



## E-Bullying: A Threat for University Students' Social Life

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**Abstract:** *Students are vital to the growth of society and nations. Universities prepare students for the real world. The study examines the threat of e-bullying to university students' social lives. The study's goal was to discover how college students perceive and use e-bullying in their daily lives. It was a descriptive study. In this survey, students from two public universities in Southern Punjab were included. The study sample was obtained by a multi-stage sampling method, and data was collected from a sample of 200 university students. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from the study sample. Personal visits collected the data. The data was examined as a percentage. According to the survey, university students have more online friends than "real world" pals because they find it more manageable. The results suggest that university students want to establish a more social and polite online world.*

**Key Words:** E-bullying, University Students and Social Life

### Introduction

Students play leading roles in society as well as in the development of nations. Universities prepare students for their practical life. There are influences of family, friends, fellows, peer groups, and media on the behavior formation of students. Usually, watching violent actions on electronic media has contributed to the increasingly aggressive attitude in youth as the children try to copy these things in daily routine life. Due to a lack of interest from family and teachers, these young ones are inclined towards negative social behaviors (Faucher, Jackson, Cassidy, 2014). Bullying is one among many other negative social behaviors (Hobbs, 2009). The age of technology has also introduced a new kind of bullying, which is commonly known as e-bullying or cyber-bullying. E-bullying is spreading worldwide very rapidly among the young generation, especially among technology lovers (Gabagan, Vaterlaus, Frost, 2016). Different information technology (IT) sources like emails, online chats, instant messaging, cell phones, and websites having pornographic material and non-social or non-cultural words are some of the ways which are used in e-bullying (Myers & Cowie, 2019; O'Brien & Moules, 2010; Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009). Bullying is accepted as the first door of aggression and big fights (Tarapdar & Kellett, 2011). It is also an admissible fact that these behaviors are not recorded by the authorities in many cases. That may be the major reason that bullying is underestimated not only by the concerned authorities but by the teachers, counselors, and parents as well (LopesNeto, 2005).

Various intellectual presented several theories about victimization; one of the famous theories regarding bullying is a socio-cognitive theory that includes the study of moral disengagement. The background of the theoretical view informed that one's moral ethics affects aggressive behavior (Bandura, 1999, 2002). The moral disagreement of a person essentially contributes to the decision-making process relevant to behavior or attitude either by preventing or mitigating it. It provides support for individual's self-worthiness and to retain its morality. Further, it describes a mechanism that

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comprised eight cognitive constructs that cause detachment of one's internal morality standards from one's actions. It represents its engagement in unethical attitudes without experiencing adverse passions (Moore, 2015). Moreover, Bandura (1991) confirms that moral disengagement operates as a defense mechanism and guards a person against the distress caused by such attitude and behavior.

When we study the bullying behavior among adolescents, numerous research studies guided us that they have higher levels of moral disengagement are more likely to be involved in cyber-bullying, traditional bullying, or both of types differently (Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Pornari & Wood, 2010). Researches in the field of moral disengagement demonstrated that it is clearly connected with the expression of aggressive behaviors. In other words, we may say that the independent effect of moral disengagement mechanisms justifies the noteworthy predictor of bullying. Likewise, Thornberg and Jungert (2014) illustrated that moral disengagement is positively correlated with the prevalence of bullying. Moreover, a study conducted in Canada involving high school students indicated that students who were bullies but were never victimized scored high in moral disengagement (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, & Bonanno, 2005). On the other hand, students who sometimes played the role of the bully but were also victimized experienced reduced moral disengagement (Travlos, Tsorbatzoudis, Barkoukis, and Douma, 2018).

Empathy has been reflected as an essential factor that can prevent anti-social behavior (Almeida, Correia, & Marinho, 2009). It is usually defined as the capability to share another person's emotional state, which is clearly a definition that strains its sentimental expressive dimensions. However, a cognitive dimension of empathy is the ability to understand another's an emotional state, has also been identified (Davis, 1994). Though, it's fairly controversial that empathy is generally considered to be a two-dimensional idea with an emotional dimension as well as a cognitive dimension.

If in the developed countries negative social behaviors are not on record, where it is supposed that everything is going to be on the record, what it can be said for developing countries like Pakistan? Pakistan is a country where major things like the total population, the population in each city or town, etc., have not in exact figures. In such conditions, many important and significant things are also not on record as our law enforcement departments have yet not any department or institution to record, control, and check the crimes that happen day by day around us in Pakistan. In such conditions, it's looking impossible that negative social behaviors are going to be on record. Big issues and quarrels in daily routine life always have some minor causes. If we control them, ultimately, we can control the occurring of these major issues and quarrels. In other words, crime is always based on negative social behaviors; if we control negative social behaviors, ultimately, we can control the growing ratio of crime in our society. The purpose of the study was to identify the different forms of e-bullying and examine its effects and side effects on the social behaviors of university students in the educational environment at the higher education level in Pakistan. The objective of the study is to find out university students' perceptions and practices of ICT use about e-bullying toward their societal life.

## Research Methodology

Keeping in mind the aim of the study, this study was descriptive in nature and was based on mix method approach. A questionnaire for students was developed. The questionnaire was based on four (4) parts. Part 1 gives the demographical information of the participants; the second section gives the information about the information technology resources usage by the participants of the study; the third section is based on the personal experiences of the participants, and the final part is based on the perceptions of the participants. This portion is supported with the 4 points Likert Scale.

Furthermore, the researcher has also used "Researcher's Diary" as a tool to record the comments and experiences of the participants if they want to share. The validity and reliability of the tools were established with the help of experts' judgments and pilot testing. For getting the real image of the problem under investigation, the data collected through these tools were validated by making cross-matching of the information.

The sample of the study was comprised only of the public universities of Southern Punjab. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to reach the sample of the study. The sample detail is like it that from Southern Punjab, two (2) public sector general universities were the sample of the study. From each university, two (2) faculties are selected on the basis of multi-stage cluster sampling, and from each faculty, five (5) departments were selected randomly, and from each department, ten male and ten female students were selected randomly just to give the equal opportunity of representation to the gender. The data was collected through personal visits. The quantitative data was fed in the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Package 20. SPSS was used for the Factor Analysis and Percentage score of the data.

## **Results and Discussions**

The part first of the questionnaire was based on the demographical variables of the target sample. The second part of the research tool is based on the practices and close observer regarding e-bullying. On the questions regarding the facility or usage of modern technology, results show that 65% male and 81% female students have computer or laptop with internet access as well as 72% male and 87% female students spend in average four or more than four hours daily on their laptops or computer while, 96% male and 98% female students are enjoying modern technology of cell phone with internet access. Furthermore, 68% male and 77% female students send or receive text messages or forwarded posts more than 50 and up to 1000 daily and spend three to nine hours for calling, using social media, listening to songs, etc. the cross-tabulation results also indicated that hostel students spend maximum time with their cell phones and computer/laptops.

On the questions regarding the victims, witnesses, and givers of e-bullying, results show that 98% male and 75% female students replied that they had been bullied on computers/laptops or cell phones. At the same time, 13% male and 04% female students have taken part in bullying using computers/laptops or cell phones. Furthermore, 99% male and 80% female students were the witnessed of other students getting bullied using computers/laptops or cell phones. On asking was the source of e-bullying, 57% respondents responded that through social media, 14% through text messages, and 02% through emails.

The next few questions were regarding the consequences of being bullied or witness to e-bullying. Results show that only 14% male and 17% female students stayed away from university in order to avoid being bullied. More to it, 21% male and 30% female students were stayed away from certain classrooms or areas of the university to avoid being bullied.

On asking regarding the reporting and reaction of being or witness of e-bullying, results indicated that 89% male and 97% female students do not report e-bullying to their teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, and other concerned authorities. As for the reactions were concerned against the e-bullying, eight different options were given to the students, 86% male and 89% female students were reported that they ignored e-bullying. Only 06% male and 09% female students replied that they inform their fellows, seniors, and elder brothers/sisters. On asking why they ignored being bullied, 63% male and 79% female said they don't know about the subject of e-bullying. 17% male and no female student said that they don't want to lose their friends. 11% male and 16% female students reported that they don't want to bear the stress of humiliation among fellows or family members.

The last question was asked about the nature of bullying. Most of the students were bullied sexually, and 43% students were victims of sexual e-bullying. After it, 31% of students were reported that due to their religion, they became the victim of e-bullying. Another major factor was social or economic background, and 27% of students have reported it. Sectarian e-bullied was the factor, according to 19% of students. Physical structure, dressing, undue favor from teachers or seniors, and lingual difference were also counted as the factors of e-bullying.

The third part of the research tool was based on the perceptions and practices of students, and it was designed on a four-point Likert Scale. Twenty different statements were asked in this part. A simple percentage was found, and findings with discussion are given in the following table and lines.

**Table 1.** Participants' Responses

S. No	Statement	SDA	DA	A	SA
1	Bullying over the internet is easier than in real life.	--	13.50	28.50	57.75
2	Bully over the internet is less hurtful as it's not facing to face.	5.75	9.75	58.00	26.50
3	E-bullying is a widespread problem.	6.75	19.25	31.75	42.25
4	E-bullying is terrifying than face-to-face bullying.	5.75	36.75	50.25	7.25
5	In our institution, e-bullying is uncontrollable.	7.25	34.25	43.00	15.50
6	E-bullying is common in educational institutes.	13.25	10.00	20.50	56.25
7	Visit sites and social media to read and post mean things.	17.00	57.50	20.00	5.50
8	E-bullies have a strong social backgrounds.	11.75	11.25	57.50	19.50
9	Nobody can do anything to stop e-bullying.	10.50	14.25	46.00	29.25
10	More online friends than "real life" friends.	6.00	18.75	25.25	50.00
11	Use fake IDs for online chat.	23.50	47.25	16.25	13.00
12	Have severe threats of being e-bullied.	16.25	10.00	11.00	65.75
13	More online communication as compared to in person.	10.25	19.50	43.00	27.25
14	To make friends online is easier than in person.	11.75	25.75	14.25	48.25
15	People should have freedom of speech and expression	11.25	16.00	28.75	44.00
16	E-bullying is a normal part of the online world.	6.50	20.75	15.00	57.75
17	Witness of hurting due to e-bullying.	6.25	46.75	34.50	12.50
18	Things that happen online should stay online.	0.25	13.75	58.75	27.25
19	E-bullying should be recorded to concern authority.	12.50	19.50	33.25	34.50
20	Want to create a kind and respectful e-world.	0.25	12.25	58.25	26.25

The above-mentioned table shows statement wise results. Results indicated of the first statement that ( $28.50 + 57.75 = 86.25\%$ ) more than 86% of the informants have opined strongly in favor that bullying people over the internet is easier as compared to bullying the people in real life. At the same time, results of the second statement indicated that ( $58+26.50=84.50$ ) more than 84% of the informants again opined strongly that bullying people over the internet is less hurtful than doing it face to face. On the next step, results of the third statement depict that ( $31.75+42.25=74$ ) 74% of university students have the perception that e-bullying is a widespread problem in educational institutions. Furthermore, the results of the fourth statement show that ( $50.25+7.50=57.50$ ) more than 57% of university students have the perception that e-bullying is more terrifying than face-to-face bullying. Likewise, results of the fifth item show that ( $43+15.50=58.50$ ) more than 58% of university students have the perception that the institution cannot do anything about e-bullying because it is uncontrollable. As well, findings of the sixth item show that ( $20.50+56.25=76.75$ ) approximately 77% of informants opined that e-bullying is just as common as bullying in educational institutes. Similarly, results of the seventh item indicated that ( $17+57.50=74.50$ ) more than 74% of informants are not in favor that university students regularly visit websites or social media to read mean things that others have posted. By the same token, results of the eighth statement indicated that ( $57.50+19.50=77$ ) 77% of informants are in the favor of the statement that university students have the perception that the people who bully electronically are some of the most popular students of the institutions. In the same way, findings of the ninth item show that ( $46+29.25=75.25$ ) more than 75% of informants are in the favor that university students have the perception that e-bullying is uncontrollable and nobody can do anything to stop it. Correspondingly, the findings of the tenth item show that ( $25.25+50=75.25$ ) more than 75% of informants are in the favor that university students have more online friends as compared to real-life friends.

Consistently, the findings of the eleventh item show that ( $23.25+47.25=70.75$ ) approximately 71% informants are not in the favor that university students don't use fake ID's online while they are chatting with others. Congruently, the findings of the twelfth item also show that ( $11+65.75=76.75$ ) approximately 77% of informants are in the favor that university students have severe threats of e-bullying. Disparately, the findings of the thirteenth item show that ( $43+27.25=70.25$ ) more than 70% informants that live communication among youth is becoming less and online chat is spreading rapidly. At present, the

findings of the fourteenth item show that  $(14.25+48.25=62.50)$  more than 62% of the informants are in the favor that university students find it's easier they make friends online than in person. View to above, the findings of the fifteenth item show that  $(28.75+44=72.75)$  approximately 73% of the informants are in the favor that each and everyone have the freedom to say whatever they want for others but should be in some ethical circle of social and state context. Simultaneously, the findings of the sixteenth item show that  $(15+57.75=72.75)$  approximately 73% of the informants are in the favor of that e-bullying is as normal part of the online world as bullying is the part of the own real world. But contrary to it, findings of the seventeenth item show that  $(6.25+46.75=53)$  53% of the informants are not in the favor that there is a majority of the university students who are witness of really have been hurt by e-bullying. In a true sense, the findings of the eighteenth item show that  $(58.75+27.25=86)$  86% of the informants are in favor that online things should stay online and they don't become the part of our real life. In addition to all, the findings of the second-last item show that  $(33.25+34.50=67.75)$  approximately 68% of the informants are in the favor that if anyone hurt by e-bullying, s/he must inform the concerned authorities (at home parents and in university to the teachers or the administrators) so that they can do something to stop e-bullying. And finally, the findings of the last item show that  $(58.25+26.25=84.50)$  more than 84% of the informants are in the favor that both male and female students want to create and establish a more kind and respectful online world.

## **Conclusion**

The study was concluded in the following lines with the help of findings drawn from questionnaire items and the researcher's diary. It can be concluded from the results of the study that The results indicate that in the universities, 65% male and 81% female students are laptop or computer users with internet access, and 96% male and 98% female students are using a cell phone with internet access and they spend four or more than four hours in average on with these gadgets as well as post and watch 300 to 700 posts daily by using different social media posts. Meanwhile, results suggest that there is a big group of students who have been bullied in the universities, but university students don't take part in e-bullying, but they are also witnessed. More to it, bullied victims are not ready to report e-bullying to the concerned authorities at home and universities. Different students have different points of view regarding don't reporting e-bullying like, they don't know the subject, they don't want to lose their friends, and they don't want to become the part of that dirty game, etc. But they stayed away from specific areas of their institutions. As for as the types of bullying are concerned, the hierarchy can be classified as most common is sexual abuse, then religious abuse, after it cultural or economic abuse, later sectarian abuse, and lingual abuse at the bottom.

Results also indicated that as compared to the female participants, male informants have the perception that e-bullying is a common part of the online world and it is just as common as bullying in the institutes, as well as bullying people over the internet is easier as compared to bullying the people in real life as bullying people over the internet is less hurtful as you are not doing it to their face, but e-bullying is more terrifying than regular bullying. E-bullying is truly a big problem in educational institutes, and our educational institutes as well as no one else, cannot do anything about e-bullying because universities don't have soft-wares to control this disease. University students have more online friends than in "REAL-LIFE" friends because they find it easier to make online friends than in person. As a result, live communication among youth is becoming less, and online chat is spreading rapidly. At the same time, not in the majority, but countable university students use fake IDs. Students also opined that online things should stay online, and they don't become part of our own real life. But in real life it's looking impossible. At the same time, it may recommend that it is the dire need of the university students that they would like to create a kinder and more respectful online world.

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