Conceptualizing Cyberbullying Victimization Prevention Among Pakistani Youth

Humaira Jami¹, Sobia Masood¹, Fatima Ashraf¹, Hira Kanwal¹, Sidra Iqbal¹, and Rabia Bibi²

¹National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan

Globally, where increased exposure to information and communication technology (ICT) has improved youth’s efficacy in using technology and internet, it is also posing unique challenges and threat to mental health of youth in context of cyberbullying victimization. Out of 207.0 million population in Pakistan, 64% of is below 30 years (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017; UNDP, 2017). Mobile users are 183.20 million; 46.4% is broadband penetration; while internet subscribers are 100.67 million (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, 2021). COVID-19 pandemic has increased internet exposure manifold for school-going and university students. Being avid user of internet, Pakistani youth needs immediate attention for guided and appropriate use of technology and internet to capitalise upon their internet efficacy and enjoy latest technological advancements without fear of being victimised in cyberspace. This symposium is based on four independent studies that provide insight about underlying dynamics of cyberbullying victimization among youth. These helped in conceptualising a prevention program to curb cybervictimization among Pakistani youth, which is in the process of implementation. A few findings of these studies are shared and discussed in cultural context. Findings reveal that online risky behaviours, personality traits like being callous and unemotional, lacking in empathy, and moral disengagement are behind risky and unethical practices in cyberspace that pave way to cyberbullying victimization. Internet efficacy for ethical use of internet; awareness of law related to electronic/cybercrimes; whom and how to report experiences related to cyberbullying victimization; and role of parents have been highlighted that are incorporated in prevention program later.

Keywords: cyberbullying, victimization, internet-efficacy, risky behaviours, law, cybercrimes, personality traits, cyberbystanders

Predictors of Cybervictimization Among Adolescents

Humaira Jami, Sobia Masood, Fatima Ashraf, Rabia Bibi, Hira Kanwal, and Sidra Iqbal

(National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan)

Literature shows that with increased exposure to internet and social networking sites (SNS), online risky lifestyle (making unknown friends, surfing unknown sites, etc.), and lack of internet self-efficacy significantly increase the chances of cybervictimization of youth (Sivakumar, 2013). The sample (N = 818) of male (n = 450) and female participants (n = 368) with age range of 16-21 years (M = 16.83, SD = 1.48) were selected through purposive sampling technique. Aim was to identify the predictors of cybervictimization among youth. Age, gender, internet self-efficacy, online risky lifestyle, time spend online (in hrs.), level of online sharing of personal activities, level of use of various personal gadgets (smart devices), and level of use of various SNS were considered as predictors of cybervictimization and its domains (i.e., verbal and written, visual and sexual, social exclusion) using stepwise regression analysis through SPSS 22. Among all the variables put as predictors, online risky activities on social networking sites, online risky vocational activities, and online exposure to victimization were considered as predictors of cybervictimization and its domains (i.e., verbal and written, visual and sexual, social exclusion) using stepwise regression analysis through SPSS 22. Among all the variables put as predictors, online risky activities on social networking sites, online risky vocational activities, and online exposure to victimization have significant positive role in experiencing cybervictimization. Moreover, online risky activities and online exposure to victimization are positive predictors of verbal and written victimization, and visual and sexual victimization experiences. Online risky activities on social networking sites, online risky vocational activities, efficacy in communication on internet sites (a component of internet-efficacy), and usage of various social networking sites positively predicted social exclusion by others. Gender is
significantly negatively predicting the cybervictimization experiences and its domains, being male participants increase proneness to cybervictimization.

**Predictors of Cybersbystanders Styles in Context of Cybervictimization Among Youth**

Fatima Ashraf and Humaira Jami

(National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan)

The increased statistics of cybercrimes and potential severity of negative impacts of cyberbullying on victims necessitates a thorough investigation of the predicting factors and interventions that may reduce the frequency and effects of cyberbullying incidents (Allison & Bussey, 2016). The cybersbystanders (witnesses of cyberbullying incidents) have the potential to alter the course of bullying situations either by reinforcing bullies, confronting bullies and supporting victims or remain passive (Lo Cricchio et al., 2020). Using purposive sampling techniques, a sample (N = 641) of 258 male and 383 female participants with age range of 18-25 years (M = 21.82, SD = 2.08) were selected. Aim was to identify the strongest predictors of cybersbystanders styles (i.e., passive outsiders, defenders of cybervictims, and reinforcers of cyberbullies) among empathy, callous unemotional traits, internet self-efficacy, social anxiety, and mechanisms of moral disengagement based on social cognitive theory of Bandura. Stepwise regression analysis was carried out. The significant findings of the study indicated that fear of negative evaluation, social avoidance, and distress in new situations; moral disengagement mechanism of moral justification; and internet self-efficacy are significant positive predictors of passive cybersbystanders behaviours. The defending behaviours of cybersbystanders for victims are positively predicted by higher callousness, internet self-efficacy, and moral disengagement of advantageous comparison. Moreover, being callous, and use of moral disengagement (distortion of consequences, euphemistic language, diffusion of responsibility) has significant positive impact in predicting behaviours of cybersbystanders in reinforcing cyberbullies. While empathy is significantly negatively predicting cybersbystanders behaviours of reinforcing cyberbullies. Interestingly, being unemotional negatively predicts reinforcing and defending behaviours of cybersbystanders in cyberbullying incidents.

**Predictors of Cybervictimization Among University Students**

Hira Kanwal and Humaira Jami

(National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan)

The objective of research was to study mediating role of awareness of cyber law, online risky lifestyle, and digital capable guardianship between psychopathic traits and three domains of cyberbullying victimization that are verbal/written, visual/sexual, and social exclusion. Using purposive sampling, 1000 university students were included in the study. Participants were smartphone/internet users from twin cities of Pakistan. Cyberbullying Victimization Scale (Lee, Abell, & Holmes, 2015), Online Lifestyle Scale (Bettencourt, 2014), Digital Guardianship Scale (Choi, 2008), Psychopathy Subscale of Short Dark Triad Scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2014), and Awareness of Cyber Law Scale (Kanwal, 2018) were administered. Analyses through SPSS-22 and AMOS-22 were conducted. The findings of study indicate that although awareness of cyberlaw significantly negatively relates with cyberbullying victimization and its three domains, psychopathic traits, online risky lifestyle, and positively correlates with digital capable guardianship; awareness of cyber law does not have mediating role in any domain of cyberbullying victimization though negatively predicted by psychopathic traits. Online risky lifestyle significantly positively related with psychopathic traits, cyberbullying victimization and its three domains, whereas negatively related with digital capable guardianship. And online risky lifestyle partially mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and three domain of cyberbullying victimization as it maintains direct relationship with cybervictimization as well. Digital capable guardianship for having nonsignificant relationship with psychopathic traits and cyberbullying victimization and its domains is playing no mediating role between their relationship. Limitations and implications were discussed indigenously.

**Perceived Barriers in Reporting Cybervictimization Among Adolescents**

Sidra Iqbal and Humaira Jami

(National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan)

In Pakistan, level of cyber-harassment raised excessively during Covid-19 pandemic (Butt, 2020). To control cybercrimes, Pakistan Electronic Crime Regulation Act was
passed in 2016. Still adolescents have reluctance to report cyberbullying victimization. Therefore, to prevent cybervictimization, it is important to address the barriers that hinder reporting to authorities about negative incidences in cyberspace. To meet the objectives, six focus group discussions (N = 36) were conducted with high school students of age 16-21 years (M = 17.6, SD =1.8) in twin cities Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Focus group guideline was developed. After transcribing data, themes that emerged in result of thematic analysis are; attitude toward justice system and fear of parents. Findings indicate that adolescents avoid reporting the incidence of cyberbullying which leads to their repeated victimization in cyberspace. Adolescents do not report for having mistrust and negative attitude toward justice system. They believe that there is no law and order in the country; perpetrators are not punished; and process of seeking justice is painfully slow. They perceive that reporting is completely useless and least important. So, to deal with the cybervictimization, adolescents often become revengeful. Media is playing role in intensifying the mistrust on justice system. Fear of parents and ill fame also prevent teenagers from reporting. For anticipating parent’s judgmental behaviour, they hesitate to share. They also fear losing parent’s trust and affection and believe that parents will blame them for their victimization. Findings suggest including cyberlaw awareness and how to report, and awareness for parents in prevention program.

References


