Research Paper

Cyberbullying and Emotional Intelligence among Senior Secondary School-going Adolescents of Sikkim

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is any kind of intentional harassment with the intent to harm others that are carried out via smartphones, the internet, and digital technologies. The objective of the present study is to study the relationship between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence and also to study the gender differences in cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence among school going adolescents. For the purpose, 170 adolescents, 85 males and 85 females were selected according to the purpose and the convenience of the researcher. Participants completed three set of form: Section A includes demographic information, Section B includes Cyber- Aggressor Scale (CYB-AGS), to assess cyberbullying behaviour among adolescent and Section C includes Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-24), to assess different dimensions of emotional intelligence. The results obtained show that there is no relationship between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence. No significant gender difference was observed in cyberbullying as well as in the different dimensions of emotional intelligence among school-going adolescents.

Keywords: *Cyber-Aggressor, Traits, Meta-Mood, Emotional Intelligence, School, Adolescents*

UNICEF (n.d) stated that cyberbullying is one of the major concerns worldwide. There are many chronic effects that a child faces due to cyberbullying. Prevalence of cyberbullying is observed to increase during COVID-19 lockdown as it has led to the increase in the screen time among people of all the age groups. During COVID-19 lockdown people around the world including children seemed to spend more time on social media than pre-pandemic (António et al., 2023). According to Smith et al. (2008), cyberbullying is aggression perpetrated by someone against any person or person known to be generally incapable to protect themselves via electronic media such as email, Twitter, Instagram, texts, or messages. Buelga et al. (2019) reported bullying takes place whenever someone intentionally harms someone else; there is a persistent imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, which can be either physical or psychological. Cyberbullying is comparable to conventional bullying and any other type of bullying in which the target of the bullying does so with the intention of causing that target physical or psychological harm. The bully is just physically absent from the scene and is now hidden behind a screen.

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During pre-pandemic, 58% of American parents surveyed by the APA (2017) reported concern about the effects of social media on their children's physical and mental health. Bullying has an effect on adolescents' self-esteem, which appears to be where it has the most of an influence. By definition, cyberbullying is violent action that is repeated and carried out with the goal to hurt the victim (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). The aggressor's primary goal is to intimidate, harass, threaten, or cause harm. During the lockout, cyberbullying has become more commonplace globally. There are certain characteristics of cyberbullying, including an imbalance of power, repeated displays of violent behaviour, and the existence of malicious intent. Globally, cyberbullying is increasing without regard to differences in culture, geography, or learning environment. According to research from the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017), worldwide, cyberbullying affects 5 to 21% of children and adolescents.

Theories are there to provide a causal explanation of cyberbullying- Glasser's choice theory and Hirschi's social bond theory. Glasser's choice theory explains that people cannot be given responsibility for their behaviour that includes psychological problems as psychological problems are categories into mental disorder (Glasser, 1985). Theory also explains that people experience problems with other people, in such cases people try to change other people's behaviour instead of changing their own behaviour. Hirschi's social bond theory (1969) explains that there are four bonds of social elements- attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. This theory is based on the belief that people with low social bond are at higher risk of becoming the victims of cyberbullying whereas people with high social bonding are very less likely to become the victims of cyberbullying or engaging in the activities of cyberbullying.

One of the personality traits that can be recognised in relation to cyberbullying is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is described as "a type of intelligence that involves the ability to process emotional information and use it in reasoning and other cognitive activities (Singer & Salovey, 1988). Emotional intelligence can be seen as some of the potent protective factors among teenagers against school bullying or cyberbullying. According to studies, both the perpetrators and the targets of cyberbullying have poor EQ (Zych et al., 2018). Baroncelli and Ciucci (2014) study explains that an inability to comprehend one's feelings is a factor in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

Gender needs to be taken into consideration while understanding the component of effective bullying intervention and prevention programs. While women are seen as social, understanding, and sensitive, men are seen as strong and independent. As a result, guys engage in cyberbullying behaviour more frequently than females. Relational hostility and bullying are the two most prevalent forms of bullying that appear to be influenced by gender. Males are frequently perceived as the physical bullies, but women are frequently perceived as using relational aggression or bullying covertly (Devine & Lloyd, 2012). Women bullying is observed in a passive form that frequently involves actions like verbal abuse, rumour-mongering, and gossiping. Female bullies frequently have other people who back them in their actions, so they do not bully alone. Accordingly, research indicates that girls are more prone to engage in verbal cyberbullying behaviour than boys are to engage in physical bullying (Kowalski et al., 2014).

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Rationale of the Study

In the past few years there has been an increase in the incidents of cyberbullying among adolescents. Such cases had emerged rapidly during lockdown pandemics. The increase in the screen times of people and dependence on the social media platform, abuse on these platforms has increased. During a pandemic where everyone– students, teachers, employees, etc. are exposed to social media, studying the impact of cyberbullying and its determinants will be beneficial for understanding both bully and victims as cyberbullying leaves a person with psychological trauma. Understanding emotional intelligence is crucial in the context of cyberbullying as it contradicts the notion of cyberbullying. Worldwide, numerous studies have been carried out that explain how cyberbullying is increasing in the younger population though there is paucity of research on cyberbullying in the Indian context. The psychological impact of cyberbullying among the adolescents has not been explored much. Cyberbullying has a worldwide impact and affects the mental health of people all over the world. UNESCO shows that around 5 to 21% of the children and adolescent population have been impacted by cyberbullying worldwide. The focus of the present study is to add rich literature on cyberbullying and emotional intelligence and gather data to understand how emotional intelligence can act as a perpetuating factor in cyberbullies or not.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence among school-going adolescents of Sikkim.
2. To study the gender differences in cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence (i.e., emotional clarity, emotional attention and emotional repair) among school-going adolescents of Sikkim.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant negative correlation between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence among school-going adolescents of Sikkim.
2. School-going adolescent boys will score higher on cyberbullying compared to the school-going adolescent girls of Sikkim.
3. School-going adolescent girls will score higher on different dimensions of emotional intelligence (i.e., emotional clarity, emotional attention and emotional repair) compared to the adolescent boys of Sikkim.

METHOD

Research Design

The study was carried out through a quantitative method. Standardised questionnaires were used to collect data. The study does not focus on the in-depth data hence a quantitative research design was selected. The sample was selected through the process of purposive sampling according to the purpose of the study as well as through convenience sampling according to the convenience of the researcher.

Sample

For the study, 170 (85 boys and 85 girls) school-going adolescents between the age ranges of 15-18 years were selected (Age Mean = 16.52 & SD =0.94). The sample selected was both adolescent boys and girls studying in four different senior secondary schools of East Sikkim in 11th and 12th class.

Participant Inclusion Criteria
- Students from 11th and 12th class
- Both boys and girls
- School students who were regular in attending classes.
- Students who were not having major physical/psychiatric illnesses.
- Students who gave consent for participation in the study.

Ethical Consideration
- Permission was taken from the participants for data collection
- Confidentiality: Ensuring privacy and confidentiality of personal information
- Non-inclusion of subject's personal information in data files
- Strict anonymity was also maintained throughout the study.
- The students were made sure that they can leave the study any time they want to and no payment was given for the participation in the study.

Tool Used
1. **Socio-Demographic Details (Self, 2021):** Personal details of the participants such as name, age, gender, class, religion, types of school, annual income, etc. were collected.
2. **Cyber-Aggressor Scale (Buelga et al., 2020):** The Cyber-Aggressor Scale (CYB-AGS) is an updated version of adolescent aggression which measures aggression seen through mobile phone and internet scales. The modified and updated final scale includes 18 items. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 5(always). It has satisfactory reliability as Cronbach's alpha for the global scale was acceptable (0.88).
3. **The Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995):** The Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) is used to measure perceived emotional intelligence which includes people's beliefs and attitudes about their own emotional experience. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale. In this study, a shorter version of TMMS is used. It includes 24 items from the original scales (8 questions for each subscale is used) and has a higher internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha for attention =.90, Clarity = .90, repair = .86) and has satisfactory test-retest reliability (r values from .60 to .83).

The Procedure for Data Collection
The questionnaire was selected for the research and an in-depth understanding was done on the topic. Questionnaire was selected keeping in mind the aim of the research. The questionnaire was distributed to the high school students studying in different senior secondary schools of East Sikkim. Self-report data were collected following a standard data collection protocol which also included a brief description of the study's purpose. All the participants were assured that the responses would be kept confidential and would be used for the study purpose. After getting the response from the participants, responses were taken for the statistical analysis.

Statistical Techniques Used
Keeping in view the objectives and hypotheses, different statistical techniques were used for analysing the data. The quantization data was analysed using SPSS version 27. The items were analysed to check the Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha), Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis. For the inferential statistics, techniques like correlation, and t-test

were used to measure the significant relationship and significant differences among different variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study focuses on the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional intelligence among school-going adolescents. Cyberbullying as defined is an intentional, aggressive, and repetitive behaviour by a person (cyberbully) who engages in a harmful action on another (victim) who generally cannot defend themselves via electronic medium such as the internet and smartphone (Buelga et al., 2019). Previous studies have talked about the prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents where a study by Modecki et al. (2014) reported that there is a 16% perpetration rate of cyberbullying among adolescents.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Distribution of the Sample (N=170)

Variable	Category	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
		85	**50%**	**85**	**50%**	**170**	**100%**
Age	15 years	17	20%	7	8.2%	24	11.8%
	16 years	21	24.7%	41	48.2%	62	36.5%
	17 years	34	40%	22	25.9%	56	32.9%
	18 years	13	15.3%	15	17.6%	28	16.5%
Class	11th class	33	38.8%	26	30.6%	59	34.7%
	12th class	52	61.2%	59	69.4%	111	65.3%
Types of school	Private school	71	83.5%	79	92.9%	150	88.2%
	Govt. school	14	16.5%	6	7.1%	20	11.8%
Religion	Hindu	78	91.8%	78	91.8%	156	91.8%
	Muslim	4	4.7%	5	5.9%	9	5.3%
	Sikh	2	2.4%	1	1.2%	3	1.8%
	Christian	1	1.2%	1	1.2%	2	1.2%
Annual Family Income	< 6 lac Rs.	48	56.5%	55	64.7%	103	60.6%
	6 lac -12 lac Rs.	28	32.9%	25	29.4%	53	31.2%
	>12 lac Rs.	9	10.6%	5	5.9%	14	8.2%

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic distribution of the sample of the study. In the present study, 170 samples were selected out of which 85 were boys and 85 were girls. The sample was also selected from the students belonging to class categories of 11th (34.7%) and 12th (65.3%). The age ranges from 15 years (11.8%) to 18 years (16.5%). The majority of the participants are of 16 years (36.5%). The majority of the participants were from the Hindu religion (91.8%). Participants belonging to all the socio-economic strata were selected in the study where the majority of the participants belonged to 'less than 6 lac' strata (60.6%).

Table 2: Determination of significance of the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional intelligence of school-going adolescents (N=170)

Variable	Mean	SD	CyB	EI	EA	EC	ER
CyB	20.26	4.90	1.00				
EI	84.61	12.80	.007	1.00			
EA	27.29	5.60	.045	.696**	1.00		
EC	27.99	5.52	.107	.768**	.319	1.00	
ER	29.32	6.08	-.125	.767**	.257	.416	1.00

*p<0.05 and **p<0.01

Table 2 shows the correlation of the variables, between cyberbullying (CyB) and different variables of emotional intelligence i.e., emotional attention (EA), emotional clarity (EC), and emotional repair (ER). No correlation is found between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI). The results shows that there is no significant relationship between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence as the correlation value between cyberbullying and emotional intelligence, emotional attention, emotional clarity, and emotional repair comes out $p > 0.01$ i.e., r= 0.007, r = .045, r = .107, and r = -.125 respectively. The possible reason for the non-significant correlation between cyberbullying and EI could be because cyberbullying is the non-physical form of bullying as it is done behind the screen and the bully is not aware of the seriousness and extent of the damage one is causing on the other person. Hence, a bully is not able to assess the emotion of the other person when they are performing the activity. Powell-Lunder (2019) writes that perception of the sender and receiver plays a role in interpretation of the text. He also explained about the self-esteem of the teenagers which also reportedly leads to the skewed interpretation of the intention of the other people. Hence, hypothesis 1 that "There will be a significant negative correlation between cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence among school-going adolescents of Sikkim" is not accepted.

Table 3: Mean, SD, and t-value scores on cyberbullying and emotional intelligence of school-going adolescents concerning gender variations (N=170)

Category	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Cyberbullying	Boys	85	20.75	6.41	168	-1.302	.195
	Girls	85	19.78	2.58			
Emotional attention	Boys	85	27.20	5.98	198	.205	.838
	Girls	85	27.38	5.20			
Emotional clarity	Boys	85	28.95	5.34	168	-2.293	0.23
	Girls	85	27.04	5.56			
Emotional repair	Boys	85	29.52	5.77	168	-.415	.679
	Girls	85	29.13	5.40			

Table 3 shows the comparison of boys and girls on two variables, cyberbullying and different dimensions of emotional intelligence. No significant gender difference is observed in cyberbullying. No significant gender difference is observed in the three dimensions of emotional intelligence i.e. emotional attention, emotional clarity, and emotional repair. The result of the study shows that there is no gender difference in cyberbullying. This might be due to the fact that Cyber-aggression scale measures both direct and indirect behaviour. It is believed that boys are more likely to be engaged in the co-occurrence of the traditional

bullying and cyberbullying whereas girls are more likely to be engaged in the covert or relational form of bullying (Bjorkqvist et. al., 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; O¨sterman, 1999). The results of the study are in alignment with the previous studies (Griezzel et al., 2012; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007) who found that no gender differences in victims and aggressors are found in the study. Hence, hypothesis 2 that "School-going boys will score high on cyberbullying than school-going girls of Sikkim" is not accepted.

Table 3 also shows gender differences among different dimensions of emotional intelligence. The result shows that gender difference was not found in the three dimensions of emotional intelligence i.e. emotional attention, emotional repair, and emotional clarity. However, the mean difference shows that girls scored slightly higher than boys on emotional clarity dimensions. The possible reason for the result might be due to the fact that gender stereotypes might inhibit male to expressing their emotions. Bosson et al. (2021) explains in the research that no consistent sex difference in emotional experience was observed when daily life and emotion were measured. They suggested that women tend to amplify certain emotions whereas male tend to suppress certain emotions. Hence, hypothesis 3 that "School-going adolescent girls will score higher on different dimensions of emotional intelligence (i.e., emotional clarity, emotional attention and emotional repair) than school-going boys of Sikkim" is not accepted.

Certainly as observed in this study, emotional intelligence does not influence the cyberbully perpetration in adolescents. Perpetration rate of cyberbullying was observed to be high among adolescents due to change in the technologies over time, especially during COVID pandemic times. In addition, there are many factors that are observed to be playing a role in the cyberbullying tendency such as adverse effects of the childhood maltreatment (Wang et al., 2019), life domains such as self, family, and peers (Kabiri et al., 2020) and, anger or provocation (Gradinger et al., 2010) is related to the cyberbullying perpetration. Certain environmental conditions might also play an important role in cyber-aggression. In terms of gender differences, both boys and girls are equally vulnerable to engage in cyberbullying activities. They are mainly driven by hormones like testosterone which biologically plays an important role in showing aggressive behaviour (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). Social norms might play a role in understanding gender differences as earlier it was believed that there are certain roles and behaviours that are expected out of the particular gender (Eagly, 1997; Eagly & Wood, 2012) but now as the times have changed women are getting more expressive as compared to before.

CONCLUSION

Hence, it is concluded that there is no relationship found between cyberbullying and emotional intelligence. Understanding the causal factors playing a role in cyberbullying should not focus on the emotional intelligence other personal and environmental characteristics needs to be taken in consideration. It is observed that gender is not related to cyberbullying. More studies are required in the future to understand the precipitating and perpetuating factors that are involved in cyberbullying. Protective factors such as family roles also need to be taken into consideration for future intervention to be successfully initiated. Causal factors that are involved in cyberbullying need to be understood as many victims of cyberbullying are children who experienced such traumatic incidents during childhood. Preventive measures like taking regular surveys, checking the mental health, ensuring anonymity of the victims, and providing space where they can openly talk about

their issues can be effective measures to prevent cyberbullying. Hence, discussing cyberbullying based on gender should not be taken into consideration. Adolescents are vulnerable to engage in cyberbullying behaviour irrespective of their gender.

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Conflict of Interest
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