Cyber Violence Victimization: Nature of Psychological Impact on Victims

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to review the buffering effects of cyber violence and associations between the psychological impacts with other physical and behavioral disorders. This is a secondary analysis where different studies related to psychological impact of cyber violence on different age groups of victims and further impacts on life has been reviewed to accumulate and compare the nature of psychological impacts. Cyber violence can have many negative effects on physical and emotional wellbeing, cognitive development and school performance. It can lead to depression, shame, stress, isolation, guilt and inflicted harm. The review linked the work done across disciplines and provided a background to guide future research and practice.
Key words: Cyber violence victims, psychological impact, physical wellbeing, school performance, suicidal tendency, cognitive development.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Cyber-sexual violence is an emerging social and public health issue that can impact those who have experienced it. Thus, the cyber violence against women or technology-facilitated sexual violence can describe the range of harmful aggressive behaviors perpetrated against women with the help or use of new technologies (Henry & Powell, 2015). This study focus on the forms of cyber-sexual violence that female university students have experienced, whether they have reported or not reported the incidents and their association with negative health emotional states. The women who are affected in cyber-sexual violence are associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic reactions, regardless of individuals' experiences. This study describes how the victims of cyber violence are psychologically affected and what are the impacts of it in their personal life.

1.1 The global situation of cyber violence victimization of women

Amnesty International found that, among the women who experienced abuse or harassment online, 41% of responding women felt that their physical safety was threatened. In the same survey, 1 in 5 (20%) women in the UK and over 1 in 4 (26%) in the USA said they felt their family's safety was at risk after experiencing abuse or harassment on social media platforms. 1 in 2 women experienced lower self-esteem or loss of self-confidence as well as stress, anxiety or panic attacks as a result of cyber violence and hate speech online. Tarana (2017) observed that, around 73 percent women internet users in Bangladesh are facing cyber crimes and 84 percent of the women internet users facing cyber crimes were between the age group of 18 to 34 years. Currently there are 6.67 core internet users in Bangladesh. The study also mentioned that Bangladesh; particularly young women are more likely than men to face severe online abuse that is sexualized and violent. One the other hand, India has been slowly waking up to the pervasiveness of violence against women in the online sphere. In India 85 percent of women affected or experienced the sexual cyber violence victimization .However ,only 8.3 percent of cyber violence victim reported to police (Jaishankar, 2010) .While it lacks a nationwide comprehensive study on the issue, the widespread prevalence of gender based online harassment and abuse against women has come increasingly under the spotlight owing to the national and international media.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Cyber victimization has received increased attention over the past ten years. Jessica (2014) focused on the impact of online sexual harassment is unique to the individual and intersectional, with gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, special educational need or disability variables that influence the impact of such violence. Researchers agree that forms of cyber violence affecting adolescents have a long-term effect and consequences on mental health, sense of safety and increased risk of suicide. Consequently, in this figure 1 quantitative data have been applied to know the impact of cyber violence towards victims from the victims' perspectives.
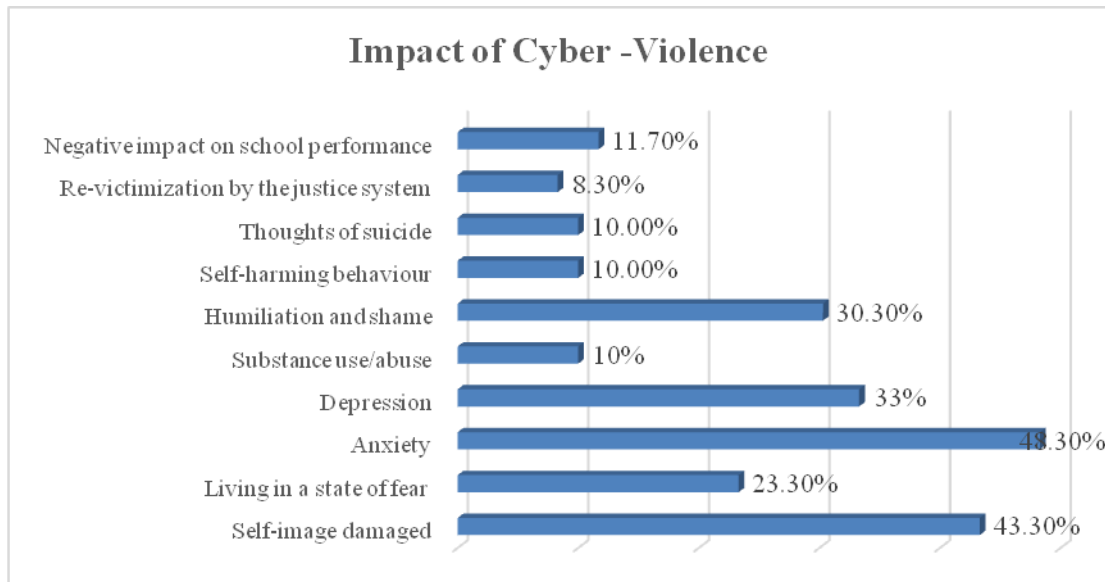

Figure 1: Online Survey Responses: Impact of Cyber-Violence, Jessica, 2014

The findings, which we have got from the heuristic literature analysis of both the qualitative and the quantitative data, have been presented in the following sections:

2.1 Anxiety and depression among cyber violence victims and its relation to health issues

Gámez-Guadix et al.(2013); Landstedt and Persson (2014) and Olenik-Shemesh et al. (2012), highlighted the psychological impact on cyber violence victims and pointed out that the result of cyber victimization is related to an assortment of psychosocial adjustment difficulties, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness. An almost same picture is also found in the study by Bauman et al. (2013); Campbell et al.(2012) ; Gámez-Guadix et al. (2013); Kowalski and Limber (2013); and Wright (2015); where the psychological impact of cyber violence victims has been linked to suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, poor academic performance, substance abuse, and loneliness.

Mueller-Johnson et al. (2014) highlighted the impact of online sexual victimization without providing explicit findings. The impact of cyber-victimization was measured using a predetermined set of questions that focused mainly on psychological complications. The most commonly documented issue was depression (Annerbäck et al., 2014; Didden et al., 2009; Gibson-Young et al., 2014; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Wells & Mitchell, 2014; Yen et al., 2014), followed by anxiety (Annerbäck et al., 2014; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011; Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Sofronoff et al., 2011; Yen et al., 2014), and suicide or self-harm (Annerbäck met al., 2014; Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Yen et al., 2014). Relatively less common problems were low self-esteem (Didden et al., 2009; Kowalski & Fedina, 2011), behavioral issues (Sofronoff et al., 2011), and substance abuse (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). It is worth noting that distress was statistically significant in cyber-victimization cases (Wells & Mitchell, 2014). On the other hand, Annerbäck et al.,(2014) and Fridh et al., (2015) showed that detailed physical and mental health-related variables. Annerbäck et al. (2014) used a comprehensive list of health indicators, which included poor general health, physical health problems (headache, migraine, stomach ache, tinnitus, and musculoskeletal pain), mental health problems (insomnia, anxiety, worry, and depression), and self-injurious behavior. In comparison, Fridh et al. (2015) addressed a group of general symptoms called 'subjective health complaints.' Participants' health status was determined through responses to questions on headache, feeling low, irritability, nervousness, sleep disturbances, and dizziness.

Hinduja & Patchin, (2011) shown that online partner abuse is associated with greater depression and anxiety for the victims; greater uncertainty regarding the relationship; insecure and ambivalent attachment styles; antisocial behaviors and higher levels of hostility; as well as levels of perceived stress even higher than those caused by traditional aggressions.

2.2 Impact of chronic condition and post traumatic disorder on victims' psychiatric crisis and difficulties in cognitive development

National Stalking Helpline in the United Kingdom observed that 67% of cyber victims suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, and CIU (2015) showed that 35% suffered a full-blown PTSD. On the other hand, Bennett, Rodrigues, & Klein, (2013); Lukaschek et al., (2013); and Pinel, 2009) pointed out from biological and psychosocial impact of cyber violence victims of distress and social isolation while living with a chronic condition could harm the victim's well-being.

The highest reported prevalence of cyber victimization of people with chronic conditions was 41.7% (Fridh et al., 2015) and the lowest was 2% (Didden et al., 2009).Chronic conditions were mainly psychological, psychiatric, or developmental, such as Asperger's syndrome (Sofronoff net al., 2011) and ADHD and Asperger's syndrome (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Didden et al. (2009) reported a similar category of conditions, which were broken down into 82% intellectual disabilities or borderline IQ, and 18% developmental or emotional disability; 67% of the sample had a previous diagnosis of ADHD or pervasive developmental disorder. Yen et al. (2014) included ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, tic disorder, and autism. The same study excluded people with intellectual disability, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or autistic disorder with difficulty to communicate or having cognitive impairment. Fridh, Lindstro¨m, and Rosvall (2015) adopted a detailed list of conditions, but these were mainly psychiatric or neurological conditions. The list covered impaired hearing, impaired vision, reading/writing disorders, dyslexia, ADHD, and ultimately provided an option called "other" for conditions not listed.

2.3 Impact of feeling of helpless and power less and its consequences of victims post traumatic disorder

Pathé, (2002) states that the stress prompted by cyber stalking culminates in the victim feeling helpless and powerless, similarly, as informed by Bocij (2004, p 80), victims of cyber stalking often suffer from "depression, anxiety, guilt, shame, helplessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)". Moreover, cyber stalking victims may suffer feelings of seclusion, self-blame, hyper vigilance, over activity, loss of control, and susceptibility to psychiatric disorders and suicidal tendencies (Drahokoupilová, 2007) However, not all victims of cyber stalking experience the same negative effects (Sheridan & Grant, 2007).

Pellegrini (1998) showed that depression is associated with exposure to cyber violence . Furthermore, they found that victims of cyber-violence reported a higher level of depression than perpetrators. These findings can be explained by the fact that victims of cyber-violence may be more likely to feel helpless and isolated when experiencing an anonymous attack through a social network or in some other way (Smith et al., 2008).

2.4 Impact of isolation and lower self-esteem and low-down academics performance of victims

Several studies explained that the negative impact of cyber-violence on academic performance, including reduced concentration, school avoidance, isolation, lower academic achievement and higher risk of school problems (Hinduja and Patchin, 2007,2008a; Marczak and Coyne, 2010). Greater frequency and intensity appear in the group of perpetrators/ victims, and they feel less safe at school, have lower self-esteem and have more suicidal thoughts (Patchin and Hindjua, 2012). So it is found that victims had the highest negative outcomes. They had higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress than other groups, as well as a lower level of self-esteem.

In the same way, Kowalski and Limber (2007) found that students in grades 6-12 who both bullied and were victimized were more anxious, depressed and had lower self-esteem. The impact of cyber-violence also depends on personal experience, and the impact is greater on victims than on perpetrators (Cassidy, 2013). Victims most often experience feelings of sadness, hurt, anger, frustration, stress and loneliness, prolonged depression, low self-esteem, social anxiety and emotional and peer problems (Agatston et al., 2012; Kowalski et al., 2012; Marczak and Coyne, 2010; Menesini and Nocentini, 2012; Patchin and Hinduja, 2012; Smith, 2012; Sourander et al., 2010; Tokunaga, 2010).

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et al., 2010; Tokunaga, 2010). The relevant literature shows that perpetrators/ victims experience the worst psychological effects because they are simultaneously engaged in cyber-violence as perpetrators and victims (Kowalski et al., 2012).

Cassidy et al., 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Ortega et al., 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Raskauskas, 2010; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007 observed that victims who report emotional impact, many (up to 93%) report such issues as sadness, anger, frustration, fear, suspicion, or a combination of emotions. Furthermore, Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) investigated the impact of electronic bullying in 41 adolescent victims and found that 60% reported feeling sad, hopeless, or depressed as a result of their cyber-bullying. In a larger sample, up to 13% reported feeling depressed as a result of mobile or Internet bullying (Ortega et al., 2009).

2.5   Impact of negative feelings on victim's depressive symptoms

Various studies have found a significant link between cyber victimization and depressive symptomatology (Buelga, Martínez-Ferrer, Cava, & Ortega-Barón, 2019; Tokunaga, 2010), perceived stress (Garaigordobil, 2011; Shpiegel, Klomet, & Apter, 2015), low self-esteem (Cénat et al., 2014), low life satisfaction (Bili , Buljan-Flander, & Rafajac, 2014; Povedano, Hendry, Ramos, & Varela, 2011), and fatalism (Navarro et al., 2018). Cyber victimization has a very serious impact on the psychosocial adjustment of the victims, who also show high levels of loneliness. In fact, cyber victimization has been strongly related to greater social isolation (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Smahel, Brown, & Blinka, 2012), and numerous previous studies have linked bullying victimization to loneliness (Ostrov & Kamper, 2015; Pereda & Sicilia, 2017).

For instance, youths who encounter cyber bullying report significantly higher levels of psychosomatic problems than non-involved youths (Beckman, Hagquist, & Hellström, 2012), higher levels of depressive symptoms (Nixon, 2014), greater levels of anxiety symptoms (Sontag, Clemans, Graber, & Lyndon, 2011), lower self- esteem (O'Brien & Moules, 2013) and even higher rates of suicide ideation and attempts (Gini & Espelage, 2014). Furthermore, being the victim of cyber violence negatively affects the victims' emotional and social adjustment (Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Ortega-Ruiz, & Casas, 2015). In particular, cyber victimization has been linked with negative feelings such as anger, upset, sadness, helplessness, fear, shame, guilt or loneliness (Elipe & al., 2015; Ortega & al., 2012. Several studies have revealed that adolescents with EI are able to use and regulate their emotions and others' negative emotions for improving happiness and psychological well-being, and preventing psychological maladjustment (Fernandez-Berrocal & Extremera, 2016; Hill, Heffernan, & Allemand, 2015; Tucker, Bitman, Wade, & Cornish, 2015).

2.6   Impact of psychological distress and victim's suicidal tendency

Cyber victimization has also been linked to suicide ideation (Mitchell et al., 2018; Nixon, 2014; Young, Subramanian, Miles, Hinnant, & Andsager, 2016). Suicide ideation occurs when an individual repeatedly thinks about, plans, and desires to commit suicide (Beck, Kovacs, & Weissman, 1979). Van Geel, Vedder, and Tanilon's (2014) meta-analysis reveals that the relationship between suicide ideation and cyber bullying is greater than the one found with traditional bullying.

The lack of social integration as a factor linked to suicide was initially suggested by Durkheim (1951). More recently, the interpersonal theory of suicide by Thomas E. Joiner highlighted the lack of feelings of belongingness as one of the main risk factors associated with suicide (Calati et al., 2019; Joiner, 2005). Loneliness defined as the subjective feeling of being alone or without the desired level of social relationships (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999), is strongly related to suicide ideation. McKinnon, Gariépy, Sentenac, and Elgar (2016), using data from 32 countries, indicated that loneliness is the main risk factor for suicide ideation among adolescents .Thus, linked to cyber victimization, such as perceived stress, depressive symptomatology, and psychological distress, could also have a mediating role in the relationship between cyber victimization and suicidal ideation. Previous studies have suggested that the effects of traditional and cyber victimization on suicide ideation are mediated by depressive symptoms (Mitchell et al., 2018; Reed, Nugent, & Cooper, 2015).The results of this study also support the interpersonal theory of suicide (Calati et al., 2019; Joiner, 2005) because loneliness is the variable with the highest direct effect on the suicide ideation of adolescents who experience cyber victimization.

III. CONCLUSION

Conducting this systematic review helped to map a serious issue facing a vulnerable group with potential escalation due to the growing use of technology in communication. This scoping of prevalence and impact revealed the direct and indirect work done so far to address both cyber victimization and its consequences. Cyber violence can have many negative effects on emotional well –being, sense of self and mental health. It can lead to depression, shame stress, isolation, guilt and isolation and loss of inflicted harm. The review linked the work done across disciplines and provided a background to guide future research and

practice. Cyber victimization is related positively to depression, anxiety, and loneliness. There is a significant effect of cyber victimization on mental health and well-being. After controlling for the effect of age, gender, and residential status the cyber victimization significantly negatively predicted the well-being and significantly positively predicted mental health as like as depression, anxiety, and stress. The results showed a significant effect of cyber victimization on mental health and well-being.

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