



Cyber Victimization among Pakistani Youth: Role of Media, Family and Peer

Hina Malik¹, Sumera Batool², Saima Iqbal³

Abstract

The current study explores how social structures including media, families, and peers play a role to the prevention and causes of cyber-bullying among youth in Pakistan. Youth interaction behaviors are developed through interpersonal communication patterns. A qualitative approach was used in this study and victims of online bullying were interviewed. The study concludes that social media offers a secure environment for bullying. Moreover, educating the victim about privacy settings can help the victim stop bullying themselves. Youth can achieve healthy well-being through family involvement and attachment. The communication gap between victims and their parents were found. Peer involvement and attachment have been found to be particularly helpful in the fight against cyber-bullying.

Keywords: Cyber-bullying, Victim, Media, Family, and Peer

1. Introduction

One of the most common and direct forms of internet abuse is cyberbullying (Thai et al., 2022; Vismara et al., 2022 and Kumar & Sachdeva, 2022). Cyberbullying is a unique activity that involves an imbalance of power, hostility, anonymity, and intention. The malicious and frequent use of information and communication technology by an individual or group to damage other people is known as cyberbullying (Zhao, Chu, & Rong, 2023; Alismaiel, 2023; Wang & Ngai, 2022&Vismara, et al., 2022). Additionally, it can be defined as an aggressive, intentional act carried out repeatedly and over time against a victim who is unable to defend themselves using electronic forms of contact (Maftai and Măirean, 2023; Huang et al., 2023; Vismara et al., 2022; Tozzo et al., 2022; Maftai et al., 2022; Audi et al., 2022). Cyberbullying is a distinct type of bullying from more conventional types (Williford & DePaolis, 2019).

Youth who are bullied online are more likely to become victims of online abuse which is one of the worst things that can happen. Cyber victimization is the act of exposing a person, group, or legal entity to abusive behavior in a technological or relational context and suffering material or moral harm as a result. Individuals may suffer psychological-based grievances such as constant harassment, mockery, gossip spreading about them in the virtual environment, being exposed to insults, and spreading private photos without their consent or threatening with it, in addition to technical grievances such as the capture of their personal information and passwords as a result of virtual attacks on e-mail or websites (Merlici et al., 2022; Kadri et al., 2020; Burger & Bachmann, 2021 and López-Meneses, et al., 2020; Audi et al., 2021).

According to a few studies that cyber victimization has been linked to academic and emotional difficulties, decreased self-esteem decreased psychological well-being, and decreased perceptions of school safety (Devine & Lloyd, 2012). Furthermore, even when victimization stops, depression symptoms brought on by bullying have been observed to last until early adulthood (Perren & Alsaker, 2009; Shahbaz et al., 2019). The purpose of the current study was to ascertain the incidence and methods for preventing cyber victimization among Pakistani adolescents. According to research by the Digital, Right Foundation conducted in 2016, 40% of Pakistani women experience some type of online harassment, with Facebook being the most frequently utilized platform. The rules in Pakistan that address cyberbullying and online harassment are unknown to about 72% of women. 70% of women are hesitant to post their photos online out of concern that they will be inappropriately utilized. Furthermore, only 11% of women believe that reporting online abuse to the FIA won't be helpful, while 70% of victims have never come forward (Musharraf, & Anis-ul-Haque, 2018; Rafi, 2019 and Tabasum et al., 2021). According to a study by Microsoft, 53% of bullying in Pakistan among children aged 8 to 17 takes place offline, compared to 26% of internet bullying. The survey also showed that because Pakistan has a male-dominated culture, women and girls endure bullying more frequently than men do (Pasha, & Jeljeli, 2022 and Jang, et al., 2022).

The purpose of the present study is to explore the role of important social institutions including media, family, and peer groups in the prevalence and prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. Family is an integral part of one's life and a country like Pakistan where family is given priority and is core for need fulfillment (Ali, McGarry, & Maqsood, 2022). The importance of family cannot be ignored in this regard. Moreover, peer group plays an important role in shaping youngsters' actions and attitude (Ali, Hartini, & Yoenanto, 2022; Taylor et al., 2020 and Carroll, Witten, & Duff, 2021). The desire to follow peer groups leads youth toward many delinquent actions. Media is expected to perform a variety of social roles, building opinions and ideas, creating awareness regarding sensitive issues, working as the fourth pillar of the state (Wong et al., 2022 and Cefai et al., 2021). The core problem identified by the researcher is that social media is providing a platform for cyberbullying and is it performing its vital role to counter this problem or not.

¹Lecturer, Communication Studies, Queen Mary College Lahore, PhD Fellow, Dept. of Mass Communication, LCWU, Pakistan
Rangehina95@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Dept. of Mass Communication, Lahore College for University, Pakistan

³Lecturer, Communication Studies, Queen Mary College Lahore, PhD Fellow, Dept. of Mass Communication, LCWU, Pakistan

1.1. Significance of the study

Due to the widespread use of cell phones, computers, and the internet, cyberbullying and victimization have proven to be an unavoidable problem. Several studies have demonstrated that this problem makes its victims more likely to engage in suicide behavior, so it requires significant treatment. Due to the use of technology, youth have developed the harmful practice of cyberbullying (Ansary, 2020; Kwan et al., 2020 & Polanin et al., 2022). Currently, the majority of young boys and girls use cellular devices or the internet to access technology, and Pakistani children confront cyber bullying which is one of the greatest problems. One of the largest issues in recent memory is that teenagers are developing new forms of bullying, such as sending hurtful words, bothering others via texts and emails, and posting private photos online (Mkhize, & Gopal, 2021). Due to cyberbullying, young adults struggle with a variety of psychological issues, such as despair, anxiety, and isolation as a result of their lack of coping mechanisms. According to Gamez-Guadix et al., (2013), cyberbullying among adolescents is a strong predictor of serious behavioural and psychological health issues. According to a research, Pakistan has the 22nd highest rate of online bullying out of 25 countries. Six out of ten kids have a good or limited understanding of cyberbullying. Almost 8 to 17-year-old youngsters reported being bullied 64% of the time, whether online or off.

The purpose of the current study is to determine if certain significant social institutions in society fulfill their intended functions in people's lives. In relation to this issue, the researcher has also discovered a contextual gap. The function of social institutions in the prevalence and prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth could not be established in any notable research. It also intends to draw attention to the stark gender disparities in cyber victimization rates. Cyber bullying affects girls more than boys (Zhao, Chu & Rong, 2023).

By examining and comparing cyberbullying and bullying rates, victimization rates, internet usage, the role of media, parenting practices, and parental influences as correlates of cyberbullying and victimization, this study aims to expand our limited understanding of cyber victimization. The current study has looked at how social structures including media, families, and peers affect the prevalence and prevention of cyber victimization among young people in Pakistan. The study also intends to determine the causes of the prevalence of cyber victimization and how to prevent it. Information for creating successful bullying and cyberbullying interventions could be one of the study's outcomes.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Cyber bullying and psychological and social changes

Many research studies conclude that kids who experience bullying tend to be anxious, intimidated easily, and low on self-esteem (Nurlia, & Suardiman, 2020; Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2020 and Cuesta et al., 2021). Cyber bullying research has also found a link between victimization and poorer levels of self-esteem, indicating that being the target of traditional bullying and becoming a victim of cyberbullying are likely related experiences (Li, & Hesketh, 2021 and Ding et al., 2020). Moreover, victims' low self-esteem frequently causes them to be overly sensitive and incompetent in social situations and romantic relationships. Because they are frequently left alone, abandoned by other kids, and socially isolated, victims are excellent targets for bullying behavior because they lack social communication skills, are insecure about how others perceive them, and lack confidence in themselves (Özer & Escartín, 2023). Another characteristic that may both predict and be a result of bullying is anger (Wang et al., 2020 & Kustanti et al., 2020). Cyber bullying victims may also struggle with issues like sadness and rage (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005; Perren & Alsaker, 2009).

2.2. Cyber victimization and role of media

Many research studies have been done to investigate the impact of cyberbullying on victims and the part the media plays in either promoting or inhibiting it. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) looked at the connection between suicide and cyberbullying as well as how the media can either support or encourage this behavior. The authors contend that by boosting awareness and encouraging positive messages, the media can be a potent tool in the fight against cyber bullying. The correlations between cyberbullying and traditional bullying were analyzed by Kowalski & Limber (2013), who also looked at how media can either encourage or discourage cyberbullying. According to the authors, encouraging young people to critically evaluate the media messages they consume can assist to reduce cyberbullying. Mesch (2009) investigated how media use can raise the risk of cyberbullying as well as the function of parental mediation in mitigating it (Tao et al., 2022 & Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). According to the author, parents who keep an eye on their kids' online activity and teach them how to use media responsibly can assist to prevent cyberbullying.

The personal traits and online activities of young people who engage in online harassment were examined by Ybarra & Mitchell (2004), as well as the contribution of the media to the facilitation or prevention of cyberbullying. The authors contend that teaching young people media literacy can aid in their development of the critical thinking abilities required to fend against media messages that encourage cyberbullying. Teenagers are the biggest users of social media and the internet, according to a study from 2020 by Wuryanningsih, and Aisyah. This has an impact on the propensity for taunting in cyberbullying. Youngsters who experienced cyberbullying, whether as a bully, victim, or both, spent more time engaged in social activities while sedentary on their computers, according to research by Kimberly Twyman, M.D., and Conway Saylor, Ph.D. (2010). Research have indicated

that by sensationalizing the issue and fostering a climate of fear and anxiety, media coverage of cyber victimization can make matters worse. This might then result in imitation behavior and a vicious cycle of victimization. For instance, a study conducted in 2007 by Kowalski and Limber indicated that the chance of further cyberbullying occurrences in the same community increased when the incident was covered by the media.

A good role for the media in addressing and preventing cyber victimization is also possible. The media may assist in empowering victims and holding offenders accountable by increasing awareness of the problem and disseminating knowledge on how to prevent and solve it. The media can also give victims a forum to tell their story and draw attention to the problem. In conclusion, the role of the media in the problem of cyber victimization is nuanced and diverse. Although it might exacerbate the issue, it can also be a potent instrument for solving and avoiding it.

2.3. Cyber victimization and role of parents

These researchers discovered that bullies frequently had strict, unsupportive parents (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). According to research by Wang and colleagues (2009), parental support is effective in lowering bullying and cyberbullying. A similar pattern was observed in paternal parenting techniques, with more relational hostility in kids following stricter parenting and psychologically controlling parenting methods (Helfrich et al., 2020; Maftai Máirean, 2023 & Kawabata et al., 2011). Teenagers who receive less parental support may therefore be more likely to engage in bullying themselves. Kim and colleagues (2009) hypothesize that children who are subjected to excessive parental pressure are more likely to engage in problematic peer relationships (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2019 & Adeyinka et al., 2022).

2.4. Cyber victimization and role of peer

Paulus and others (2012) Bullying and bullying tendencies have been shown to be negatively impacted by peer attachment. Peers can either escalate or stop cyber victimization, according to research. Peers who encourage, assist, or engage in harmful activity might increase cyber victimization. Additionally, they might propagate rumors or divulge sensitive information, adding to the victim's suffering. Peers can stop cyber victimization, however, by speaking out for the victim, reporting inappropriate behavior to adults, or even seeking to mediate the conflict. According to a study by Holfeld and Grabe (2018), peers who engage in cyberbullying frequently enjoy more popularity and social standing among their peers, which may persuade other peers to follow suit. Peers who see cyber victimization taking place and step in to stop it, on the other hand, can significantly improve the victim's situation. According to a 2009 study by Gini and Pozzoli, victims of cyberbullying experience less victimization and more feelings of social support when their peers defend them. In conclusion, peers are important in cyber victimization since they have the power to either encourage or discourage the conduct. A significant step in lowering the prevalence of cyber victimization is educating young people on how to identify and avoid becoming a victim online and promoting good actions, such as standing up for victims and confronting bullies.

3. Theoretical Framework

Social Bond Theory by Hirschi 1969 has been adopted as a theoretical base for this research. According to this those who are closely connected to society are less likely to act in a way that violates social norms and values because they have a larger stake in doing so. Four components—attachment, commitment, participation, and belief—combine to form these ties. People who reported stronger bonds to their parents and schools were less likely to participate in delinquent behavior, which is one that supports the Social Bond Theory (Nasaescu et al., 2020 & Kalu, Menon, & Quinn, 2020). Similarly, the present research identified the role of media, family, and peers in the prevalence of and prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. Spiral of Silence communication theory by Neumann in 1974 hypothesized that people are less likely to voice their beliefs in public if they think that their opinions are not shared by many others for fear of social rejection or retaliation. On the other side, people are more likely to voice their opinions if they believe that others share them. The researcher explored that victims remained silent after they are bullied online because of the fear of isolation.

4. Research Methodology

The qualitative research method (*in-depth interviews*) has been used to address the issue of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. The youth aged between 15-24 years is the *population* of the study. A total of 08 in-depth interviews had been conducted. Almost 07 female victims and 01 male victim were the *sample size* of the recent research. *Snowball sampling* technique has been applied to select the respondents, one respondent referred the other. A cue sheet had been developed comprised of open-ended questions.

4.1. Inclusion criteria

As per table .1, the following respondents had been selected for the study aged between 15-24. All the respondents were victims who faced cyber victimization at least once in life. All 08 respondents were chosen from different academic institutions in Lahore and were interviewed according to their consent. The selected respondents are assigned different codes and are mentioned in table.1.

Table 1

| Code | Gender | Total Participants | Age |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----|
| T1 | Female | 01 | 19 |
| T2 | Female | 01 | 21 |
| T3 | Female | 01 | 22 |
| T4 | Male | 01 | 24 |
| T5 | Female | 01 | 21 |
| T6 | Female | 01 | 24 |
| T7 | Female | 01 | 20 |
| T8 | Female | 01 | 24 |
| Total Participants | 08 | | |

4.2. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis has been opted to evaluate the content of the in-depth interviews. Main themes and sub-themes have been used to assess the data. The main theme is as follows:

4.3. Experiences of the bullying

The following sub-themes have been identified to evaluate cyber victimization among youth.

4.4. Prevalence

The data was collected from 08 respondents through in-depth interviews. 07 subjects were females and 01 was a male who had been victimized frequently in his/her life. Cyberbullying is a growing problem in Pakistan, particularly among young people. According to a survey conducted by Digital Rights Foundation in 2019, 37% of Pakistani women and 41% of Pakistani men reported experiencing online harassment.

“Yes, I was bullied once in life, faced threatening by a bully” (T1, F, 19).

“I was bullied by the same person on daily basis for almost a month” (T2, F, 21).

“I faced bullying in college thrice a week. But in university life, I faced bullying on daily basis almost” (T4, M, 24).

Most of the subjects reported that they had been bullied frequently in life, a few of them almost on daily basis for many years and a few of them once in life.

4.5. By whom

The subjects reported that they had been bullied mostly by strangers whom they do not know.

“I mostly get bullied by strangers but sometimes by my followers as well” (T3, F, 22).

“No, I didn’t know them” (T5, F, 21)

“Many times strangers harassed through phone calls and messages” (T6, F, 24)

“Stranger bullied me through the text messages” (T7, F, 20).

“I was been bullied by stranger/ unknown personality. At that time, I was totally shocked that how this person got my number” (T8, F, 24).

However, one of the respondents told us that she had been bullied by her family member and other was bullied by his friends. Research has shown that peer involvement is a common factor in cyberbullying. A study found that approximately 30% of students who reported being cyberbullied also reported that peers were involved in the bullying (Nguyen et al., 2020). Additionally, the study found that students who were cyberbullied were more likely to report feeling helpless and experiencing negative emotions. Another study found that the involvement of peers in cyberbullying was significantly related to an increase in victimization and psychological distress for the victim. The study also found that the involvement of peers in cyberbullying was associated with a higher likelihood of the victim being cyberbullied again in the future (Eyuboglu et al., 2021). As few respondents said that

“Family member (cousin brother) bullied me and My friends bullied me”.

4.6. To whom you shared

Most of the subjects narrated that they shared their bullying experiences with their friends.

“I shared with my Friend. I never shared with my famil” (T1, F, 19 & T2, F, 21)

Few of the participants stated that they shared with their elder sister and mother.

“I shared it with my mother and sister and they helped me out the most to handle that miserable situation” (T7, F, 20 & T8, F, 24).

Only one subject told that she shared with her father and teacher.

“I shared with my Father and teachers” (T6, F, 24).

4.7. Immediate feelings

The given data showed that majority of the respondents slipped into severe form of the depression. They felt upset and slipped into isolation. In contrast to typically-developing adolescents, Kowalski and Fedina (2011) discovered that adolescents with Asperger syndrome or ADHD were more likely to be cyber victimized and to experience physical and mental health issues adolescents who did not engage in online bullying. The respondents said:

"I was slipped to depression. I locked myself in room and went to isolation, I faced lack of sleep and hunger" (T1, F, 19).

"I felt isolated (Started Crying), I felt afraid, anxious and stressed after seeing the message" (T6, F, 24 & T8, F, 24).

4.8. Psychological, emotional and social changes

After being bullied extreme changes were reported by subjects. Most of them faced poor mental health, lack of confidence, poor academic performance, low self-esteem, lack of sleep and severe psychological and emotional changes as few respondents said:

"I felt depress. I was unable to focus on my studies. I felt alone" (T4, M, 24)

"My confidence shattered. My self-esteem loves down, I get isolated. I become doubtful about myself. I slipped into phase of overthinking" (T5, F, 21).

4.9. Medium of bullying

Most of the subjects reported that social media like Whats app and Instagram were common platform that were used to bully them. Only two of the respondents identified Facebook and Google Chrome.

"Instagram and Whatsapp" (T2, F, 21)

"I use twitter on every hour. I frequently use twitter and was bullied on it by my followers" (T3, F, 22)

"Chrome, WhatsApp and Instagram" (T4, M, 24 & T6, 24, F).

4.10. Strategies to protect

The following sub themes were identified to address main theme.

4.10.1. Role of Media

Social media is a powerful medium to protect subjects from bullying as stated by most of the respondents.

"Social media is such a powerful weapon for all of us. It gives us many platforms to protect yourself from cyberbullying. In a large kind of extend social media provide us platforms. It helps us a lot to protect ourselves from cyberbullying" (T8, F, 24).

Few reported that that social media has positive and negative effects it depends on its users how to use it. One can use it to protect his/her self or other can use it for cyber victimization.

"Social media provide us a significant platform to protect ourselves from cyberbullying in the form of different sites we discuss it openly" (T7, F, 20).

4.10.2. Role of parents

Almost 80% respondents stated that they don't shared their feelings with their parents. The role of the parental guidance, support, communication seems missing. The addressed that there is a lack of trust between parents and their children.

"I never shared with my parents regarding my bullying. I hide this incident with my parents because I was afraid that they will not comprehend it well. still in our society we have a drawback that our parents do not trust us completely. My mother died when I was only 1 year old. I felt that my father and two Brother will not understand my situation: They will blame me at the end. I had fear that they will apply restrictions on me. They forbade me to generate Facebook I.D. I never trust my parents because they don't listen me. They simply blame me. There is a wide communication gap between me and my parents. There is a weak bond between me and my parents. I strongly feel that my parents don't honor /value my decisions" (T1, F, 19).

Only 20% respondents stated that their parents helped them out to revive from this trauma of bullying.

"My parents advised me to do not worry about it they also spent some time with me so that i can forget this experience. I used to trust on my parents and share everything when being bullied that they understand me and also stand with me. My mother explained that it's not your fault, she said that some people use social media in this way to harass innocent people. parents give me better advice how to prevent cyberbullying" (T6, F, 24 & T8, F, 24).

4.10.3. Role of peer

The given data provided a significant fact that respondents are more comfortable to talk to their friends and found them more supportive.

"I trust my friends. My friends guided me to block bully and restart my life with new bloom. My friends supported me when I was bullied. My friend took me out for shopping. She encouraged me to revive towards life" (T4, M, 24 & T8, F, 24).

However, few of them narrated that they don't trust their friends as one of them was being bullied by his friends so he never shared his feelings with them rather he preferred his virtual/online friends.

"My friends bully me so how can I share my problem with them? I switch to my online/virtual friends. I really feel isolated to with whom I share. I cannot tell my parents because I don't feel comfortable talking to them. I can't share with my friends because they themselves bully me. So, I prefer to talk to my virtual friends. They help me a lot. They listen to me and played a vital role in my life. My virtual friends never saw me, never meet me so they helped me out" (T5, F, 21).

5. Discussion and analysis

Many teenagers who grew up in a digitally linked society view digital devices as crucial components of their daily life. Teenagers can access a range of information, stay connected to the outside world virtually constantly, and find entertainment thanks to these technologies. Although using digital technologies as teenagers has numerous benefits, it also exposes them to threats including sexual predators, violence, and pornography (Keen, France & Kramer, 2020 and Levine, & Meiners, 2020). Cyber victimization is a concern connected to teenage usage of digital technologies. Teachers, parents, researchers, and the general public have all taken notice of this risk since some victims of cyberbullying struggle with a variety of adjustment issues, such as despair, loneliness, and anxiety (Wright, 2018). Internet bullying that takes place online is known as cyberbullying. People use the internet for important daily tasks, however excessive internet use has several disadvantages as with anything that has advantages and disadvantages (Cuervo, et al., 2014).

Social networking services including Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and LinkedIn are used by many students to engage in cyberbullying. This brand-new form of bullying (Dutta, De, & Chandan, 2017). Despite being a relatively recent phenomenon, cyberbullying has been shown to have negative consequences according to a number of publications (Nixon, 2014). The media has covered a lot of the differences between traditional kinds of harassment and cyberbullying. Being a victim of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying is connected. and many online bullies are reported by the victims, both offline and online. This amounts to cyber-harassment, to use Slonje et al., (2013) terminology. Students who are bullied online at school become victims of cyberbullying at the college level (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014). According to Faucher, Jackson, and Cassidy (2014), cyberbullying is becoming more common among university graduates on a daily basis. The present study was conducted to explore the role of media, family and peer in prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. The present study applied thematic analysis for qualitative analysis of In-depth interview of 08 respondents. Themes and subthemes have been developed. The researcher interviewed 07 females and 01 male who faced bullying in life aged between 15-24 years. The researcher developed a cue sheet comprised of 25 questions. The major theme comprised of 1- experiences of bullying along with sub-themes of occurrence, by whom, to whom you shared, immediate feelings and psychological, emotional and social changes.

The research questions have been developed to find out role of social institutions in prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. **RQ1: Do media play significant role in the prevalence and prevention of Cyber victimization among Pakistani youth?** Results revealed that most of victims were bullied almost on daily basis. It showed that cyber victimization is a significant social problem. Smith (2012) generally acknowledged that cyberbullying is a ubiquitous societal issue that has a detrimental influence on a significant number of young people's daily lives. The results showed the prevalence of cyber victimization among youth. Most of the respondents reported that they had been bullied on WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. It revealed that social media provide a platform to bully someone online. Most of the respondents also addressed that privacy settings in social media also provide a safe harbor to its to protect him/her self from cyber victimization. the use of technology made it a blessing or a curse. Although, Few victims reported that they were being unaware of the privacy settings of social media that actually lead them to being victimized.

RQ2: Do parental attachment and involvement play significant role in the prevalence and prevention of Cyber-victimization among Pakistani youth?

According to the answers given by respondents the data revealed that parents should play a significant role in one's life but unfortunately a wide generation gap was identified between victim and their parents. Most of victims stated that they do not share anything with their parents. They rather have fear that their parents will impose restrictions on them without listening to their problems. Parents are found to be more authoritative rather than supportive. Respondents shared few matters with their mothers but not with their father. A wide communication gap was identified between children and their parents. As far as family is concerned sharing with siblings is more common as compared to sharing with parents. One of the respondents stated that she is being left alone by her family because her family does not have time to listen to her problems. She slipped into the worst form of depression because of her family negligence. The researcher also explored a gender discrimination here. As one of the male victims addressed that his family is supportive and trust him blindly but as far as most of female victims are concerned they all reported that their family do not trust them. However, children or adolescents tend not to share negative experiences with their parents. For instance, Yilmaz (2011) found that only 38.4% of students who had been cyber bullied discussed the problem with parents or teachers. only 02 out of 08 respondents claimed that their parents listen to their problems and guided them in the right direction. On the whole the role of parents seems significant in the prevention of cyberbullying. Most of the parents do not have time to listen to their children that leads them to cyber victimization. Social bond theory also narrated that weak social bonds lead youth towards delinquency. One study that supports the role of parents in social bond theory was conducted by Matsueda and Heimer (1987). They analyzed data from a longitudinal study of delinquent behavior in a sample of high school students. The study found that parental supervision and attachment were negatively associated with delinquent behavior, while parental conflict and deviance were positively associated with delinquent behavior.

RQ3: Do peer attachment and involvement play significant role in the prevalence and prevention of Cyber-victimization among Pakistani youth?

Almost all the participant shared the similar opinion that they blindly trust their friends. They found their peer more supportive as compared to their parents. Peer support helped them out to cope with the trauma of cyber victimization. Peer support groups can help victims of cyberstalking and harassment to cope with their experiences and reduce the impact of trauma (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). Peer support can help victims to develop coping strategies and reduce the impact of cyberbullying on their mental health (Afrouz, 2021). Only one of the victims reported that his friends bully him so he don't trust them rather he shared his feelings with his online/virtual friends. They prove to be his real support mechanism. The results shed light on an important fact that now a day's people like to share more with virtual friends rather than real friends. People tend to disclose more about themselves on social media than they do in person, because they feel more in control of their self-presentation online (Dwivedi et al., 2017). Participants reported feeling more comfortable disclosing personal information to their online friends than their offline friends (Vogel et al., 2018).

RQ4: *What are the reasons behind prevalence of cyber-victimization among Pakistani youth?*

As we come across from data the responses given by respondents shed light on few of the major reasons behind cyber victimization. One of the victims addressed that female face discrimination at all level in a patriarchal society. She is blamed for everything. Male are at supremacy level in Pakistani society and female are mistrusted by men. Most of the respondents shared same view that their family don't trust them and simply blame them. Another reported that weak communication bond and family pressure is also a significant reason behind the cyber victimization. As Social Bond Theory, developed by Travis Hirschi in 1969, posits that individuals who have strong social bonds are less likely to engage in deviant behavior. According to this theory, individuals who have strong connections to their family, school, peers, and community are less likely to engage in criminal activities or other deviant behaviors.

Research has found that parents play a crucial role in the development of these social bonds. Parents who provide their children with emotional support, set appropriate limits, and supervise their activities are more likely to have children who form strong social bonds and are less likely to engage in deviant behavior. On the other hand, parents who are neglectful, abusive, or overly permissive may have children who are more likely to engage in deviant behavior. Apart from that another victim draw our attention towards an important factor that is lack of awareness regarding privacy settings of social media. That also made a strong base for cyber victimization. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2019, only 9% of social media users were aware of all the data that Facebook collects about them, and only 33% were aware of the information that Twitter collects. A survey conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, found that 65% of Facebook users were unaware of the platform's privacy settings, and 74% were unaware of the extent of data collection by the site (Cori et al., 2020). Another significant reason reported by a participant is that we (victim) remained silent after being victimized. The spiral of silence is a theory in communication studies that describes the tendency of people to remain silent or withhold their opinions when they perceive that their views are in the minority, in order to avoid social isolation or rejection. The theory was first proposed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974. The fear of isolation is a key factor in the spiral of silence, as people may be afraid of being ostracized or excluded from social groups if they express an unpopular opinion. This fear can lead to self-censorship, which reinforces the dominance of the majority opinion and perpetuates the spiral effect. Another study by Moy and colleagues (2005) examined the role of fear of isolation in the spiral of silence, and found that people were more likely to self-censor when they believed that expressing their opinion would lead to social isolation or disapproval. This also leads the participants towards victimization.

6. Conclusion

The key objective of the recent study was to access the role of social institutions media, family and peer in the prevalence and prevention of cyber victimization among Pakistani youth. Recent years have seen a sharp increase in internet usage. Although effective, affordable communication is made possible by the ongoing development of electronic communication technology, there are also some drawbacks, most notably cyberbullying and cyber victimization. Teenagers can mistreat, threaten, and bully their classmates using this new medium, and it has been noted that risky online behavior is frequent among teenagers (Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007). Up to one-third of teenager's experience cyberbullying when engaging in online activities (Lenhart, 2007). As a result, many young people have fallen prey to online bullies (Arcak et al., 2009). Research has repeatedly revealed links between cyber victimization and unfavorable outcomes, including depressive symptoms, anxiety disorders, hostility, and melancholy (Mitchell et al., 2007). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that both conventional bullying and cyberbullying commonly lead to low self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Social networking websites like Facebook, Myspace, and Meet Me have made it easier for people to influence others, sometimes for the worse. For instance, a neighbor made a phone Myspace account of a boy who, after flirting, harassed, and breaking up with Megan Meier, 13, in 2006, leading to Meier's suicide (Breuer, 2009). The social media playing its role in both aspects it is providing platform for cyberbullying and also work as a platform to create awareness regarding this miserable situation. The respondents of the recent research reported that they were victimized heavenly on social media because they were unaware of the privacy settings of the social media.

Adolescents' wellbeing is greatly influenced by parenting in general and parent-child interaction in particular. Relationships between parents and adolescents are one of the most crucial safeguards against adverse conditions for children. Due to the autonomy that adolescents experience during adolescence, parent-child interactions change both numerically and qualitatively, but maintaining a close bond during this period is still essential. In light of the information obtained from the respondents, it has been determined that victims have weak relationships with their parents. A wide communication gap exists between them and they hardly found support from their parents. This leads them to the delinquent behavior that is cyber victimization. Baldry (2004) discovered that having close relationships with one or both parents can lessen the negative effects of victimization. In other words, teenagers who have weaker parental bonds are more inclined to internalize issues. On the contrary the peer support seems more significant in countering the impact of cyber victimization. Most of the victims are supposed to share freely with their friends and their friends also help them to get out of this trauma. Teenagers that have strong peer attachment are the least hostile and most understanding of their peers (Laible et al., 2000). In a similar vein, an acculturation study has found a link between attachment to peers and reduced delinquency (Wong, 1999). The major reasons explored by current research were found to be lack of family support, lack of awareness of privacy settings, misuse of social media and gender discrimination existing in our society. However, the supportive role of peer found to be significant in countering this dilemma. Peer support and friendships serve as a safeguard against victimization (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997). Fostering peer ties can serve as a defense mechanism against victimization and bullying (Marini et al., 2023).

6.1. Recommendation

Overall, these studies indicate that media literacy instruction and parental supervision can aid in the prevention of cyber victimization and that the media can be a potent weapon for spreading encouraging messages and increasing public awareness of the risks of cyber victimization. All the media have negative effects to a great extent.

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