

Personality Antecedents and Consequences of Cyberbullying among youth at Higher Educational Institutes in India

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Abstract:

Cyber bullying has emerged as a serious issue in today virtual / technical environment. With the emergence and advancement of technologies where technology has touched every sphere of our life thus making our living comfortable, the flip side of it has grown in a level where we are witnessing an increase number of cases of cyber bullying or cyber teasing among the undergraduates of university while attending the online classes. In recent times, organizations are witnessing an increase in the bullying behavior at the virtual workplace or technical space which has several negative consequences such as increase in the number of psychological problems, absenteeism from classes and mental stress.

This study is an earnest attempt towards examining personality antecedents and consequences of cyber bullying among university graduates. For the study , the data was collected through electronic questionnaire medium, from 299 undergraduate's university students in southern India. Studies reveals that the Big Five personality dimensions helps to understand and explain victimization from cyber bullying. Neuroticism was found to be positively related with cyberbullying. Cyber bullying reveals that it strengthens the intention to remain absent, develops mental pressure and reduces attendance. The most important consequence was found to be the victims' intention to be absent from the class or avoid the group . The implications of this study will help the educational universities in the identification of individual traits which will help them to predict the victim who are likely to get bullied and to suggest anti – victimization efforts to effectively protect students in the virtual set up of the institution.

Keywords: Cyber bullying, psychological stress, absenteeism, Personality Antecedents,

1. Introduction

The emergence of technology has led to the growth of entirely various forms of social connections, happenings and organizing. Apart from the fact that this technology has made our life more easy and comfortable, it also caused to the growth of undesirable behaviours that are offensive and threatening, such as cyber bullying or electronic bullying or cyber teasing.

“Bullying” is often considered as being an violent, deliberate act or behavior that is carried out by a group or an individual frequently and over time against an individual who is unable defend him or herself (Smith, 1993; Olweus, 1999). Bullying can be considered of exploitation that is based on an imbalance of power; it can be defined as a systematic exploitation of power (Sharp, 1994; Rigby, 2002).

Belsey (2006, p.1) stated that , “Cyberbullying includes the use of information technologies and communication like cell phone, texts messages and also paper texts messages, instant messaging, offensive personal web sites, online games, creating blogs and defamatory online personal polling sites, to support repeated, deliberate and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.” Characteristics like concealment, accessibility to electronic communication, and rapid audience spread, result in a limitless number of individuals that can be affected by cyberbullying. Some 21st century elements have also contributed to making cyberbullying a public health concern: the increasing penetration of networked computers and mobile phones among young people, the advent of social media and the reliance on new connectivity tools to the point where many would rather tolerate negative effects than be disconnected

Cyber bullying or electronic bullying or online bullying has been designated as a serious health hazard and drew warnings to the general public from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The term was first coined in year 2000 in Canada by the owner of a web site dedicated to preventing traditional (face – to – face) bullying . Tokunaga defined the phenomenon as “any behavior performed through digital or electronics media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to wreak harm or embarrassment on others” . The definition given by him covers most of the aspects of electronic bullying or cyber harassment namely: the act driven by technology , the act being too aggressive, the motive to harm others. The various mediums of cyber bullying are: (a) through mobile phones like bullying by phone calls, hurtful or threatening online message with the intention of causing harm to someone (b) doxing or outing , it is defined as an action in which the individual openly reveals sensitive or private information about somebody without taking his consensus with the intention of embarrassing them (c) fraping is a form of bully in which the wrongdoer uses the victims social accounts networks to display inappropriate substances with their name (d) the other means of humiliating is masquerading is an activity in which a individual creates a made up profile in the name of the victim with the sole purpose of bullying the victim in the social platforms (f) Trolling: is a means of bullying an individual by posting derogatory remarks of the victim (g) exclusion: is an activity in which the bully deliberately do not allow the victim to enter in the group online.

The individuals suffering from cyberbullying are found to have lots of psychological

problems such as loneliness, low level of self – esteem, hopelessness , depression, crowd phobia and anxiety (Atak, & Erguzen, 2012). Researchers are of the view that cyberbullying can causes a lot of serious mental issues in which an individual may self harm themselves and also develop suicidal tendencies. (Price & Dalglish, 2010. Klomek et al. 2009 Horzum & Ayaş, 2014;)

Personality Traits to Cyber Bullying:

The word personality can be defines as the differentiative characteristics an individual posses with which he/she responds / encounters their social environment as per (TDK, 2016). There are several definitions being provided by different authors, like Mroczek in 2008 defines it relatively stable characteristics , feeling, thoughts and behavior an individual possess that differentiates him /her from one another. Similarly, according to Mayor (2007) personality “as a system of parts that is organized, developed and expressed in a person’s actions”. However various researchers are of the view that personality is comprehensive in nature and consists of various dimensions .

Bullying has attracted a significant amount of attention in recent times. The present time the emphasis is shifted to linking the personality antecedents and bullying. In the year 1993, Olweus has highlighted on the typical personalities of bullies , he states that these individuals have tolerances for violence, are unemphatic, impulsive and very aggressive.

Studies related to bullying and Big five have shown that the individuals suffering bully are less friendly (Agreeableness) and are emotionally instable (Neuroticism: Schneider, Tani Greenman , 2003) .

Many research studies have been conducted to establish the relationship between the personality traits and bullying (e.g., Bamberger and Bacharach, 2006, Bowling et al., 2010, Milam et al., 2009) while other studies states it not easy to differentiate between victims and non – victims through personality trait . Due to inconsistencies in findings and research, still it is not very clear whether or not personality dimensions and characteristics are actually having relation with the experience in bullying. Majority of the study in this area is done and conducted in the western side and in Indian context still the insights are very less available

The earlier research studies has thrown light on various forms and features of on cyberbullying which clearly differentiates it from traditional forms of bullying. In traditional form of bullying , the victim goes to school and come back home , thus they are atleast away from the bullying till the next day, however in the case of cyberbullying , the victim is in continuously receive the texts messages and emails . Another area in which it is different from traditional bullying is the reach of the people. In Cyberbullying the bully can reach a large group of people or peer group like downloading any photograph of the victim or videos clips the uploading it in various social platforms with the intention of embarrassing the victim, whereas in the traditional bullying the reach is small group of people. In the case of cyberbullying , the person involved in the bullying activity may not be having any idea or may not be aware of the consequences caused by his / her action, hence there may be fewer chances for empathy.

Aims and Hypothesis

In this recent pandemic situation, whole world have entered into virtual setup. Apart from the organization, the education industry undergone a lot of transformation. Almost all age groups are now using the internet / smart world for their learning. The technology in one way have enabled the students all across the world to continue their learning without hindering their progress but on the other hand it has also resulted in the wrong usage of the internet which has resulted in the increase in the number cases of cyberbullying, this has become even more popular among adolescents and faculty group in India. Less work has been done in this area in Indian context specially in deciding the influence of personality in cyberbullying. On account of these contextual factors, the study is aims to find the personality antecedents of cyberbullying among adolescents / university students of higher educational institutes located in the metropolitan a city Bengaluru where we have students from all parts of India .

On the basis of the various studies, the gap were identified and following objectives are considered for this study:

- i. *To analyze the big personality trait as a predictor for cyber bullying among the adolescent students of the higher education institute in Bangalore.*
- ii. *To evaluate the consequences of cyber bullying among the students of the higher education institute in Bangalore.*

Hypothesis of the Study:

This study integrates the trait theory proposed by (Costa 1992) to conceive the study of personality antecedents of cyberbullying. According to study it is observed

that personality traits are relatively stable characteristics that makes a person to react or respond in certain situations in specific way. Personality characteristics differs among individuals (like some people are characterize as extrovert , while some are ready to take the risks etc) and hence based on the personality type they influence their perception, their attributions for the cause of events, their emotional stability and the way they manage certain anti – social incidents in their social space. The general study of personality is done “Big Five” personality parameters. This is a conceptual approach to study the common personality framework comprising of “ Extroversion, open to experience new, agreeableness, neuroticism and agreeableness (Srivastava & John 1999).

The Five factor Model of Personality:

The five factor model (FFM) is a very widely referred model to study the personality traits . This model is basically established to identify the fundamentals elements related to personality in order to classify the differences found in individuals in terms of motivational drives, emotional style , interpersonal skills. The elements of this model are agreeableness vs dissension, conscientiousness vs lack of vision, neuroticism vs emotional soundness and extroversion vs introversion.

Extroversion are individuals are observed to be more social, interactive , outgoing , they are gain energy on by interacting with people. They are more positive towards their approach, , hence such people not necessarily perceive that someone has bullied them in their social space. On the other hand , research indicates that introverts are generally more introverts are more

vulnerable and are more responsive to bullying to such bullying behaviors.

On the other hand, those individuals who are on the extreme side of introversion very often find difficult to get along with other individuals since they find it difficult to communicate with other people, hence the other individual find it difficult to develop relationships with them to be very frustrating, hence leads to development of feelings of being bullied (Digman, 1990).

Conscientiousness are individuals who are dutiful, responsible, sincere. These individuals intend to develop feelings of being bullied when they are purposely removed from the class or receive text messages which disturbs their mind and hence reduce their performance.

Agreeableness are those personality traits where the person is observed to be more reliable, dependable, well – tempered and helpful (Costa and McCrae .1991). Research have shown that such individuals are observed to be negatively related and are very positive and confident..

Neuroticism are prone to negative moods like, emotional instability, angry and lack of cooperation (Costa et al 1989). Agreeableness, Extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness negatively correlate with cyberbullying (Rai, A & Agarwal U.A.2019). Neuroticism was most strongly related to harassment (Stale Einersen, Lars Glaso, 2017). Meta – analyses (Beehr and Bowling, 2006) and the results of other studies have indicated that neuroticism has a positive relationship with cyberbullying.

Based on the above study, the following hypothesis can be concluded:

H1: Students perceiving high level of (a) agreeableness (b) conscientiousness (c) extraversion and (d) openness will experience low

level of cyberbullying and high neuroticism is positively associated with cyberbullying.

Consequences of cyberbullying:

Bullying in any form have a detrimental effect on the physical and mental well being in an individual. A lot of studies have shown negative effects of cyberbullying which includes lower academic achievements (Smith 2000, Nansel et al., 2001, Mitchell and Ybarra 2004bY), signs of depression and anxiety among the youth, absence from the classes specially among the victims become more frequent (Rigby, 2003; Mitchell & Ybara, 2004b). The effect of cyberbullying has more dangerous effect than the traditional or face to face bullying since here the victims is reachable at any point of the time by the bully, hence the effect of cyberbullying ranges from misery and distress (Kowalski et al., 2008; Rackauckas & Stoltz, 2007) to anger and frustration (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, 2010) and in some cases to an extent of suicide.

The hypothesis from the study:

H2: The experience of cyberbullying experience may lead to (a) intention to remain absent from the class and (b) reduce interest in studies.

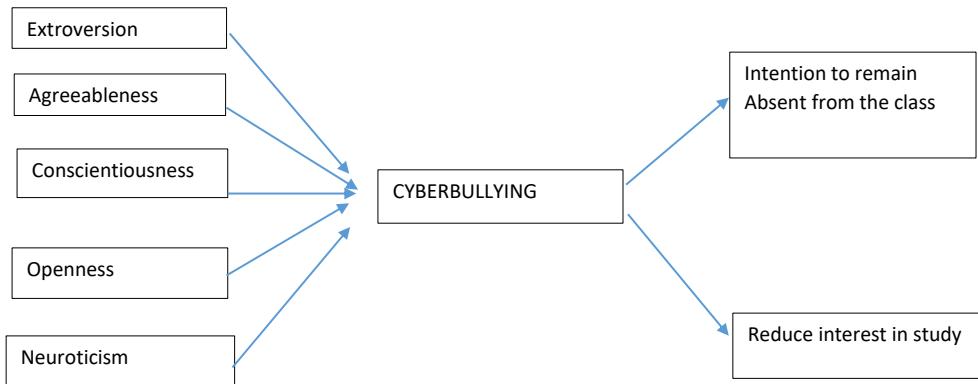
Research Methodology:

For this Study, survey was done among the students of higher educational institutions. A questionnaire was prepared in English and was distributed among the students 350 in numbers. A total of 290 students responded usable data for the study.

Variables for the study:

1- Big Five Personality Trait (Independent Variable)

FIGURE 1. Below give us a detailed picture of Independent Variable and Dependent Variable



- 2- CyberBullying (Dependent Variable)
The experience of Cyber bullying experience will intensify (a) intention to remain absent from the class and (b) reduce interest in studies.
- 1- Cyber Bullying (Independent Variable)

Consequences of Work Place Bullying

- 2- Intention to remain absent from the class (Dependent Variable)
- 3- Reduce interest in study (Dependent Variable)

TABLE 1: Scale reliability and validity of personality antecedents, Cyberbullying, and consequences.

Variable	No. of items		
	Original	M	Cronbach's α
Extraversion (E)	4	4.13	0.753
Conscientiousness (C)	4	4.190	0.714
Agreeableness (A)	4	4.44	0.754
Neuroticism (N)	4	4.264	0.676
Openness (O)	4	4.201	0.750
Personality Individual-level	20	4.225	0.917
cyberbully bullying (NAQ)	22	1.755	0.924
Intention to remain Absent from the class	4	1.746	0.725
Reduce interest in study	7	3.956	0.806

1.4 Analysis:

Reliability explains the stability and consistency of an instrument (Creswell, 2005). The scale reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha. In the present study , the value of Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70(Nunnally, 1967) (Table 1)

Demographic profile:

The demographic profile represents the students mainly in the age group of 24 to 28. Most of them are undergraduates students studying in higher educational institutions. By confirmatory analysis ,

discriminant and convergent validity of the constructs was examined . The fit measures like , comparative fit index (CGI), goodness – of – index(GFI) , normed fir index (NFI) and root mean square of approximation (RMSEA) of the scales were obtained.

All the variables under SEM model were classified as observed or unobserved , and as exogenous or endogenous.

Observed and endogenous variables are: neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness ,openness , cyberbully, intention to remain absent from class, reduce interest in study.

Unobserved and exogenous variables:

E5,e4,e3,e2,e1,e6,e7,e8

Variable counts

No. of variables in the model: 16

No. of unobserved variables: 8

No. of observed variables: 8

No. of exogenous variables: 8

Minimum was achieved:

Chi – square = 595.721

Degrees of freedom = 260

Probability level = .001

In the above output , AMOS reports that the minimum was achieved with no error or warning. The Chi – square test of absolute model fit is reported , along with its degrees of freedom and probability value.

Results

All dimensions of personality , i.e. extroversion ($r = .819;p<0.01$), agreeableness ($r=0.088,p<0.01$), conscientiousness ($r=0.062,p<0.01$), neuroticism ($r=0.047,p<0.01$) and openness ($r=0.408,p<0.01$) had a high negative correlation with experiences of cyberbullying . Cyberbullying is negatively correlated with attendance in class ($r=-0.254,p<0.01$). In addition cyberbullying is significantly and positively corelated with less interest in study ($r+0.807,p<0.01$).

FIGURE 1: Showing path model showing antecedents, personality attributes , cyberbullying and consequences.

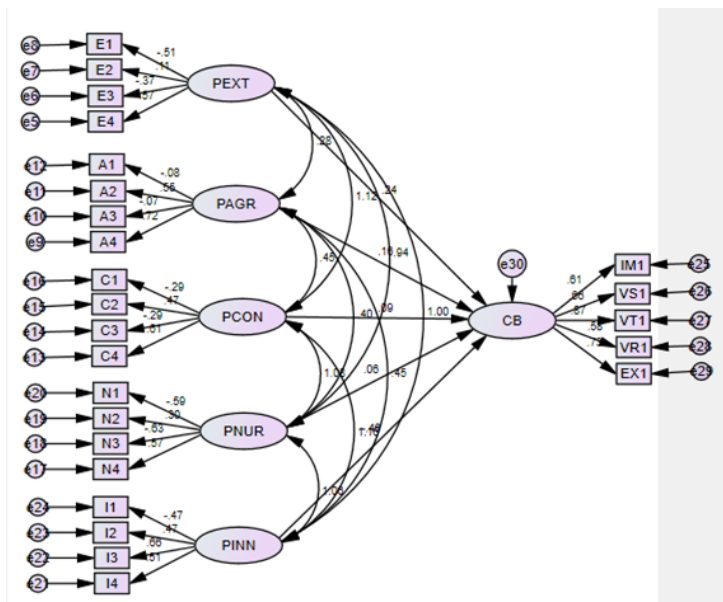


Table: Showing Analytic results of hypothesis:

Table: Showing Fit measures dealing with personality attributes , cyberbullying and consequences.

Fit Index	Final Model
Goodness-of-Fit-Index(GFI)	0.822
X ² /DF	2.291
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.736
Adjusted Goodness – of -Fit-Index (AGFI)	0.777
Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.08

Table 5 shows the fit measures of the path model. Chi – square were highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Because chi – square is sensitive to large sample size , relative chi – square ($X^2/\text{degrees of freedom}$) was estimated. It was observed that the relative chi – square was within the range less than 3 (Kline , 1998). The fitness of the model was also tested using other measure . GFI compare the fit of a target model to the fit of an independent or null , model .

Discussions and Conclusions:

The pandemic brought the emergence of a new era in education industry, the whole teaching learning process saw a shift into a virtual set up. This virtual growth made possible the learning process to continue , but on one side it also led the growth of students getting involved in nuisance activities . One such activity the adolescents got involved is cyberbullying. There , this study is an attempt to find the personality which are more prone to cyberbullying and the consequences of such bullying .

For this study data was collected from 299 students from higher educational institutions. The data was collected through electronic questionnaire. The survey was done by using various kinds of tools and

techniques. For the hypothesis i.e. between personality antecedents and consequences of cyber bullying , a strong relationship was reflected by a combination of high coefficient magnitudes of structural path/constructs and the extent to which the p-value was above the statistical significance level. The results obtained was shown while testing the analytic hypothesized relationships in Structural Equation Modelling. It was observed that among all the personality , neuroticism had the highest path coefficient for cyberbullying bullying among the adolescents , which indicates that faculty students who were more vulnerable of being bullied are high on neurotic tendencies like being emotionally unstable, moody and often experience the feeling like worry, fear anger, frustrations , envy , jealous , guilt , feeling of loneliness etc. Since Neurotics are individuals having irritating temperaments that leads to negative relationships with their friends and group members in their institute and which further propels them to involve themselves in cyberbullying activities.

This piece of study helps us to understand that the Big Five Personality characteristics would help us in predicting the incidences of cyberbullying . Through personality tests . the identification of individual traits will help the organizations in identifying the likely victims of bullying , thereby allowing them to take anti – victimization efforts to safeguard such individuals in the workplace.

By framing strong policies and creating leadership which focuses on bullying control efforts, as given by Wang (2008_ , will help organisations in controlling bullying, these movements should be backed by suitable training initiatives, assessment and regular monitoring.

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