

## Theory of Empowerment in Female Cyber Victimization

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### ABSTRACT

The pervasiveness of digital technology in people's lives is widely acknowledged, and it is potential for risky behaviors to be occurred in online. Females have been observed to face more cyber victimization than males due to the gender issue. Despite the rise in cyber victimization, research into the theoretical backgrounds of such online behaviors has been limited, but using the theory of empowerment, the female victim would more accurately pave a path that could lead to a reduction in the problem. This study provides a brief overview of the meaning and significance of empowerment theory, concept, and applying theory to female cyber victimization. During the empowerment process, the victim could be able to exert more control than the perpetrators, or victims may be able to develop the ability to change their situations. As a result of employing the empowerment theory, the negative consequences of cyber victimization can be mitigated.

**Keywords:** *Theory of Empowerment, Women Empowerment, Female, Cyber Victimization*

**E**mpowerment is a concept that refers to personal strengths and competencies, natural helping processes, and proactive social change behaviors (Rappaport, 1984). Empowerment generally refers to the act of granting power to another, as well as providing a means of exerting or asserting power as a behavior practiced. The meaning assumes that the act of power is given upon someone by someone else (Parsons, 1991). However, it can also refer to the process of assisting individuals, groups, or communities in increasing their personal, interpersonal, and resilience in the face of difficult situations. (Gutiérrez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995). Empowerment is more likely to emerge gradually rather than suddenly (Morton & Crump, 1996). For theory of empowerment include both process of incremental power among people and the outcome of conversion from powerless to power. The activities, actions, or structures can be empowering, and the results of such processes can provide a sense of empowerment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment theory has been revealed in a variety of fields. These include general psychology, community development, community health, nursing practice, sociology, and women's studies (Joseph, 2020). The empowerment process for increasing personal power focuses on how people can gain a sense of personal power. Individuals can be devastated by the experience of being powerless, as is common with many victims of violence. Empowerment can be an outcome due to the results of victim interactions with their

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environment. Empowerment can mean 1) a state of mind that includes feelings of worth and competence, 2) personal, interpersonal, and political control are all perceived to be under one's control, and 3) a re-allocation of power or resources as a result of modify social structures (Rappaport, 1984). Throughout a person's life cycle, empowerment occurs as a result of a continuous process of growth and change (Choi, Green, & Kapp, 2010). Thus, empower refers to a psychological feeling of individual control or influence, as well as a concern for social variable, political power, and legal rights. It is a multilevel concept relating to individuals, organizations, and communities (Dandona, 2015).

In order to define empowerment theory clearly, it is necessary to distinguish between empowering processes and outcomes. Individual empowerment processes may include involvement in community organizations. Collective decision making and shared guidance may be examples of empowering process at the organizational level. Collective behavior to access government and other community resources could be a representation of a community empowerment process. Empowered outcomes are operationalizations of empowerment that investigate the outcomes of empowering processes. Individual empowerment outcomes may include perceived control and resource mobilization abilities in response to a specific situation (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

### *Cyber victimization*

Nowadays, people's digital interactions play a key role in life, and there is the possibility of harmful behavior occurring as a part of online interactions. This should be done to understand the technology-facilitated sexual violence or harassment (Henry & Powell, 2015). Online harassment and cyberbullying victimization are one of these disadvantages consequences (Elzeblawy, Ali, Mostafa, & Emad, 2019). The process of becoming a victim in a cyber context or technology is referred to as cyber victimization (Langos, 2012). It can be included victimization both via internet and mobile phone. Moreover, cyber victimization can be defined as an intentional act of harm occurred repeatedly through electronic means. When discussing cyber victimization, empirical literature includes both criminal (sexual abuse based on images, threats to distribute sexual photos without permit, cyber stalking, etc.) and noncriminal (name calling, sexual joking, unpleasant messages, etc.) behaviors (Powell, Scott, & Henry, 2018).

There is no standard definition of cyber victimization (Cesaroni, Downing, & Alvi, 2012). Depending on the scope of the study, different researchers defined it differently. However, based on the available reviews, cyber victimization is defined as intentional digital harm, bullying or harassment, stalking via social media in the form of text messages, photos or video, emails, websites, or chat rooms, as a result of which the person feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused, or harassed. The main features of cyber victimization: 1) the perpetrator has intention to harm or threat; 2) there is repetition of victimizing behavior; 3) a power disparity between the perpetrator and victim (Grigg, 2012).

### *Cyber victimization and gender*

Gender is a significant risk factor in cyber victimization, just as it is in traditional victimization. Females expressed great concern about the rise in online victimization (Douglass, Wright, Davis, & Lim, 2018). Gender has been widely researched as a viable factor that may primarily engage in the characteristics that place females at risk of cyber victimization (Wachs, Junger, & Sittichai, 2015). Females are more likely than males to report being objectified or being treated differently because of their gender. Due to the gender issue, females have been observed to face more online sexual harassment than males

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as a form of gender discrimination and aggression (Reed, Wong, & Raj, 2020; Van Royen, Vandebosch, & Poels, 2015).

Females were more likely to be targeted through messenger, sexting, harassment, defamation, and blaming behavior (Burić, Garcia, & Štulhofer, 2020; Dehue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008). Several studies on the frequency of cyber victimization and its correlation to psychological functioning problems have been conducted (Kloess, Beech, & Harkins, 2014; Wright & Wachs, 2020). When compared to in-person sexual harassment, cyber sexual harassment is distinct. Perpetrators can more easily target victims across geographic boundaries, victims are more difficult to control, and can potentially maintain anonymity, and the problem has far-reaching consequences (Henry & Powell, 2015).

The victim may be harassed repeatedly every time someone sees that post after the perpetrators posted the message or photos. Some forms of online communication are extremely difficult to remove from cyberspace (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2015). Online victimization to harassment or abuse has many negative consequences. Reducing cyber victimization problem is important because victims have been found to have a variety of negative health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, feelings of hurt or sadness, embarrassment, loneliness, somatic symptoms, blaming themselves, suicidal ideation, and commit suicide (Fridh, Lindström, & Rosvall, 2015; Winkelman, Early, Walker, Chu, & Yick, 2015).

### ***Women empowerment***

Empowerment, in general, refers to any process or activity that gives women control over their lives. Women's empowerment entails gaining the ability to think freely, acting voluntarily, constructing a sense of self-worth, believing in one's ability to effect needed outcomes and having the right to control their life, negotiating power, and realize one's potential as equal members of society (Spreitzer, 1995). Empowerment of women may require women to change their perspectives and beliefs in a positive way. The empowerment approach encourages females to see themselves as more independent and confident, to speak up more often, and to support other females (Quattrochi et al., 2019). Empowerment is one of several approaches to social modification that women can use to resolve social and structural limitation. Empowerment has come to represent bottom-up social change efforts such as awareness raising, self-help, and capability building (Morton & Crump, 1996).

For female empowerment can be measured by a woman's decision-making ability (Abbas, Isaac, Zia, Zakar, & Fischer, 2021). Empowerment has been characterized as a woman's relative physical mobility, economic security, judgment ability, and lack of violence (Anderson & Eswaran, 2009). The theory of empowerment for women emphasizes the necessity of engaging in actions to reduce the powerlessness that is generated by negative people and assist these individuals in exerting greater control over their personal life (Busch & Valentine, 2000). Women's empowerment can be viewed as a process that includes awareness, manpower, voices, and participation. The goal of women's empowerment is to give women more power to make decisions in areas of their lives that are meaningful to them (Sanawar, Islam, Majumder, & Misu, 2019).

Empowerment of women is a strategy for a country's development because it involves the full involvement of women towards equality in society (Ochman & Ortega-Díaz, 2020). Women's empowerment is frequently emphasized as the primary goal of most development programs involving women's participation. However, empowerment is a process that each

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woman goes through in her own unique way, based on her efforts and personal background or experience (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018). To assess women's empowerment progress, it is necessary to consider not only accomplishments but also the situational constraints that each woman has faced (Richardson, 2018). According to the empowerment theory, individual well-being is linked to a larger social, economic, and political environment. The empowerment theory also refers to "empowerment-oriented" intervention aimed at improving living standards, resolving problems, and providing individuals with opportunities to learn and grow (Huis, Hansen, Otten, & Lensink, 2017).

### ***Theory of empowerment for female cyber victimization***

In the process of empowerment, the victim may be able to exert more strength than perpetrators or victims may be able to change the sequence of action if they develop the ability to adjust their circumstances. Practitioners must assist victims in identifying the sources of powerlessness and supporting victims in redefining themselves in a more positive and confident manner during this process. For example, as they deal with the situation of violence in a proactive manner, the victims can realize that they are not just victims but survivors. Therefore, the significance of empowerment is in the process; practitioners must encourage victims in sharing their stories and difficulties while seeking support. Empowerment can occur in specific contexts in life processes that are related to situations in which a person becomes a victim. For the victim, the process of dealing with the situation's aftermath can provide an opportunity for empowerment or, at least possibly serve as a foundation for future empowerment as life progresses (Choi et al., 2010). Empower theory, which is related to individual well-being, links mental health to mutual help (Crepaz-Keay, 2016). Instead of blaming victims, measures should be taken to identify abilities and investigate the impact of environmental factors on societal issues (Ullman & Townsend, 2008).

The concept of empowerment offers opportunities to strengthen protective factors, increase self-confidence and self-efficacy, broaden one's range of capabilities, and empower one to have more freedom and choice. The empowerment approach provides the principles required to inform empowerment practice in the context of cyber victimization. Powerless victims become empowered when they gain power an access to resources (Rafferty, 2021). Empowerment as an element of recovery, overcome difficulties related with victim's problem, develop skills to enable victims to move on with their lives (Ullman & Townsend, 2008). Empowering improvements in women's attitudes result in new values that encourage women to escape negative situation in their lives. Empowerment practice builds on strengths of women. For personal power is regained by supporting and creating avenues for females to make decisions about their own lives and to make their own choices without threat and fear (Wood, 2014). It should be recognized that when female victims begin to believe in themselves, they gain an understanding of who they are, become aware of what is unfavorable about their circumstance and how they could be in a stronger position, and realize what they can do to continue improving themselves in each situation (Choi et al., 2010).

### ***Benefit of victim empowerment***

Victim support or victim assistance also known as victim empowerment and support. Victim empowerment refers to a strategy that facilitates access to and provides a variety of services to individuals who have experienced harm and trauma from violence toward restoring and building a healthy and peaceful. For victim empowerment can reduce short- or long-term distressing after-effects. By providing empowerment, depression, anxiety, stress, physical

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symptoms, a sense of threat, poor concentration, and traumatic reactions can be reduced (Nel & Wyk, 2013). Female victims can boost their self-esteem by demonstrating that they are not abnormal or to blame for their victimization and regaining a sense of power by making something positive out of a negative experience (Berg & Klopper, 2001).

### CONCLUSION

The empowerment theory would result in overall societal development. Females must be expected to be knowledgeable, skills, and self-esteem. Women's education and earnings have also given them more power. Women who are empowered are considered independent, and they have the ability to make decisions that will improve their lives. The true benefits of empowerment will not be realized unless females perceive themselves to be powerful. After gaining power, female victims may feel a sense of self-respect, confidence in their ability to make decisions, and the right to direct their own lives. The victim may be able to exert more control than the perpetrators or develop the skills necessary to change their harmful circumstances. Promoting the development of programs based on theory of empowerment, addressing the impact of cyber victimization, and monitoring female victims are all steps that must be taken. In addition, encouraging and providing opportunities for expanding and strengthening female victimization capacity should be implemented in other fields.

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