



Cyber Bullying, Psychological Distress and Quality of Life among Employees: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the connection between cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life among employees. For this purpose, a cross-sectional correlational research design was used and a sample of 150 participants was selected through convenient sampling technique from various organizations in Faisalabad city. A demographic sheet, Cyber bully/Victim Scale, Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), and Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) were used to collect the data. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The results revealed a significant positive correlation between cyber-bullying and psychological distress and a weak negative correlation with quality of life. Further, the t-test analysis reported similar levels of cyber-bullying in both genders but female employees' scores were higher on psychological distress and quality of life as compared to male employees. The findings emphasize the need for organizations to implement anti-cyber-bullying policies, accessible support services, and gender-sensitive mental health resources to foster a safer and healthier workplace culture. This study contributes valuable insights into the growing concern of workplace mental health in digitally connected environments.



Introduction

Bullying in the workplace can result in a range of unpleasant feelings, including hostility and antisocial behavior, which can deplete a person's energy both physically and mentally (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Similarly, the cyber-bullying is a growing problem in the workplace because of the rising use of virtual communication era. Coyne et al. (2004) describe cyber bullying as bullying or harassment that happens online and includes acts like threatening someone, spreading

misleading records, or excluding them from online networks. Those risks are increasingly common among workers, mainly in corporate environments, and may affect their productivity and mental health (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). The World Health Organization defines psychological distress in the workplace as the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. Further they add that ,it can be caused by poor work organization (the way we design jobs and work systems, and the way we manage them), by poor work design (*e.g.*, lack of control over work processes), poor management, unsatisfactory working conditions and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors (Maulik, 2017).

Long-term psychological stress at work due to any of the aforementioned factors may lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, physical and emotional exhaustion, and a decline in mental health in employees (Carolan et al., 2017). It has been shown that workplace bullying and harassment, in addition to factors like workload, abusive supervision, and person job mismatch, significantly contribute to psychological stress and weakened mental health in workers within an organizational setting (Fida et al., 2018). Andrews and Slade (2001) kingdom that mental distress is a word used to signify a state of emotional struggling characterized via symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, and tension. One sizeable aspect in the place of work that has been proven to growth mental distress is cyber bullying. Victims of cyber bullying may also reveal feelings of isolation, anxiety, or fear of reprisals, all of which may also negatively affect their intellectual health. Research has shown that extended exposure to cyber bullying may additionally exacerbate signs of melancholy and tension, main to principal mental fitness problems. Cyber bullying is connected to emotional and psychological problems and has the potential to incite suicidal thoughts. It is associated with depressive, anxious, and stressed states as well as alterations in the rhythm of cortisol release. Moreover, cyber bullying has an impact on wide aspects of subjective wellbeing like happiness or life satisfaction (Navarro et al., 2015).

Experiencing cyber bullying may lead to a number of behavioral, emotional, and psychological issues as such as social anxiety, anger, and hostility, fear, melancholy, hyperactivity disorder, drug abuse, self-harm, and even suicide thoughts and attempts . Early psychological discomfort from cyber bullying may result in more serious behavioral and mental health issues, including suicidal thoughts and feelings. Suicidal thoughts were more indirectly influenced by the psychological shift caused by cyber bullying than by the action itself (Iranzo et al., 2019). Employees may find it challenging to avoid the negative consequences of cyber bullying due to the blurred lines between personal and professional life in a digital age, which can result in chronic stress and burnout. This ongoing psychological discomfort can fuel a vicious cycle in which people's quality of life declines and their mental and professional wellbeing are further impacted (Einarsen et al., 2009). The term "quality of life" (QoL) describes a person's total state of health, which includes their mental, emotional, social, and physical aspects. The increasing use of digital platforms has led to a developing issue known as cyber bullying, which has been found to pose a serious threat to quality of life (QoL), specifically impacting social relationships, mental health, and emotional stability (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). The complicated idea of fine of existence Quality of Life (QoL) encompasses social, intellectual, and physical wellbeing. Employees' work surroundings, which include the prevalence of stressors like cyber bullying, has a direct impact on their excellent of life (QoL). According to research, workers who are subjected to cyber bullying frequently experience a decline in their quality of life as well as poorer job satisfaction, higher absenteeism, and worsening interpersonal connections (Kowalski et al., 2014). Therefore, present study investigated the association between cyber-bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life in employees.

Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant positive relationship between cyber bullying and there would be a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and quality of life in employees.
2. There will be a significant negative relationship between cyber bullying and the quality of life of employees.
3. There would be significant gender differences in the scores of cyber bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life among employees.
4. Psychological distress in employees.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The investigation was carried out using a cross-sectional correlational research design.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 150 participants (77 female and 73 male) was chosen through convenience sampling technique from various organizations in Faisalabad.

Instruments

Demographic Sheet

The researcher created a demographic sheet to collect participants' personal information, including their name, age and gender etc.

Cyber Bully/Victim Scale

The Cyber bully Scale is a psychometric measure developed by Mehmet Barış Horzum (2010) to evaluate people's roles and experiences in cyber bullying scenarios. The scale uses a Likert type response format to quantify the frequency of experiences related to cyber bullying: (Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Often = 4, Always = 5). Participants rate their experiences or actions based on these options, and the scores are aggregated to identify the intensity of cyber-victimization or perpetration. Higher scores indicate more frequent experiences of being a victim or engaging in cyber bullying behavior. The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.88, ensuring its reliability in measuring cyber bullying-related experiences (Horzum, 2010).

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale

The Psychological Distress Scale (K10) was developed by renowned sociologist and health services researcher Dr. Ronald C. Kessler. The K10 scale has ten questions on various mental states; each with a five-level response scale. The scale consists of 10 items that inquire about various emotional states experienced in the past four weeks. All of the time =5, most of the time =4, some of the time =3, a little of the time = 2, and none of the time = 1. The Cronbach's alpha measurements on the scale were .89 to .91 indicating a high degree of reliability (Kessler et al., 2003).

Quality of Life Scale

The Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) is a widely used tool developed by Dr. John Flanagan in 1970s to measure an individual's overall quality of life. The newest edition of the Quality-of-Life Sale (QOLS) has 16 items. The scale scoring is like that, delighted=7, pleased=6, mostly satisfied=5, mostly dissatisfied=3, unhappy=2, terrible=1 Strong convergent and discriminant validity, good test retest reliability ($r = .78$ to $r = .84$), and excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$ to $.92$) are all displayed (Flanagan, 1970).

Procedure

After approval of the research title and getting permission from concerned authorities the data collection was started. Individuals who consented to participate in the research project were given a copy of the demographic information sheet, the Quality of Life Scale, the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, and the Cyber bully/Victim Scale. After the data collection process, participants received acknowledgment for their presence and participation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, V26) was used to calculate the results. The means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were measured for the demographic variables. Further, the Pearson correlation and t-test analyses were used to test the study hypotheses.

Ethical Consideration

Every safety measure was taken before the research was prepared and throughout its execution. This gave the author the opportunity to properly investigate the topic. The current study was conducted in a particular manner to guarantee that the respondents' dignity and respect were maintained. The researcher made certain that the study participant's rights and welfare would be upheld. The purpose and confidentiality regulations of the research were explained to the participants. The participants were additionally advised that they were under no obligation to pay for their participation and that they might withdraw at any moment. Keeping in mind the ethical issues surrounding intellectual property rights, all of the psychological tests used in this study were accessible with open authorization, while others were used with permission from the authors of the original sources.

Results & Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants (N=150)

Variables	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age			36.21 (9.71)
Gender			
Male	73	48.7 %	
Female	77	51.3 %	

Table 1 shows the participants' mean age as 36.21, with a standard deviation of 9.71. Of the participants, 73 (48%) were male, and 77 (51.3%) were female employees.

Table 2: Psychometric Properties of Research Variables (N=150)

Variables	Items	<i>A</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cyber bullying	15	.95	33.82	16.22	.18	1.38
Psychological Distress	10	.88	29.53	9.36	.07	.39

Quality Of Life	16	.92	75.78	18.12	.65	.88
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Table no 2 shows the statistical characteristics of cyber bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life among employees. The Mean of cyber bullying is 33.82 and SD is 16.21. The Means of Psychological Distress is 29.52 and SD is 9.36. The Means of Quality of Life is 75.78 and SD is 18.13. The reliability of the variables is the Cyber bullying Scale consists of 15 items to measure it and Cronbach's alpha of .95 indicates good internal consistency. Psychological Distress has 10 items and Cronbach's alpha value is .88, which is good internal consistency. Quality of life consists of 16 items and Cronbach's alpha .92 indicates excellent internal consistency. All three measures have high internal consistency, according to the reliability study, which makes them trustworthy tools for assessing psychological distress, quality of life, and cyber bullying in the sample of 150 participants.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations between Cyber-bullying, Psychological Distress and Quality of Life among Employees (N=150)

Variables	1	2	3
1-Cyber-bullying	--		
2-Psychological Distress	.53**	--	
3- Quality of Life	-.06	.03	--

Note: ** $p < .01$

Table 3 shows that the value of 0.53** represents the strong positive correlation between cyber bullying and psychological distress. The value of 0.06 represents the correlation between cyber bullying) and quality of life. This is a very weak negative correlation, suggesting almost no relationship between cyber bullying and quality of life. Similarly, the value of 0.03 represents the correlation between psychological distress and quality of life. This value is a very weak positive correlation, suggesting little to no relationship between psychological distress and quality of life.

Table 4: Independence Sample t-Test for the Comparison of Male and Female Employees (N=150)

Variable	Male (n=73)		Female (n=77)		T	P	Cohen d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Cyb	29.12	9.29	29.90	9.47	.51	.60	0.06
Psy	29.97	14.63	37.48	16.87	2.90	.04	0.47
Qua	72.52	19.05	78.87	16.74	.217	.03	0.35

Note: * $p < .05$

According to Table 4, there is no discernible difference between males and females in cyber bullying ratings ($p=0.60$). Gender does not seem to have a significant impact on cyber bullying scores, as shown by the extremely modest effect size indicated by the little Cohen's d (0.06). A statistically significant difference in psychological distress ratings between the sexes, with females reporting considerably higher levels of anguish than men, is shown by the P value of (0.04). With a medium effect size indicated by Cohen's d of (0.47), the difference in psychological distress ratings between males and females is significant. A statistically significant difference in Quality of Life ratings between the sexes is shown by the P value of (0.03), with women reporting a

considerably greater quality of life than men. The gender difference in quality of life is visible and significant, according to Cohen's d of 0.35, which indicates a modest to medium effect size.

Discussion

This research investigated the relationship between cyber bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life among employees. For this purpose the data was collected through a demographic sheet, Cyber bully/Victim Scale, Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), and Quality of Life Scale (QOLS). The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS-v26). The first hypothesis of this study was “there would be a significant positive relationship between cyber bullying and psychological distress in employees”. The results of the current study showed the significant positive correlation between cyber bullying and psychological distress. The previous research supported these results as significant correlation between cyber bullying and psychological distress. With the rise of cyber bullying events, members usually reach a better stage of stress, melancholy, anxiety, and even post-traumatic stress symptoms. One of the reasons for this could be that cyber bullying can have greater inherent stressors. According to the Social Stress Theory, continuous social stressors (for example on line harassment), at some point prevails against an individual coping resources resulting in chronic mental health problems (Pearlin et al., 1981). Cyber bullying can have long-term psychological effects on victims that extend well into adulthood, in addition to causing them severe distress. According to research, those who are cyber bullied as children are more likely to face long-term mental health problems later in life, such as anxiety disorders, sadness, and suicide thoughts (Niemelä et al., 2011). Similarly, Samnani and Singh (2012) examined studies that examined how bullying at work affects individuals, groups, organizations, and society as a whole. Numerous health problems, including burnout, have been connected to individual level workplace bullying.

The secondly hypothesis in the current research was “there would be a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and quality of life in employees”. Results of this study showed there is negative significant relationship in psychological distress and quality of life. The previous literature also showed the negative relationship between quality of life and Psychological distress (Bano et al., 2024). The third hypothesis of this study was “there will be a significant negative relationship between cyber bullying and the quality of life of employees”. The previous literature also illustrates this link as the emotional and mental aspects of quality of life are greatly impacted by cyber bullying. Anxiety, sadness, and stress related illnesses are common among victims and are linked to poor mental health (Brailovskaia et al., 2019). Though cyber bullying primarily affects emotional and mental health, it can also have indirect effects on physical wellbeing. Victims of cyber bullying often experience psychosomatic symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances, all of which contribute to a lower QoL (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2013).

Numerous researches have looked at ways to lessen the detrimental effects of cyber bullying on quality of life. The negative impacts of cyber bullying have been shown to be mitigated by strong social support, high self-esteem, and emotional resilience. Enhancing coping skills and offering psychological therapy are two interventions that may help people overcome the detrimental effects of cyber bullying and enhance their general quality of life (Iranzo et al., 2019). According to research, workers who are subjected to cyber bullying frequently experience a decline in their quality of life as well as poorer job satisfaction, higher absenteeism, and worsening interpersonal connections (Kowalski et al., 2014; Sher et al., 2023). The fourth hypothesis of this study is “there would be significant gender differences in the scores of cyber bullying, psychological distress, and

quality of life among employees". The current study results showed that there was no significant gender difference was found in cyber bullying. The previous study also shows not visible or significant difference in men and women in cyber bullying but in psychological distress and quality of life found significant gender difference in both sexes, the female was highly prone in anxiety disorder (Sher et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study was conducted to find out the relationship between cyber bullying, psychological distress, and quality of life among employees. The results indicated a high positive correlation between cyber bullying and psychological distress and a weak negative correlation with quality of life. Additionally, the t-test analysis revealed that while cyber bullying was equivalent for both sexes, female employees scored higher on psychological distress and quality of life than male employees.

Limitations & Recommendations

The data was obtained from only one region of the Punjab province and the individuals who participated in this study belonged to only a few common professions. Therefore, in the next studies data should be collected from several regions of the country, and the individuals belonging to many professions should participate in the study to increase the generalization of results. Further, based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to mitigate the impact of cyber bullying on psychological distress and quality of life among employees. Organizations should establish clear policies to prevent and address cyber bullying. These policies must define unacceptable behaviors, outline reporting mechanisms, and ensure confidentiality and non-retaliation for employees who report incidents. Regular communication and awareness campaigns can help reinforce these policies.

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