

FACTORS INFLUENCING CYBERBULLYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MALAYSIAN TERTIARY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Cyberbully is an evolvement from traditional and physical bully to bullying through internet. The advancement of internet and social media has provided a new platform through which children, adolescents, and young adults to explore the virtual world and exposes them to be involved in cyberbully as a target or an aggressor. Past studies have demonstrated that cyberbullying behaviour has adverse physical and mental health consequences for individuals. However, study on cyberbully behaviour in the context of Malaysia is still limited. In fact, tertiary students remain an understudied population regarding cyberbullying. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine the relationship between netiquette, loneliness and emotional availability of parents and cyberbullying behaviour. Data was collected from tertiary students from a public university in Malaysia using survey questionnaires. Based on the findings, it was found that only netiquette was found to have negative significant relationship with cyberbullying behaviour. This study is significant to the Ministry Higher Education, institutions of higher learning education and community on identifying the factors and subsequently creating awareness programs in dealing with cyberbullying behaviours.

Keywords: Cyberbully, netiquette, loneliness, emotional availability of parents

1 Introduction

Cyberbully is an evolvement from traditional and physical bully to bullying through internet. Research has demonstrated that cyberbullying has adverse physical and mental health consequences for youths (Abreu, 2018). Other researcher, Wright (2016) stated that cyber bullying involves receiving hostile or harassing messages, having false rumours spread about oneself, or being called mean or nasty names. Reasons why an individual involved to the aggressor in cyber bullying behaviour are many according to the literature. Kowalski and Limber (2013) for example mentioned that involvement in bullying in cyberspace is associated with psychosocial problems, problematic internet use and poor school performance. Thus, the study proposed factors that lead to cyber bullying behaviour from an individual context.

Advances in technology and better Internet access have enabled more people, to explore the virtual world. In fact, "...as the technology is advancing rapidly, aggression and peer harassment are no longer limited to traditional bullying through physical contact" (Wong, Chan, & Cheng, 2014). Cyberbullying, harassment using information and communication

technology such as cell phones and the Internet, is an emerging phenomenon all around the world.

Cyberbully involves not only adolescent but all levels of people in the community. This is especially true for the youth as they spend more time with media than any single other activity besides sleeping. Statistics on cyberbully in Malaysia has reported an increase. A report compiled by Cyber Security Malaysia highlighted that there were 300 cyber harassment cases in 2012, 512 in 2013, 550 in 2014, 442 in 2015 and 529 in 2016. Another recent study - Norton Cyber Security Insights Report: Family Edition reveals that only 10 percent of Malaysian parents reported that their child was cyberbullied. However, 40 percent of them believed their children are more likely to be bullied online than on a playground (Lee, 2017). A few studies even discussed the negative consequences of cyberbully such as depression, loneliness, and potential suicide.

Technologies have changed. Rather than physically bullying others, it has evolved into cyber bullying. According to Wong, Chan, & Cheng (2014) "Technology is advancing rapidly, aggression and peer harassment are no longer limited to traditional bullying through physical contact". According to Ybarra, Diener-West and Leaf (2007) Cyber-bullying can be defined as using information and communication technologies to harm target or targets. From time to time the definition of cyberbully might include calling others by a nasty name. Wright (2016) stated that, cyberbullying involves having false rumours spread about others, receiving hostile or harassing messages, or being called by nasty and mean names.

Bullying is one of the forms of peer harassment according to Alsaker and Valkanover (2001). He intended to say that bully can be defined as the imbalance of power between perpetrator and target. However, there is another opinion that conflict with the definition made by Alsaker and Valkanover. If let say "when a sixth-grade boy is kicked on the bus every day by a smaller, emotionally impaired second grader, it is not considered bullying under those definition due to no power imbalance" (Aalsma & Brown, 2008).

This research is focused on the factors that influence cyber-bullying. According to Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007), Social network sites (SNSs) such as such as Friendster, CyWorld, and MySpace allow individuals to present themselves, establish or maintain connections with others and articulate their social networks. However, from maintaining connections with others, some of the users of social network sites use it to harass people. This can be seen in Singapore, 51 percent of the adolescents indicated to have been harassed at least once online (Lwin, Li, & Ang, 2012).

Since future graduates play an important role in shaping the community of the future, thus, it is imperative to identify the level of cyberbullying among tertiary students and the factors that lead to cyberbullying behaviour. In fact, there are emerging studies that describe this phenomenon among tertiary students (Selkie et. al., 2016). Moreover, little is known about cyberbully phenomenon in the context of higher learning education, especially in the context of Malaysia.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Cyberbully

Cyber bully is an evolvement from traditional and physical bully to bullying through internet. According to (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010) cyberbully can be defined as intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of cell phones, computers and other devices. Wright (2016) stated that cyberbullying involves receiving hostile or harassing messages, having false rumours spread about oneself, or being called mean or nasty names.

Cyberbully is influenced by the environment of an individual. Kowalski and Limber (2013) stated that involvement in bullying in cyberspace is associated with psychosocial problems, problematic internet use and poor school performance. Cyberbullying is define as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronics form of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (Smith et al., 2008) and a group or individual's aggressive and intentional act through electronic forms of contact, repeatedly against an indefensible victim (Srinandhini & Sheeba, 2015).

Parents being a role model in shaping their children attitudes in daily life. According to Wang, Iannotti and Nansel, (2009) parental support may protect their children from negative activities nor attitudes such as being cyberbullies.” As the cost of accessing internet is affordable, people tend to use it for many purposes includes of harming and threatening others. According to Baldry, Farrington, and Sorrentino, (2015) year by year, due to the increasing access to technology, cheap internet contractor free wireless and almost worldwide presence of internet, the risk of cyberbullying increases and the assessment of such risks is more and more needed.

2.2 Netiquette and Cyberbullying

Netiquette is derived by merging the words network and etiquette (Balar, 2016). Specifically, netiquette refers to etiquette on using computer networks. The difference of etiquette and netiquette is netiquette is referring to online experience while etiquette is offline. According to Park, Na, and Kim, (2014), netiquette is a broad concept that captures the sense of morality and ethical values that are applied to the online world. This shows that cyberspace have already set its own standard from the physical world, which are used by Internet users as moral criteria. According to Barker and Barker, (2014), by definition, etiquette and ethics are closely related. In fact, they further elaborated that those who are lacked ethics or moral are more likely to become a cyberbullies.

Thus, users need to be fully aware of netiquette since the impact is huge on the user's behaviour. Usually the bullies had no idea that their actions can gave impact to others. According to Sticca and Perren, (2015), those who engaged in cyberbullying may, therefore, do so because they cannot observe the immediate impact of their actions. Thus,

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between netiquette and cyberbullying

2.3 Loneliness and Cyberbullying

As a social species, humans rely on a safe, social surround to continue and thrive. According to Drennan (2011), for perceptions of social isolation, or loneliness, rise caution for threat and increase feelings of exposure while increasingly the desire to reconnect. Loneliness is not simply being alone. Loneliness is typically an unpleasant, distressing experience as said by (Perlman & Peplau, 1984). According to Sullivan, Victor, and Thomas, (2016) , loneliness as an internal incident viewing it as a negative feeling (emotion) arising from a desire for interpersonal relationships by developing the judgment of our social environments, psychologists and philosophers. Loneliness based on quantitative cross-sectional descriptive studies and have not given tough to such as life course perspectives, place or environment and a diverse population. According to Cattani, White, Bond, & Learmouth, (2005) , preventing and improving social isolation and loneliness among older people is an important area for rule and practice, but the effectiveness of many involvements has been asked because of the lack of evidence.

Many factors have been identified that increase the risk of loneliness, including physical or mental decline and low income. Many of these factors are difficult to avoid or to recover. Therefore, it is not easy to change effective loneliness intervention programs among the elderly. A wide range of interventions have been tried to alleviate loneliness among the elderly.

Past studies reveal that there is positive relationship between loneliness and cyberbullying. Loneliness can cause a person to do something without thinking about other matters. Adolescents who are subjected to cyberbullying spend a lot of time on the net and cell phones (Drennan, 2011). Thus,

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between loneliness and cyberbullying

2.4 Emotional Availability of the parents and Cyberbullying

According to Schuster, (1998) emotions or feelings, that related to mood but different from it, should be formed from experiences such as love, hate, anger, trust, joy, panic, fear, grief and are specific reactions to a particular event that are usually of fairly short duration.

Other than that, Makri-Botsari & Karagianni (2014),stated that the various parenting styles can make differ greatly on the kind and quality of parents-children relationships and have a significantly important effect on shaping children's character, identity and relationships with peers. In terms of protection, physical and emotional nourishment, they have to be provided by parents themselves, while in response of that, children give parents something in the need of worthiness and leadership (Cohen, 2015). While emotional availability of parents means parents have to "being there" for their children as well as focused more on helping them with their homework, picking them up from school, putting dinner on the table, taking an occasional day off to spend quality time with their children. Their attitudes and availability for the children also influence them in terms of personal competence, self-concept of ability and academic self-concept (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005)

As stated by Easterbrooks and Biesecker (2000) the child whom expose to more open emotional communication from the parents as the child develops into young adulthood is

being associated from higher level of emotional availability of parents. Meanwhile low levels of emotional availability may lead to aggressive behavior for example cyberbullying (Biringen, 2008). Thus,

H3: There is a significant negative relationship between emotional availability of the parents and cyberbullying

The proposed framework is at Figure 1 below:

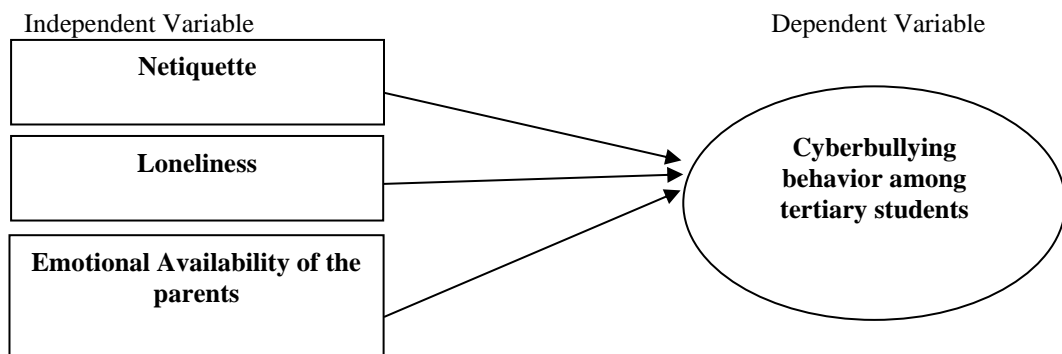


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

3 Research Methodology

A quantitative research design was adopted for this study. This study was conducted in one of the Public University in Malaysia using purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires which were distributed to the students from various faculties. The respondents were guaranteed on the anonymity and confidentiality of the data provided in which it will be used for academic purposes only.

The instrument for cyberbully were adapted from Grading, Strohmeier and Spiel (2010) which have been proven to be reliable and valid. While the instrument for netiquette was taken from Park, Na and Kim (2014). The instrument of loneliness is from Russell (1996). Other than that, the instrument for emotional availability of parents was taken from Sanzone (2013). All instruments have been proven to be reliable.

The survey questionnaire used five-point Likert scale ranging from (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4 = Frequently and 5= Often. All data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to establish frequency distribution for demographic profiles and providing descriptive statistics on the variables tested. Correlation analysis was used to understand the inter-correlation exist among the variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses of the study.

4 Result and Discussion

Data were obtained from 307 students from various Faculties in a Public University in Malaysia. The respondents of this study were consisted of 25 percent male and 75 percent of female.

4.1 Result Analysis

To test the internal consistency of the variables, reliability test using Cronbach alpha was utilized in the study. Based on Table 1, all variables were found to be acceptable based on their reliability values which ranged from 0.54 to 0.97. Among the independent variables, netiquette show the highest mean of 4.29. The standard deviation for all variables ranges from 0.26 to 0.74 as per table 2.

Table 1: Reliability and descriptive analysis

	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Cyberbully	0.97	1.51	0.68
Netiquette	0.86	4.29	0.74
Loneliness	0.54	2.89	0.26
Emotional Availability of Parents	0.83	4.26	0.43

Note: All items used a 5-point Likert scale with ((1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4 = Frequently and 5= Often)

Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the direction, strength, and significance of relationships between variables in the study. The correlation analysis was done in order to see the association between dependent variable and independent variables. Based on Table 3 below, all variables used in the study were interrelated to each other.

The correlation analysis result show that netiquette was found to be the highest to be correlated to cyberbully ($r = -0.87$, $p < 0.01$), followed by emotional availability of parents ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and loneliness ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$). The table 2 indicated all correlation values are ranging from 0.25 and above.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Cyberbully	Netiquette	Loneliness	Emotional availability of parents
Cyberbully	1.00			
Netiquette	-.87**	1.00		
Loneliness	.25**	-.29**	1.00	
Emotional availability of parents	-.27**	.35**	-.19**	1.00

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

In investigating the relationship between independent variables (netiquette, loneliness and emotional availability of parents) and dependent variable (cyberbully), multiple regression was used in the analysis. The result of multiple regression analysis is shown in Table 3 below. The R^2 for the model below is 0.75. Meanwhile, the adjusted R^2 is 0.74. Therefore, the variance of the model which consisted of independent variables (netiquette, loneliness and emotional availability of parents) contribute to cyberbully at 75 percent.

Based on the regression analysis, only two independent variables were found to be linked to cyberbully namely netiquette ($\beta = -.879$, $p < 0.01$) and emotional availability of parents ($\beta = .045$, $p < 0.01$). Netiquette was found to be the highest contributor towards cyberbully.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable Usage (B)
	Cyberbully
Netiquette	-.879**
Loneliness	.007
Emotional availability of parents	.045
F Value	303.448**
R^2	.750
Adjusted R^2	.748

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

4.2 Discussion

Based on the result, it was found that netiquette has the most significant contribution on cyberbully. The finding was supported by other researcher, according to Barker and Barker, (2014), they stated that etiquette and ethics are closely related. Those who are lacked ethics or moral are more likely to become a cyberbullies. Netiquette influenced an individual towards cyberbully either it is lacking with etiquette or not. Lack of morality make a person became more transgressive as it is not a good moral. An individual also should instil awareness about etiquette so that problem related to illegal manners such as cyberbully will not arise. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, H1 which is netiquette has a significant negative relationship with cyberbully.

This is followed by emotional availability of the parents which was found to have second highest influence on cyberbully. This result is similar to Easterbrooks & Biesecker (2000) the child whom expose to more open emotional communication from the parents as the child develops into young adulthood is being associated from higher level of emotional availability of parents. While low levels of emotional availability may lead to aggressive behaviour for example cyberbullying.

Other than that, Biringen (2008) stated that emotional availability of parents is closely much related towards cyberbully behaviour among their children. It is because if the parents tend to spend more time for their children, the probability for them to do such negative behaviour would be slightly low as they feel loved by their own parents and not feel isolated. As stated by Current research indicates that teenagers' online behaviour is influenced by parenting style based on (Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier 2008). Kerrane (2013) argued that the

nature and expectations of childhood and the parent-child relationship has been radically shaped by the unprecedented social change associated with new technologies. According to Ling, (2012) the embeddedness and omnipresence of mobile social mediation technologies empower and set the conditions for the maintenance of the social circle progressively.

Last but not least, the proverb said "Stick the iron while it is hot" that indicates in this study to focused about emotional availability of parents is important while develop and shaping a good behaviour of their children. It is agreed by Botsari and Karagianni (2014) that parents-children relationships and parents' knowledge and awareness of cyberbullying have a significant role in the emergence, maintenance and prevention of digital bullying. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, H3 which is emotional availability of the parents has a significant negative relationship with cyberbully.

Contrary to previous findings, the findings of the study revealed that loneliness does not have any relationship with cyberbully. It is supported by Şahin, (2012), there was no significant positive relationship between cyberbullying and loneliness. Therefore, it clearly showed that the lonely student would not do something that related to cyberbully. In addition, (Didden et al., 2009) mentioned that the variables of cyberbully are consisted of intelligence, self-confidence and depressive feeling that would lead to loneliness.

Other than that, Srabstein and Piazza (2008) mentioned cyberbullies are people who are looking for social support, have unhappy feelings and drug user. Logically, those who feel lonely would express their feelings and emotions through social media as they found social media as a tools for them to share everything. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, H2 which is loneliness has a significant positive relationship with cyberbully.

This study has a few limitations that need to be addressed for future research. Firstly, is the fact that the sample obtained in this study is purely based on only one Public University in Malaysia. Hence, the result might not be generalized to other universities in Malaysia. Future study should consider involving various University in Malaysia. Secondly, as suggested in the literature, studies on cyberbully should utilize longitudinal study design as perceptions on cyberbully can be captured across time. Since this study is conducted cross-sectionally, future study should consider using longitudinal type of study. Finally, this study is limited to direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. Ideally, moderating and mediating variables should be included to further understand the relationships between variables. Overall, the results indicate that netiquette and emotional availability of parents have a positive attitude towards cyberbully. Specifically, cyberbully is most influence by the netiquette of the students rather than other factors.

5 Conclusions

As a conclusion, this study would provide significantly to the education provider. The findings revealed that netiquette and emotional availability of parents have positive significant relationship to cyberbully. The result indicates that the most significant factor that effect on cyberbully among tertiary students at a Public University in Malaysia is netiquette. Hence, based on the result from this study revealed that students those who are lacked ethics or moral are more likely to become a cyberbullies.

Other than that, the study also revealed that the emotional availability of parents has positive significant relationship to cyberbully. The parent's emotional availability is closely much related towards cyberbully behaviour among their children. It shows that, if parents spend more time with their kids the probability of them to get involved in cyberbully would be low because they feel loved and appreciated by the parents. It can be concluded that, the higher emotional availability of the parents, the lower the involvement in cyberbullying behaviour.

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