Cyberbullying in Pakistan: Positioning the Aggressor, Victim, and Bystander

Muhammad Shaban Rafi
University of Management and Technology

This study explores cyberbullying prevalence, causes, reasons, and preventive measures from the perspective of victims and bystanders. The data were gathered from 329 male and female students of different age groups through an open-ended questionnaire and cyberbullying confession pages. Constructivist thematic framework was applied to look for commonly emerging patterns in the data. The study revealed that the likelihood to become a victim to cyberbullying decreased with an increase in age. However, there was no association between gender and cyberbullying. The study showed that various linguistic resources were exploited by the aggressors to victimize the participants. However, being sophomoric users of social media sites and having offline disputes were the core reasons of cyberbullying among a majority of victims. The participants valued the support of parents and friends, and showed faith in the preventive measures taken by educational institutes and Federal Investigation Agency, Pakistan against cyberbullying assaults. Findings from this study contribute to the research on cyberbullying, which is still in its infancy in Pakistan and may help in formulating cyberbullying prevention program.

Keywords. Cyberbullying, Prevalence, Causes, Reasons, and Preventions, Pakistan

Surfing the Internet has opportunities and consequences. The Internet helps us advance in this ever increasingly connected world. In an effort to cope with the growing challenges of this globalized world, teens, adolescents, young adults, and adults are compelled to equip themselves with modern gadgets such as smart phones and computers. Shah (2019) reported that the use of mobile phone and computer among schoolchildren are astonishingly increasing in Pakistan. The

Muhammad Shaban Rafi, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Management and Technology, C-II, Johar Town, Lahore., Pakistan.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Muhammad Shaban Rafi, University of Management and Technology, C-II, Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan. E-mail: shaban@umt.edu.pk

schoolchildren use computers not only to complete their school assignments, but for socialization and entertainment as well. They have become so much accustomed to Internet communication that researchers such as Rafi (2017) and Turkle (2011) argue that the digital discourse is taking over their 'real self'. Carter (2013) argues that the Internet has the potential to take over our lives. The Internet users have nurtured kind of 'virtual self', which makes them assume multiple identities in the digital discourse (Baym, 2010; Rafi, 2017; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). The presentation of 'self' in the digital discourse is forged in many ways by the youth. By virtue of their being technology savvy, they are tempted to abuse options provided by the Internet causing irreparable harm to another person's reputation (Ong, 2015). In doing so, they are inclined to express their hidden desires and emotions, which turn out to be bullying in the cyberspace. The most recent cross-cultural studies (Carter, 2013; Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig, & Olafsson, 2011; Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2014; Sittichai & Smith, 2015; Smith & Steffgen, 2013; Smith, Sundaram, Spears, Blaya, Schäfer, & Sandhu, 2018; Wright et al., 2018) show that the cyberspace is the platform that provides opportunities for bullying to occur.

Pew Research Center (2014) further indicates that 4 out of 10 youth are bullied online. The study assumes that the younger the participants the more chances of Cyberbullying (CB) are. There is a fair chance when they reach to puberty, they know how to pervert and shield from CB attacks. CB can be defined as a repeated behavior to denigrate someone through internet. There is a common agreement among CB researchers that it includes sex-texting, false statements, humiliating, hurting, teasing and threatening remarks or graphic illustrations by an aggressor. The involvement of males in CB attempts may be associated with socio-cultural nuances because as compare to females, males enjoy a freedom of socialization and power in Pakistani society. The feeling that there is no check on them or they will not be caught encourages them mostly to involve into CB. In some cases, they believe as they have all rights to control females' life or/and to make it miserable – purely a patriarchal mind set (Helgeson, 2012). This study aims to draw data from the participants who have been victims or/and witnessed when someone, mostly a peer, was bullied taken as bystander.

Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston (2016) argue that anonymity offered by the Internet communication allows aggressors to experiment with different 'selves' without any fear and negative evaluation which is not possible in face-to-face communication.

Ptaszynski et al. (2016) argue that the anonymity of communication on the Internet provides a false impression to the aggressors that anything can go unpunished because the origin of nasty messages cannot be traced. From the same perspective, Kowalski et al. (2016) contend that opportunities for self-affirmation and self-expression provided by the Internet can become vehicles for CB. Also, a silence on CB by bystanders, who are mostly peers, becomes a source of humiliation for a victim as noted by Carter (2013). A bystander is a person who acts in different roles and witnesses when someone is bullied. Ferreira, Simao, Ferreira, Souza, and Francisco (2016) reveal that bystanders of CB most likely become either victim or aggressor if they remain silent over the issue. On the other hand, Barzilay et al. (2017) have found an association between low or no peer support to CB victim and suicide ideation (Barzilay et al., 2017).

Ak, Ozdemir, and Kuzucu (2015) find that victims of CB may experience feelings of helplessness and isolation, which may prompt them to sustain behavior of aggression and feelings of anger and/or revenge toward their aggressor or other people. Kokkinos, Antoniadou, and Markos (2014) submit that as compared to face-to-face bullying, cyber aggression is more retaliatory and leads to the vicious cycle of victimized bullying. Ferreira et al. (2016) conclude that increasing deaths among the youth are associated with the harmful impact of CB. Recent publications (Aboujaoude, Savage, & Starcevic, 2015; Kowalski et al., 2016) on CB note that suicide in teens has been on the rise after remaining on decline for many years. Ptaszynski et al. (2016) consider CB as one of the most common causes of suicide among schoolchildren in Japan. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) highlight that CB victims are almost twice as likely to have attempted suicide compared to the youth who had not experienced CB. Barzilay et al. (2017) noted a positive association between bullying and suicidal attempts and ideations.

While these studies provide insight into CB, there has been little scholarly data about its prevalence, causes, reasons, and preventive measures from the perspective of Pakistan. According to Federal Investigating Agency (FIA) of Pakistan's Quarterly Bulletin, during the last few years, there has been an increase in the reporting of CB incidences that is 136 cases in 2013 and 566 cases in 2015. The Express Tribune (October 31, 2015) reported an incident when FIA arrested two students on a charge of posting pictures and contact details of girls on Facebook page – 'Edwardian Girls'. They ran this page for around four-year before they were finally arrested. Dawn (March 26, 2017) also reported an incident when a woman from Sialkot, Pakistan, was arrested by FIA on the charge of blackmailing a

Pakistani born UK Immigrant for money. The Digital Rights Foundation (2017) reported in the Express Tribune that it has received 513 complaints of cyber harassment on its helpline in the first four months of 2017. With the increase in the instances and subsequent reporting of CB events both in electronic and print media, CB has become a social problem and a serious health concern in Pakistan that demands scholarly research to back up anti-CB policy (see e.g., Fahy et al., 2016; Murshid, 2017).

Most of the studies cited here are from Europe and America. However, not much attention is paid to the prevalence of CB in the less developed countries like Pakistan (see e.g., Zych, Ortega-Ruiz & Rey, 2015). The focus of past research (Antoniadou, Kokkinos, & Markos, 2016; Carter, 2013; Ferreira et al., 2016; Guckert, 2013; Murshid, 2017) has been either on 'victim' or 'bystander' or specific age group considered vulnerable to CB. By taking the perspective of victim and bystander about the aggressor, this study investigates: (a) The prevalence of CB among male and female students of different age groups from different educational institutions situated in Lahore, Pakistan, (b) causes of CB, (c) reasons of CB, and (d) CB preventive measures. Research on CB has been largely based on empirical evidences. Hence, by taking 'constructivist grounded theory' as the theoretical framework, this study attempts to triangulate empirical findings with the qualitative data. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help understand the phenomenon, causes of CB, and encourage preventive measures for the provision of safe cyberspace to youth – whose social lives increasingly incorporate the digital means (see e.g., Pew Research Center, 2014).

Method

Participants

The target population was confined to Lahore – the capital city of the Punjab province. The data was elicited from 329 ($n = 171$ boys and $n = 158$ girls) students who were studying at various state run and private schools, colleges, and universities. They can be divided into different age groups $n = 115$ between 13-14 years of age; $n = 105$ between 15-16 years of age; $n = 80$ between 17-18 years of age; and $n = 29$ between 19-20 years of age. Sample included both victims or/and bystanders. Sampling technique was convenience sampling. On a socio-economic continuum, they can be roughly divided into middle and upper class. The variable of 'class' is referred here only as a

correlate of their access to internet communication through computer and cellphone.

Material

The participants were inquired about some demographic information that is gender and age to categorize the data. In addition to quantitative data, an open-ended questionnaire: (a) Have you ever been bullied in the social networking sites?, (b) What was the theme(s) of cyberbullying?, (c) What was the cause(s) of cyberbullying?, and (d) What has been your response to cyber victimization? was administered to elicit detailed responses of the participants.

The messages posted by aggressors on the public Facebook confession pages were also examined to support the findings. The messages were selected on the basis of their relevance with the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. The selected confession pages were being run by anonymous administrators who perhaps wanted to provide an outlet to the participants to express their experiences as a victim or/and aggressor. The content posted on these pages clearly indicated participants' affiliation with educational institutes and provided somehow a clue to their age and gender as well. For example, a reference to their 'grade' and use of 'verb' in the Roman Urdu or Punjabi language indicated participants' approximate age bracket and gender, respectively. Semiotics (emojis, image, and video) which were exploited by an aggressor to manipulate, flirt, threaten, and abuse a victim were embedded in the interpretation of the data. Thus, the analysis was backed up by quantitative and qualitative data sets.

Procedure

An open-ended pen-and-paper questionnaire was distributed among 400 male and female students of different age groups with the help of their subject teachers (who volunteered to assist in this study) who were students of the researcher in a large private university in Lahore, Pakistan. The volunteers were briefed how to administer the questionnaire. They also helped in seeking consent of the institutes from where data were collected. Three hundred and twenty-nine students in grade 6 through bachelorette completed survey that reported causes, reasons, and remedies of CB. For some reasons unknown to the researcher, 71 students did not fill the complete questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

The sampled participants were contacted after the approval of their institution's head. The participants were informed that the data collected from them would be used solely for this study. They were given assurances regarding confidentiality, security of information, and unauthorized eavesdropping; that is, information that might identify their names and institutions was never to be disclosed as has been endorsed by the Association of Internet Researcher (2012). They were masked by rewriting their messages then simply using snapshots of their conversations which could identify them. As noted above the messages selected to support the emerging patterns of CB had public access, therefore, were not subject to approval for their citation. Since these messages were selected in the context of free conversation, the use of racist and sexist language could not be ruled out, along other contentious and provocative material. Mann and Stewart (2000) argue that the Internet research does not have to conform to these restrictions.

Data Analysis

The demographic information elicited from the questionnaire was quantified to measure percentage of CB and its prevalence between male and female participants of different age groups. Beside this, findings were analyzed across aggressor, victim, and bystander role in cyber space. Constructivist grounded theory was used as a theoretical uncover commonly emerging themes from the data and the relationship between them (see e.g., Charmaz, 2014). Birks and Mills (2012) explain that 'constructivist grounded theory' is appropriate when there is little known on the area of research. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the data analysis was run at three stages. At the first stage, under each emergent theme the study interpreted categories, for example, appearance, belonging, competence, gender, and social status while investigating causes of CB. These categories were further supported by drawing the messages [1-7] from the confession pages. The messages were posted by the aggressors to hit the victims. A value-free interpretation was attempted by letting the themes emerge from the data set. Charmaz (2014) notes that the constructivist grounded theory satisfies the preconception of researchers that may shape the analysis. Hence, the data were organized to construct the initial thematic framework. The emerging categories were linked to account for patterns. These patterns were described and explained to achieve a uniform interpretation regarding the causes of CB. At the second stage, some most recurring reasons of CB were identified from

the perspectives of the participants. At the final stage, the most common responses of the participants regarding how to counter CB assaults were interpreted to elucidate preventive program.
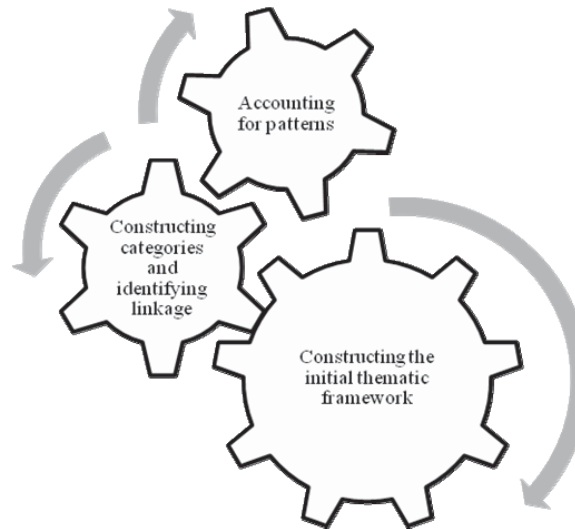
Figure 1. Faceted classification of the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Age group 13-20 years of age was considered ideal for collecting the data. Past research (Hood & Duffy, 2018) indicates the prevalence of CB in this age group. Mishna et al. (2012) argue that schoolchildren are more likely to be involved in CB than any other group. Similarly, Ptaszynski et al. (2016) also believe that CB is the most prevalent among schoolchildren.

The study shows somewhat higher percentage of CB attacks on male participants. Although the percentage of CB among male participants (52%) is slightly higher than female participants (48%), the small difference controverts the claim that CB is more prevalent in any one specific gender. The finding is in line with Hood and Duffy (2018) and contradicts with Erdur-Baker (2010), Mishna et al. (2012), Schneider, O'Donnell, and Smith (2015), and Suparli and Ramdhani (2015). The provision of modern gadgets and access to the Internet seem to be the key factor behind the slightly elevated percentage of CB among boys. Another interpretation of this finding is that in Pakistani culture male children are privileged over females in the provision of things (such as smart phones) linked with social status and power as is the case in 'class conscious' societies or patriarchal societies (Helgeson, 2012).

This study is in line with the past research (e.g., Mishna et al., 2012; Ong, 2015; Ptaszynski et al., 2016; Suparli & Ramdhani, 2015) proposing that teenagers are relatively more prone to CB. Interestingly, the percentage of CB gradually decreases (35%, 32%, 24%, and 9% along four age groups in order of increasing age) as the Internet user gets older. The finding suggests that with age chances for CB decreases. This is something akin to our social set-up in which losing repute at a very young age limits the benefits in society and can have a dire consequence on the emotional health of an immature mind. This connects CB with the dynamics of revenge and malevolent intentions of teens as aggressors who want to see CB working to achieve the most harm to the victim. The younger the victim, the more the harm is. Contrary to the teenagers, a fair number of adults conceded that they did not experience CB. The finding repudiates the research (Pew Research Center, 2014; Rey, Lazuras, Casas, Barkoukis, Ortega-Ruiz & Tsorbatzoudis, 2016) that CB is more prevalent among older students. One of the reasons for the gradual decline of CB among young adults and adults is that with time they become experienced in dealing with the aggressors or perhaps they are not the prime target of the aggressors. In most of the cases, they believe that the best response is to remain silent or to report the authority, mostly FIA in Pakistan. The participants opine that the situation aggravates when CB experience is not shared by victims themselves.

The next section draws on commonly occurring themes which help to know what is aimed at while committing cyber victimization. The snippets were demonstrated within mathematical symbols (such as, <>) along with their transliteration in the square brackets. The aggressors used Urdu (as the national language), English (as the second language), Punjabi (as the regional dialect), and mixed Urdu and English code for communication on the Internet, hence, reported accordingly.

Causes of Cyberbullying and Its Linguistic Manifestation

The qualitative results, which are interpreted in this section and the following ones aim to demonstrate causes, reasons, and CB prevention measures. As indicated in Figure 2, the participants responded that they were victimized for their appearance, belonging, competence, gender, and social status. The aggressor used various linguistic resources such as culturally offended language and signs to hit the victims.
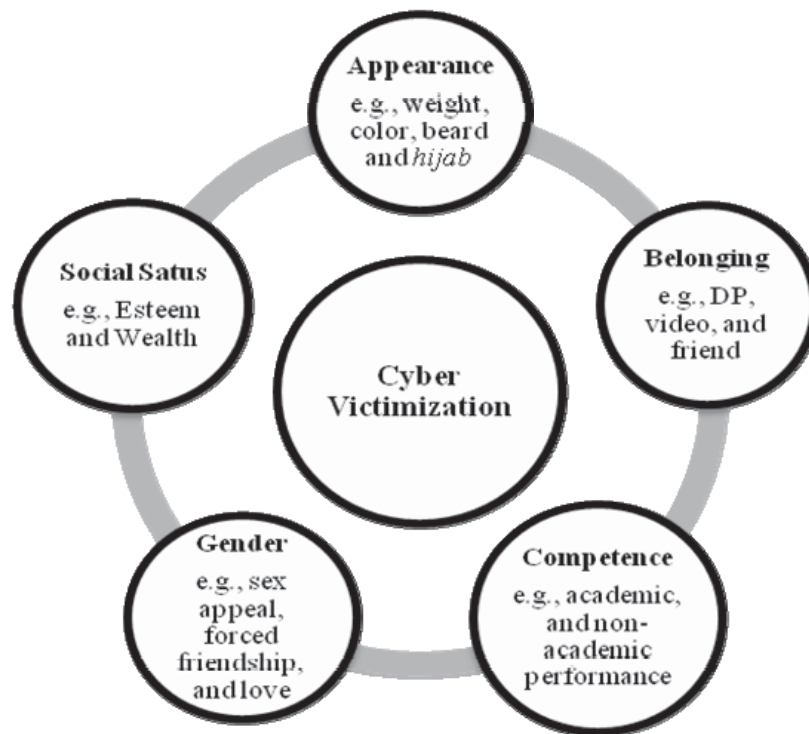
Figure 2. Most recuring causes of cyber victimization.

The victims were humiliated for their status update via emojis as demonstrated with their connotative meanings in Table 1. These semiotic resources have cultural connotations and they might not signify the same meanings in other than Pakistani culture. The participants reported that they were harassed with repulsive video messages (e.g., showing male genitals) and even of naked girls for arousing sexual impulses. The participants admitted that they were allured by sweet followed by flirtatious signs. When the aggressors were repeatedly ignored or rejected, they unleashed their frustration by threatening and abusive signs to belittle them.

Table 1
Semiotic Resources Used by Aggressors to Victimize the Participants

Description	Semiotics	Connotative meanings
Manipulating/sweet		Offering friendship to victim by sending a winking face.
		Trapping victim by raising expectations and making them emotionally attached.

Continued…

Description	Semiotics	Connotative meanings
Flirting/dirty		Seducing victim by sending the kissing lips.
		Sending broken heart to show false emotions and to gain the attention.
		Sending smirking face to give sexual hints.
		Expressing sexual activity.
		Portraying an intensive physical relation.
Threatening/abusing		Calling for revenge or/and violence.
		Offending and/or for body shame.
		Expressing frustration.
		Threatening
		Insulting
		Disrespecting and hitting self-esteem.

While targeting their appearance, the aggressor abused the victims for their overweight, skin color, face, beard, and *hijab*. The comments by the aggressor reveal similar patterns in the illustrations [1, 2, 3, and 4] that were drawn from the confession pages. In the examples, the participants were compared with ugly or cheap non human objects for their appearance. Certain discourse markers (e.g., upper case, punctuations, and mathematical symbols) were used to accentuate the message. In most of the cases, a victim's surname was highlighted in upper case maybe to unleash fury. Also, a kind of an image grammatology (e.g., emoticons, similes, and metaphor) was created to set a scene for harassment. The use of images such as cauldron, monkey, and mango in many ways hit the victim like hell. Such attacks sometime make a victim reactive and eventually an objective of 'fun' and 'blackmailing'.

[1]

<***Saly teri ass hai ya patila chair pe uski aik side he atti hai baki #hawa mai #hawaon ky # rehmokaram per hoti hai…D > [Scoundrel, your ass is as big as a cauldron. It does not fit on a chair, more than half of it is hanging in the air; it is at the mercy of the air.]

[2]

< Apni shakal dekhi hai kabhi…D. aisa lagta hai jaisy Bandria ho bulkay uski naak bhi tum se behtar he ho gi…..D > [Have you ever seen your face? You look like a monkey rather it has better nose than you.]

[3]

< J***K what do you think of yourself?? You are very cool looking guy or what? You are nothing more than a #Mango faced guy having a beard that's more like a small fig…. get a life filthy dog. >

[4]

<Hijaban Bibi…. show your real self.> [Veiled lady, show your real self.]

The academic competence of the participants turned out to be another important cause of CB. In [5], the academic performance of the victim was branded illegal by the aggressor. Contrary to the acknowledgment by peers when the victims are smeared for their competence they borne burnout effects, which may culminate into disastrous consequences such as psychological disorder, isolation, and suicide ideation as supported by Murshid (2017). Barzilay et al. (2017) find that low peer support increases the likelihood of verbal victimization and suicide ideation. There is a fair chance that as a result of cyber victimization a victim may turn out to be an aggressor as well. Similarly, a bystander also becomes part of CB as noted by Bastiaensens et al. (2016) that the social pressure such as injunctive and descriptive norms of peers and adults influence bystanders joining in CB.

[5]

< M***B**T! Sali tu apny apko samjhti kia hai.. char marks kia a gay … over ho gi… chote chote bachon ko pichy lagaya hoa hai. Sharam ker. > [Scoundrel, what do you think of yourself? You have started to show off

after obtaining better scores and making innocent others to follow you. Have some shame.]

The female participants admitted that they were victimized because they refused to accept an offer for forced friendship, sex, and love. The finding coincides with Barzilay et al. (2017) who note that girls are more prone to relational victimization. The participants admitted that the aggressor defamed them by associating them with Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community as pointed out in [6]. The LGBT community, although exists in Pakistan, is mostly relegated to an inferior status such as sex workers and beggars as affirmed by Saddique, Mirbehar, Batool, and Ahmed (2017). In [7], a comment posted by the aggressor clearly targets the 'gender' of the victim. He was hurt for being male accidently. Calling into question 'gender' of a victim sprouts false speculations that eventually mars their social standing. It is important to note that some of the victims including Ryan committed suicide (see e.g., Kowalski et al., 2016) when they were labeled as LGBT on the Internet.

[6]

 < @kusray "RAJPUT"....> [Transgender Rajput – one of the common castes in Pakistan].

[7]

 <H****C***Y! tere maa baap ko tere larky hone pe shakkk tha ya tu bachpan mein tha e larki jaisa jo H*****L naam rakha.....D> [**** were you like a girl in childhood or your parents doubted you as a male that they selected a girlish name for you.]

The aggressors consider themselves as superiors and eventually exercise the right to humiliate whosoever they want. Since victims are found helpless to fight back against all the allegations, they are tagged with, they begin to accumulate stress that eventuates in fatal consequences. The next section will help to figure out the reasons of CB that can be used as a backdrop to control this menace.

Reasons for Cyberbullying

The participants who were the victims of CB at least once reported that aggressors in most of the cases belonged to troubled family backgrounds. Irrespective of a fear of being caught, they find the social media sites the best vent for their negative emotions. Or perhaps they are aware of the fact that it is easy to tease and blackmail someone by remaining unidentified. They poison bystanders (mostly peers) against a victim. Being isolated among his/her own peers, the

victim loses confidence to face the aggressor and bystanders who support CB acts for fun. This finding is constant with Caravita, Colombo, Stefanelli, and Zigliani (2016) who reveal that CB perpetuates high stress and negative emotions. Among other traits as shown in Figure 3, low self-esteem and inferiority complex characterize the aggressor as psychotic who needs rehabilitation treatment (see also Suparli & Ramdhani, 2015; Wachs, Jiskrova, Vazsonyi, Wolf, & Junger, 2016). Moreover, in the absence of a clear CB law and no action by police (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2012) aggressors escape punishment and are eventually encouraged to be a part of the vicious CB cycle.

The participants accepted that being naïve users of the social media sites is a soft target for aggressors (Livingstone & Olafsson, 2013). Ignorant of the account privacy and security checks, the Internet users fall prey to aggressors who many times get involved into CB for fun, scam, and revenge. It is observed in most of the cases that the victim is known to the aggressor. Particularly, the cases reported in [1-7], CB acts were perpetuated due to an offline dispute, hatred, and jealousy. This finding is in line with the studies (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015; Antoniadou et al., 2016; Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2016; Burton, Florell, & Wygant, 2013; Gualdo, Hunter, Durkin, Arnaiz, & Maquilon, 2014; Hase, Goldberg, Smith, Stuck, & Campain, 2015; Livingstone et al., 2011) that support certain overlaps between CB and school bullying leading to similar psychological symptoms having real world consequences. In the cases where both aggressor and victim are not known to each other, CB is carried out for money. So broadly speaking there are two kinds of aggressors – one who does CB for money and the other who get involved for fun or/and to express hidden desires and emotions, which turn out to be bullying in the cyberspace to take revenge.

Figure 3. Most common reasons of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying Preventive Measures

The participants were asked how they reacted when someone was being cyber victimized. As shown in Figure 4, reporting authority, stopping aggressor, empathizing, and ignoring were among the key recommendations that participants made to overcome cyber victimization. It is interesting to note that those who were between 13-14 years and 15-16 years of age could not suggest tangible ways to intervene when they saw someone being blackmailed, harassed, and made fun of on the social networking sites. Those who were between 17-18 years and 19-20 years of age made several recommendations such as reporting to the authority, ignoring, and stopping victim while responding to CB. As many as 50% of the bystanders showed concern and reported the authority regarding CB. Maybe, this is one of the reasons that reports to FIA, Pakistan, on such incidents have been increasing over the years. Much is due to the proliferation of the Internet and access to smart phones with all kinds of apps to connect with the social media sites. Ferreira et al. (2016) have revealed that those who intervene are less likely to become a victim or an aggressor.

As many as 30% of the participants chose to be silent and ignore the CB event. They further suggested leaving the site and signing up with another account if at all this is required to ward off CB. Most of them reported the authority to help the victim. Only 10% of the bystanders confessed to help the victim fight back and stop the aggressor. Another 10% of the bystanders said if they were unable to do anything they would rather like to feel sorry for the victim. There is fair chance that the bystanders who remain inactive or silent over CB events are more likely to become a victim or an aggressor as reported by Ferreira et al. (2016).
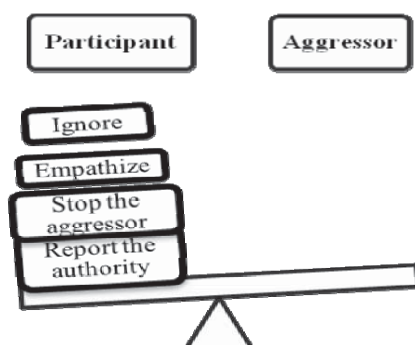

Figure 4. CB intervention steps proposed by the participants.

Findings help understand the proliferation and causes of CB among the participants of different age groups in the urbanized

settings of Pakistan. CB events are rarely reported in the rural and remote areas of the country maybe due to either no connectivity or poor connectivity. It is important to note that the contemporary Pakistan is not comparable with the West or Southeast Asia in the development of social media usage and its proliferation in everyday life. The country lacks strict legislation and awareness to counter CB unlike technologically the advance countries. Due to socio-cultural nuances and lack of support by the State, many CB events go unreported by victims and bystanders as also noted by Cater (2013) in the Singaporean context. Eventually, the perpetrators of CB get encouraged to attack innocent schoolchildren.

Future Directions

The qualitative data has revealed that for being isolated, lack of peers' support, and naïve user of social media sites, especially, teens become soft target of CB. Aggressors being computer savvy are supposedly empowered to take the advantage of their peers' insufficient knowledge of social media. They blackmail the victims to satisfy their emotional desires. On the other hand, the position of bystanders is somewhere between victims and aggressors who remain silent or/and team with aggressors maybe for a fear of facing the same consequences. Hence, victims find them in a vulnerable position, which sometimes directly hits their psychological health and in the worst cases triggers suicide attempts (c.f., Kowalski et al., 2016; Murshid, 2017). Further study is called to investigate mental health outcomes of CB attacks.

The study suggests launching CB prevention program at the educational institutions located in big cities of the country. School management, teachers, parents, and children should be part of this introductory prevention program. The findings of this study can be integrated to formulate this program which is desperately needed to protect the cyber life of youth. The significance of this program increases when lack of tolerance and campus violence are common in the educational institutions spread over Pakistan (see e.g., Haq, February 12, 2017). The program should focus on educating children about the Internet privacy and communicating with the people they are familiar that can save them from CB attacks. Livingstone et al. (2011) encourage dialogue and greater understanding between parents and children in relation to their online activities. Also, empowering and encouraging bystanders who are mostly peers to provide assistance to victims; flag and report bullying events anonymously is viewed by Carter (2013) as a helpful strategy to prevent CB attacks. In addition

to this, educating parents regarding the importance of monitoring cyber life of their children would be one of the most effective strategies for CB prevention (c.f., Hood & Duffy, 2018).

This is a mixed method study that steps outside the often-studied western sphere to unfold the prevalence, causes, reasons, and CB preventive measures from the perspective of Pakistani students.

Limitations and Suggestions

In the current study, participants were asked if they were ever bullied in social networking sites whereas, most studies give a time frame such as 'the last year' that may impact on prevalence rates and age differences. Furthermore, an independent study to investigate a correlation between CB and metal health outcomes among Pakistani students is also suggested which was not explored in the current study.

Conclusion

CB is a serious issue in Pakistan. Unlike the adults, youth is more vulnerable to CB. The study shows an unequivocal prevalence of CB among male and female participants. Several unique causes of CB emerged such as appearance, academic performance, gender and social status of the participants. One of the common reasons for CB among the participants is being a naïve user of the social media sites. It was disclosed by the participants that aggressors were mainly from troubled family history who got involved in CB for money, fun, sex, and revenge. As confirmed by the past studies, in some cases, CB escalated from an offline discourse. Reporting the concerned authority, blocking the aggressor, and seeking help from family and friends are other effective ways for the victims in stopping CB assaults as reported by the participants also supported by Livingstone et al. (2011). The study highlights role of parents, educational institutes, and governments to ensure a safe virtual space for the youth. It suggests further introducing CB prevention program for youth.

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