

An Integral Study of Mental Well Being of Cyber-Victims Associated with Non- Reporting of Crime

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the mental well-being of cyber-victims associated with non-reporting of crime. This is a quantitative study and is administered to 240 participants (120 reported and non-reported cyber victims and 120 male and female unreported cyber victims). Random sampling method was used to draw the samples from the population. The mental health of the respondents was assessed using Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). This study designed to uncover the issues related to the mental wellbeing of those victims of unreported cyber crimes. Statical technique of independent sample T test is used to compare the means of the different groups of reported and unreported cyber crime victims and to compare the mean differences in gender. The result showed that there is a high significant difference in mental wellbeing among reported and unreported cyber crime victims and male and female unreported cyber crime victims.

Keywords: *Mental Well Being, Reported and Non-Reported Cyber Victims, Male and Female Unreported Cyber Victims*

Proliferation of digital technologies has given rise to an increased risk of cyber victimization. As cybercrime continues to grow, it has become imperative to understand the impact of these experiences on individual's mental wellbeing. The advent of the internet and digital communication platforms has transformed the way people interact, fostering connectivity and convenience. However, this technological progress has also led to the emergence of cyber victimization, encompassing a range of harmful incidents such as online abuse, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and identity theft. Understanding the impact of these experiences on mental health is crucial for designing effective prevention strategies and support mechanisms. The psychological impact of cyber victimization can be profound, leading to symptoms of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even suicidal tendencies. Understanding the mental wellbeing of cyber victims is essential for multiple reasons. Firstly, it helps to recognize the true extent of the problem by identifying the prevalence and severity of mental health issues among those who have experienced cyber victimization. Secondly, studying the psychological impact can provide valuable insights into the underlying processes and potential risk factors associated with cyber victimization. Lastly, it allows for the development of effective prevention strategies

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and interventions to support and address the mental health needs of cyber victims. Research on the mental wellbeing of cyber victims is still in its infancy, and there is a need for more integral studies that delve into various dimensions. This includes understanding the specific psychological distress experienced by cyber victims, exploring the emotional impact, investigating potential coping mechanisms, and evaluating the effectiveness of support systems and interventions. By conducting such studies, we can gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by cyber victims and work towards promoting their mental well-being. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to conduct a comprehensive study on the mental wellbeing of cyber victims. The study examines the various psychological consequences of cyber victimization, explore potential risk factors, and investigate available coping mechanisms and support networks.

The non-reporting of cyber crimes is a significant issue with various implications. Non-reporting of cyber crimes leads to an underestimation of the true magnitude of the problem. Official statistics on cyber crimes may not reflect the actual number of incidents occurring, leading to a lack of understanding about the extent and seriousness of the issue. When cyber crimes go unreported, victims are unable to seek justice. This lack of reporting allows perpetrators to operate with impunity, potentially causing harm to more individuals. This lack of data limits efforts to develop effective cyber-security strategies, puts other individuals at risk, and hampers the ability to implement preventative measures at a larger scale. Non-reporting perpetuates a lack of awareness about cyber crimes and their potential consequences. When incidents go unreported, the public remains unaware of the risks, making them more susceptible to falling victim to similar crimes. Reporting incidents can play a crucial role in educating individuals about cyber threats and empowering them to protect themselves.

Addressing the non-reporting of cyber crimes requires efforts to increase public awareness, reduce stigma, enhance trust in law enforcement agencies, provide secure and confidential reporting mechanisms, and ensure that victims have access to support services. This study aims at finding the psychological impact of non-reporting the crime and its social consequences.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study intends to investigate the mental well-being of cyber-victims associated with non-reporting of crime with respect to the variable, namely mental well-being and thus entitled, 'An integral study of mental well-being of cyber victims associated with non-reporting of crime.'

Specific Objectives

1. To study the influence of non-reporting of cybercrime on mental well-being of cyber victims.
2. To study the differences in mental well-being among cyber victims of those who reported and unreported the cyber crime.
3. To study the gender differences in mental well-being among cyber victims of those who not reported the cyber crime.

Hypothesis

1. **H₀₁**-There is no significant difference in mental wellbeing among reported and unreported cyber crime victims.

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2. **Ho2**-There is no significant difference in mental wellbeing among male and female unreported cyber crime victims.

Variables

- **Independent variable:** reported and unreported cyber crime victims, male and female unreported cyber crime victims.
- **Dependent variable:** mental well being

Sample

The sample for the present study consists of 240 cyber victims belonging to the age range of 18 to 25 years. Cyber victims who reported and not reported cyber crimes are randomly selected from different districts of Kerala.

Instruments

One measure was used in this study.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was used to assess the mental wellbeing of the cyber victims WEMWBS showed good content validity. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the single factor hypothesis. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.89. Test-retest reliability at one week was high (0.83). Social desirability bias was lower or similar to that of other comparable scales.

Procedure

For the purpose of the data collection the Cyber victims who reported and not reported cyber crimes are randomly selected from different districts of Kerala. It was ascertained to collect an equal number of reported and non- reported cyber victims that is 120 each. Data was collected through google forms from the people who belong to the sample group. The approximate time taken for the completion of the questionnaires was around 15 minutes. The responses obtained were scored based on the scoring criteria provided for each questionnaire in the manual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Analysis of Socio demographic details of the respondents

This chapter deals with the results and discussion obtained after the detailed statistical analysis of data which was collected for the present investigation. The results are then interpreted. The aim of the study is comparing the mental well-being of cyber-victims associated with non-reporting of crime. The data was collected from 240 participants (120 reported and non-reported cyber victims and 120 male and female unreported cyber victims) selected from Kerala. Random sampling method was used in this study as it makes the sampling more related to the purpose.

Table 1 Shows mean, SD, and t value of psychological variable Mental well-being among cyber victims reported and unreported cyber victims

Variables	Sample	Mean	t -value	Sig (2 tailed)
Mental well-being	Cyber victims (reported)	42.1	-2.8	.268
Mental well-being	Cyber victims (not reported)	45.8	-2.2	.252

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

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Table 1: Shows the mean Significance and t- value of mental well-being among cyber victims reported and unreported cyber victims. On this variable 42.1 and 45.8 are the mean scores obtained for the samples.

Table indicates that the mean, t-value and significance among cyber victims who reported and non-reported crime. Testing of hypothesis shows high significance which indicates the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, a significant difference in mental wellbeing is found. Mean analysis of the result indicates a slight change in mental wellbeing. The cyber victims who don't report crime shows higher mental being than those who reported.

The analyzed reason for this difference can be the environmental influences like the reaction of family and friends on reporting crime. The emotional trauma they had while investigatory procedures. Lack of effective involvement in corrective measures and Denial of justice.

The differences in mental well-being among the different group of cyber victims based on gender were tested in the research for the significance and the relevant results were obtained

Table 2 Shows mean and t value of psychological variable Mental well-being among male and female unreported cyber crime victims.

Variables	Sample	Mean	t -value	Sig (2 tailed)
Mental well being	Male Cyber victims (not reported)	42.6	-2.8	0.005
Mental well being	Female Cyber victims (not reported)	45.1	-2.8	0.005

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Table indicates the mean, t value and significance among cyber victims of those males and females. Testing of hypothesis shows high significance which indicates the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, a significant difference in mental wellbeing is found.

Mean analysis of the result indicates a slight change in mental wellbeing. The male cyber victims who don't report crime shows higher mental wellbeing than females.

Although men experience traumatic events more often than women overall, studies have shown that women are 2 to 3 times more likely to develop PTSD after experiencing a traumatic event than men: about 10% to 12% in women compared with 5% to 6% in men. Women have higher rates of re-experiencing events and of negative alterations in cognition or mood, dissociative responses, and a range of other post traumatic reactions.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Implications of the study

A study in cyber victims will raise the awareness about the psychological impact of cyber victimization. It can shed some light on the various mental health issues and negative emotions faced by cyber victims especially those who have not reported it. Non-reporting of cyber crimes leads to an underestimation of the true magnitude of the problem. Official statistics on cyber crimes may not reflect the actual number of incidents occurring, leading to a lack of understanding about the extent and seriousness of the issue. When cyber crimes go unreported, victims are unable to seek justice. This lack of reporting allows perpetrators

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to operate with impunity, potentially causing harm to more individuals. It also hampers law enforcement agencies' ability to identify and apprehend offenders. Non-reporting hinders the development of preventative measures and intervention strategies. Along with these factors, Study also want to prove the how mental wellbeing of a victim is also been affected by non-reporting the crime.

When cybercrimes go unreported, victims may not receive the necessary support and resources. Reporting a cybercrime allows victims to access support services, counseling, and legal assistance, which are crucial in their recovery and rebuilding process. Non-reporting denies victims the opportunity to receive the help they may desperately need. This indicates the importance of having a study in this area to know how much psychologically such cyber victims are affected. Studies in Cybercrimes can have broader societal impacts beyond the immediate victims. By not reporting these crimes, important information about emerging trends, vulnerabilities, and methods of attack is lost. This lack of data limits efforts to develop effective cyber security strategies, puts other individuals at risk, and hampers the ability to implement preventative measures at a larger scale. This study also tries to explore whether there are any gender vulnerabilities in mental wellbeing related to non-reporting of cybercrime in victims. This may reveal the hidden facts regarding the psychological impact on gender based victimization. This signifies the importance of gender based therapies and awareness s about victimization and its consequences. On-reporting perpetuates a lack of awareness about cybercrimes and their potential consequences. When incidents go unreported, the public remains unaware of the risks, making them more susceptible to falling victim to similar crimes. Reporting incidents can play a crucial role in educating individuals about cyber threats and empowering them to protect themselves.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is that it was conducted in an online method of data collection, so that it could not collect data with a face-to-face mode. As data collection was in an online mode, we can't completely depend upon the validity of the study. The emotional condition of the sample is also a key factor. As mentioned earlier, this study was conducted within a small sample. Sample of only 60 were taken. If we could enhance the study towards a large sample, we may get more clarified and reliable results. The study was concentrated upon Kerala alone. There may be changes according to the region, culture and nation. The study was a short-term study. The validity of the study is dependent upon the honesty of the participants who filled the questionnaire. Lack of interest or tiredness due to a greater number of items in the questionnaire might affect the study. This is a cross sectional study is limited to a particular country. In the quantitative study, the results are limited as they provide numerical description rather than detailed narrative and generally provide less elaborative accounts of human perception.

Scope for the Further Research

The study was limited to an age group in the Kerala state. Also, area wise classification (rural or urban) was not considered in this study. This classification on the basis of area will be more helpful in future research. The variables included in the present study were limited. Research can be improved by adding new samples and variables into this study. Sampling diversity can also be increased to improve the quality of the study.

CONCLUSION

The issue of unreported crime in India has a bad impact on society and criminal justice system. The psychological effect on cyber victims of unreported crimes is an area of interest

for research as it effects the whole functioning of the individual and therefore the society. Rigorous growth in the rate of cyber-crime made a great hike in number of cyber victims who avoid reporting the crime. This shows the significance of a psychological study. The study investigates the mental wellbeing of cyber victims who evade reporting the crime. Mental wellbeing is an integral part of an individual's ability to learn, work, and contribute to society which defines ones existence and functioning. It is identified that majority of the cyber crimes are getting either unreported or unidentified due to various reasons. This very peculiarity of cyber world gives rise to a larger population of cyber victims and their mental health is often ignored. Main aim of the study was to find the impact of non-reported crime on mental wellbeing of cyber victims and the gender influence in such condition. The sample consisted of 180 cyber victims of which 60 belonged to the male category and 60 belonged to the female category of non-reported cyber victims. The data were collected individually and scale used is Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). Independent sample 't' test were used for statistical analysis. The results of the study shows that there is a significant Impact on mental wellbeing for both reported and non-reported cyber victims Also, the study concluded that there is a significant gender differences in mental wellbeing among non-reported cyber victims.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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