecting children whom are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, and ensuring their enjoyment of their digital rights within a safe electronic environment.

Based on this, the following central question is raised: To what extent have international and national legal mechanisms contributed to combating the phenomenon of digital bullying against children and achieving effective protection for them, and what are the ways to enhance this protection in light of the rapid developments of the digital environment?

To answer this question, the descriptive approach was used to clarify the conceptual framework of digital bullying against children and to review the various legal mechanisms established to combat it. The analytical approach was also employed to analyse the relevant international and national legal texts and clarify their effectiveness in providing legal protection for children.

Axis One: The Concept of Electronic Bullying Against Children

Social, psychological, and legal awareness of the seriousness of bullying has clearly increased recently. It has also been agreed that bullying takes multiple forms. In addition to physical bullying, it can take verbal and indirect patterns (Boushaib et al., n.d.). Through this axis, we will present the definition of bullying, its types, and the impact and consequences of such phenomenon on child behaviour.

Section One: Definition of Bullying

The concept of bullying raises a jurisprudential issue regarding the necessity of the repetition element to consider a behaviour as bullying. While some traditional definitions stipulated the repetition of aggressive acts for bullying to occur, many modern definitions have tended not to consider repetition an essential condition. This is based on the rationale that some incidents may be of such gravity and seriousness that they cause deep psychological and social effects on the victim, even if they occurred only once.

This idea is manifested more clearly in the field of electronic bullying. The abusive act may be issued once, but its effects are constantly renewed as a result of its circulation, republication, and sharing across different digital platforms, which leads to the continuation and exacerbation of the

harm. Therefore, the harm caused by a single incident of electronic bullying may equal, and sometimes even exceed, the damage resulting from the repetition of traditional bullying acts.

First - The Linguistic and Terminological Definition of Bullying:

From a linguistic standpoint, the English term "bullying" originates from the 16th-century Middle Dutch word *boele*, initially meaning "lover" or "darling," before shifting dramatically over centuries to denote a swaggering blusterer and, ultimately, a cruel oppressor. In modern linguistics, the term defines a specific type of aggressive behaviour characterised by a deliberate intent to harm, an inherent imbalance of power, and repetition over time.

It has also been defined as an intentional aggressive behaviour carried out by a person or a group of people against a person who is unable to defend themselves. Bullying involves the use of different forms of violence and physical and psychological abuse on the victim repeatedly and several times. Bullying is also characterised by an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, leading to physical, psychological, social, or educational harm or distress for the victims (Al-Munifi, 2020).

Researchers such as Wook, Woods, Stanford, and Sigels confirmed that bullying is the repeated exposure of an individual to negative behaviour from one or more people, where this behaviour is intentional and causes pain to the victim in a physical, verbal, emotional, or psychological way. It differs from accidental or aggressive behaviour, which are not considered bullying. For the behaviour to be bullying, it must be real and there must be an imbalance of power between the bully and the bullied (Al-Subhiyeen & Al-Qudah, 2013).

Second - The Legal Definition:

Regarding the legal definition of bullying against a child, international law did not provide an explicit definition of bullying itself, but rather gave definition with its effects, like harm and abuse. Article Two of the Model Law on Child Protection issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child stipulated that: "The term 'harm' means any intentional and deliberate act or transgression issued by parents, guardian, caregiver, or any other person in a position of trust or responsibility that would cause or is likely to cause physical, mental, or psychological harm to the child" (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

The term 'abuse' means "any intentional and deliberate act resulting in physical, mental, or psychological harm to the child, or any failure on the part of the parents, guardian, or caregiver to protect the child from such harm, and in general all forms of violent, aggressive, cruel, humiliating, or degrading treatment of the child."

Article Three of the same law adds by mentioning the effects of the crime of bullying: "This law aims to protect children from all acts or transgressions that consist of neglect, harm, abuse, or exploitation, such as:

- a- Harming the child's life, health, and physical safety, including the use or threat of use of any form of violence or aggression.
- b- Harming the child's mental or psychological safety, including threatening, terrorising, intimidating, or humiliating the child."

We find that international Organisations, through their work and sessions, have paid attention to bullying against children. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defined bullying, including cyberbullying against children, as: "That unwanted aggressive behaviour, by a child or a group of

children, who are not the victim's siblings and do not have a friendly relationship with them, and this includes repeated physical or psychological and social harm, and often occurs in schools and other places where children gather, and online" (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2017).

As for the Algerian legislator, there was no focus on defining bullying, but rather on defining moral danger. Article Two of the aforementioned Law No. 15-12 stipulated that a child in danger is: "The child whose health, morals, upbringing, or security is in danger or prone to it, or whose living conditions or behaviour would expose him to potential or harmful danger to his future, or who is in an environment that exposes his physical, psychological, or educational safety to danger.

Among the cases that expose the child to danger are:

- ... abusing the child, especially by exposing him to torture, attacking his physical safety, detaining him, denying him food, or committing any act involving cruelty that would affect the child's emotional or psychological balance..."

As for the Egyptian legislator, there was a proactive view of bullying as a crime punishable by law, unlike what is stated in the Algerian Penal Code. Article 309 bis B of the Egyptian Penal Code, according to the latest legal amendment in 2020, defined it as: "Bullying is every saying or display of power or control by the perpetrator or exploitation of the victim's weakness or a state that the perpetrator believes offends the victim, such as gender, race, religion, physical descriptions, health or mental state, or social level, with the intent of intimidating him, ridiculing him, degrading him, or excluding him from his social environment."

The French legislator also addressed the crime of bullying through the concept of "moral harassment" stipulated in the French Penal Code, where it was subjected to a legal regulation comprising two basic forms. The first relates to acts committed within the work environment, and the second includes acts that fall within marital relations or within the scope of certain civil relations of a solidarity nature. Article 222-33-2 states that moral harassment is the repetition of acts or words aimed at harassing others or resulting in the deterioration of their working or living conditions, which would compromise their rights or dignity, or harm their physical or mental health, or jeopardise their professional future. Criticisms have been directed at this definition by some jurists due to its broad scope and flexibility, which may raise difficulties in accurately determining its legal boundaries. However, it can be concluded from the provisions of French legislation that the essential element for the occurrence of moral harassment is the repetition of the harmful behaviour, regardless of the means used to commit it, whether done through traditional direct methods or through electronic and digital media. This allows for the inclusion of many forms of digital bullying within the scope of criminalisation whenever its legal elements are met (Taleb & Mebarki, 2023).

It is noticeable from the previous presentation of legal interest in defining bullying that there is no explicit provision for this specific phenomenon in international law. The reason is quite clear: international rules leave the definition of specifics to the various committees affiliated with international Organisations specialised in various topics. As for Algerian legislation, there is a clear legislative void and lack of focus on the phenomenon of social bullying, which has become one of the most dangerous situations faced by children in social environments in general, and educational, electronic, and family environments in particular. This is unlike the Egyptian legislator who rushed to address this phenomenon, and even went further to consider it a legally punishable crime.

Field studies conducted by most psychologists and sociologists have proven that the problem of bullying has become a common issue. Statistics indicate that more than 50% of children will either be victims of bullying or will cause distress to another child. Bullying is a phenomenon directed from one child to another of their age or slightly younger, and in this case, the danger becomes greater. The outcomes for both the victimised and bullying children have a profound impact, as victims suffer from social isolation, rejection, persecution, harassment, feelings of insignificance, as well as low academic performance, and other dire consequences that may reach the point of suicide by the victimised child (Al-Abbadi, 2020).

Section Two: Types of Bullying Behaviour

Researchers believe that bullying is not just a behaviour but an aggressive relationship that includes practices aimed at controlling the other and limiting their freedom to act, through continuous threats of harming them. Bullying usually leads to creating a sense of helplessness in the victim, humiliating them, and compromising their dignity. Bullying includes behaviours such as physical violence, terrorising others, abusive phone conversations, name-calling, etc. It also includes teachers' bullying of students, such as using insulting language and humiliating or terrorising weaker students (Boushaib et al., n.d.). Thus, bullying takes the following forms (Al-Subhiyeen & Al-Qudah, 2013):

1. **Physical bullying:** such as hitting, slapping, pinching, kicking, knocking down, dragging, or forcing the victim to do anything.
2. **Verbal bullying:** cursing, insulting, swearing, provoking, threatening, reprimanding, spreading false rumours, name-calling, or using ethnic slurs.
3. **Sexual bullying:** using sexual names, dirty words, inappropriate touching, or threatening sexual acts.
4. **Emotional or psychological bullying:** harassment, intimidation, threat, humiliation, and group rejection.
5. **Social bullying:** preventing individuals from engaging in certain activities by excluding them, refusing their friendship, or spreading rumours about them.
6. **Property bullying:** taking others' belongings and disposing of them, failing to return them, or destroying them.

It is important to note that these forms may be interconnected. Verbal bullying may be linked to physical bullying, or physical to social bullying, and so forth.

Axis Two: Legal Criminalisation of Digital Bullying Against Children in International and National Legislations

The increasing spread of modern communication tools and digital technologies has produced new patterns of criminal behaviour, most notably digital bullying, which has become a real threat to children given their vulnerability and the ease of targeting them through cyberspace. The serious psychological, social, and educational damages left by this behaviour have led to growing national and international interests in the necessity of confronting it by establishing effective legal mechanisms that guarantee the protection of children from various forms of digital abuse.

In this context, international Organisations have sought to lay down legal rules and principles that ensure the protection of children in the digital environment. Many national legislations have also tended to criminalise acts constituting digital bullying, whether through specific texts or by relying

on crimes related to harassment, threats, defamation, and violation of privacy through electronic media. Accordingly, it is necessary to study the legal basis for criminalising digital bullying against children by identifying the positions adopted by international rules and various national legislations in order to provide effective legal protection for this demographic.

Section One: Criminalising the Phenomenon of Digital Bullying Against Children in International Law

The rules of international law concerned with human rights, especially those relating to children, have paid attention to the issue of the international protection of the child from all kinds of violence, especially moral violence, given that bullying is an extension of non-physical violence directed at the child. In this section, we will discuss the legal provisions included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect children from digital bullying, followed by the strategies and measures taken to achieve this.

First - Legal Provisions to Protect Children from Electronic Bullying within the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Two Additional Protocols (2008):

The Convention on the Rights of the Child issued by the United Nations included many rights that guarantee the protection of the child from digital bullying, which are:

1. Non-discrimination between children:

The convention affirmed the principle of equality and non-discrimination, obligating States Parties to ensure that all children enjoy the rights and freedoms set forth in the convention without any discrimination based on sex, colour, language, religion, origin, social status, or any other reason. It also required taking the necessary measures to protect children from all forms of discrimination or punishment to which they may be exposed because of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members (UN General Assembly, 1989).

2. Devoting the principle of the best interests of the child:

Article 3 devoted the principle of the best interests of the child as the primary consideration in all decisions and procedures concerning them, whether issued by judicial or administrative bodies or care and protection institutions. It also obligated States Parties to provide the necessary protection and care to ensure the child's well-being by taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures, while ensuring the commitment of the institutions in charge of their care to approved legal standards related to safety, health, worker competence, and effective supervision.

3. The right to expression:

The Convention recognised the right of the child who is capable of forming their own views to express them freely in all matters affecting them, taking into account their age and degree of maturity. It also guaranteed their right to be heard in various judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them, either directly or through a representative or competent body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law (UN General Assembly, 1989). It also guaranteed their right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion according to Article 14 of the Convention.

4. Protection against arbitrary interference:

Article 16 stipulated that no child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on their honour and reputation. The child also has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

5. Protecting the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse:

States Parties pledge to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral, and multilateral measures to prevent the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, and the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials (UN General Assembly, 1989).

Second - Strategies and Measures Approved by the Convention and Optional Protocols to Protect the Child from Bullying:

Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulated that: "States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child" (UN General Assembly, 1989).

The World Health Organisation, through the *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children* package, considered that violence embodies the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (WHO, 2017).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, through its Model Law on Child Protection, established that one of the basic principles of international human rights law for children is the necessity of protecting the child based on the right that guarantees survival and development, meaning the physical, mental, psychological, and social development of the child and their well-being must be protected to the maximum extent possible (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

To ensure that countries implement rules protecting children from all forms of bullying and moral violence, the Committee on the Rights of the Child also sought to establish a child protection agency with legal personality. This agency coordinates the activities carried out by child protection committees and the work of all child protection service providers, monitoring, encouraging, and supervising them. The composition, Organisation, and mandate of the child protection agency must be determined.

The agency primarily undertakes the following tasks:

- a- Coordinate and implement all child protection policies by competent agencies, Organisations, and institutions.
- b- Propose to legislative and executive bodies and participate in deliberations drafting legislative laws related to child protection.
- c- Prepare and activate child protection programs at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels by providing necessary financial resources, allocating them within the child protection committees, and providing advice on priorities in implementing this program.
- d- Ensure that all members of the child protection agency and child protection committees possess the necessary expertise to accomplish their tasks and receive continuous education on the latest developments in the field.

e- Inform the public of the agency's activities and the cases in which children are exposed to neglect, harm, abuse, and exploitation in order to advance the realisation of the rights and welfare of children in the country.

The child protection agency is also responsible for supervising the child protection committees and monitoring their activities, that is by periodically evaluating the submitted reports. It also sends periodic reports of all its activities to the competent authorities. These reports address cases where children are at risk of neglect, harm, maltreatment, or exploitation, the root causes, and the necessary responses under the law and general child protection policies (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

As for the regional supervision exercised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to ensure that children are not subjected to moral violence, especially bullying, it relies on the establishment of regional child protection committees. These must establish an operating system for child protection measures to implement and coordinate all activities, including but not limited to:

a- Establishing a formal response system to receive and coordinate reported cases of child neglect, harm, abuse, or exploitation, by dedicating a helpline and/or a website to advise and assist actual or potential victims, and to direct investigation and intervention procedures.

b- Managing programs to support and assist parents, family members, or guardians who are unqualified, unwilling, or who need assistance to protect children from abuse or to provide appropriate care.

c- Managing a safe accommodation system for actual or potential child victims and an alternative care system.

d- Operating centres for medical and psychological assistance for victims.

e- Coordinating with free legal assistance system available for children.

f- Establishing programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013).

Therefore, international child protection from the risks of social bullying is embodied in the oversight framework carried out by international Organisations over countries to ensure their implementation of human rights rules. This oversight takes place through committees distributed worldwide, which collect statistics and track rates of children's exposure to bullying. However, a major flaw in the work of these committees is their reliance on the reporting system of bullying cases. In practical reality, most cases of bullying against children and the moral violence they experience are not reported, which may undermine the tasks of these committees and cause inaccuracy in their results.

Section Two: Criminalising Digital Bullying in National Legislations

The Algerian Penal Code did not explicitly stipulate the crime of bullying a child, even though it is considered one of the most dangerous behaviours that can negatively affect a child's psychological and social upbringing. However, the Penal Code did include a set of offenses that share elements with the crime of bullying, such as insult. Article 297 regarding this crime stated that an insult is any shameful expression or phrase containing contempt or defamation that does not involve the attribution of any specific fact (Algerian Penal Code, 1966). It is notable that bullying also includes aspects of contempt and defamation. Article 298 bis also stipulated that: "An insult directed at a person because of their belonging to an ethnic or sectarian group or to a specific religion shall be

punished by imprisonment from 5 days to six months and a fine from 5,000 to 50,000 DZD, or by one of these two penalties only." In the same context, Article 299 stipulated that: "An insult directed at an individual or several individuals shall be punished by imprisonment from one month to three (03) months and a fine from 10,000 DZD to 25,000 DZD, and the victim's pardon puts an end to the penal prosecution."

In contrast, Article 06 of the aforementioned Algerian Law No. 15-12 stipulated that: "The state guarantees the right of the child to protection from all forms of harm, neglect, violence, maltreatment, exploitation, or physical, moral, or sexual abuse, and for this purpose takes all appropriate measures to prevent it, provide the necessary conditions for his growth and care, preserve his life, and raise him in a sound and safe upbringing in a healthy and suitable environment, and protect his rights in cases of emergencies, disasters, wars, and armed conflicts. The state ensures that the information directed to the child through various means does not harm his physical and intellectual balance."

Although the Algerian legislation did not specifically stipulate the phenomenon of bullying to which the child is exposed, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications issued a guide on child online protection, which highlighted that among the most prominent electronic risks to teenagers are cyber harassment and bullying based on ridicule, defamation, isolation, insults, rumours, and threats through comments, messages, pictures, and videos (Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, 2020).

However, it is highly noticeable that the Egyptian legislator paid special attention to human rights in terms of familiarising the legal code with contemporary crimes that disrupt the personal and social security of individuals, especially children. The legislator explicitly criminalised bullying through Article 309 bis B, which stipulated: "The bully shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than six months and a fine of not less than ten thousand pounds and not more than thirty thousand pounds, or by one of these two penalties."

The penalty would be imprisonment for a period of not less than a year and a fine of not less than twenty thousand pounds and not more than one hundred thousand pounds, and by one of these two penalties, if the crime was committed by two or more people, or if the perpetrator was one of the victim's ancestors, those in charge of raising or observing him, those who have authority over him, or he was handed over to him according to the law and by a judicial ruling, or he was a servant of the perpetrator. If the two circumstances combine, the minimum penalty shall be doubled" (Law No. 189, 2020).

Section Three: Evaluating the Effectiveness of National and International Legislations in Protecting Children from Digital Bullying

The issue of the effectiveness of national and international legislations in protecting children from digital bullying raises a fundamental problem, that is the extent to which existing legal rules are able to keep pace with the transformations produced by the digital environment and the accompanying new forms of attacks on children's rights. At the international level, conventions, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child have contributed to establishing an integrated human rights system that guarantees the child protection from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Many subsequent international instruments have also reinforced the principle of providing a safe digital space that respects the child's dignity and privacy. However, these texts have mostly been general in nature, not addressing digital bullying as an independent phenomenon with technical and legal

specificity, meaning the prescribed protection relies on broad interpretations of texts related to violence, abuse, or attacks on private life.

At the national level, modern legislations have tended to expand the scope of criminal protection to include acts committed via information and communication technologies, specifically by criminalising acts of cursing, defamation, threats, harassment, and violation of personal data. These acts essentially constitute the most prominent forms of digital bullying. Despite the considerable legal protection provided by this trend, the effectiveness of these legislations remains debatable due to the gap between theoretical legal protection and actual applied protection. Digital bullying is characterised by complexities that make it far more difficult to combat than traditional bullying, including the speed at which abusive content spreads, the possibility of mass repetition, the difficulty of permanently erasing it from cyberspace, and the potential for it to be committed anonymously or across national borders.

Accordingly, evaluating the effectiveness of these legislations should not be limited to monitoring legal texts and prescribed penalties, but must extend to studying their ability to achieve actual deterrence, prevention, and protection. The existence of advanced legal texts does not achieve the desired goal if not accompanied by effective mechanisms to detect violations, intervene quickly, and provide appropriate judicial and administrative remedies. Hence, it can be said that the effectiveness of the legal system in this field remains relative, heavily influenced by how well legislation keeps pace with technological development, the competence of implementing institutions, and the level of legal and digital awareness among various parties.

Mechanisms for Enhancing the Legal Protection of Children from Digital Bullying

The limited protection provided by traditional legal texts against digital bullying dictates the necessity of adopting a multidimensional approach based on the integration of legislative, institutional, technical, and educational mechanisms. Enhancing legal protection is not only about stiffening penalties or expanding the scope of criminalisation; it requires a makeover from reacting after harm occurs to proactive prevention and management of digital risks.

In this context, there is a pressing need to develop the legislative framework by introducing a precise legal definition of digital bullying that outlines its elements and various forms. This would unify the legal categorisation of acts and limit discrepancies in application. Specialised procedures appropriate for digital crimes should also be introduced, especially regarding the collection and preservation of electronic evidence, expediting the removal of harmful content, and ensuring the child's privacy during reporting, investigation, and trial stages.

Legal protection is incomplete without activating the preventive and educational dimension. Comparative experiences have shown that digital prevention is one of the most effective methods for reducing digital bullying. This is achieved by consolidating a culture of safe internet use, integrating digital education and digital rights within school curricula, and empowering children with the skills to deal with and report electronic risks. Families, civil society institutions, and digital service providers must also be involved in protection efforts by developing parental control tools, adopting stricter content monitoring policies, and creating easy and safe channels for reporting (Okasha, 2025). Thus, effective legal protection from the crime of bullying requires activating the following procedures:

1. Setting a minimum age allowed for creating accounts on social media platforms, while obligating platforms to strictly verify users' ages to reduce early age exposure.
2. Enacting special legislation on digital bullying that includes a precise definition, its forms, and appropriate penalties, rather than relying solely on general texts relating to insults or threats.
3. Obligating social media companies to rapidly remove abusive content upon reporting, while imposing sanctions on platforms that fail to comply.
4. Enhancing the protection of children's personal data and preventing its exploitation or publication without legal consent.
5. Establishing simplified legal mechanisms for reporting cases of digital bullying that allow the child or guardian to request urgent intervention.
6. Activating artificial intelligence systems to monitor abusive and bullying content directed at children.
7. Developing advanced parental control tools that allow parents to monitor their children's digital activity.
8. Providing easily accessible features to block bullies and report them with ease.
9. Adopting strict default privacy settings for all children's accounts.
10. Creating national electronic platforms dedicated to receiving complaints related to digital bullying against children.
11. Including digital education within school curricula to introduce children to their rights and duties in the digital environment.
12. Organising periodic awareness campaigns about the dangers of digital bullying and its psychological and legal impacts (Al-Bahnassawi & Ali, 2025).
13. Enhancing the family's role in the continuous guidance, control, and monitoring of children's internet use.
14. Providing psychological and social support to children who are victims of digital bullying.

Ultimately, enhancing the legal protection of the child from digital bullying requires adopting a comprehensive vision that treats legislation as just one part of an integrated system where legal, technical, educational, and institutional dimensions overlap to guarantee a safe digital environment that upholds the best interests of the child and respects their fundamental freedoms (Hejazy, 2004).

Conclusion

Digital bullying against children has become one of the most prominent challenges imposed by the digital revolution and the increasing expansion of social media and modern technologies. It carries serious psychological, social, and behavioural consequences that jeopardise the child's safety and dignity and hinder their healthy development. Various international instruments and national legislations have sought to establish legal frameworks to protect children from violence and exploitation online. However, the continuous evolution of electronic communication requires constant legislative and institutional modernisation.

Through studying the legal mechanisms for combating digital bullying against children under international law and some national legislations, the following key results were reached:

Results:

1. Digital bullying constitutes a direct violation of several fundamental rights of the child, mainly the right to dignity, privacy, and psychological safety.

2. International conventions, specifically the Convention on the Rights of the Child, provide a general legal framework for protecting children from various forms of violence and abuse, including acts committed via digital media.
3. National legislations differ in how they regulate digital bullying. Some nations have enacted specialised texts to confront it (such as Egyptian legislation), while others rely on applying general rules related to cybercrimes, defamation, libel, and threats (such as Algeria).
4. Algerian legislation still suffers from a lack of explicit, integrated legal provisions that directly address the phenomenon of digital bullying against children.
5. Combating digital bullying is not limited to legislative intervention alone; it requires cohesive integration between the family, schools, specialised institutions, and social media platforms.

Recommendations:

1. The Algerian legislator must introduce specialised legal provisions criminalising digital bullying against children, clearly defining its elements, forms, and corresponding penalties.
2. Enhance rapid electronic reporting mechanisms and ensure children and parents can easily access them.
3. Obligate social media platforms to develop robust tools to monitor abusive content towards children and remove it as swiftly as possible.
4. Establish more effective restrictions regarding the minimum age for using social media, coupled with strict age verification.
5. Work on awareness and educational programs within schools to spread a culture of safe internet use.
6. Strengthen international cooperation and information exchange between countries to tackle cross-border digital crimes targeting minors.
7. Provide dedicated psychological and legal support to victims of digital bullying, giving them effective mechanisms for redress and reintegration.

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3. Okasha, Azza Abdel Fattah Mohamed, *International Protection of Children from Internet Risks*, Journal of Jurisprudential and Legal Research, Issue 50, 2025.
4. Boushaib, Ali Ahmed, et al., *Bullying in Schools*, Educational Futures Journal, Fifth Issue, Fourth Volume, Arab Center for Educational Research, n.d.
5. Al-Subhiyeen, Ali Mousa, Al-Qudah, Mohammed Farhan, *Bullying Behaviour in Children and Adolescents*, Center for Studies and Research, Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, Saudi Arabia, 2013.