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Relationship Between Bullying, Cyberbullying, And Subjective Well-Being: A Study On +2 Students

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Abstract
The growing prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying among adolescents has attracted attentions of researchers due to their harmful consequences on psychological health and overall life satisfaction. The present research explores the association between traditional bullying, cyberbullying (both direct and indirect victimisation), and subjective well-being in higher secondary school students. Subjective well-being was assessed through three dimensions: a. life satisfaction, b. positive affect, and c. negative affect. Data were obtained from 300 students, and Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Findings revealed that traditional bullying was significantly and negatively associated with life satisfaction. However, cyberbullying, whether direct, indirect, or overall, demonstrated weak and statistically non-significant associations with subjective well-being components. These results emphasize the continuing detrimental role of traditional bullying on adolescents' well-being, whereas the effects of cyberbullying appear less straightforward and call for deeper investigation.
Keywords: *Bullying, Cyberbullying, Subjective Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, Adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

This study examines how bullying and cyberbullying (both direct and indirect) are related to subjective well-being, including life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect, among adolescents. Bullying and cyberbullying remain major social and psychological concerns worldwide. Traditional bullying refers to repeated intentional harm inflicted upon individuals who are less able to defend themselves, typically involving a power imbalance (Olweus, 1993). Cyberbullying, on the other hand, involves similar harmful behaviours carried out through digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and online communities (Smith et al., 2008). Both forms of victimisation have been shown to negatively affect adolescents' learning, emotional health, and psychological adjustment.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a multidimensional construct comprising life satisfaction (a cognitive evaluation of one's life), positive affect (experience of pleasant emotions), and negative affect (experience of unpleasant emotions) (Diener, 1984). As an indicator of both mental health and overall quality of life, SWB has gained significant importance in psychology and education. Research shows that bullying and cyberbullying may reduce adolescents' subjective well-being, leading to emotional difficulties such as depression, loneliness, and suicidal ideation (Bauman et al., 2013; Kowalski et al., 2014).

The present investigation seeks to determine the extent to which traditional bullying and cyber victimisation—direct, indirect, and overall—are associated with life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect among +2 students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bullying has consistently been identified as a significant risk factor for reduced adolescent well-being. Victims of bullying often report low life satisfaction, higher stress levels, and decreased self-esteem (Nansel et al., 2001; Suldo & Huebner, 2004). Repeated victimisation disrupts students' evaluations of life quality and reduces their experience of positive emotions.

Cyberbullying, an extension of traditional bullying in online spaces, has emerged as a pressing challenge in the digital era. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2010) and Kowalski et al. (2014), victims of cyberbullying often struggle with poor emotional well-being, depression, and academic difficulties. However, findings are not uniform. Some studies argue that cyberbullying has stronger psychological

consequences than face-to-face bullying, while others suggest its effects may be mitigated by coping strategies such as blocking perpetrators or limiting online engagement.

Most of the current body of research originates from Western contexts. In India, though internet usage among adolescents is rapidly growing, studies focusing specifically on cyberbullying and its psychological outcomes are relatively very few. The influence of cultural norms, family systems, and community support may shape the way adolescents interpret and respond to victimisation, underscoring the need for localized research.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 300 adolescents from higher secondary schools. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation of gender and grade levels.

Measures

1. Cyber-Aggression Scale (CYB-AGS): This scale was developed by Buelga and Pons (2012), this 18-item scale measures both direct and indirect forms of cyber-aggression. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).
2. Child-Adolescent Bullying Scale (CABS): The scale on bullying was designed by Strout et al. (2017). It is a 20-item scale captures students' experiences of physical, verbal, and social bullying.
3. Subjective Well-Being Measures: It consists of cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being.

a. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): A five-item scale by Diener et al. (1985) assessing cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction.

b. Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE): A 12-item measure developed by Diener et al., covering both positive and negative affect.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between bullying, cyberbullying, and subjective well-being. Results are presented in Table-1.

Table 1: Correlation between Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Subjective Well-Being (N = 300)

Variable	Bullying	Direct Cyber Victimisation	Indirect Cyber Victimisation	Overall Cyber Victimisation
Life Satisfaction	-.159 (p = .006)	-.080 (p = .165)	-.100 (p = .083)	-.099 (p = .088)
Positive Affect	-.041 (p = .485)	.041 (p = .476)	.085 (p = .142)	.067 (p = .244)
Negative Affect	.073 (p = .207)	.011 (p = .852)	-.022 (p = .707)	-.004 (p = .939)

It has been seen that traditional bullying was negatively and significantly associated with life satisfaction ($r = -.159$, $p < .01$), indicating that frequent bullying experiences lower adolescents' sense of life satisfaction. Cyberbullying variables showed weak, non-significant correlations. Further, no significant correlations were found between cyber bullying (direct and indirect cyber victimisation) and components of subjective wellbeing. Direct cyber victimisation showed a slight, non-significant positive relationship with positive affect, possibly reflecting coping or resilience among certain students. Neither bullying nor cyberbullying was significantly related to negative affect.

The study highlights the significant negative relationship between traditional bullying and adolescents' life satisfaction, which is consistent with findings by Nansel et al. (2001) and Suldo & Huebner (2004). Repeated victimisation may diminish adolescents' feelings of safety, belonging, and overall quality of life. Unexpectedly, cyberbullying variables did not significantly relate to subjective well-being. This result contrasts with findings from Western studies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2014) that link cyberbullying to strong psychological distress. A possible explanation is that adolescents in this sample may perceive online victimisation as less threatening, or they may use strategies like blocking offenders to

reduce its impact. Additionally, cultural and familial support systems may help buffer the emotional toll of cyberbullying.

The lack of correlation with negative affect suggests that other factors—such as academic pressure, family environment, or peer relationships—may play a stronger role in shaping adolescents' emotional states.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that traditional bullying significantly reduces adolescents' life satisfaction, while cyberbullying appears to have weaker, non-significant effects on subjective well-being indicators. These results emphasize the enduring impact of face-to-face bullying on adolescent development. Schools should prioritize anti-bullying initiatives and promote positive peer relations. For this, awareness campaigns can equip students with strategies to handle online victimisation. Further, school counsellors must provide preventive and supportive interventions for both victims and at-risk groups.

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