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Research Article
Cyberbullying and Emotional Deprivation among School Students: A Case of Bullies, Bullied and Bystander at Jordanian Schools

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Cyberbullying remains a pervasive phenomenon affecting students at different stages and backgrounds worldwide. It has been a matter of concern for current research and practices as a wide range of psychological problems including emotional deprivation are associated with it. The present study examined the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among school students. **Materials and Methods:** The participants were 432 school students (179 males and 253 females) who were randomly selected from 10th, 11th and 12th grades in the schools of the Directorate of Education in the Southern Jordan Valley in Jordan. A cyberbullying, emotional deprivation and bullied scales were applied. **Results:** The study found a positive correlation between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among bullies and bullied students in favor of male students. The findings further indicated that the level of emotional deprivation was high among both bullies and victims of bullying students. The results posited emotional deprivation as a good predictor of cyberbullying among bullies and bullied students. **Conclusion:** The findings establish a relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation which fore shadows alarming consequences among school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a multidimensional phenomenon that can have a number of negative psychological and social effects. These effects can be noticed in different forms of behavioural and emotional disorders experienced by both bullies and bullied which can be denoted by poor social consensus and anti-social behaviours[1]. Bullies are assumed to have special physical and psychological qualities that enable them to impose their authority on their victims, while individuals who are victims of bullying are characterized by low self-esteem and poor social skills[2]. Cyberbullying can be defined as any behaviour that is carried out via the internet using any electronic or digital media platform. This behaviour is carried out by an individual or group through recurring interactions involving hostile or aggressive messages aiming at harming others using an anonymous or known identity to the bullied[3]. It is also defined as the deliberate use of electronic communication tools to repeatedly harm an individual or a group[4].

Cyberbullying behaviour does not only affect individuals who are bullied, but also bullies who exhibit higher rates of psychological, behavioural and emotional problems[5]. Psychologists argue that bullying behaviour is a result of a number of reasons including internal factors related to bullies as well as external reasons including environmental and societal factors that threaten psychological security or compensation for the sense of inferiority[6]. It is known that family, its environment and its relationships that bind family members are among the most important factors that shape the psychological, social and emotional development of individuals[7]. Many personality traits that a person acquires depend primarily on the nature of his or her relationship with family members. Therefore, deprivation from a positive family climate can have a negative impact on the development of the individual, as he might become indignant to those around him. Consequently, it may become more difficult for him to reconcile his psychological needs and social commitments due to his sense of psychosocial and social insecurity[8]. Emotional deprivation is defined as the lack of proper care and sympathy from parents and insecurity as a result of parental separation or abuse[9].

Several recent studies have found a high level of cyberbullying among schoolchildren, especially males[10] over the age of 14, A study found a positive correlation between traditional and electronic bullying for both bullies and bullied in favor of males[11]. In a study aimed at establishing psychometric validity of a cyberbullying scale, research found differences between males and females for both bullies and bullied in favor of males. The results further revealed an overlap between being an initiator of cyberbullying and a victim of cyberbullying. In order to identify the relationship between emotional deprivation and aggressive behaviour in a sample of middle school students[12], the participants had a medium level of parental emotional deprivation and occurrence of hostile behaviours. Furthermore, the study found a positive correlation between emotional deprivation and hostile behaviour among elementary school students[8].

The proliferation and development of electronic and digital media platforms has led to the emergence of cyberbullying which has resulted in negative effects on both bullies and bullied. As a result, both of them experience periods of emotional disturbance and behavioural problems. A study found that bullies usually belong to families that suffer from disintegration, separation, anarchism and negative relationships which push bullies to engage into bullying behaviours[13]. Therefore, it can be argued that emotionally disturbed students resort to social networks to drain their excessive emotional energy allowing them to disguise and not to show their true identity and to practice bullying away from legal responsibility. Consequently, the current study set out to respond to the seriousness of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, especially on school students in the absence of laws or policies that are capable to mitigate its negative effects. This study is an attempt to identify some of the factors and variables that contribute to the spread of cyberbullying and hence, reduce its impact of young student's welfare. Hence, this study aimed specifically to unfold the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among secondary school students in Jordan. Present study was aimed to:

- Detect the level of emotional deprivation and cyberbullying among bullies, bullied and bystanders
- Reveal the nature of the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among bullies, bullied and bystanders
- Identify whether emotional deprivation can help predict cyberbullying
- Find out whether the differences between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation can be attributed to gender, educational qualification of the guardians and school stage of the bullies, bullied and bystanders

Research questions are all following:

- What is the level of emotional deprivation and cyberbullying among bullies, bullied and bystanders?
- Is there a relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation of bullies, bullied and bystanders?
- Can cyberbullying be predicted by emotional deprivation of bullies, bullied and bystanders?
- Are the differences between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation attributed to gender, educational qualification of the guardians and the school stage (grade) of bullies, bullied and bystanders?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The study population included secondary school students in the Southern Jordan Valley in Jordan, the participants were 432 students (179 males and 253 females) who were selected by random sampling from grades 10th, 11th and 12th). The participants belonged to 5 secondary schools for males and 5 secondary schools for females during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. A cyberbullying scale, an emotional deprivation scale and a bullying victim scale were administrated to all participants. Based on the scores of the scales, the participants were divided into 3 groups: Bullies, bullied and bystanders. Those who scored 50% or more on the cyberbullying scale were categorised as bullies. Those who scored 50% or more on the bullying victim scale were categorised as bullied, while the rest were categorised as bystanders as shown in Table 1 which showed that 10.4166% of the total sample are bullies, 13.4259% are bullied and 76.1574% are bystanders.

Instruments: After scrutinizing the previous studies that examined the variables of the study, i.e., cyberbullying and emotional deprivation, the current study adopted the Cyberbullying Scale from Almakanin et al.[10], the emotional deprivation scale from Ali and Al-Bayatee[8] and cyberbullying victim scale from El-Shennawi[12].

Psychometric characteristics of the scales: The researchers maintained the validity and reliability of the measures in two ways: internal consistency by calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each paragraph in the scale with the total score for it. The coefficient values were statistically significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$ which designated the validity of the scale. The second method was the discriminant validity applying the t-test for two independent samples to test the difference between them. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in favor of the higher group which indicated the discriminatory strength of the scale. With regard to the reliability of the scales in current study, split half and Cronbach Alpha Coefficient methods were used as shown in Table 2. The high values obtained for the reliability by using split-half and Cronbach Alpha indicated that the scales are reliable and suitable for the purposes of the current study.

Compliance with ethical standards: The current study followed the ethics guidelines of research involving human participants. The ethical procedure was approved by the Ministry of Education in Jordan. During data collection, the researchers confirmed the privacy of the participants and confidentiality of the gathered data. The participants were granted the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All the students who participated in the study read and signed an information sheet which involved the research description and a consent form.

Table 1: Three groups of participants (bullies, bullied and bystanders)

Six		Grades			Qualification of the guardian				Category		
Male	Female	10th	11th	12th	Uneducated	12th and less	Graduate	Postgraduate	Bullies	Bullied	Bystander
64	135	74	67	58	62	117	13	7	21	25	155
61	54	37	41	37	15	76	18	6	12	12	88
32	35	29	24	14	2	44	11	10	3	8	53
29	22	15	20	16	3	30	11	7	9	13	33
179	253	155	152	125	82	267	53	30	45	58	329
432		432				432				432	

Percentage: Obtained value×100/Total participant

Table 2: Reliability coefficient for the three scales

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	Split-half
Cyberbullying	17	0.93	0.88
Emotional deprivation	37	0.97	0.91
Bullying victims	24	0.95	0.89

RESULTS

After researching, collecting and analysing data and information, the answers to the above questions were reached as follows.

Answer to research question one: The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the measures of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for the 3 groups: Bullies, bullied and bystanders as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 showed a positive statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among bullies and bullied students. The results suggested that the higher the emotional deprivation of secondary school students is, then higher the cyberbullying level will result in increasing bullying of the bullied.

Answer to research question two: T-test was used for one sample to determine the level of emotional deprivation and cyberbullying among the 3 groups: Bullies, bullied and bystanders, as shown in Table 4.

Results related to the bullies group as shown Table 4 above reveal that the actual average of the degrees of emotional deprivation and cyberbullying is higher than the hypothetical mean and statistically less than 0.01 ($\alpha \leq 0.01$). This means that the level of emotional deprivation was high in terms of the category of bullies. However, the results related to the category of bullied indicated that the actual mean of emotional deprivation levels was higher than the hypothetical mean average which was statistically significant at $\alpha \leq 0.05$. This result indicated that the level of emotional deprivation was high among bullied participants. The results further showed that the level of cyberbullying was low among the bullied students in the sample of the study. As for the results of the group of bystanders, the findings indicated that the actual means of emotional deprivation and cyberbullying scores were significantly lower than the hypothetical average and statistically less than (0.01). This would mean that cyberbullying and emotional deprivation were very low among the bystander's group.

Answer to research question three: The simple regression analysis was used by Enter Method as shown in Table 5.

Results for the group of bullies as shown in Table 5 revealed a statistical significance difference at $\alpha \leq 0.01$. The R^2 value was 0.273 which indicated that emotional deprivation explains 27.3% of the variation in the level of cyberbullying. This would mean that emotional deprivation is a good predictor of cyberbullying. Hence, the equation can be as follows:

$$\text{Cyberbullying} = 34.700 + (0.1810 \times \text{emotional deprivation})$$

It is concluded that emotional deprivation is a good predictor of cyberbullying among the study sample. Therefore, whenever a student is emotionally disadvantaged, this will lead to practicing cyberbullying. The results related to the category of bullying victim indicated a statistical significance at the level $\alpha \leq 0.01$ and the value of R^2 is 0.369 which means that emotional deprivation explains 36.9% of the variation in cyberbullying and therefore, can predict the equation predictive of cyberbullying as follows:

$$\text{Cyberbullying} = 4.826 + (0.181 \times \text{emotional deprivation})$$

Table 3: Pearson correlation coefficients for cyberbullying and emotional deprivation

Category	Correlation coefficients	Number	Significant
Bullies	0.523*	45	0.00*
Bullied	0.607*	58	0.00*
Bystanders	0.126	329	0.06

*Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Table 4: T-test results for one sample

Category	Variable	df	Hypothetical mean	Mean	t-test	Significant	Relative weight
Bullies	Cyberbullying	44	111	122.06	2.36	0.00	65.98
	Emotional deprivation	44	51	56.80	3.57	0.00	66.82
Bullied	Cyberbullying	57	111	118.80	2.19	0.03	64.21
	Emotional deprivation	57	51	43.67	-3.29	0.00	51.37
Bystanders	Cyberbullying	328	111	54.98	-51.82	0.00	29.72
	Emotional deprivation	328	51	24.44	-78.90	-0.00	28.76

Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Table 5: Simple regression analysis results

Category	Independent variable	Model	Beta	R	R^2	Beta	t-est	Significant
Bullies	Cyberbullying	Constant	34.700	0.5230	0.2730	0.523	4.019	0.000*
		Emotional deprivation	0.1810					
Bullied	Cyberbullying	Constant	4.826	0.6070	0.3690	0.607	5.723	0.000*
		Emotional deprivation	0.3480					
Bystander	Cyberbullying	Constant	2.11	0.126	0.016	0.126	0.178	0.098
		Emotional deprivation	0.013					

*Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$, R : Regression

Table 6: T-test results for two independent samples by gender for bullies group

Variable	Number	Gender	Mean	Standard deviation	df	t-est	Significant
Cyberbullying	30	Male	58.4103	10.73293	43	5.135	0.000*
	15	Female	46.3333	6.93277			
Emotional deprivation	30	Male	124.4103	31.66745	43	1.285	0.206
	15	Female	106.8333	27.27209			

*Significant at α$\leq$0.01

Table 7: ANOVA for guardians' education and students' grade for bullies group

Differences with respect	Variables	Variance	Sum of square	df	Mean squares	F	Significant
Qualification of the guardian	Cyberbullying	Within groups	173.762	3	57.921	0.471	0.704
		Between groups	5039.438	41	122.913		
		Total	5213.200	44	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	Within groups	3952.459	3	1317.486	1.368	0.266
		between groups	39480.341	41	962.935		
		Total	43432.800	44	-		
Grade	Cyberbullying	Within groups	134.363	3	67.181	0.556	0.578
		between groups	5078.838	41	120.925		
		Total	5213.200	44	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	Within groups	603.871	3	301.936	0.296	0.745
		between groups	42828.929	41	1019.736		
		Total	43432.800	44	-		

Significant at α$\leq$0.01

Table 8: t-test results for two independent samples by gender for bullied group

Variable	Number	Gender	Mean	Standard deviation	df	t-test	Significant
Cyberbullying	30	M	58.4103	10.73293	43	5.135	0.000*
	15	F	46.3333	6.93277			
Emotional deprivation	30	M	124.4103	31.66745	43	1.285	0.206
	15	F	106.8333	27.27209			

*Significant at α$\leq$0.01

As regards those who were categorised as bystanders, the results did not show any statistical significance difference. Therefore, it cannot be predicted cyberbullying through the emotional deprivation of the bystander students.

Answer to research question four:

- To determine the differences between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation (for bullies' category) in relation to gender variable, the t-test was used for two independent samples. As for the variables of the educational qualification of the guardian and the educational level of the participating students, the test of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed as shown in Table 6 and 7

Table 6 showed that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding cyberbullying in favour of males. As regards emotional deprivation for both males and females, the t-test output did not show any statistically significant differences.

It is clear from the Table 7 that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for category of bullies attributed to the variables of the educational qualification of the guardian and the grade of the student.

- To identify the differences in cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for the category of bullied by gender variable, the t-test for 2 independent samples was used. As for the variables of the educational qualification of the guardians and grade of the bullies students, the test of variance analysis was used as shown in Table 8 and 9

Table 8 did not show any statistically significant difference between males and females regarding cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for the bullied group.

It is clear from the Table 9 that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for category of bullied attributed to the variables of the educational qualification of the guardian and the grade of the bullied students.

- To identify the differences in cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for the category of bystanders by gender variable, the t-test for 2 independent samples was used. As for the variables of the educational qualification of the guardians and grade of the bystander students, the test of variance analysis was used as shown in Table 10 and 11

Table 9: ANOVA for guardian's education and student's grade for bullied group

Differences with respect of	Variable	Variance	Sum of square	df	Mean squares	F	Significant
Qualification of the guardian	Cyberbullying	Within groups	700.815	3	233.605	0.807	0.496
		Between groups	15637.961	54	289.592		
		Total	16338.776	57	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	Within groups	3952.459	3	853.124	0.974	0.412
		Between groups	39480.341	41	875.538		
		Total	43432.800	44	-		
Grade	Cyberbullying	Within groups	684.649	3	342.325	1.203	0.308
		Between groups	15654.126	54	284.620		
		Total	16338.776	57	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	within groups	1273.618	3	636.809	0.721	0.491
		Between groups	48564.796	54	882.996		
		Total	49838.414	57	-		

Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Table 10: T-test results for two independent samples by gender for bystanders group

Variable	Number	Gender	Mean	Standard deviation	df	T-test	Significant
Cyberbullying	94	M	26.9255	6.72859	327	4.814	0.000
	235	F	23.4553	5.54711			
Emotional deprivation	94	M	56.6489	20.89076	327	0.972	0.332
	235	F	54.3234	19.07133			

Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Table 11: ANOVA for guardian's education and student's grade for bystanders group

Differences with respect	Variables	Variance	Sum of square	df	Mean squares	F	Significant
Qualification of the guardian	Cyberbullying	Within groups	153.174	3	51.058	1.375	0.250
		Between groups	12066.145	325	37.127		
		Total	12219.319	328	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	Within groups	46.841	3	15.614	0.040	0.989
		Between groups	126013.111	325	387.733		
		Total	126059.951	328	-		
Grade	Cyberbullying	Within groups	782.016	2	391.008	11.145	0.000*
		Between groups	11437.303	326	35.084		
		Total	12219.319	328	-		
Variable	Emotional deprivation	Within groups	4597.778	2	2298.889	6.170	0.002*
		Between groups	121462.173	326	372.583		
		Total	126059.951	328			

*Significant at $\alpha \leq 0.01$

Table 12: LSD test results to determine the source of differences according to the grade

Variables	Grade	N	Mean	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade
Cyberbullying	10th	115	26.5478		*	*
	11th	126	23.2460	*		
	12th	88	23.4205	*		
Emotional deprivation	10th	115	59.8348		*	*
	11th	126	53.5873	*		
	12th	88	50.6591	*		

*Significant

Table 10 revealed a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding cyberbullying in favor of males in spite of the decreased level of cyberbullying for this group. As regards emotional deprivation, the t-test did not show a statistically significant difference among the bystanders group.

It is clear from the Table 11 that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for category of bystanders attributed to the variables of the educational qualification of the guardian. However, the ANOVA output revealed a statistically significant difference in the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for category of bystanders attributed to the variables of their class grade.

To determine the sources of the variation according to the variable of students' grades, Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was employed as presented in Table 12.

From the Table 12, it is clear that there was a statistically significant difference between the grades (10th, 11th and 12th) in the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation in favor of the 10th grade because the arithmetic mean of the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation is greater than the average of the 11th and 12th grades. The statistically significant differences were in favor of the 10th grade despite of the decreased level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation for the bystander's group of participants.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine the relationship between cyberbullying with emotional deprivation for the three groups of participants, i.e., bullies, bullied and bystanders. The participants were high school students in Jordan. The study found that 10.4166% of the total sample population were electronic bullies, 13.4259% were victims of bullying and 76.1574% of the total number of respondents were bystanders. Therefore, 23.8425% of the study sample members were either electronic bullies or a victim of cyberbullying. The results of the study also revealed high levels of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among the two categories of bullies and the victims of cyberbullying. The relationship was positive between the 2 variables in favor of males over females.

Building the findings of this study, the high percentages obtained can be alarming with precarious indicators of the prevalence of cyberbullying among high school students in Jordan. Hence, this study suggests a set of reasons and factors that can lead to the emergence of this high levels of cyberbullying. The most important factor can be the increasing levels of emotional deprivation among students in the context of the study, i.e., Southern Jordan Valley which is considered poor areas with limited facilities and low income. It can be argued that family ties and love can have a significant influence on the formation of the mental, physical, emotional and psychological aspects of children's personalities. Nevertheless, children who live in a state of emotional deprivation, lack parental love and lack of care attention will result in negative effects on the development of their awareness and mental abilities. Moreover, this will create psychological problems and complexities among them, as the student's physical and personal characteristics contribute to being a bully or a victim of cyberbullying.

The results of this study were consistent with the results of other studies which indicated that the level of cyberbullying among emotionally deprived students was high. These study further captured statistical significant differences in the levels of cyberbullying among students due to the variables of gender and age in favor of males and the age group greater than 14 years[10,11]. The results of the study also indicated that emotional deprivation is a reliable indicator of cyberbullying among both the bullies and bullied. This result can be regarded to the fact that the conduct of cyberbullying which bullying students practiced might be as a result of their emotional deprivation. Moreover, they might use it as a means for relieving negative emotions and their deprivation from living a less decent family life which lacked social security. The obtained results speculate that higher levels of emotional deprivation will result in increasing the possibility of the occurrence of bullying behaviour in different forms.

It is worth mentioning that most of the parents of the bullies and bullied in the sample of this study constitute more than 80% of the participants hold low educational qualifications, i.e., high school or less. Therefore, a negative relationship between parent's level of education and both cyberbullying and emotional deprivation can be anticipated. As a result, it can be concluded that lower level of parent's level of education will be associated with more emotional deprivation and cyberbullying among students. The limited education of parents as well as the immoral social practises can result in unstable family environment and relationships. Such unstable context may lead to suffering from weak emotional security, low intellectual interaction, multiple forms of ignorance and elimination and the loss of tenderness.

This result was consistent with the results that found a positive correlation between aggressive behaviour and emotional deprivation among the participating students in the preparatory stage[8]. Likewise, the results indicated that the level of cyberbullying among emotionally deprived students is relatively high. The findings of the current study were further in harmony with result that found that the individual's previous negative experiences can develop different aggressive conducts which may result in different forms of treacherous internet behaviours like cyberbullying[12].

Another important finding in this study was capturing differences in emotional deprivation and cyberbullying among students based on their level of study, i.e., 10th, 11th and 12th grades and the difference was in favour of the 10th grade.

These results can be explained by the fact that this stage is the beginning of adolescence which is characterized by the tendency to rebel against everything familiar and against family rules and restrictions. Consequently, this group will be the most vulnerable to cyberbullying and emotional deprivation. These results were consistent with the results that indicate that the level of cyberbullying is high among male school students aged 14 years and over[10].

The possibility of generalizing the findings of this study is limited to its temporal and spatial determinants, as it was applied to a sample of secondary school students in the Southern Valley schools in Jordan during the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. The findings of the current study can be limited to the type of measurements that have been employed; moreover, the results of the study can be applied and utilized to enable specialists in the field of psychology and mental health in preparing programs to reduce this alarming phenomenon and its negative consequences. It is anticipated that school counsellors and teachers will benefit from the results of the study in guiding students to adjust some behaviours, predict signs of cyberbullying and deal with its consequences during their communication through social media and smart phones. The findings should encourage both bullied and bystanders report any incident of cyberbullying to their school officials or their parents to help halt such misconduct from harming vulnerable students. In addition, findings of this study can offer directions and instructions for parents to predict and avoid offending their children and meet their needs and desires that may lead to achieve emotional balance to try to keep them safe from any emotional deprivation and behavioural disorders.

CONCLUSION

Cyberbullying of students is a prominent issue suggested and supported by a line previous literature. Being bullied is further related to increased risk of developing long-lasting harm which can result in a number of serious psychological, social, educational and physical negative sequences. However, this study presents the insight about cyberbullying emerging issue and consequences of emotional deprivation between school students. Findings of the study posit variable prevalence of bullying and emotional deprivation between school students and gender of students.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The study provides new insights and novel contributions regarding broadening our knowledge toward cyberbullying and its relationship with emotional deprivation among school students. Moreover, this study has benefitted. It is possible to compare the level of cyberbullying and emotional deprivation among school students who are bullies, bullied or bystanders from different genders, school stages and socioeconomically backgrounds to help unfold the association between cyberbullying and emotional deprivation and whether the relationship can be mediated by other independent variables. This prominent issue is still an open area for future research aiming to assist our new generations cope with the dramatic changes in the use of technology and social media platforms with can be tools of destruction in a form of cyberbullying and other types of electronic misconducts.

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