

Relationship between cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress among college students of Jammu District

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Abstract

Background: As a result of current technology developments, cyber bullying has become a major problem. It's a new type of peer violence in which one or more people threaten one other person using a technological medium. Because college students have more autonomy, less obligations, and more freedom, they are more vulnerable to cyber bullying.

Aim: The purpose of the present study is to look at the differences and relationships between cyber bullying, cyber victimization, and psychological distress among male and female students in Jammu, J&K. It has a total of 200 pupils, 100 of whom are males and 100 of whom are females. The data was collected using an incidental sampling approach.

Methods: Independent t-test and Pearson correlation were used for carrying out differences and relationship respectively.

Results: The findings of the study show a significant gender difference between male and female students on the variables of cyber bullying and victimization, whereas non-significant gender difference was found on the variable of psychological distress. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress among male students, whereas non-significant positive correlation was found among female students on the variables of cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress.

Conclusion: Mean score of male students on the variables of cyber bullying, victimization and psychological distress is more than female students. This can be suggested that the male students are more prone to cyber bullying and cyber victimization, whereas both male and female are equally prone to psychological distress.

Keywords: Cyber bullying, victimization, psychological distress, college students, t-test, correlation analysis

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Introduction

The internet and electronic gadgets have provided new avenues for young people to socialize, but they have also prepared new type of negative bullying, known as cyber bullying (Tokunaga, 2010; Palermi *et al.*, 2017). Bullying and stalking of others through the use of new digital media, mostly mobile phones and the internet, is referred to as online bullying, also known as cyber bullying (Smith, Steffgen, & Sittichai, 2013). Cyber bullying has become a major public health concern among youngsters, and it has been linked to a variety of mental health issues (Cenat *et al.*, 2018). It is a new type of bullying that has received a lot of attention in recent years. Despite the fact that there is a little amount of literature on cyber bullying and internet harassment, the majority of study has been on determining the frequency of cyber bullying among adolescent groups (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Lenhart, 2007; Hinduja, & Patchin, 2008; Burgess-Proctor, Patchin & Hinduja, 2009; Li, 2007). Cyber bullying is a rapidly growing issue that previous generations who did not grow up with constant access to the internet has yet to

encounter (Samodra & Mariani, 2013). Parents, schools, and researchers are increasingly concerned about the negative effects of cyber bullying (Navarro *et al.*, 2013).

Psychological Distress

Youth is a particularly susceptible phase in terms of the development of psychological and mental health issues (Benzi *et al.*, 2019). One of the issues is psychological distress, which is described as unpleasant sensations and emotions exhibited during anxiety and depression symptoms, and which generally results in decreased behavioral, cognitive, and emotional performance (Castro-Castaneda *et al.*, 2019; Benzi *et al.*, 2019; Andrews & Slade, 2001). Psychological discomfort has been linked to poor parent-child communication in the home setting (Curran, & Allen, 2017; Schrodt, & Ledbetter, 2007).

Apart from that, gender differences in psychological distress have been reported, with females reporting higher levels of psychological distress than males (Stallman, 2010; Verger, *et al.*, 2009; Dyrbye, Thomas, Shanafelt, 2006; Saias *et al.*, 2014; Drapeau, Amarchand, & Beaulieu-Prevost, 2012). Horwitz (2007) defines it as a transient emotional response to stress that, if left untreated, might develop to depression. According to Wheaton (2007), psychological discomfort is a relatively continuous condition that affects every day functioning and existence, and it is a major health issue since it includes symptoms of general mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and stress.

Gender Differences in Cyber bullying

Girls use social networking sites more frequently to interact with their friends (Kircaburun, *et al.*, 2018; Kuss *et al.*, 2014), whereas boys spend more time on other activities like playing games or browsing web pages (Kircaburun *et al.*, 2018; Watters *et al.*, 2013). In terms of comparison, boys have a considerably greater percentage of participation in cyber bullying than girls, and findings from a previous study suggest that the prevalence of problematic internet use is higher in boys (16.1%) than in girls (8.1%). The presence of rule-breaking and aggressive behaviors was associated to the sufferer group, while the presence of rule-breaking and aggressive behaviors was linked to the perpetrator group (Jung, *et al.*, 2014).

Cyber bullying and Psychological Distress

Only a few studies have looked into the link between cyber bullying and psychological distress. There is a clear relationship between cyber bullying and mental health, according to studies (Laftman, Modin, & Ostberg, 2013). Bullying that occurs frequently in both the offline and online environment causes the victim to experience significant levels of psychological distress and behavioral problems, as well as increased anxiety, sadness, fear, dread, irritability, sleep disturbances, and focus probing (Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2017; Lazuras, Barkoukis, Tsorbatzoudis, 2017; Martinez-Ferrer *et al.*, 2018; Machimbarrena *et al.*, 2018) as well as more thoughts of anxiety, depression, apprehension, restlessness, irritability, sleep disorders, and difficulties in concentration (Campbell *et al.*, 2012; Pham & Adesman, 2015). Victims of bullying and cyber bullying are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide (Iranzo, Buelga, Cava, & Ortega-Baron, 2019), which has a negative influence on the family and societal environment (Buelga *et al.*, 2017). Bullies, both real and virtual, can have long-term repercussions that can endure far into adulthood. Bullies and cyber bullies have greater stress levels, disobey the rules more frequently, use drugs more frequently, have negative views about authority persons, and engage in more violent and illegal conduct in other aspects of their lives (Festl & Quandt, 2013).

According to previous studies, young people's engagement in bullying varies based on the ratio of bullies to victims (Holt & Espelage, 2007). A recent study (Davis *et al.*, 2018) discovered a connection between perpetration and victimization, indicating that youngsters may be both bullies and victims. According to studies, there is a relationship between cyber bullying and mental disorders among young people (Wigderson & Lynch, 2013) and college students. In both youth and college students, previous research has revealed a correlation between cyber bullying and depressive illnesses, as well as a link between cyber victimization and depression

(Wigderson, Lynch, 2013; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). Higher levels of cyber bullying victimization were associated to depression, and cyber bullying victims who had a strained connection with their parents were more likely to have poor self-rated mental health, psychological distress, suicide thoughts, attempts, and drug use than those who had a great relationship (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Lalande, & Colman, 2020).

According to attachment theory, a feeling of safe interpersonal interactions with essential people, such as parents, or other adults, offers a framework for psychological and social development (Bowlby, 2005). As a result, a strong parent-child relationship may be able to alleviate the harmful impacts of being a victim of cyber bullying. Because they are subjected to online harassment by unknown suspects who may swiftly disseminate embarrassing images and rumors on social media, cyber bullying victims report higher degrees of despair, rage, and unhappiness than non-victims (Smith et al., 2008). According to Patchin and Hinduja (2006), approximately 43% of young individuals who had been cyber bullied expressed sadness, while 40% expressed anger, findings also exposed that young individuals who have been cyber bullied may express their frustrations and wrath by harassing their bullies or identifying strangers.

Objectives

To find out the gender differences on the variables of cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress among college students

To examine the relationship between psychological distress and cyber bullying among college students

To explore the relationship between psychological distress and cyber victimization among college students

Hypotheses

Males and Females students differ significantly on cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress

There is a significant positive relationship of cyber bullying with psychological distress among college students.

There is a significant positive relationship of cyber victimization with psychological distress among college students.

Methodology

Sample

A total sample of 200 college students was collected for finding out gender differences and relationship of cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress among college students with 100 males (50%) and 100 females (50%). Participants were in the age group of 18 to 22 years with mean age of 19.68. The incidental sampling technique was applied for collecting data.

Procedure: Permission was obtained from college authorities prior to data collection. Participants were given a thorough description of the questionnaire before it was administered, and students were prompted to complete the questionnaire. The participants were asked about data confidentiality.

Measures

Cyber Bullying & Cyber Victimization Experience Questionnaire CBVEQ (Antoniadou, et al., 2016)

It comprises of total 24 items with two parts i.e. 12 items for cyber bullying and 12 for cyber victimization for assessing cyber bullying and victimization respectively. It is a five-point rating scale.

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler et al., 2003): It consists of 10 items that evaluate psychological distress. Each item has a five-level response. Minimum score is 10 and maximum score is 50. Low scores represent low levels of psychological distress and high scores signify high levels of psychological distress.

Statistical Tools: To find out the gender differences between males and females students on the domain of cyber bullying, victimization and psychological distress t-test is used. Correlation analysis is used to find out the relationship between cyber bullying, victimization and psychological distress among college students.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

t-ratios of Cyber bullying, Victimization and Psychological distress among College Students

Variables	Male Students (N=100)		Female Students (N=100)		t	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Cyber-bullying	18.34	6.76	15.90	5.45	2.80	.005*
Cyber-victimization	20.47	7.31	17.37	5.71	3.34	.001**
Psychological distress	22.08	6.25	22.13	4.83	-.063	.950

** Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

Results from the table states that t-ratios have been applied to find out the gender differences on the variables of cyber bullying, victimization and psychological distress among college students. Observation from the table shows that there is a significant gender difference on the dimension of cyber bullying ($t(198) = 2.80, p < 0.01$). The mean score of male students ($\bar{x} = 18.34$) is higher on cyber bullying than female students ($\bar{x} = 15.90$). It was further illustrated that significant gender differences is found among male and female college students on the dimension of cyber bullying. Similarly, significant gender difference has been found on the variable of cyber victimization ($t(198) = 3.34, p > 0.01$). The mean score of male students is higher ($\bar{x} = 20.47$) than mean score of female college students ($\bar{x} = 17.37$) on cyber victimization. On the other hand, non-significant difference is found on the domain of psychological distress ($t(198) = -.063, p < 0.01$). The mean score of male students ($\bar{x} = 22.08$) and females students ($\bar{x} = 22.13$) is similar on the variable of psychological distress.

Table 2

Inter-correlation among male Students

Variables	Psychological Distress
Cyber bullying	.192*
Cyber victimization	.331**

** Significant at 0.01 level

*Significant at 0.05 level

The association between cyber bullying, cyber victimization and psychological distress among male students was investigated using correlation analysis. Results from Table 2 reveal a positive connection between cyber bullying and psychological distress ($r=.192^*$). Positive relationship has also been found between victimization and psychological distress ($r=.331^{**}$) among male students. From this we can pronounce that both bully and victim are expected to become psychological distress. Prior research has shown that bullying victimization is linked to a higher risk of psychological distress across the level, from depressive symptoms to suicidal thoughts to self-injury and suicide attempts. Furthermore, children who were victims of both online and school victimization had the greatest link between victimization and distress, followed by victims of cyber bullying exclusively and then victims of school bullying only (Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012).

Table-3

Inter-correlation among Female Students

Variables	Psychological Distress
Cyber bullying	.073
Cyber victimization	.093

Table 3 shows non-significant positive relationship between cyber bullying and psychological distress among female students ($r = .073$). Similarly, non-significant positive relationship has also been found between cyber victimization and psychological distress among female students ($r = .093$). Study on college students has established that cyber bullying perpetrators have uncaring-detached behavior, and it was also reported that depressive symptoms have found in both bullies and victims (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2014). But in our study non-significant difference is found, this might be due to their favorable family conditions that cyber bullying and cyber victimization is not related to psychological distress among female students. Prior evidence suggests that cyber bullying victimization is linked to suicidal behavior, including non-lethal and lethal suicide attempts in young adults (Bannink *et al.*, 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Messias, Kindrick, & Castro, 2011; Van Geel, Vedder, & Tanilon, 2014), behavioral issues, (Kim *et al.*, 2017), substance use (Litwiller, & Brausch, 2011; Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finkelhor, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the results that there is significant gender differences on the variables of cyber bullying and cyber victimization ($t(198) = 2.80, p < 0.01$). The mean score of female students is less on cyber bullying and cyber victimization than male students and significant gender differences has been found between male and female students on both variables. By using correlation analysis significant positive relationship between cyber bullying and psychological distress ($r = .192$), between cyber victimization and psychological distress ($r = .331$) has been found among male students. Whereas, non-significant positive relationship has been revealed between cyber bullying and psychological distress ($r = .073$), between victimization and psychological distress ($r = .093$) among female students. Consistent with prior research the increased risk of negative mental health outcomes (suicide ideation, psychological distress, and delinquency) linked to cyber bullying victimization (Bannink *et al.*, 2014; Hinduja, & Patchin, 2010; Bonanno, & Hymel, 2013; Messias, Kindrick & Castro, 2014; Van Geel *et al.*, 2014; Hamm, 2015). Administration should intervene in cyber bullying incidents, as failing to do so may expose student's capability to accomplish something in academics.

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