

Cyberbullying among Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders: Do Gender and Age Play a Role?

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ABSTRACT Interactions and relationships between students inside and outside the school take many forms. Some of them leave positive effects, such as sympathy, affection, and intimate relationships, and others leave negative effects, such as aggression, beating, cursing, mockery, and insult. The aim was to assess cyberbullying among children with emotional and behavioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age. Quantitative research is carried out with the aim to assess cyberbullying among children with emotional and behavioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age. It uses a survey-based methodology to obtain data from the respondents. The final sample consisted of 120 behaviourally and emotionally disordered students. Data were collected through structured self-administered questionnaires. t-test, ANOVA, and Scheffe Test were used to analyse data. Findings indicated that cyberbullying level among children with emotional and behavioural disorders was ranked high. There are statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 between responses means of the study sample on the cyberbullying scale according to gender in favour of males.

INTRODUCTION

Interactions and relationships between students inside and outside the school take many forms (Stárek 2021). Some of them leave positive effects, such as sympathy, affection, and intimate relationships, and others leave negative effects, such as aggression, beating, cursing, mockery, and insult (Arriaga and Schkeryantz 2015). These effects are characterised as affecting all aspects of the psychological, emotional, physical and social human personality. These effects may extend for long periods (Stárek 2021).

Perhaps among those interactions is what is known as the phenomenon of bullying, which has become one of the educational problems with serious negative effects on school students. What increases the danger of this phenomenon is that it is constantly increasing in school environments, and its negative effects are increasing on students' performance, and on their cognitive, emotional and social development, whether they are bullies or victims of bullying, the spread of bullying also threatens students to learn in a safe classroom environment (Gomez-Baya et al. 2022).

Interest in the study of bullying began in the seventies of the last century, and bullying became a topic of increasing interest in many countries. In 1978, Olweus presented a definition that

was one of the first and most important one. It dealt with the concept of bullying and repeatedly over a period of time to negative behaviours on the part of one or more other students. Bullying is defined as a student's deliberate and repeated negative behaviour during a period of time against another student or more of his peers (Wang et al. 2022). Bullying includes multiple elements, like the nature of bullying behaviour, the bullying person, the occurrence and repetition of bullying behaviour intentionally on a regular and hidden basis and the harm and psychological and physical pain of the victim (Gomez-Baya et al. 2022).

According to a report issued by the Kingdom's National Committee for Childhood, 57.1 percent of boys and 42.9 percent of girls suffer from bullying in Saudi schools. A survey prepared by the Family Safety Program of the Ministry of National Guard in Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, on peer violence (bullying), showed that about 32.9 percent of students are subjected to peer violence occasionally, and 15.0 percent of students are exposed constantly. The National Family Safety Program (the first founder of the bullying prevention project) concluded a cooperation agreement with the National Committee for UNICEF to

coordinate the launch of the national project to prevent bullying in public education schools, which aims to prepare a training program whose components and programs are periodically applied in schools, in addition to school, family and community awareness programmes (Middle East 2022).

Technological development has also brought unexpected threats to schools, and one of these threats is cyberbullying. Most of the bullying behaviour occurs outside the school, which reflects an impact on the interactions inside the school, which faces schools with challenges to confront bullying outside the school, and the possibility of controlling it, but cyberbullying is a threat that extends from home to school and to all aspects of life, and does not go away with the interruption of direct physical contact. Traditional bullying may be faced with some codes of conduct and policies, but cyberbullying, according to the results of some studies, needs legal procedures related to it, and setting specific policies for it (Younan 2019; Khaled and Al-Adamat 2021; Alzami 2021).

Schneider et al. (2012) confirm that suicide rates have increased among students, especially those who have been victims of cyberbullying, and the rates of physical and emotional effects of cyberbullying have increased despite not having much information about cyberbullying and its prevalence in schools. Some reports have shown that ninety-three percent of adolescents use the Internet, and seventy-five percent use smartphones, which indicates that there is a large scope for cyberbullying among them, and that its spread in schools is very fast. Adolescents use the Internet on a daily basis, and this use is constantly increasing to communicate socially with their peers, and this communication is not always positive, as school students who use electronic communication are exposed to personal attacks and harassment on a daily basis. The negative emotions that teenage students bring to school as a result of cyberbullying, teachers and principals suffer from these effects, and it is unfortunate that school principals and counsellors do not have the legal capacity to protect victims of the Internet. Even the victim student cannot claim financial compensation as a result of cyberbullying, which makes all efforts and proposals focus on enacting school laws that limit its effects among school students (Wu et al. 2015).

Cyberbullying is distinguished from traditional bullying in schools in that it allows the bully to harass the victim at any time, and reduces the level of responsibility and accountability for the bully than it is in face-to-face bullying, and electronic bullying does not stop once students leave the school. Rather, cyberbullying breaks into their homes, their computers and their phones. The available means of cyberbullying also enable people to be identified and their places, which enables the bully to see and harass the victim. With the development of modern electronic communications represented by the Internet, the frequency of electronic threats among students has increased in what is known as cyberbullying (Chudal et al. 2021).

Schools strive to reduce cyberbullying because of its negative effects on the bully and its victim, as both the bully and the victim suffer from poor mental health, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, and problems in making friends, and the victim student becomes depressed and confused, and may be injured with anxiety and insomnia, or become violent and withdrawn, as cyberbullying may lead to depression, low self-confidence, permanent tension, a feeling of fear, instability and loss of security, and can lead to suicide. These effects last for a long time (Cosma et al. 2020).

Students may acquire bullying behaviours as a result of some personal factors. Behavioural and emotional disorders affect students' behaviour, especially since behaviourally and emotionally disturbed students are basically normal people in terms of their mental and physical abilities, but the difference between them and ordinary children is in the degree of behaviour performance and not its type. They experience fear and embarrassment, withdraw and isolate themselves, display aggressive behaviour, and distrust others (Elkady 2019; Due et al. 2005; Nguyen et al. 2020; Karaman and Coskun 2020). It is important to understand the extent to which cyberbullying is related to some behavioural or emotional problems and disorders among school students, especially since cyberbullying is linked to personal indicators among students, such as emotional disorder, low achievement, dissatisfaction with school, and a lack of relationships with students, local community and parents (Geckler et al. 2016; Chatters and Hyungyung 2018; Özer 2018; Ramadan 2019).

Problem Statement

With the spread of modern means of communication, bullying has taken another form, which is electronic bullying, which does not end with the end of school hours. Rather, the bully continues to harass the victim from a distance and on an on-going basis, as cyberbullying is a modern problem with significant negative effects, both on the level of the bullies themselves, and on their victims. Both the bully and his victim suffer from low mental health, self-esteem, behavioural and emotional problems, and stresses related to general psychological adjustment, as the victim of bullying becomes depressed, confused, anxious, violent, withdrawn, isolated and timid, and the victim's feelings may generalise to most of his performance at home and at school. What makes the matter worse for school students is the interaction of multiple factors with cyber-bullying, such as emotional-behavioural disorder, which increases the severity of cyberbullying, and multiplies its effects on students.

Aim of the Study

The aim was to investigate and assess cyberbullying among children with emotional and behavioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of cyberbullying among students with BED?
2. Do the level of cyberbullying differ among students with BED according to their to gender?
3. Do the level of cyberbullying differ among students with BED according to their to age?

Significance

The results will help us know much about cyberbullying among students with BED . The study is concerned with investigating and assessing cyberbullying among children with emotional and behavioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age. This may provide guidelines for those concerned with

those types of students to implement cognitive and behaviour therapy to overcome cyberbullying circumstances and effects.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research is carried out with the aim to assess cyberbullying among children with emotional and behavioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age. It uses a survey-based methodology to obtain data from the respondents.

Sample and Data Collection

The targeted schools from Makka were paid a visit. The inform consent form and the questionnaires were filled in by students. A convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants in this study. The inclusion criteria were behaviourally and emotionally disordered students and both sexes (males and females). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study sample. A brief written informed consent at the beginning of the survey questionnaire was required. The incomplete questionnaires were discarded. The final sample consisted of 120 behaviourally and emotionally disordered students.

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of respondents

Variables	Level of variable	No.	Percentage
Age	From 10-12 years old	40	33.3
	Older than 12 and younger than 14 years old	46	38.3
	Older than 14 years old	34	28.3
Total		120	
Gender	Males	79	65.8
	Females	41	34.2
	Total	120	

Source: The Author

Instruments

The *School Children's Problems Scale*, which is a 24- item survey instrument, was developed particularly for this research study. It is based on Saleem and Zahid's School Children's Problems Scale (Saleem and Zahid 2011). It is a 4-point rating scale with options of "Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Often". It originally, as developed and tested by Saleem and Zahid, has six factors, name-

ly, Anxiousness (5 items), Academic Problems (4 items), Aggression (4 items), Social Withdrawal (4 items), Feelings of Rejection (3 items), and Psychosomatic Problems (4 items).

Instrument Reliability and Validity

As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha of each construct and the whole questionnaire are greater than the recommended threshold of 0.7. Besides, all corrected item-total correlation values were higher than the acceptability value of 0.5, which mean that the internal consistency of the questionnaire was fairly well.

Table 2: Reliability test for each item, variable and the whole questionnaire

Variable/item	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's α if item deleted	Cronbach's α
<i>Anxiousness</i>			
Item 1	0.844	0.901	0.931
Item 2	0.823	0.903	
Item 3	0.846	0.906	
Item 4	0.848	0.907	
Item 5	0.850	0.911	
<i>Academic Problems</i>			
Item 6	0.846	0.906	0.940
Item 7	0.848	0.907	
Item 8	0.850	0.911	
Item 9	0.846	0.906	
<i>Aggression</i>			
Item 10	0.823	0.903	0.920
Item 11	0.846	0.906	
Item 12	0.848	0.907	
Item 13	0.823	0.903	
<i>Social Withdrawal</i>			
Item 14	0.848	0.907	0.924
Item 15	0.850	0.911	
Item 16	0.848	0.907	
Item 17	0.850	0.911	
<i>Feelings of Rejection</i>			
Item 18	0.850	0.911	0.929
Item 19	0.848	0.907	
Item 20	0.850	0.911	
<i>Psychosomatic Problems</i>			
Item 21	0.848	0.907	0.939
Item 22	0.850	0.911	
Item 23	0.846	0.906	
Item 24	0.848	0.907	

The concurrent validity of School Children's Problems Scale was confirmed with Behaviour Rating scale-Teachers' Forms (Khalik 2017). A significant positive correlation was found ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$).

The Cyber Bullying Scale is an 18- item survey instrument, which was developed particularly for this research study. It is a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). High scores indicated great cyber victimisation experiences. The test-retest reliability value was 0.66. For convergent validity of the Cyber Bullying Scale, correlation with the cyber bullying scale (Hisham 2018) was significant ($r = 0.64$, $p < .01$).

Data Collection

Data were collected through structured self-administered questionnaires. With the support of each school's principal, each round for filling out the questionnaires was accompanied by the researcher to introduce the study purpose.

Data Analysis

Invalid questionnaires, including those that were incomplete or provided the same response for all items or with many missing values, were eliminated. T-test, ANOVA, and Scheffe Test were used to analyse data.

RESULTS

To answer the first question, which stated, "What is the level of cyberbullying among behaviourally and emotionally disordered students?" means, standard deviation, ranks were calculated. The items were arranged in descending order according to the means as shown in the Table 3. From Table 3 it is clear that item 10 comes first with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.95$). Item 5 comes second with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.01$), while Item 11 comes third with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.05$). Item 4 comes fourth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.94$, $SD=1.07$). Item 2 comes fifth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.09$), while Item 12 comes sixth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.11$). Item 1 comes seventh with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.86$, $SD=1.10$). While Item 3 comes eighth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.82$, $SD=1.12$), whereas Item 7 comes ninth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.81$, $SD=1.10$). Item 6 comes tenth with high degree of

cyberbullying ($M=3.79$, $SD=1.05$). Item 9 comes eleventh with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.75$, $SD=1.03$). Item 13 comes twelfth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.69$, $SD=1.00$), whereas Item 16 comes thirteenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.66$, $SD=1.01$) and Item 8 comes fourteenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.63$, $SD=1.05$). Item 18 comes fifteenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.62$, $SD=1.03$). Item 17 comes sixteenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.03$). Item 14 comes seventeenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.04$), whereas Item 15 comes eighteenth with high degree of cyberbullying ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.04$).

To answer the second question, which stated, "Is there statistically significant difference in the level of cyber bullying among behaviourally and emotionally disordered students attributed gender?" the t-test was employed. As shown in Table 4, there are statistically significant differences at the significance level of 0.05 between responses means of the study sample on the cyberbullying scale according to gender in favour of males ($t=11,843$, $p < .01$).

Table 4: t-test results

Group	No.	M	SD	t	P
Males	79	4.197	0.453	11,843	.01
Females	41	3.165	0.897		

To answer the second question, which stated, "Is there statistically significant difference in the level of cyberbullying among behaviourally and emotionally disordered students attributed age?" ANOVA was employed. As shown in Table 5, there was a significant difference in mean score [$F(2,119) = 61.462$] between ages. The multiple comparison procedures are used to determine which groups are significantly different after obtaining a statistically significant result from an Analysis of Variance. Results are shown in Table 6. As shown in Table 6, there are statistically significant differences in the level of cyberbullying among behaviourally and emotionally disordered students attributed to age, for the older groups.

DISCUSSION

The aim was to investigate and assess cyberbullying among children with emotional and be-

Table 3: Mean and standard deviations of the cyberbullying scale

Item No.	Item	M	SD	Rank	Degree
10	I impersonate some students to tarnish their reputation through social networks.	3.97	0.95	1	High
5	I send messages to some students just to annoy them.	3.96	1.01	2	High
11	I send messages and post materials about a student, which possesses sensitive, confidential or critical information.	3.95	1.05	3	High
4	I repeat some emails frequently and urgently to get a response.	3.94	1.07	4	High
2	I send messages containing vulgar language directed towards some students on the Internet.	3.93	1.09	5	High
12	I use photos and movies to damage the reputation of others.	3.88	1.11	6	High
1	I send e-mails expressing my anger to some students.	3.86	1.10	7	High
3	I sent some offensive emails back to some students.	3.82	1.12	8	High
7	I send or post false emails that hurt some students.	3.81	1.10	9	High
6	I harass and threaten others with harm.	3.79	1.05	10	High
9	I pretend to be someone else to send messages that hurt some students.	3.75	1.03	11	High
13	I use photos and movies to damage the reputation of others.	3.69	1.00	12	High
16	I ban some students from communicating with my group because it provokes them.	3.66	1.01	13	High
8	I am verbally defaming some students through social networks.	3.63	1.05	14	High
18	I would like to know the personal pages of some students to use them in the future to threaten them.	3.62	1.03	15	High
17	I threaten people who don't like my posts on social networks.	3.61	1.03	16	High
14	I collect a picture using modern means of communication to use it to threaten or tarnish the reputation of some students.	3.60	1.04	17	High
15	I am trained to use modern means of communication to skilfully use them to harm some students of cyberbullying.	3.58	1.04	18	High
	Total	3.77	0.98		High

Table 5: ANOVA for differences in the level of cyberbullying according to age

	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between groups	27.985	2	13.993	61,462	0,000 sig.
Within groups	25.954	117	.228		
Total	53.939	119			

Table 6: Multiple comparison (Scheffe test results)

<i>Group</i>		<i>Mean diff.</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>95% confidence interval</i>	
					<i>Lower bound</i>	<i>Upper bound</i>
G.1	G.2	3.5000	2.098	.125	1.026	10.026
	G.3	6.5000*	2.098	.003	11.765	8.765
G.2	G.1	3.5000	2.098	.125	6.956	7.011
	G.3	5.5000*	2.098	.004*	12.062	4.064
G.3	G.1	6.5000*	2.098	.003*	1.463	9.666
	G.2	5.5000*	2.098	.004*	1.987	9.368

havioural disorders, taking into consideration the role of both gender and age. Table 3 shows that the arithmetic mean of the level of bullying among students with behavioural and emotional disorders was 3.77, with a standard deviation of 0.98. This result is due to the fact that students with behavioural and emotional disorders are under the pressure of the emotions of their peers, which makes them resort to social networks to unload their energies.

Modern means of communication also allow them to be anonymous. These means make them practice bullying away from legal prosecution for their behaviour, as social networks allow them to communicate without verifying their true identity, or verifying their age. Also, these means of communication allow them to respond and practice bullying away from the other party who could take revenge directly if such behaviour happened in front of them.

In addition, the students have no experience of any real judicial incident that indicates that impersonation electronically or attacking a person under a pseudonym requires school legal procedures or even judicial procedures. These results are in agreement with the results of Garaigordobil and Machimbarrena (2019) who concluded that students who had higher scores in victimisation or cyber-victimisation manifested internalising and externalising EBPs, whereas those who had higher scores in perpetration of

bullying or cyberbullying had fewer internalising problems.

While Bradshaw et al. (2015) suggested that being victimized led to social-emotional problems. Bullying across the sibling and peer context are associated with similar negative outcomes for children and adolescents (Dantchev and Zemp 2021). Nonglak et al. (2021) indicated that being cyberbullied and school bullied were significantly associated with greater behavioural problem scores.

Findings indicated that the level of cyberbullying differs among students with BED according to gender, in favour of male students. This result is due to the fact that males are more able than females to express feelings of anger and revenge, and that many fathers in the Arab world, according to the prevailing traditions, allow males to communicate electronically without controls, while they place many controls on the communication of their daughters through social networks.

Also, males communicate with strangers much more than females do, fearing that they are exposed to risk cursing, insulting and attacking others through social networks, and they do not trust the guarantees of privacy and safety in social networks. This result goes in the same line with previous literature (that is, Esther and Izsakun 2012; Lansford et al. 2012), which showed that boys are more likely to respond in an aggressive manner than girls, and that girls are more

likely to be victims on the Internet (Huang and Chou 2010). According to other studies, girls are at higher risk of being cyber-victims (Tali and Dorit 2013).

As shown in Table 6, the level of cyberbullying differs among students with BED according to their age, for the older groups. These differences are due to the fact that students from the “14 years and older” group have the most smartphones and the ability to access social networks. This group also takes courses in computers and Internet use in schools. However, the group from “10 years to 10 years 12 years” is a group that is not taught computers as a school subject in schools, and the age group “from 14 years and older” is the most communicating and using social networks among themselves, as communication and acquaintance with each other is done through social networks.

CONCLUSION

In summary, findings from this study have revealed that cyberbullying level was high among students with BED. The level of cyberbullying differs among students with BED according to gender, in favour of male students. The level of cyberbullying differs among students with BED according to their age, for the older groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations are presented below. Adopting an educational awareness approach to guide students to benefit from technology in a positive way, and to raise awareness of the dangers of misuse of the Internet and modern communication technology on society and the individual. Conducting further studies to find out the level of cyberbullying, its forms and causes in the Saudi and Arab environment in light of variables not included in the current study, such as the variables of the geographic region, the level of achievement, the student's status (orphan or has siblings), the level of the school, basic or mixed type of technology. Involve students in cultural, social and sporting activities and programs aimed at giving them opportunities for constructive positive social contact. Involve families in school meetings and decisions to confront cyberbullying and intensify control over social

communication among students. Working on developing preventive school programs to face the problems that cyberbullying may pose among school students.

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