



Research Article

The Qur'an's Perspective on the Phenomenon of Cyberbullying on Social Media: Contextual Approach

Isna Fitri Choirun Nisa¹, Abdul Fatah²

1. Prodi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Kudus, Indonesia;

isnafitri@student.iainkudus.ac.id 

2. Prodi Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Kudus, Indonesia;

abdulfatah@iainkudus.ac.id



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Abstract. This study examines the phenomenon of cyberbullying on social media through a contextual approach, focusing on the interpretation of relevant Qur'anic verses and their application to modern digital behavior. The research identifies that the majority of cyberbullying cases on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok take the form of verbal harassment, including flaming, impersonation, trickery, and denigration. The research method is library research, with primary data sourced from the Qur'anic term "*sakhara*" (humiliating or mocking). This term is further interpreted using both classical and contemporary exegeses. The paradigm used is contextual hermeneutic approach. The results of this study show that: 1) Cyberbullying on social media is found on Instagram, Facebook, X, and TikTok. The cyberbullying patterns in the majority of social media are verbal harassment with the aim of insulting and humiliating someone. 2) The term *sakhara* is the root word that is closest to the meaning of cyberbullying because it has insulting and degrading meanings. The the word *sakhara* is mentioned 32 times in the Qur'an. Three main verses are selected to be discussed: Q. S. al-Hujurat [49]:11, Q. S. at-Taubah [9]:79, and Q.S. al-An'am [6]:10. The verses reveal a clear prohibition against mocking and degrading others. These verses highlight the importance of

maintaining respect and dignity, even in the face of mockery, and the need for resilience and faith in the face of such challenges. The study concludes that insults and mockery should not be normalized, as they can lead to harmful consequences, including the emergence of cyberbullying, which has significant negative effects on individuals.

Keywords: cyberbullying, Contextual-Approach, sakhara. social media

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the development of information and communication technology has advanced significantly. One of the core tools of communication is the internet, which remains widely used by society. This shift has driven the transformation of communication technology from traditional methods to a more modern and fully digital approach. The growth of communication tools accelerated further with the advent of smartphones, which provide easy internet access. Communication facilities have also become increasingly diverse, including features like instant messaging, email, browsing, and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, and others. (Ahmad Rohman, Masduki Asbari, 2024) The emergence of social media has undoubtedly brought positive impacts to daily life. It enables users to share advice or news online, engage in discussions, or participate in various activities. Social media provides quick access to the latest news, serves as a communication platform to maintain connections with distant family members, acts as a resource for online learning and teaching, and facilitates networking opportunities for business and other purposes. (Yuhandra et al., 2021)

However, social media also has its negative aspects. These include addiction, which can hinder real-world social interactions, as well as cybercrimes such as hacking, cyberbullying, the spread of fake news (hoaxes), and hate speech. In today's era, social media has become a breeding ground for hate speech, where individuals insult or mock one another. As a result, bullying, which was once primarily physical, has shifted to being predominantly verbal on social media, commonly referred to as cyberbullying. (Fitriani, 2021) Cases of cyberbullying on social media have serious impacts on the emotional and social well-being of teenagers. Research findings by Beran show that victims of cyberbullying who experience negative encounters, such as being scolded and insulted online, are at risk of losing self-confidence, feeling ashamed, losing friends at school, experiencing stress, suffering from insomnia, and even expressing suicidal thoughts after being subjected to such behavior. (Beran et al., 2012)

Recognizing the serious impact of cyberbullying on social media, it is crucial to take action against this phenomenon to prevent further victims. Therefore, understanding the Qur'an's perspective on cyberbullying becomes an essential area of study. A deeper analysis of this issue can provide valuable insights, encouraging Muslims to follow the guidance of the Qur'an in addressing and preventing cyberbullying in a manner that upholds ethical and respectful interactions in the digital space.

Several previous studies have explored the issue of cyberbullying, including research by Abdul Fatah et al., This study examines the digital civility (morality) of Indonesian Muslims in their interactions on social media. The research highlights a gap between Muslim behavior on social media and the teachings of the Qur'an, attributed to negative prejudices. Behaviors categorized as flaming (verbal attacks, insults, and derogatory remarks) are indicated to stem from negative assumptions and sadistic tendencies. Consequently, the values taught by the Qur'an become diminished, leading to a behavioral disconnect among Muslims on social media that fails to reflect the importance of politeness and civility. (Fatah & Khusniyah, 2022) Another relevant study is by Dewi Rahmawati, This research discusses the concept of bullying in the Qur'an from the perspective of Tafsir Al-Maraghi, which encompasses three key aspects: 1. The prohibition of verbal bullying, such as mocking or insulting others. 2. The prohibition of any form of physical violence, such as hitting or other harmful actions. 3. The prohibition of psychological bullying, such as isolating or ostracizing others. In the context of the digital era, these principles remain relevant. Acts of insult or harassment are prohibited, even if they occur through online platforms. This highlights the timelessness of Qur'anic teachings in addressing ethical behavior across all forms of communication, including modern digital interactions. (Rahmawati, 2022) The study conducted by Sule and Musa explores relevant preaching methods to respond to the widespread issue of cyberbullying found in online media. Therefore, scholars who engage in online preaching must have a strong understanding of how to counter cyberbullying effectively so that their message can be conveyed successfully. (Sule & Musa, 2023) The study conducted by Naseer and Matar also analyzes how the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah can help minimize incidents of bullying. (Naseer & Matar, 2023) Bullying is also considered preventable by providing education through the stories of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to foster friendly and positive behavior toward peers. (Syarifah et al., 2024)

The studies mentioned above have not specifically analyzed the word *sakhara* in the Qur'an using a contextual approach to explore the Qur'an's perspective on the phenomenon of cyberbullying on social media. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the contextual and conceptual meanings within the Qur'anic text, making it relevant to contemporary issues like digital interactions and online harassment. The area focus of study to the verses of the Qur'an in this study are are: Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79 and Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method. The research is categorized as library research, with primary data sourced from the Qur'anic term "*sakhara*" (humiliating or mocking), considered most closely aligned with cyberbullying behavior. This term is further interpreted using both classical and contemporary exegeses. The thematic (*maudhu'i*) method is applied in the analysis, while the paradigm used is contextual hermeneutic approach. (Saeed, 2006) This approach involves focusing on uncovering the original meaning and contextual meaning of the Qur'anic verses used in the study they are: Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79 and Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10

Cyberbullying on Social Media

The term bullying originates from the English word “bull”, referring to a bull that charges aggressively in various directions. In this context, bullied is understood as acts of intimidating or harassing others. Cyberbullying specifically refers to bullying behaviors that occur through digital platforms, such as social media, characterized by actions like mocking, threatening, or spreading harmful content about others. These actions, though virtual, can have profound psychological impacts, mirroring or even amplifying the effects of traditional bullying. (Novan Ardy Wiyani, 2014) According to Hinduja and Patchin, cyberbullying is defined as intentional and harmful behavior carried out repeatedly through the use of computers, mobile phones, or other electronic devices. (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013) Bullying is an aggressive act that is intentionally carried out repeatedly against another person with the aim of causing harm or discomfort to them. (Fatah, 2023)

According to Willard, there are seven patterns of cyberbullying, which include:

1. Flaming: Sending online messages, such as chat or email, with harsh or vulgar language.
2. Online Harassment: Sending messages with the intention to offend, repeatedly.
3. Cyberstalking: Engaging in online harassment that targets an individual with the aim of causing fear or distress.
4. Denigration: Sending false messages that defame or slander someone.
5. Masquerading: Pretending to be someone else online to threaten or harm the intended target.
6. Tricking and Outing: Spreading personal or private information to the public without consent.
7. Exclusion: Deliberately ostracizing someone, typically through online groups or forums. (Nancy E Willard, 2007)

An example of a cyberbullying case leading to body shaming on Instagram involves comments made by netizens on the account of a celebrity, referred to by the initials ‘AH’. After giving birth to her second daughter, ‘AH’ received harsh criticism from netizens about the changes in her body shape, which had become fuller. As a result, the victim felt sad and emotionally distressed. The effects also impacted her health, including a reduction in breast milk production. This was triggered by the overwhelming focus on the negative comments and insults from online users. (Riyawan, 2024) Another example of verbal cyberbullying on social media platform X involves an individual with the initials ‘KP’, who insulted a YouTuber, ‘RR’, regarding her divorce from her husband. ‘KP’ commented on one of ‘RR’s posts, questioning whether there would be a vlog or video about their divorce process, insinuating that it would be part of her YouTube content. This is an example of a verbal comment that subtly mocks or insults someone inappropriately and at the wrong time. This was further supported by other netizens’ comments, who believed that almost every aspect of ‘RR’s life shared on social media was done purely for content purposes. (Nisa, 2024) An example of cyberbullying on Facebook was reported by the Ditreskrimsus team of the Riau Islands Police, which arrested a man with the initials ‘WP’ for spreading hate speech and insults against President Jokowi. The perpetrator used his personal Facebook account to post images or memes containing offensive content targeting the president. This led to the incitement of hostility against certain

individuals or groups, highlighting how such online actions can escalate into larger social conflicts. (*Lagi, Penghina Presiden Di Media Sosial Ditangkap Polisi*, 2021)

Several factors contribute to the occurrence of cyberbullying, including: 1. **Ease of Access to Technology:** The increasing accessibility to devices and online platforms has led to more people engaging in cyberbullying behavior. 2. **Weak Social Control and Lack of Parental Supervision:** The insufficient oversight by parents regarding their children's online activities increases the likelihood of exposure to or involvement in cyberbullying. 3. **Declining Ethics in Communication and Behavior:** As societal norms around respectful communication and behavior weaken, the prevalence of cyberbullying rises, as individuals become more vulnerable to both perpetrating and falling victim to such behavior. 4. **Inequality and Discrimination:** Differences in ethnicity, race, and gender often fuel cyberbullying, as a lack of tolerance and respect for others can trigger these harmful online behaviors. The impacts of cyberbullying begin with physical symptoms experienced by the victims, including loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, skin issues, feelings of distress, and an increased heart rate. Psychologically, victims may experience anxiety, depression, fatigue, decreased self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, sadness, self-blame, and irritability. Additionally, the stress caused by cyberbullying can lead to more serious outcomes, such as engaging in risky behaviors like substance abuse or, in extreme cases, contemplating suicide.

According to the government, cyberbullying can be prevented by halting the spread of inappropriate content, such as utilizing the "report and block" features available on social media platforms. Cyberbullying often occurs due to the decline in manners and a lack of knowledge about digital rights. Additionally, efforts can be made by providing training and counseling to increase digital literacy, particularly for adolescents, to help them navigate social media responsibly and avoid engaging in or becoming victims of cyberbullying. (*Dinda Charmelita Trias Maharani*, 2023)

To address and mitigate cybercrimes on social media, such as cyberbullying, hate speech, and the spread of fake news, several strategies can be implemented: 1. **Prevention through Awareness and Education:** Providing outreach, education, and guidance to the public about the dangers of cyber activities and the importance of responsible online behavior. 2. **Cyber Patrols:** Conducting online surveillance to monitor and track developments on social media platforms, ensuring that harmful activities are identified and addressed promptly. 3. **Clarification of Fake News:** Actively correcting misinformation by clarifying and correcting hoaxes, ensuring that accurate information is shared. 4. **Imposing Strict Sanctions:** Enforcing serious consequences for individuals who engage in cybercrimes, including cyberbullying, to deter further offenses and promote accountability. (*Sabkan & Bidaya*, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Cyberbullying in The Qur'an

In Surah Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, Allah SWT clearly prohibits mocking or ridiculing others. The verse states:

"O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after faith. And whoever does not repent – then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11)

This verse emphasizes the importance of respecting others' dignity and avoiding actions like mockery, insults, and offensive name-calling, which are common behaviors in cyberbullying. It reminds us that such actions not only harm individuals but also contradict the values of faith, compassion, and respect for others.

The word *yaskhar* (يَسْخَرُ) from the verse above comes from the root word *sakhar* (سَخَرَ) which follows the pattern سَخَرًا - يَسْخَرُ - سَخَرَ. This root consists of the Arabic letters س (sin), خ (kha), and ر (ra), which carry the meaning of lowering, humbling, or making something submissive. Over time, this meaning expanded to include actions such as mocking, ridiculing, and belittling someone, often by dismissing their social status or rank. Therefore, *yaskhar* refers to the act of mocking or insulting someone, showing contempt or degradation of their dignity. In the context of Surah Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, this term is used to highlight the prohibition against any behavior that diminishes the worth or status of others, which can lead to harmful actions like cyberbullying, verbal insults, or degrading comments. (Shihab, 2007) In the Lisan al-'Arab dictionary by Ibn Manzur, the word "sakhira" (سَخَرَ) is explained to carry meanings of mocking, ridiculing, and reproaching. This definition aligns with the broader interpretation of the term *yaskhar* (يَسْخَرُ) in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, where it refers to actions that insult or belittle others through mockery or contempt. The essence of this meaning emphasizes the act of demeaning someone, which could manifest in various forms, including verbal insults and derogatory behavior, all of which are prohibited in the Islamic ethical framework, as they harm the dignity of others. (Ibnu Manzur, 1999)

This is also in line with the opinion of Ibn 'Ashur in his tafsir al-Tahrir wal-Tanwir, where he states that the word "*al-Sukhriyah*" is synonymous with "*al-Istihzal*" both in terms of language and meaning. Most linguists use these terms interchangeably when discussing acts of mockery, ridicule, and insult. Both words refer to behaviors that involve belittling others, often with the intention of causing harm to their dignity or reputation, which aligns with the prohibition against such actions in Islamic teachings, including those found in Surah Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11. These behaviors are condemned because they undermine respect and foster negative social dynamics. (Syekh Muhammad At-Tohir bin 'Asyur (Ibnu Asyur), 1984)

According to Ibn Kathir, the word "*sakhara*" is essentially the same as the words "*lumazah*" (لُمَزَة) and "*istahzaa*" (اسْتَهْزَأَ), all of which carry the meaning of insulting, belittling, or looking down on others. This behavior stems from a sense of superiority, where one considers themselves better than others and conveys it through a tone of condescension or mockery. (Abu Fida' Ismail bin Umar bin Katsir al-Qursyi ad-Damasyqi, 1923)

According to the Tafsir al-Munir, the phrase "لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ" (which translates to "let not a people ridicule [another] people") emphasizes the prohibition against mocking or belittling one group by another. The terms *as-sukhriyyah* (السُّخْرِيَّة) and *as-*

sikhraa (السخراء) both carry the meanings of *al-izdiraaa* (الازدراء) and *al-ihtiqaar* (الاحتقار), which refer to contempt, disdain, and the act of looking down on others. These actions are not limited to verbal insults but can also manifest through mocking gestures, imitating someone's speech, behavior, or body language in a way that humiliates or disrespects them. This form of mockery, whether expressed through words or actions, is condemned as it undermines the dignity and honor of individuals, violating the Islamic principle of mutual respect among people. (Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, 1991)

The next verse that is analyzed is Surah At-Taubah [9]:79, which also explicitly prohibits insulting or disparaging others. The verse states:

"Those who criticize the believers who give charity willingly and those who find nothing to spend except their effort, and they ridicule them – Allah will ridicule them, and for them is a painful punishment." (Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79)

This verse highlights the sin of mocking or belittling others, particularly those who make efforts in charity or good deeds, even when they have little to give. The verse condemns the act of ridiculing others for their actions, regardless of their circumstances, emphasizing that such mockery is not only a sin against the person being mocked but also invites divine ridicule and punishment. The prohibition against mocking or insulting in this context underscores the importance of maintaining respect, especially when interacting with others who may be in a vulnerable or humble position. This aligns with the broader Islamic ethical framework, which calls for empathy, kindness, and the avoidance of any action that would degrade or humiliate others.

According to Wahbah al-Zuhaili, the meaning of "الَّذِينَ يَلْمُزُونَ" refers to the hypocrites who mock and disparage others. The term "الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ" refers to those who give willingly, freely, or out of sincerity, especially in the context of charity or good deeds. The phrase "إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ" means "except for what is within their capacity"—indicating the highest level of effort someone can offer based on their means or abilities. If someone still mocks or belittles them despite their sincere efforts, the phrase "سَخَّرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ" signifies that Allah will mock and humiliate them in return. This means that Allah will exact justice on those who ridicule and belittle others, and not only will they face divine ridicule, but they will also experience a severe punishment, as mentioned in the verse: "وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ" ("and for them is a painful punishment"). This commentary further emphasizes the severity of mocking others, especially those who give selflessly or do what they can within their means. The punishment for such actions is not just a form of retaliation but also a reminder of the moral responsibility to respect others and refrain from harmful behaviors like ridicule. (Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, 1991)

The next verse being analyzed is Surah Al-An'am [6]:10, which addresses the ridicule and mockery faced by previous prophets and their followers:

"And never was a messenger ridiculed, but there have passed away before him [many] who mocked." (Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10)

This verse reflects on the pattern of mockery that the messengers of Allah and their followers have faced throughout history. Despite their sincerity and devotion, the prophets and their supporters were often ridiculed, rejected, and belittled by

those who were arrogant or dismissive of their message. The verse serves as a reminder that the ridicule and mockery of righteous individuals is not a new phenomenon. Allah acknowledges that such behavior has occurred in the past and reminds the people that these acts of disdain toward those who call for truth and justice will not go unanswered. Those who mock the righteous or the messengers of Allah will eventually face the consequences of their actions, as Allah is the ultimate authority in dispensing justice. This verse ties in with the broader theme of prohibiting mockery and disparagement, especially of those who act in accordance with divine guidance. It encourages believers to persevere in the face of ridicule, knowing that such behavior will be dealt with by Allah.

According to Tafsir Al-Misbah, the word *al-istihza* (اسْتَهْزَأَ) originates from the root word *haza'a* (هَزَأَ) or *haziyah* (هَزِيَةٌ) which means to mock, ridicule, or make fun of someone. Initially, the term referred to the act of lightening the hand in killing, meaning an action done easily or without much effort. Over time, its meaning evolved to refer to lightening of the heart, symbolizing an attitude where it becomes easy to mock, insult, or belittle others. This development in meaning indicates that *al-istihza* involves making jokes or ridicule that are intended to humiliate or degrade others, often done covertly with the aim of belittling someone. Such mockery is not merely harmless humor but an act of contempt meant to undermine the dignity of others. This definition aligns with the broader prohibition in Islamic teachings against mockery, as it can cause harm to the target, both emotionally and socially, and is considered morally wrong. The act of *al-istihza* is condemned in the Qur'an, as it goes against the principles of respect, humility, and dignity that Islam upholds for all individuals. (Shihab, 2002)

In his Tafsir al-Mizan, Tabatabai explains that the word "*al-sakhara*" (السَخْرَةُ) is closely associated with laughing at someone and pointing out their deficiencies in a way that leads to humiliation. This term signifies not only mocking or ridiculing others but also the act of highlighting someone's perceived shortcomings, which results in them being belittled or degraded. Tabatabai further elaborates that this ridicule can occur through words, gestures, or actions, and it always carries the intent of lowering the dignity of the person being mocked. Whether through verbal insults, mocking gestures, or actions meant to humiliate, "*al-sakhara*" goes beyond simple joking; it serves to degrade or undermine the person's status or worth, thereby creating a feeling of inferiority. This understanding aligns with the Qur'anic prohibition of mockery, as it fosters arrogance and disrespect. Islam teaches that all people deserve honor and respect, regardless of their social status, wealth, or appearance. Therefore, any form of "*al-sakhara*" is not only a breach of etiquette but also goes against the ethical teachings of Islam that promote mutual respect and humility. (Thabathaba'i, 1973)

Contextualization of Verses to Cyberbullying on Social Media

Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11. In this verse, Allah SWT explicitly forbids mocking, ridiculing, or demeaning others. The word "*yaskhar*" (يسخر), meaning to degrade and humiliate, has a very relevant connotation with the phenomenon of cyberbullying on social media. Online mockery is often carried out covertly, through comments,

memes, or posts that contain insults against a person. Cyberbullying occurs because of the anonymity and ease of spreading humiliation without face-to-face confrontation, allowing individuals to freely mock or belittle others. This verse reminds us that such actions not only damage the dignity of the person being mocked but also invite retribution from Allah SWT, who will punish those who engage in such behavior.

Relevance to Cyberbullying: Mockery that occurs in the online world can take the form of insults regarding someone's appearance, social status, or personal circumstances, which often results in psychological trauma for the victim. This verse reminds us that any form of ridiculing others is a prohibited act in Islam.

Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79. This verse also condemns the act of insulting or mocking others, especially those who perform good deeds. In the context of social media, this phenomenon often occurs, where individuals who try to do good or share positive experiences are subjected to ridicule or scorn. On social media, for instance, influencers or public figures often become targets of jeers, especially when they appear "less than perfect" in the eyes of others. These insults are typically meant to degrade, and as mentioned in this verse, Allah will repay those who commit such actions with a painful punishment.

Relevance to Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying directed at individuals who are seen as "different" or "not meeting social standards" often involves ridicule of their positive efforts. This verse emphasizes that insulting those who try to do good, especially through social media, is an unacceptable action and will receive retribution from Allah.

Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10. This verse mentions that even the prophets and messengers were mocked and ridiculed by those who opposed them. This shows that the phenomenon of insults and mockery is not new and has existed since ancient times, even directed at the most noble people. In the current context of social media, such mockery of individuals who speak the truth or try to share knowledge is still common. Netizens who disagree with or dislike someone often mock them in cruel ways, either through comments that belittle them or by spreading slander.

Relevance to Cyberbullying: As explained in this verse, the persecution through mockery of individuals who speak the truth or share beneficial information has been around since the time of the prophets. On social media, this can occur when someone attempts to share or express viewpoints that contradict the majority view, making them targets of ridicule, criticism, and even insults.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and data obtained from the research on cyberbullying on social media using a contextual approach, the following conclusions can be drawn: The majority of cyberbullying patterns on social media involve verbal harassment. The presence of comments on social media has made the phenomenon of online mocking and bullying easier to carry out. According to this study, the predominant pattern of cyberbullying on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok is harassment. However, other patterns also exist, such as flaming, impersonating, trickery, and denigration.

The meaning of the word ***al-sakhara*** overall refers to behavior that includes insulting and disparaging others through gestures, speech, or actions. Its purpose is to degrade and tarnish someone's dignity and reputation. Whether done seriously or as a joke, such behavior can hurt feelings and offend the target. The key message of the three verses discussed—Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11, Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79, and Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10—is that insulting and belittling others is prohibited. Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:11 forbids mocking and degrading fellow humans. Q.S. At-Taubah [9]:79 reminds that even those who act sincerely will still face mockery from others, and thus, one should strengthen their faith and continue striving for goodness. Q.S. Al-An'am [6]:10 explains that even prophets and messengers were not spared from mockery, showing that insults are a natural part of human life. However, mocking should not be normalized as it is a precursor to cyberbullying, which has negative impacts.

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