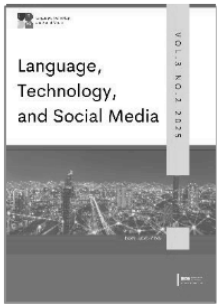

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ISSN: 3026-7196

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To cite this article. P. Motshware, E. Francke, and B. Makwambeni, "The Price of Fame on X: A Systematic Review of Social and Cultural Consequences of Cyberbullying of Celebrities on X," *Lang. Technol. Soc. Media*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 266–287, 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.v3i2.226

OPEN ACCESS

Language, Technology, and Social Media Vol 3 No 2 (2025) https://doi.org/10.70211/ltsm.v3i2.226

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Research Article

The Price of Fame on X: A Systematic Review of Social and Cultural Consequences of Cyberbullying of Celebrities on X

Portia Motshware*, Errol Francke and Blessing Makwambeni

Received: 17 May 2025	Revised: 14 July 2025	Accepted: 8 August 2025	Online: 9 August 2025

Abstract

This systematic review examines the socio-cultural consequences of cyberbullying targeting celebrities on X, addressing a gap in current research. The increasing prevalence of cyberbullying in the digital era, especially on social media platforms like X, has significant implications for public figures. The review synthesizes findings from 23 peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025, following the PRISMA framework and employing thematic analysis using Atlas.ti. The research identifies the psychological, personal, and professional impacts of cyberbullying on celebrities, particularly focusing on how the platform's design, including features such as anonymity and rapid information dissemination, exacerbates harmful behaviors. The findings highlight the critical role that X's structure plays in amplifying cyberbullying, with negative consequences such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation for victims. Additionally, the review reveals how celebrities' public personas and constant exposure to online criticism significantly affect their mental health and professional lives. The study also discusses the broader socio-cultural implications, including the normalization of hostility and the public's complex responses to celebrities' victimization. Based on these insights, the review recommends stricter platform regulations and increased support for affected individuals, including the involvement of celebrity managers and healthcare professionals. This research contributes to the understanding of cyberbullying's socio-cultural dynamics on X, offering new perspectives on how digital abuse affects public figures and emphasizing the need for safer online spaces.

Keywords: Cyberbullying; Celebrity Culture; Digital Abuse; Social Media; X; Mental Health; Socio-Cultural Impact.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media platforms, particularly X, have become central to shaping celebrity culture and influencing public perceptions in both positive and negative ways [1]. As noted by Dwivedi et al. [2], these platforms offer celebrities unprecedented opportunities to manage their public image and engage directly with their audience. However, this direct interaction also exposes celebrities to heightened risks, including online abuse such as cyberbullying [3]. Social media's ability to facilitate rapid information sharing enables swift formation of public opinions, which can sometimes create hostile environments, escalating into cyberbullying [1]. On X, such behaviors often manifest as targeted harassment, the spread of malicious rumors, or the sharing of harmful and offensive content [1]. While X allows for personal interaction and image management, it simultaneously fosters an environment conducive to cyberbullying [4], [5]. Cyberbullying, defined as the use of electronic communication to intimidate, threaten, and humiliate individuals, has become a pervasive issue in the digital era [6]. Although significant research has explored cyberbullying across various contexts, there is a notable gap in studies examining its socio-cultural impact on celebrities, particularly on platforms like X [7]. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the socio-cultural consequences of cyberbullying targeting celebrities on X.

Historically, conventional media operated within controlled public relations frameworks that offered celebrities some level of protection from negative scrutiny [8], [9]. However, the emergence of social media platforms like X has fundamentally transformed the way celebrities interact with the public [5]. These platforms have increased celebrities' visibility and accessibility but also exposed them to greater risks of digital abuse and cyberbullying [8]. The design of X, particularly its anonymity features, plays a crucial role in amplifying the prevalence of cyberbullying aimed at celebrities [1]. As emphasized by Takano et al. [3], this anonymity, coupled with the platform's design, contributes significantly to the spread of harmful content, hate speech, trolling, and online aggression [9]. As a result, negative narratives are amplified, creating a toxic online environment that severely impacts the mental and emotional well-being of celebrities [8].

Furthermore, the platform's culture of retweeting and commenting further empowers cyberbullies. These features allow individuals to engage in harmful behaviors with minimal accountability, exacerbating the consequences of digital hostility [3]. Studies have shown that persistent exposure to cyberbullying can lead to severe psychological consequences, including increased anxiety, depression, and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation [9]. The heightened visibility of celebrities makes them more vulnerable to the harmful effects of cyberbullying, exposing them to public humiliation and reputational damage, as noted by Scott et al. [10]. Importantly, the consequences of cyberbullying extend beyond personal harm and often result in significant professional implications for the affected celebrities [11], [12], [13], [14] . While much of the existing research has focused on the mental and emotional health consequences of cyberbullying for individuals [15], [16], [17], [18], studies specifically examining its effects on celebrities engaging with social media platforms like X remain limited. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural impacts of cyberbullying targeting celebrities. It specifically explores how the anonymity, rapid spread of information, and platform design of X contribute to the intensity of cyberbullying and shape both the public and private lives of the individuals targeted.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the following research question: What are the social and cultural impacts of cyberbullying on celebrities on X? The findings from this study are expected to offer valuable insights into the broader societal implications of cyberbullying, contribute to the existing body of knowledge on digital abuse, and inform potential strategies for mitigating its effects on public figures.

METHODS

Research Design

This systematic review synthesizes the existing literature on the socio-cultural impact of cyberbullying targeted at celebrities on X. In adherence to PRISMA guidelines, the review systematically identifies, selects, evaluates, and integrates relevant studies [19]. Comprehensive searches were conducted across key databases using predefined keywords and Boolean operators [20]. The search focused on empirical studies that investigate celebrity experiences with cyberbullying on X, encompassing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Studies published between 2020 and 2025 were included, with sources spanning diverse regions, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Malaysia, and China, among others. A standardized data extraction form was employed to capture essential variables and key findings, while Atlas.ti was utilized for coding and thematic analysis [21]. Mendeley was used for citation management [22], [23]. The overall analysis was conducted in compliance with IEEE guidelines for reporting, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency. To assess the quality of the studies and evaluate potential bias, the review employed a standardized checklist based on the criteria outlined by Kitchenham et al. [21]. Additionally, the development of the research question and search strategy was guided by the PICo framework, which emphasizes Population, Intervention, and Context. This framework ensured that the investigation remained conceptually aligned and methodologically focused throughout the review process [24], [25].

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to explore and critically evaluate the socio-cultural consequences of cyberbullying directed at celebrities on the social media platform X. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how cyberbullying on X affects the mental, emotional, and professional well-being of celebrities, and how the platform's features such as anonymity and the rapid spread of information contribute to the prevalence and intensity of such abuse. By examining these dynamics, the study aims to offer a deeper understanding of the broader societal and cultural implications of cyberbullying, within the context of digital media, and to assess its impact on public figures.

Research Framework

The PICo framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Context) was employed to refine and focus the research question, as suggested by Luijendijk [23]. This framework helped clarify the study's key components and ensured methodological alignment throughout the investigation. See Table 1 below for an overview of how the PICo framework was applied in this study.

Table 1. PICo Framework – Research Question Formulation [26].

PICo Element	Description
Population / Problem	Celebrities who frequently attract media attention and actively engage on Platform X, making them vulnerable to cyberbullying behaviors.
Interest / Phenomenon	Cyberbullying, specifically targeting celebrities on Platform X.
Context	Platform X provides a highly visible environment for public figures, facilitating networked interaction and audience participation, which increases their vulnerability to online abuse.
Research Question	What are the socio-cultural consequences of cyberbullying for celebrities on the social media platform X?

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for this systematic review were established a priori to ensure the study specifically addresses the research question, focusing on the experiences of celebrities with cyberbullying on X and examining the resulting socio-cultural impacts, as outlined in the PICo framework [27]. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed below in Table 2.

Table 2. Eligibility Criteria for the Systematic Review.

Criteria		Description
Inclusion Criteria	Target Population	Studies must focus on celebrities who are victims of cyberbullying on social media platforms, particularly X.
	Research Design	Only empirical studies reporting on outcomes related to changes in online behavior, effects on celebrity image, or shifts in public discourse will be included.
	Publication Date	Studies published between 2020 and 2025 are eligible for inclusion.
	Source of Studies	Only peer-reviewed articles or scholarly publications indexed in databases such as Web of Science and ProQuest are considered.
	Language	Only studies published in English will be included.
Exclusion Criteria	Non-Celebrity Focus	Studies that do not focus on celebrities as the primary subject will be excluded.
	Non-Cyberbullying Studies	Studies that do not specifically address cyberbullying or digital aggression will be excluded.
	Platform Relevance	Studies that do not examine the social media platform X will be excluded.

Search Strategy and Data Sources

A comprehensive search strategy was employed to identify relevant literature on cyberbullying targeting celebrities on Platform X [28]. The search involved an extensive review of several well-established electronic databases, including Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, ProQuest, ResearchGate, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Web of Science [29]. The focus of the review was on peer-reviewed journal articles and other scholarly publications, systematically sourced through

these databases. Boolean operators, including "AND" and "OR," were utilized to combine and refine keywords, ensuring a more precise identification of relevant studies. The selected search terms, outlined in Table 3, were carefully chosen to encompass a broad range of related concepts, thereby ensuring a comprehensive review of the literature.

Table 3. Search Strategy and Keywords.

Keywords	Boolean Operators
Cyberbullying	"Cyberbullying", "online harassment", "digital abuse", "online aggression", "trolling", "cyber victimisation"
Celebrities	"Celebrities", "public figures", "influencers", "famous people", "notable personalities", "high-profile individuals"
Platform X	"Twitter", "X", "social media", "online platforms", "microblogging sites", "social networking sites"
Impact	"Psychological effects", "mental health", "professional impact", "career consequences", "social impact", "well-being", "reputation damage"

Study Selection and Data Selection Process

The review employed a thorough and iterative process for study selection and data extraction to ensure the integration of relevant, high-quality evidence in line with established systematic review guidelines [28]. Duplicate records were removed prior to conducting an initial screening of identified studies based on their titles and abstracts. The primary focus was on excluding studies that did not align with the research question, while strictly adhering to the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria [27]. Subsequently, the retrieved studies were evaluated against a set of predetermined criteria, which included an examination of study design, participant characteristics, interventions and exposures, and outcome measures. This step ensured that only eligible studies were included, thereby maintaining the review's focus [30]. A standardized data extraction form was used to capture essential research information from the selected studies, focusing on study design, the operationalization of cyberbullying, and reported outcomes [30], [31].

Quality and Risk of Bias Assessment in Individual Studies

This section outlines the evaluation of quality and risk of bias conducted in the systematic review.

Quality Assessment

The quality assessment for this review was conducted using a checklist adapted from the guidelines outlined by Kitchenham et al. [21]. A total of twenty-three studies were evaluated based on eight predefined criteria, which served as a framework for assessing the quality and rigor of the studies included in the review [32]. These criteria addressed key aspects of research design and methodology, ensuring that the studies were robust and relevant to the research questions posed. The specific criteria used to evaluate each study are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Quality Assessment Criteria.

Criterion	Description
Clear articulation of the aims and objectives	The study's aims and objectives should be explicitly stated.
Sufficient description of the context	The study context should be adequately described.

Criterion	Description
Clear and appropriate study design	The study design must be clearly explained and appropriate.
Clear and appropriate data collection procedure	The data collection methods must be described clearly.
Clear and appropriate data analysis procedure	The data analysis approach should be sufficiently detailed.
Clear reporting of findings supported by the data	Findings must be clearly presented and backed by evidence.
Addressing threats to validity and limitations of the study	The study should discuss potential threats to validity.
Relevance to the research questions posed in this review	The study must align with the review's research questions.

To ensure a rigorous evaluation process, a three-point scale was employed for quality assessment, as outlined below. The scale categorized studies based on their level of compliance with the predefined criteria:

Table 5. Quality Assessment Scoring and Categorisation of Included Studies.

Score	Description
2	Full compliance
1	Partial compliance
0	Non-compliance

According to Smith and Scherman [31], a score of 2 indicates full compliance, a score of 1 represents partial compliance, and a score of 0 signifies non-compliance. The cumulative scores ranged from 0 to 16, with studies categorized as follows: those with scores between 13 and 16 were classified as high quality, those with scores between 9 and 12 as moderate quality, and those with scores between 0 and 8 as low quality [32].

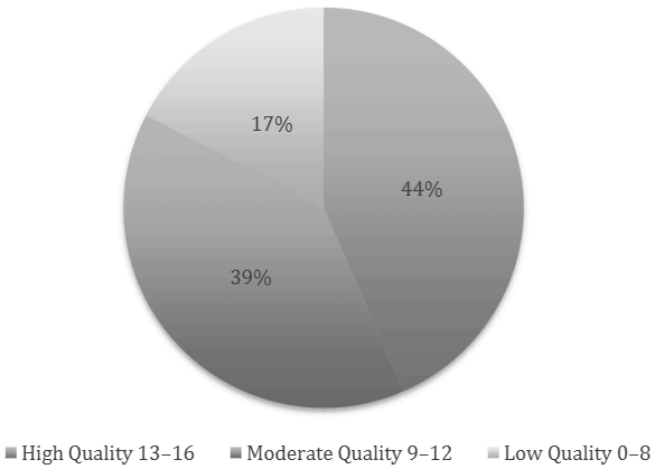

Figure 1. Distribution of Studies Across the Three Categories.

The studies were classified based on their cumulative scores. Most studies fell within the high to moderate quality range, which strengthens the evidence supporting the review's conclusions. By employing the quality screening process as recommended by Smith and Scherman [31], the results of this review are both credible and accurate.

Risk of Bias Assessment

This study acknowledges several potential biases that may have influenced the results. First, the inclusion criteria, which were limited to English-language articles, may have resulted in findings that are more reflective of academic settings where English is the dominant language. This limitation could have reduced the diversity of perspectives included in the review. Additionally, the search strategy, which employed keywords and Boolean operators to obtain systematic and repeatable results, may have unintentionally influenced the selection of studies. While this approach was efficient, it may have excluded relevant studies that did not precisely match the predefined search terms. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively on social media platform X, the review excluded studies related to other platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This exclusion may have affected the applicability of the findings to broader online environments. Finally, the review was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly publications, excluding grey literature such as conference proceedings, government reports, and industry white papers. This exclusion may have led to the omission of valuable real-world evidence, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the findings.

Data Analysis Methods

This study employed a systematic method for analyzing data from the selected articles. The researchers used thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes from the data [33]. Qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti, was utilized to facilitate the coding process [34]. The first step in the analysis involved importing the relevant articles into Atlas.ti and categorizing them into groups. Next, a coding process was conducted, guided by the study's research question. The coded data were then analyzed to identify prevalent themes related to the social and cultural implications of cyberbullying targeting celebrities on X. As the coding process progressed, it was refined to accommodate emerging themes. Ultimately, five key themes were identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The 23 studies included in this analysis yielded several key findings. The studies systematically coded the results to identify core concepts and recurring patterns. One consistent theme across the studies is that celebrities who experience cyberbullying often suffer from significant mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem [35], [36]. In the most severe cases, cyberbullying has even been linked to reports of suicide [37], [38]. The studies also indicate that cyberbullying can lead to increased social isolation for celebrities [39]. Negative online interactions often cause them to withdraw from social networks and public engagements, which in turn impacts both their personal and professional relationships [40].

Another significant finding is the divided nature of public opinion regarding celebrities victimized by cyberbullying [41]. While some fans actively support these celebrities, others contribute to the bullying by blaming or mocking them, leading to a complex and often

contradictory societal response [42], [43]. In addition to the mental health challenges faced by celebrities, the studies highlighted the professional consequences of cyberbullying. Prolonged harassment can result in the loss of career opportunities, such as the cancellation of contracts, withdrawal of sponsorship deals, and negative impacts on career longevity and income [44].

Some studies also highlighted a more positive outcome: certain celebrities who have experienced cyberbullying have shown resilience by offering support to others facing similar struggles [16]. Furthermore, the studies revealed that platform features, such as the ability to create anonymous accounts, allow users to express aggressive opinions without revealing their identities, thus encouraging negative behavior [45]. Additionally, the retweet function on platforms like X facilitates the rapid spread of bullying and harmful content, significantly amplifying the impact of cyberbullying on its victims [9], [46], [47].

Study Selection

A thorough database search was conducted as part of the study's selection process, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines outlined in Figure 2 below [19]. Duplicate records were carefully removed, and titles and abstracts were screened against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. After this rigorous selection process, the selected articles were imported into Atlas.ti for qualitative analysis [34]. The steps leading to the final selection of 23 studies were meticulously recorded, and a PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the reasons for excluding studies at each stage [29]. This study employed a thematic systematic review approach, prioritizing quality and depth over quantity [35]. This approach provided a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of cyberbullying [36]. Figure 2 presents the PRISMA flowchart, summarizing the systematic literature review process and outlining the stages of study selection and evaluation [37].

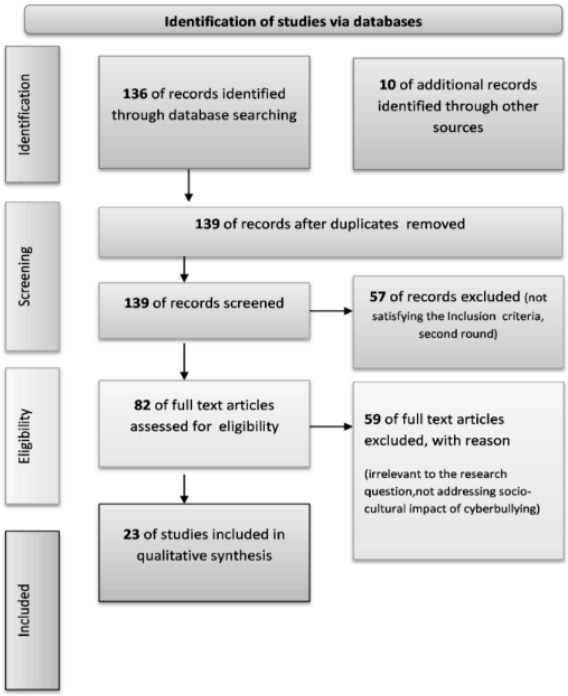

Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram Summary [19].

This literature review followed the PRISMA 2020 four-phase framework: Identification (planning and searching), Screening (selecting), Eligibility (appraising), and Included (analyzing and writing) for study selection [37]. During the Identification phase, 136 records were identified through database searches, with an additional 10 records sourced from other platforms, resulting in an initial total of 146 records [20]. After removing duplicates, 139 records were retained. In the Screening phase, all 139 records were assessed based on their titles and abstracts [28]. Subsequently, 57 records were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 82 articles for further evaluation. During the Eligibility phase, the remaining 82 articles were reviewed for relevance and methodological soundness [28]. Following a thorough assessment, 59 articles were excluded based on the exclusion criteria. In the final Included phase, 23 studies that met all inclusion criteria were selected for qualitative synthesis.

Study Range and Characteristics

The studies selected for this review employed a range of methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods [38]. This methodological diversity allowed for a comprehensive examination of the impact of cyberbullying on celebrities, enabling a deeper understanding of how this phenomenon affects them across various contexts. The inclusion of diverse study designs also enhanced the thematic synthesis, providing a well-rounded picture of how cyberbullying operates in different cultural and digital media environments.

Data Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

A systematic data extraction protocol was implemented to capture key details from the reviewed literature [39]. This protocol documented specific elements such as authorship, publication year, research objectives, study design, celebrity involvement, forms of cyberbullying, and the resulting impacts [40]. Using ATLAS.ti, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted, revealing five primary themes. This process provided a comprehensive understanding of how cyberbullying intersects with social and cultural issues [41]. The inductive approach allowed themes to emerge naturally from the data, aligning with the research question and the PICo framework described in the methodology section [24]. The iterative development of codes, organized into categories reflecting recurring patterns, further strengthened the analysis [42]. The main themes identified were: Celebrity Culture in the Age of Social Media, Impact of Digital Abuse, Digital Aggression on Celebrities, Platform X, and Socio-Cultural Implications of Celebrity Cyberbullying.

Celebrity Culture in the Age of Social Media

Celebrity culture has undergone significant changes, largely due to the influence of traditional media and evolving human connections. Its origins can be traced back to the early 20th century [36]. This culture encompasses various elements, including the creation and promotion of celebrities and their societal impact [4]. Celebrities play a substantial role in shaping public opinion and influencing consumer behavior [43]. Ali et al. [42] asserts that to fully comprehend celebrity culture, it is essential to examine how it has evolved, how celebrities acquire and maintain their status, and what society's obsession with fame means in the broader cultural context. Prior to the rise of social media, conventional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines played a crucial role in shaping celebrity culture [44]. Yuanhong [4] notes that these platforms functioned as gatekeepers, controlling the flow of information and shaping public perceptions of celebrities. The editorial

decisions made by media organizations and the public relations strategies of celebrities and their agents significantly influenced how these public figures were perceived [36]. According to Velasco [45], this process not only elevated celebrities as cultural icons but also reinforced a more hierarchical structure within celebrity culture.

The advent of social media, particularly platforms like X, has radically altered the public's perception of fame and popularity. Velasco [45] emphasizes that social media has redefined what it means to be famous by allowing celebrities to communicate directly with their audience, reducing the reliance on journalists and public relations professionals [46]. Social media platforms like X enable celebrities to connect with their followers on a more personal level, showcasing a more authentic side of themselves while maintaining control over their narrative [5]. This direct engagement creates a deeper sense of connection between fans and celebrities, a connection that traditional media could never facilitate [46].

However, as Yuanhong [4] points out, platforms like X have blurred the lines between celebrities' public and private lives, resulting in an intimate yet scrutinized relationship that is both admired and criticized. Velasco [45] further notes that social media platforms, especially X, have made cyberbullying more prevalent, as individuals can easily criticize, abuse, or even "cancel" celebrities in the open. Figure 3 below illustrates various codes from the thematic analysis that contributed to the development of this theme.

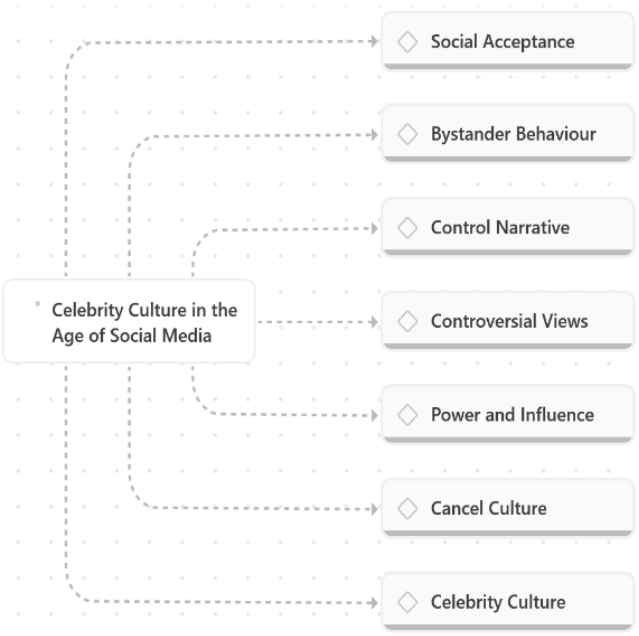

Figure 3. Network Map – Theme 1: Psychological Effects of Cyberbullying on Celebrities.

Impact of Digital Abuse on Celebrities

Bansal et al. [1] highlight that the digital abuse of celebrities is an increasingly concerning issue in today's digital age. As public figures, celebrities are constantly in the spotlight and are often subjected to online harassment, particularly due to their direct and instant communication with the public [10]. Forms of digital abuse such as cyberbullying, doxxing, trolling, and the unauthorized release of private information have become prevalent [47], [48], [49]. Hassan et al. [2] note that

these actions can result in severe emotional and psychological consequences for the individuals involved. According to Kulkarni et al. [47], celebrities frequently face online hate, which can lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and, in some cases, withdrawal from the public eye. Kulkarni et al. [47] further emphasize that this type of abuse not only harms a celebrity's mental health but can also damage their public image and the brand they have worked hard to cultivate. Allison et al. [46] suggest that individuals who experience online bullying are at a higher risk of suffering from severe depression compared to those who have not been victims of such abuse. They also argue that digital abuse extends beyond negative comments and includes behaviors that can profoundly affect a victim's psychological well-being. The anonymity afforded by platforms like X and the physical distance between the perpetrator and the victim tend to escalate these harmful behaviors, exacerbating the psychological toll on the victim and challenging their sense of identity. Figure 4 below illustrates various codes from the thematic analysis that contributed to the development of this theme.

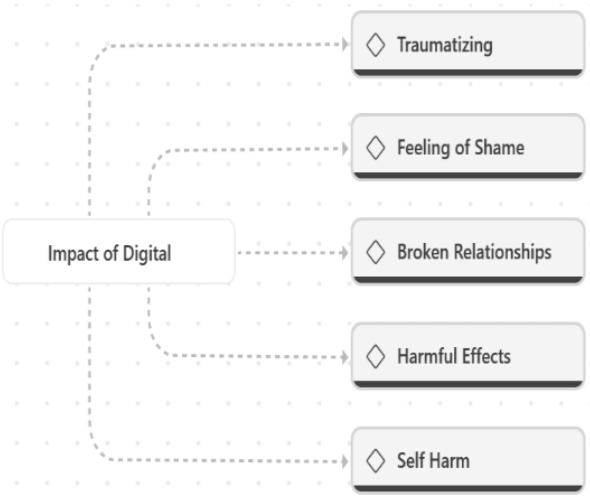

Figure 4. Network Map – Theme 2: Impact of Online Harassment on Public Perception.

Digital Aggression

Zhao et al. [50] defines digital aggression as hostile behavior expressed through electronic means, including social media platforms like X. Khan et al. [51] observe that digital aggression directed at celebrities on platforms such as X has become increasingly prevalent in recent years. Noakes and Noakes [50] note that this form of aggression manifests in various ways, including targeted insults, hate speech, and even coordinated harassment campaigns by cybermobs. Allison et al. [46] further affirm that negative commentary targeting celebrities has become a common phenomenon on social media platforms like X, with the public becoming more actively involved in perpetuating such behaviors. This public scrutiny and criticism can result in aggressive and harmful actions [52], [53].

Hassan et al. [2] emphasize that anonymity on X allows users to express negative views without facing direct consequences, thereby creating a toxic and hostile environment. Celebrities are often the target of this aggression due to their opinions, lifestyles, or public personas, which can lead to significant emotional distress. In severe cases, this digital aggression may even contribute to suicidal thoughts or actions [54].

Kulkarni et al. [47] highlight that digital aggression toward celebrities is a growing concern in contemporary society, particularly due to the pervasive influence of social media. While social media has its advantages, it also facilitates harmful behaviors that have wide-reaching consequences. A thematic analysis reveals the complexity of this issue, its profound impact on victims, and the various forms it takes. This aggression underscores the urgent need for stricter regulations to foster respectful online behavior and protect individuals from its detrimental effects [55], [56]. Figure 5 below illustrates various codes from the thematic analysis that contributed to the development of this theme.

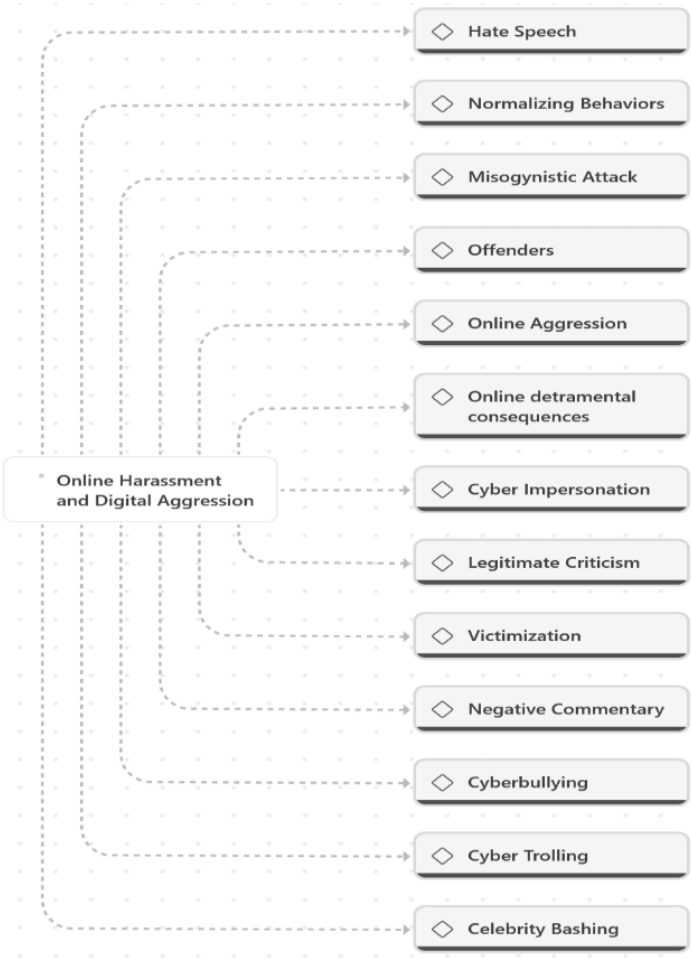

Figure 5. Network Map – Theme 3: Professional Consequences of Cyberbullying for Celebrities.

The affordances of X as a social media platform

According to Martínez-Monteagudo et al. [54], X is a social media platform that allows users to communicate, share opinions, news, and participate in online discussions through short posts of approximately 280 characters. Over the years, the platform has increasingly attracted public scrutiny, particularly from celebrities [17]. X's real-time functionality enables users to quickly respond to what celebrities do and say online. However, this prompt feedback mechanism also creates opportunities for negative comments, which users often make without considering the

consequences. This lack of accountability contributes to the creation of a hostile environment where online aggression thrives [48].

A significant factor that makes celebrities prime targets on X is the platform's ability to maintain user anonymity. Many users mask their identities by creating pseudonymous accounts, which can lead to reckless behavior, as they feel shielded from real-world consequences [11], [56]. This anonymity encourages users to engage in abuse, trolling, and posting offensive comments without fear of reprisal [57]. Studies indicate that social media platforms like X have become breeding grounds for harsh comments about celebrities, with an increasing number of users participating in such negative behaviors [58], [59].

Cano-Marin et al. [60] highlights another feature of X its viral nature which facilitates the rapid spread of tweets to millions of users. The drive for viral content often motivates users to post attention-grabbing critiques or praise of celebrities [54]. While this can result in the creation of engaging memes and trending hashtags that spark broader conversations, it also fosters sensationalism at the expense of meaningful discourse, leading to more superficial interactions. On the other hand, Bollmer and Tillerson [61] note that X also serves as a platform where fans and supporters can come together, despite some drawbacks. Fans often unite to defend their favorite celebrities from criticism or celebrate their achievements, while others may focus on spreading negativity [4]. This dynamic reflects the complex relationship between celebrities and their fans, as noted by Suprawan et al. [62]. Figure 6 below illustrates various codes from the thematic analysis that contributed to the development of this theme.

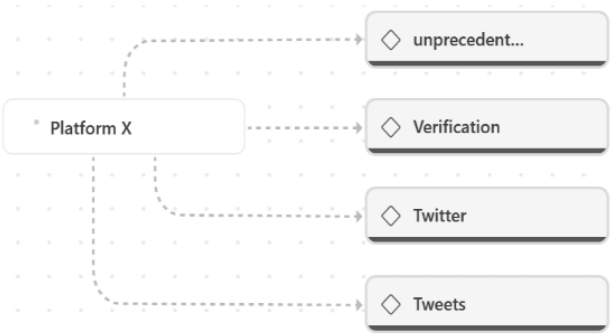

Figure 6. Network Map – Theme 4: Role of Anonymity in Amplifying Cyberbullying.

The Socio-Cultural Implications of Celebrity Cyberbullying

According to Allison et al. [46], the rise of celebrity cyberbullying on platforms like X brings a host of social and cultural issues to the forefront, shedding light on the ways in which people interact online and revealing underlying societal problems. Kulkarni et al. [47] observe that examining the phenomenon of cyberbullying closely reveals patterns that help in understanding its impact on individuals and communities. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the power dynamics that emerge when celebrities are targeted by online harassment [61].

Celebrities, as public figures, are constantly under scrutiny, making them frequent targets of criticism [46]. Fame can be a double-edged sword: while it grants celebrities the power to influence change, it also subjects them to relentless negativity that can significantly affect their mental health and self-esteem [62]. This dynamic illustrates how celebrity culture may alter public perception, reducing celebrities to mere sources of entertainment rather than recognizing them as real, complex

individuals [63]. Social media platforms like X play a critical role in amplifying cyberbullying, revealing how society at large perceives criticism and the extent to which people are invested in celebrity culture. The normalization of public criticism and shame suggests that many people derive a sense of enjoyment from drama and conflict [46]. Despite these challenges, many celebrities use their platforms to promote positive change and offer support to others facing similar struggles. Figure 7 below illustrates various codes from the thematic analysis that contributed to the development of this theme.

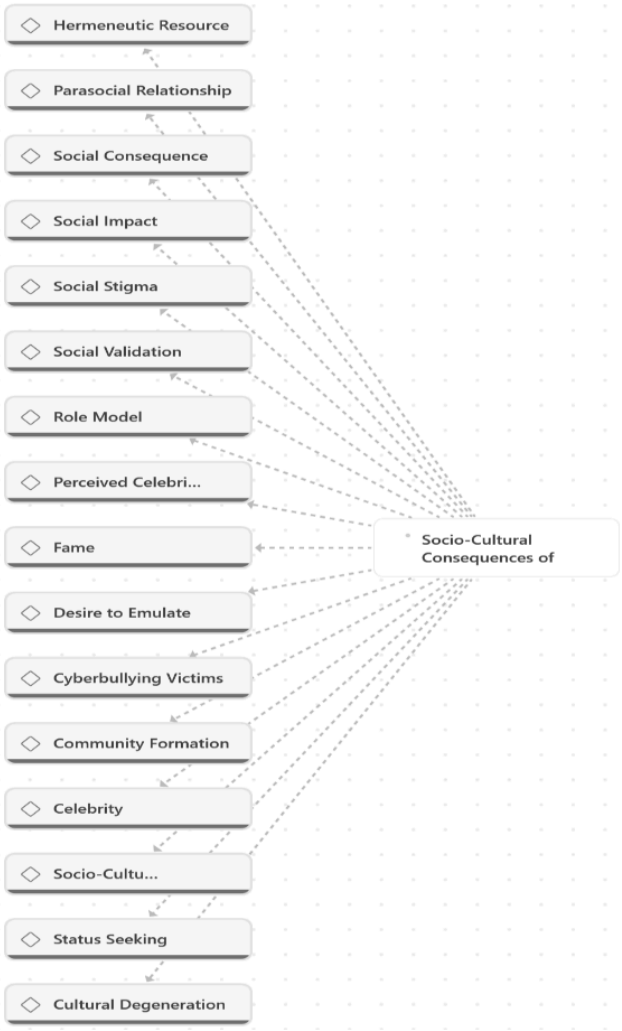

Figure 7. Network Map – Theme 5: Coping Strategies and Support Systems for Celebrities.

Discussion

The 23 studies included in the thematic analysis reveal some concerning insights regarding the sociocultural impact of cyberbullying on celebrities on X. These studies indicate that celebrities, like anyone else, can suffer from anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem when faced with cyberbullying [16], [61]. These facts show the need to raise awareness and build support structures for everyone who might be a victim of cyberbullying, not only celebrities [7]. The social impact of

cyberbullying goes far beyond mental health [14]. As the studies indicate, increased social isolation is the primary concern for celebrities affected by this issue [2]. For celebrities to withdraw from public life and social engagements affects their ability to maintain relationships and careers [64]. The mixed opinions and perspectives among fans reflect a societal tendency to both support and criticize [65], [66]. Although some fans show support for their idols by defending them against bullies, others focus on the cycle of hostility that often perpetuates [10]. The studies show that when these consequences affect celebrities, their sponsors withdraw sponsorship and terminate their contracts, and it can take years for them to regain employment or financial stability [7], [67], [68], [69]. These problems highlight the importance of protecting individuals from online harassment for professionals and legislators [62]. Although there are some negative impacts, some studies show hope for certain celebrities who demonstrate resilience despite these attacks and continue to show support for those facing similar situations, bringing some solidarity to the online community [62].

The studies revealed that the platform's technological affordances are determined by its structure and design [68]. The studies also indicated that the affordances brought about by the platform's design and structure affect how information flows [68]. These studies further suggest that X offers technological affordances for social engagement [70]. The platform's design encourages users to express aggressive views without being identified by allowing them to create anonymous accounts [10]. As the studies indicate, the platform's retweeting feature makes it easier for bullying and other types of content to spread quickly [71]. As a result, the ability to reach a broad audience increases the harm that cyberbullying causes to its victims. The studies noted that X has moderation policies, but they are frequently viewed as being slow to address abuse cases or inconsistently enforced. Sadly, this may give bullies the impression that they can avoid repercussions.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the significant socio-cultural consequences of cyberbullying targeting celebrities on X, revealing its detrimental effects on mental health, including anxiety, depression, and social isolation. The platform's anonymity and rapid dissemination of harmful content exacerbate these impacts, while public reactions to celebrity victimization remain polarized, with some offering support and others perpetuating hostility. This study calls for stricter platform regulations and a more integrated support system involving celebrity managers and healthcare professionals. It contributes to the understanding of the broader societal implications of digital abuse, urging future research to explore the long-term effects and cross-platform comparisons to better protect individuals from online harassment.

LIMITATIONS

This review is subject to several limitations. First, the inclusion of studies published solely between 2020 and 2025 may limit the generalizability of the findings to earlier periods, during which platform dynamics and user behaviors may have been different. Second, the review focused exclusively on cyberbullying on the social media platform X, which restricts comparisons with other platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok, where the nature and prevalence of cyberbullying may vary. Additionally, the exclusion of studies published in languages other than English may have reduced the diversity of perspectives considered. Lastly, the studies included in this review were predominantly cross-sectional, limiting the ability to draw conclusions regarding

long-term effects. Future research should seek to address these limitations by exploring the long-term socio-cultural impacts of cyberbullying across different platforms and languages.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

P.M. conducted the study, performed the systematic review, and analyzed the data independently. P.M. also wrote the manuscript and was responsible for all stages of the research process. E.F. and B.M. provided valuable guidance and critical feedback, which significantly contributed to refining the study and ensuring its rigor. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used several generative AI tools in the process. ChatGPT was used to help organise complex concepts, while Grammarly was employed to enhance the grammar, style, readability of the text and improve the overall clarity of the writing. Although these tools provided valuable support, the researcher wrote all the content and conclusions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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