

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) Study of University Students about Cyberbullying in Multan

Ayesha Mustafa¹ Madieha Akram² Aamir Hayat³

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Sociology, The Women University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ Ayeshaygull935@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, The Women University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ dr.madieha@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor/Head, School of Sociology, Minhaj University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ draamir.soc@mul.edu.pk

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Abstract: Cyberbullying is defined as the use of digital technology to harass, threaten, or embarrass another person repeatedly. It involves the misuse of social media platforms to harass those people who are unable to defend themselves. A study to assess the knowledge, Attitude and practices about cyberbullying done among female university students of the faculty of social sciences at Women's University, Multan. A cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of 310 female students. Data was collected with the use of a structured self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire includes some demographic questions and ten questions to assess the knowledge of students about cyberbullying, ten questions to assess the practices, and ten questions related to the attitude of the students towards cyberbullying. Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) is used to see the Chi-Square and correlation. Results showed that the majority of the students have a higher level of knowledge about cyberbullying and participate in preventive activities, and over half of the students express a negative attitude toward cyberbullying. The study highlights that there is a need for awareness programs, digital security, and policies to empower students to wisely handle cyberbullying incidents.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Female Students, Knowledge, Attitude and Practices, Women's University Multan.



Corresponding Author:

Madieha Akram

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, The Women University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

✉ dr.madieha@gmail.com

Introduction

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies to repeatedly harm or harass others on purpose. It is a growing problem in today's digital world, especially among university students who spend a lot of time on social media. Cyberbullying takes place through digital platforms like social media and messaging apps, making it easier for bullies to target their victims. Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that has become more prominent in recent years as young people use various electronic devices such as computers and cell phones. Internet- cyberbullying is increasing at an unprecedented rate in the online environment (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Research suggests that the increase in online sharing among young people, such as university students, contributes to cyberbullying. The effects of cyberbullying are very serious, leading to mental health issues like depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). This is because it's important to understand how much university student know about cyber bullying and how they feel about it and how to handle it when they face it while many university students know about cyber bullying but they lack detail of its different form of cyber bullying and the severity of its affect and how to seek help (Balakrishnan et al., 2015).

Online technology, especially on popular websites such as Facebook, is attractive to users because these sites provide many conveniences. Therefore, it is difficult to find young people, especially students, online who participate in one or more social networking sites, such as Facebook, which is popular among young people, especially undergraduate students (Kibe et al., 2022). Social networking sites are widely used, and Facebook ranks high on the

list of favourite platforms of students (Yang & Brown, 2015). Undergraduate students use social media such as Facebook to establish relationships, especially when they are physically separated from their partners. Cyberbullying among university students found that social media, business, and educational politics are some of the most common areas of use on Facebook. As warnings among university students, social networking sites are various areas of interest, including entertainment, communication, online games, research, learning, etc. Additionally, many students do not take cyberbullying seriously; they think it's a joke or a normal part of online interaction (Bashir et al., 2021).

These attitudes prevent effective interventions and stop them from seeking support. Some students try to ignore this issue while others take action on it or seek help from friends, family or the university. However, most of the students don't talk about the cyberbullying issue because they are afraid, ashamed, and don't take action on it (Mishna et al., 2010). There are several types of cyber bullying such as flaming (aggressive and rude messages via chatrooms), harassment (offensive messages for hurting someone), outing (sending private information which should be kept private), miss information (spreading false information about anyone) and sexting (sending shameful videos or images) etc. (Shurtleff, 2023).

Some students might not know that sending someone's private information is a form of cyberbullying. Students are connected to each other through the internet, unfortunately, which becomes the main tool for cyberbullying, while technology is a great blessing for society (Hossain & Yasmin, 2022). At the university level, it can be viewed as a bridge to this behaviour from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Cyberbullying is beginning to examine the continuum of cyberbullying that occurs in universities, colleges and beyond. When students are involved in cyberbullying as a bully or a victim, it has three terms. Long-term, medium-term, and short-term effects on people's mental health. This can even lead to dropout from university, social isolation, and, in severe cases, thoughts of suicide (Lee & WU, 2018).

Cyberbullying is more harmful to students than physical violence. In some cases, it led to suicide. Continuous use of social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and WhatsApp increases the risk of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is also a global problem, causing mental health issues in students, and it also affects their academic performance, since appearing online on social media platforms is a normal part of university students' lives. Cyberbullying affects their educational and emotional well-being (Webber et al., 2018).

Being harmful to others by sending and posting harmful material or involve in other forms of aggression by using the internet or other technologies, cyberbullying is a serious problem that effect society as a whole, it takes many forms like fraud, blackmailing, spam and harmful messages or stealing someone's identity, these activities have real and serious negative effects on people's lives. Researchers and mental health experts have started to work on this issue. Cyberbullying puts teens in danger (Aricak et al., 2009).

Hurtful behaviours like lying or pretending someone else online, threatening or spreading rumours or false information, sharing photos or videos without their consent and creating harmful websites. Victims of cyberbullying show some behavioural attitudes, such as getting nervous or upset when using the computer, avoiding social activities, and not talking about their online activities, or using the computer at night or in secret, sometimes laughing or having fun while using the computer, but they avoid talking about it. It's important to know how cyberbullying happens as different methods require different prevention strategies. It's important to understand that for some university students, moving from college to university is an existing experience for some and also a difficult or stressful one (Sennett et al., 2003).

Review of Literature

Khine et al. (2020) stated that young people are more vulnerable to cyberbullying during the transitional period of adjusting to university life because it is a difficult time when they are looking for new friends. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) without parental supervision increases the chances of cyberbullying-related behaviours.

Hinduja and Patchin (2011) said that bullying has moved online because it gives power to bullies; they attack without showing who they are. They are a cause of more emotional harm. Bullies think that they are safe because no



one can trace or stop them. On the other hand, victims are scared and alone. Their emotional pain lasts longer than any physical injury. Cyberbullying is much more common and never really stops.

Shariff (2009) stated that it has been identified that roles in cyberbullying, legitimate bullies (who believe that they are better than others and have right to mistreat them especially if that person is different), Targets of bullying (these people are bullied because the bullies think they are different or unimportant), Revenge victims (these are the first bullies to be cyberbullied through revenge), Interfering bystanders (these individuals either support the bully or simply watch the bullying without helping the victim).

Lee and WU (2018) explored that teenagers are more bullied than others. Girls are more likely to engage in gossip on the internet, while boys are more likely to share photos or videos. Ladies are more likely to be cyberbullied, while boys are more likely to be bullied. The problem with sexting is that the content is really shared with others, and the girls often has no control over it, this can be intentional and is often used to bully girls and the effects of sexting are more severe leading to problems such as dating violence, black mailing, peer pressure, cyberbullying and even suicide in some cases.

Al-Alosi et al. (2017) stated that there is a relationship between cyberbullying and emotional problems such as anxiety, depression and stress in cyberbullying victims. These students often experience anxiety, depression, self-confidence, powerlessness, somatisation, loneliness, anger, insomnia, inattention, low education, absenteeism and suicidal ideation, bullying. On the other hand, parents' different behaviors such as dissatisfaction aggression behavior, substance abuse, aggression, anxiety, depression psychometric symptoms and self-harm medium. Cyberbullying is commonly seen in peer groups, usually occurring where people come together, such as in universities and extracurricular activities.

Gritzalis (2004) described that the anonymity provided by digital technologies and the ease of creating and managing user profiles on social networking sites. The most obvious example of negative consequences is sexual cyberbullying detected by peers. Peer-to-peer cyberbullying is an activity that often occurs within families, where the perpetrators are unknown and send or publish offensive, hateful images, text, or visuals to any person or group. A cyberbully uses internet technology skills to disguise himself/herself and tries to control the victim, making the victim feel bad behaviours in online content include lying, masking, imitating, threatening, insulting and publishing content, and other non-photographic and non-visual materials used with permission.

Myers and Cowie (2019) stated that although some universities have begun to take steps to combat cyberbullying. Concerns remain about the effectiveness of these measures. This is a problem because university students need to have a say in this assessment and can provide insight to make this assessment appropriate and relevant in a group. It's important to consider the unique living conditions of university students when developing cyberbullying interventions, as they are only effective when they are of the right age.

Merrick (2023) narrated that to address cyberbullying issues, new prevention strategies and responses must be developed based on university students' experiences with cyberbullying and their newly created life stages away from home, with special consideration given to relationships and diminished elder care. For example, students understand existing cyberbullying programs like policies, resources, or services. More research is needed that includes university students as participants and determines their perception of cyberbullying and how they can address this issue.

Heffernan and Bosetti (2021) stated that indiscriminate reporting of bullying is a problem not only because universities do not understand the seriousness of the problem, but also because students are exposed to severe mistreatment. Without backing bullying on a regular basis can lead to a variety of negative issues, including stress, anxiety, loneliness, low self-regard, suicidal thoughts, poor physical health, defiance and poor academic performance.

Schenk & Fremouw (2012) stated that without the support of trusted people and social networks similar to groups of musketeers, this impact may be severe and unrecoverable in the absence of social networks like fellowship groups and the support of dependable individuals. At one time of age, over half of the scholars who targeted cyberbullying experienced negative consequences from the act of being mean, but there could also be more serious problems, such as young people who are not able to get everything they need.



Cyberbullying has gained significant attention in the last decade (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Real-life power models, such as physical strength or age, which explain the information taught by experts in the field of cyberbullying, in traditional bullying, it seems necessary to avoid physical violence and potential threats; however, applying the physical activity and age analogy to online content may be difficult. Furthermore, the unbalanced power may also lie in the victim's advantage in bullying. One such benefit is belonging to the same in-group in interpersonal connections, in groups, and in an online sense, there may be people who join or participate in the same chatrooms and meeting places.

Objectives

1. To find out the knowledge of cyberbullying among female university students.
2. To highlight the attitude and practices of cyberbullying among female university students.
3. To see the coping strategies to deal with cyberbullying.

Research Questions

1. Which platform is used for cyberbullying?
2. Do you think cyberbullying is a serious issue?
3. Can cyberbullying lead to suicidal thoughts or behaviors?
4. Do you use privacy settings on social media to protect yourself from cyberbullying?
5. Would you report cyberbullying if you witnessed it?

Methodology

This study designs quantitative research to systematically analyse the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of university students about cyberbullying in Multan. A Survey questionnaire was used to examine knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of female university students regarding cyberbullying. This design is used because it allows for the collection of detailed information from a large sample. The survey questionnaire includes questions about their knowledge, attitude and practices. It consists of a binary scale to measure their knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of university students about cyberbullying. A simple random technique was used to select female students of social sciences from the women's university in Multan. Age range of the population varied from 18 to 27 years, and a demographic form was developed to seek personal information of the respondents like age, gender and education. The total population of this study consisted of 1,590 female students enrolled in the faculty of social sciences at Women's University Multan.

To determine sample size, the Rao soft online sample size calculator was used with a 95% confidence level 5% margin of error and a 50% response distribution. The calculated sample size was 310 female students. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the questionnaire, five students were selected randomly for pretesting from Women's University Multan. The participants provided feedback on the instrument clarity and overall effectiveness. After collecting data, the analysis was made by putting it into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive Statistics were applied to analyse the KAP components using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to understand students' knowledge levels, attitudes, and practices. Inferential Statistics to perform a statistical test of correlation to know the relationships between demographic variables and KAP scores.

Table 1

What is the Most Common Form of cyberbullying?

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Harassing Messages | 160 | 51.6 |
| Embarrassing posts | 46 | 14.8 |
| Fake profile | 93 | 30.0 |
| Exclusion from online groups | 6 | 1.9 |
| Other | 5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 310 | 100.0 |



Table 1 shows the results. Harassing messages were the most common form of cyberbullying experienced by 51.6% respondents (n= 160). Fake profiles were the second most common form of cyberbullying experienced by 30.0% respondents (n= 93). Embracing post experienced by 14.8 % and exclusion from online groups was experienced by 1.9% (n=6) of respondents. The most common form of cyberbullying experienced by the respondents is harassing messages, which suggests that online harassment is a significant concern.

Table 2

Do You Know Someone Who Has Been Cyberbullied?

| Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 143 | 46.1 |
| No | 167 | 53.9 |
| Total | 310 | 100.0 |

Table 2 shows that 46.1% (N=143) of respondents know someone who has been cyberbullied, and 53.9% (N=167) of respondents do not know someone who has been cyberbullied. The majority of respondents do not know someone who has been cyberbullied. This suggests that students have a lack of awareness and empathy for the victims of cyberbullying.

Table 3

Do you Use Privacy Settings on Social Media to Protect Yourself from Cyberbullying?

| Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 273 | 88.1 |
| No | 37 | 11.9 |
| Total | 310 | 100.0 |

Table 3 shows the results regarding the practices of students regarding cyberbullying. The majority, 88.1% (N=273), of respondents use privacy settings on social media for protection from cyberbullying, while 11.9% respondents do not use privacy settings on social media. The results indicate that the majority of students know about cyberbullying, so they use privacy settings on social media for protection from cyberbullying incidents.

Table 4

Correlation

| | | Knowledge | Practices |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Knowledge | Pearson Correlation | | .963** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 1 | .000 |
| | N | 310 | 310 |
| Practices | Pearson Correlation | .963** | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | 1 |
| | N | 310 | 310 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table indicates that the correlation between knowledge and practices is .963 with a corresponding p value of .000. Since the p value is less than 0.5, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is calculated that there is a positive relationship between knowledge and practices. The correlation coefficient indicates that the correlation is statistically significant, $P < 0.01$.

$r = .963$ and p value .000 which is less than 0.05



Table 5

Correlation

| | | Knowledge | Practices |
|------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Perception | Pearson Correlation | | .800** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 1 | .000 |
| | N | 310 | 310 |
| Attitude | Pearson Correlation | .800** | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | 1 |
| | N | 310 | 310 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table No. 5 indicates that the correlation between attitude and perception of the students is .800 with a corresponding p value of .000, since the p value is less than 0.5. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is calculated that there is a positive relationship between perception and attitude. Correlation coefficients indicate that the relation is statistically significant at the 0.1 level.

R = .800, p-value is .000, which is less than 0.05.

Conclusion

This study examined the knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP) regarding cyberbullying among female university students at the faculty of social sciences, Women's University Multan. The findings revealed that the majority of students have higher knowledge about cyberbullying and view it as a serious issue, and show empathy towards victims. The majority demonstrated positive practices such as using privacy settings, avoiding harmful content, and reporting these issues. A number of students have a negative attitude toward cyberbullying. They ignored these issues and think cyberbullying is fun or a joke.

Suggestions

1. Universities may conduct seminars and workshops to raise awareness among students about cyberbullying, its effects and how to prevent it.
2. Educate students about ethics and online behaviours through social media programs.
3. Tell the youth about the reporting system that students feel free to report cyber victims.
4. Implement strict policies for cyberbullying.



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