Research Article

Exploring Possible Coping Strategies of Cyberbullying Awareness among School Students in Bahla, Oman

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Abstract

Background Social media tends to cause poorer physical and mental health. Students are more addicted to using media in their daily lives and are more likely to stress. Objective: This study's primary objective is to explore the current level of knowledge of cyber bullying and provide awareness programs to bolt their reflective minds with possible coping strategies to prevent consecutive reduction behaviours among students of Aysha Al- Riyamia school in Bahla. Methods: One hundred eighty participants were recruited from Aysha Al- Riyamia school in Bahla in grades 10 through 12 using a convenient sampling technique. The questionnaire was constructed with knowledge and coping skills about cyber bullying and adopted to collect data from the participants before and after an educational awareness program. Results: The results showed that awareness programs had significantly enhanced students' knowledge and coping strategies in cyber bullying. Furthermore, the evidence of the study confirmed that cyber bullying awareness programs had a positive influence on knowledge among school students; the mean difference between pre-test and post-test was 2.81 at $p<0.05$. Conclusion: Given the widespread use of social media in everyday life, these findings highlight the need for more incredible research into the education program to minimize the risks involved in cyber bullying. ***ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 23(8), August, 2022; 1-11.***

Keywords: Cyber Bullying, Awareness Program, Health Education, School Students, Impact Awareness Program, Coping Strategie

Introduction

Technology continues to advance at a breakneck pace, transforming our social interactions. As educators and mentors, this adds new dimensions to our responsibilities. Doors are continuously opening and closing bringing more significant opportunities while also pushing us to reconsider the ethical use of technology in educational institutions [1]. As civilizations improve their standard of living, various notions emerge due to technological advancements. Bullying is one of these principles. It is described as frightening or disturbing someone smaller or weaker than you to get them to accomplish something you want. There are two significant classifications of bullying, direct and indirect. Physical bullying includes physical parts such as beating or flogging, kicking, shoving, etc. Verbal abuse, like taunting, swearing, name-calling, etc., is direct, face-to-face, but only happens when facing the victim and if the event or situation is appropriate [2].

Repeated aggressive behaviour that occurs between two parties is also bullying [3]. It can

happen by using a digital device to post, share, and distribute unpleasant, harmful, and fraudulent personal information. The goal is to gain money, sexual favour, or exact retribution on the victim. Bullying and cyber bullying are both prevalent occurrences in schools. These harmful behaviours can substantially influence the mental health, of individuals involved in them, both as victims and as bullies [4].

Half of all teenagers have been bullied or harassed online, and a comparable percentage believes it is a big issue for their generation. On the other hand, teens think that instructors, social media firms, and politicians fail to solve the problem [5]. Many constant factors can affect the increasing rate of cyber bullying, such as time spent on the Internet, frequency of access, access to resources, use of social media, sharing of personal information, educational background of the parents, and several children [6]. As cyber bullying became a predominant phenomenon among school students, several researchers were started to investigate the reason for cyber bullying occurring and how it can help bring awareness to school students about cyber bullying. Many researchers conducted programs to educate the students and their families about cyber bullying, increasing awareness and regulation required within schools and within the home to tackle this escalating problem [7].

Cyber bullying is becoming an issue prevalent in the whole world. It is increasing among students of school age, especially among the boys than girls. Both the victim and the offender had significantly low self-esteem than those who had little or no experience with cyber bullying [8]. Cyber bullying is highly harmful to the victim's physical and emotional health and can even be fatal under challenging situations. Cyber bullying can occur in various settings, many of which are connected to the Internet. Bullying takes place on different social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. Students may also receive threatening emails, text messages, unpleasant or cruel instant messages, or entire websites dedicated to their destruction. In Oman, cyber bullying occurs widely; there were 1479 recorded cases in Oman National CERT in 2017, which decreased in 2018 there are 1414; this decrease is due to performing programs like " Khalid Arif" and " the public prosecution " community," which is prepared by The Oman public prosecution.

Although there are studies that have studied cyber bullying prevention among students in Oman, no known research has attempted to investigate the effect of cyber bullying awareness education. Thus, this study was the first attempt to study the impact of cyber bullying awareness education on school students who have been exposed to this teaching. Also, learning the effect of cyber bullying education on students' knowledge and coping behaviour strengthened or supported evidence on cyber bullying reports during the present times when the Country is making all efforts to establish and encourage the early recognition and detection of cyber bullying among school students. So, this study was the epitome of creating awareness of online safety among school students and finding motivation factors that might positively change the cyber bullying approach.

Research question(s)

What are the levels of knowledge on cyber bullying among school students before the health education program? What were coping strategies used on cyber bullying among school students before the health education program? How does the awareness education program support school students to develop knowledge and coping strategies? What is the relationship between cyber bullying knowledge and coping strategies?

Objectives of the study

This study's primary objective is to examine the effectiveness of cyber bullying awareness programs on knowledge and coping among the school students of selected schools in Bahla.

Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional, one-group quasi-experimental design was adopted to investigate the effect of cyber bullying awareness programs on knowledge and coping among the school students at selected schools in Bahla. The knowledge and the coping strategies are the independent variables, and the cyber bullying awareness program is the dependent valuable. Preliminary power analysis for a paired sample t-test was performed using G*Power to identify the sample size required to achieve appropriate statistical power (0.80) [9]. A sample size of 180 participants was found to be sufficient. Power was also considered [10]. As the inclusion criteria, students from 8 to 12th grades who wished to participate were included in the study.

Any student who was absent during the period of data collection was excluded.

This questionnaire is composed of three parts:

Part A: Consists of demographic data. It consists of age, grade, hours spent on the Internet daily, the device used to access, the interest program used, and the program they are active and post daily.

Part B: Assessment of knowledge on cyber bullying was answerable by using a Yes and NO scale self-administered questionnaire. It consists of ten questions wherein seven questions (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10) are positively stated or correct responses and are expected to be answered by Yes. Three questions (3, 7, and 8) are negatively expressed or incorrect responses, the expected be answered by No response. The scores ranged from 0-to 10. The correct answer Yes was given a score of 1. The interpretation of the score was:

- From 6.7 to 10- adequate.
- From 3.4 to 6.6 -moderate.
- Less than 3.3 - inadequate.

Part C: The nominal self-administered questionnaire measured coping strategies for cyber bullying. It consists of 5 points scale. Each stage had three choices: the first choice=1 point, the second choice=2 points, and the third choice=3 points. The maximum score is 15, and the minimum score is 1; the interpretation of the score was:

- From 11 to 15 - adequate.
- From 6 to 10 - moderate.
- Less than 5 - inadequate.

The pilot study was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the tool used and assess the feasibility of conducting the survey. The personal visits were presented to the affiliated schools to explain the nature and manner the study was conducted. The collection of data was done in four weeks. Potential subjects were approached and described the nature of the research and how the questions could be answered. The responses were gathered on the same day to maintain the quality and credibility of the answers. Data were collected using a survey and distributed to school students studying 8 to 12th grades. The pre-test and the post-test data were collected from the same participants. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics frequency, mean, standard deviation (SD)) and inferential statistics; a paired t-test was used to analyze the data.

Ethical Consideration

A letter of acknowledgment was received from the Dean's school of Nursing, University of Nizwa. Later the letter was sent to the selected school's director to obtain permission to conduct the study. A personal visit was made to discuss the potential subjects and describe the study's characteristics and how the study was conducted. Furthermore, it explains the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey and their rights to withdraw from the study. The consent to participate in the study was obtained before administering the survey. All sources of information used in the study were sufficiently referenced using the American Psychological Association format.

Results

Demographic data of participants

This part described the analysis of the participants' demographic data, including age, grade, times spent on the Internet, the device of access, a program used, and daily post. Table 1 shows that out of 180 participants, the majority of them were aged between 15-16 (58.3%), followed by 17 years and above (41.1%), and only one student aged between (13-14 years) (0.6%) (Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to age (N=180)

Age	Frequency	Percent%
13-14 years	1	0.6
15-16 years	105	58.3
> 17 years	74	41.1
Total	180	100

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to grade (N=180)

Grade	Frequency	Percent%
10	60	33.30%
11	60	33.30%
12	60	33.30%
Total	180	100.00%

Distribution of Respondents According to Time Spent on Internet and Devices Usage

The use of the Internet among school children has expanded in recent years, as it has in most Arab countries. Table 3 shows that 122(67.8%) among the students spend (1-2 hours) on the Internet, 28(15.6%) of students spend around (3-4 hours) on the Internet, the lowest is (5-6 hours) by 5(2.8%), while, 25 (13.9%) of participants spend less than an hour on the Internet. Table 4 illustrates that among the participants, 105 (58.3%) of them are using smartphones to access, laptops 39(21.7%), and iPad 25 (13.9%). The lowest is Smart Screen 8 (4.4%), where 2(1.1%) Students use other devices to access.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to hours spent on the internet in a day (N=180)

Hours	Frequency	%
1-2 hours	122	67.80%
3-4 hours	28	15.60%
5-6 hours	5	2.80%
other	25	13.90%
Total	180	100%

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to a device user access to the Internet (N=180)

Device	Frequency	%
Laptop	39	21.70%
Smartphone	105	58.30%
iPad	25	13.90%
SmartScreen	8	4.40%
other	2	1.10%
Total	180	100.00%

Distribution of respondents according to favorite program and daily posts

Table 5. Shows using Instagram is the most commonly used 70(38.9%), YouTube 66(36.7%), TikTok 17(9.4%), Snapchat 11(6.1%), and followed by Twitter 3(1.7%). Table 6 shows 147(81.7%) students who did not post daily on social media programs and 33(18.3%) by post.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to favorite program (N=180)

Program	Frequency	%
YouTube	66	36.70%
Instagram	70	38.90%

Snap chat	11	6.10%
Twitter	3	1.70%
TikTok	17	9.40%
other	13	7.20%
Total	180	100%

Table 6. Distribution of respondents according to daily posting (N=180)

Posting	**Frequency**	**%**
yes	33	18.30%
no	147	81.70%
Total	180	100%

Assessment of Knowledge on Cyberbullying Before and After the Awareness Program.

During (72%) of students heard about cyberbullying. Also, (83%) of students think that cyberbullying is when they get hurt through the Internet. However, (61%) of participants know that cyberbullying is not when they send personal pictures or text messages to a person via the Internet. Half of the students believe that cyberbullying is when they use someone else's name or pretend to be someone else online to get rid of it or put them in problems. And (38%) of the participant agree that cyber bullying is when I use someone else's phone to get them into trouble. Cyberbullying is when I write bad or racist comments to another person (59%). Oppositely, (86.1%) of the students see that cyberbullying is not when they press the dislike button on someone else. Additionally, (69.5%) of students think that cyberbullying was when I sent a joke to someone else, but they thought I was abusing them, which is a wrong statement. (59%) of the student knows that cyber bullying is when I abuse someone else online only for fun. (70%) of students know that cyber bullying intentionally harms others frequently and aggressively by using the Internet (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of respondents according to student's knowledge of cyberbullying before and after the awareness program (N=180)

knowledge	**Pre-test**				**Post-test**			
	f	**%**	**Yes**	**%**	***f***	**%**	**Yes**	**%**
1. I am heard about cyberbullying before.	50	28	130	72	7	4	173	96.1
2. Cyberbullying is when I get hurt through the Internet.	31	17	149	83	15	8	165	92
3. Cyberbullying is when I send personal pictures or text messages to someone via the Internet.	109	61	71	39	100	56	80	44

4. Cyberbullying is when I use someone else's name or pretend to be someone else online to get rid of it or put them in problems.	95	53	85	47	26	14	154	86
5. Cyberbullying is when I use someone else's phone to get him/her into trouble.	112	62	68	38	63	35	117	65
6. Cyberbullying is when I write a terrible or racist comment to another person.	74	41	106	59	36	20	144	80
7. Cyberbullying is when I press dislike button to someone else.	155	86	25	14	131	73	49	27
8. Cyberbullying was when I sent a joke to someone else, but they thought I was abusing them.	125	70	55	31	125	70	55	30.5
9. Cyberbullying is when I abuse someone else online only for fun.	74	41	106	59	45	25	135	75
10. It is intentionally harming others frequently and aggressively by using the Internet.	54	30	126	70	31	17	149	83

Impact of awareness program among the participants

Table 8: shows the students improved their knowledge of cyberbullying. Before the awareness program, 78 (43.33%) students had an inadequate understanding of cyberbullying. After receiving awareness education, the level of expertise in cyberbullying increased to an adequate level of 143 (79.44%).

Table 9: interprets the comparison of the mean score of students' knowledge of cyberbullying during pre-test and post-test using paired samples t-test. A comparison of the pre-test and post-test showed a statistically significant improvement in the post-test mean score of knowledge of cyberbullying (mean=7.59, SD=1.96) than the pre-test mean score of knowledge of cyberbullying (mean=4.78, SD=1.18) with a mean difference of 2.81 at $p < 0.05$.

Table 8. Level of student's knowledge of cyberbullying before and after the awareness program.

Level of student's knowledge of cyberbullying	**Pre-test**		**Posttest**	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**
Inadequate	78	43.33	11	6.11
Moderate	55	30.56	26	14.44
Adequate	47	26.11	143	79.44

Table 9. Comparison of the mean score of students' knowledge of cyberbullying before and after the awareness program.

Duration of study	Study group		Mean Difference		t value
	Mean	SD		SD	p-value
Pre-test.	4.78	1.18	2.81	1.53	8.72*
Post-test.	7.59	1.96			

** - $p<0.05$*

Assessment of coping strategies on cyberbullying before and after the awareness program

Table 10 indicates (73.8 %) of the students were responded to the bullied person. (54.4 %) of the participant had blocked the bullying person not to contact them anymore. (60 %) of students were agreed to keep evidence against the bullying person. However, (58 %) of the students reported the bullying person to the site administration. Last, (83 %) of students have informed their family members or the concerned authorities (cybercrime) about exposure to cyberbullying. It indicates 160 (88.8 %) of the students responded to the bullied person. 133(74 %) of the participant had blocked the bullying person not to contacting them anymore. 142(79 %) of students agreed to keep evidence against the bullying person. However, 134(74 %) of the students reported the bullying to the site administration. Last, 169(94 %) of students have informed their family members or the concerned authorities (cybercrime) about exposure to cyberbullying. Even though the respondents were coping effectively in both pre-test and post-tests, the effective coping is increased in the post-test than the pre-test due to the awareness program.

Table 10. Distribution of respondents according to students' coping strategies on cyberbullying before and after the awareness program (N=180).

Stage		Pre-test	%	Post-test	%
1	1. Meet all the demands of bullying.				
	2. I respond to the bullied person.	133	73.8	160	88.8
	3. I don't respond to the bullied person.				
2	1. I don't care.				
	2. I am completely desperate.				
	3. I block the bullying person so that they cannot contact me anymore.	98	54.4	133	74
3	1. Search for a bullying person to tell them to stop.				
	2. I talk only to my friends so they can be careful.	108	60	142	79
	3. I keep evidence against the bullying person.				
4	1. Pay more attention to who can get access to my data.				
	2. Put less personal information on the Internet.	105	58	134	74

	3. I report to the site administration about the bullying person.				
5	1. I keep bullying only for myself.				
	2. I look for someone who accepts me the way I am.				
	3. I inform someone from my family or the concerned authorities (cybercrime) that I am exposed to cyberbullying.	149	83	169	94

Table 11: 78 (43.33%) of the participant had inadequate coping strategies for cyberbullying during the pre-test whereas 143(79.44%) had an adequate coping strategy in dealing with cyberbullying. Table 12: interprets the comparison of the mean score of coping strategies on cyberbullying during pre-test and post-test using paired samples t-test. A comparison of the pre-test and post-test showed a statistically significant improvement in the post-test mean score of coping strategies on cyberbullying (mean=12.46, SD=1.16) than the pre-test mean score of coping strategies on cyberbullying (mean=6.18, SD=2.73) with a mean difference of 6.28 at $p<0.05$ due to the awareness program.

Table 11. Level of student's coping strategies on cyberbullying before and after the awareness program.

Coping strategies on cyberbullying	**Pre-test**		**Post-test**	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**
Inadequate	78	43.3	11	6.11
Moderate	55	30.6	26	14.44
Adequate	47	26.1	143	79.44

Table 12. Comparison of the mean score of students' coping strategies on cyberbullying before and after the awareness program.

Duration of study	**Study group**		**Mean Difference**		**t value**
	Mean	**SD**		**SD**	**p- value**
Pre-test	6.18	2.73	6.28	1.62	17.58*
Post-test	12.46	1.16			

** - $p<0.05$*

The most robust relationship is the positive correlation between knowledge of cyberbullying and coping strategies for cyberbullying. As the coefficient of 0.51 indicates, the more the level of knowledge, the more effective the coping strategies used by the participants

Discussion

This study adds to the body of knowledge on cyber bullying in various aspects. There is little research on cyber bullying because it is such a new phenomenon. Few, if any, of this research looked into students' attitudes and behaviors concerning these aggressive acts. This study looked into the probable links between students' opinions and behaviors regarding knowledge and coping, whether cyberbullies, victims or witnesses. Several themes have arisen that help us comprehend the elements contributing to cyber bullying. One finding was that, even though more than a quarter of the school children were disturbed by cyber bullying, more than 54.4% would do nothing if they were cyber

bullied. Children would be informed by about one in ten people. This indicates that a significant majority of the victims are passive. Whether bullying occurs in the real world or on the Internet, victims prefer to ignore it or try to avoid it rather than notifying others, especially school children.

Why would many of the victims choose to remain silent about the events? When we look at the outcomes, we observe that the situation improved after the victims alerted others about the incident in less than one out of every six cases [11]. Things grew considerably worse in a few instances. Before the awareness program, participants' level of knowledge was deficient; 78 (43.33%) were inadequate. Because nothing changed in most cases, the students reasoned, "Why bother?" When we looked at the helpers, we discovered that friends were the most inclined to assist. This may be because victims frequently only tell their friends. As suggested by dynamic systems theory, cyber bullying results from the interplay of its system's components. As a result, peers play a significant role in perpetuating cyber bullying, consistent with our observations of regular bullying. Friends can help alleviate cyber victims' worry since they greatly influence their emotional, behavioral, and affective development [12].

Friends can provide safety and coping that could help victims [13]. According to our survey, one out of every four observers contacted the cyberbully personally, and more than 35% attempted to assist or befriend the victim. One implication is that we should pay special attention to students when developing prevention initiatives [14]. We must teach children about their responsibilities and how to help one another.

One of the study's most interesting findings was that only one-third of the students believed that intentionally harming others frequently or aggressively is cyber bullying. This reflects a widespread belief that cyberspace is distinct from the actual world. Although this may have been true when the Internet was initially introduced, our online and offline lives are becoming increasingly linked [15]. Our study results, 54(30%), are congruent with the above findings. What we do online has an impact on what we do offline. Harassment that takes place online can also take place in person. As a result, to regulate cyberbullying and promote responsible technology use, technologies must be monitored and updated.

One of the main goals of this research was to figure out why school students cannot cope, the relationship between the level of knowledge and coping, and report cyber bullying events to professionals in their schools. Several significant concerns arose as a result of this. The greatest number of children, 98(54.4%) (almost half), responded, "I just don't care as I am more desperate, and I block the person Who bullies." Cyber bullying is a relatively new topic, and most schools have yet to grasp the problem, let alone build adequate safety and prevention programs [16]. Many youngsters, 106(60%), have expressed trust in friends ("I talk only to my friends so they can be careful with example). For these reasons, it's hardly surprising that the rest remain silent. The student mean pre-tests (6.18SD 2.73) coping was less than fifty percent. It underlines the importance of putting policies and strategies to combat cyber bullying.

Another significant finding is reporting the occurrences; like many students, 149(83%) have stated they explore the report to family or authorities. Self-coping and meeting the demands of bullying is a unique strategy for cyber bullying. It allows bullies to defend themselves by concealing their identities and leaving victims unprotected. According to research, our children have changed dramatically due to digital technology's rapid development and distribution [17]. Because technology has become such an essential aspect of their lives, barring access to the Internet or other forms of technology has significantly impacted their personal lives [18].

105 (58.3%) participants have used a smartphone to access the Internet; this is also found in [19]. In our study, most students reported accessing the Internet (about 87%) and email (77.3%). Furthermore, [20] "In Turkey, 93.5% of adolescents, ages 15 and 22, use cell phones". Over 97% of British adolescents aged between 12 and16 years have been estimated to own a mobile phone [21]. It is common among school students from 12 years to use smartphones based on the above. A study stated that 74.1% of the students had a personal computer, and 84.2% had personal cell phones [23]. In assessing our study participants about the usage of the device, 70 students have used Instagram (38.9%). In a similar study in the US, Instagram was the most popular social media network in the United States from spring 2014 to fall 2015 (30%).

Also, Instagram is the favorite program used by students.

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2020), seventy-five percent report having at least one active social media profile, and 41% post on a social media site daily. The participants increased their knowledge about cyber bullying after the awareness program. There is an improvement in the post-test mean score for understanding cyber bullying compared to the pre-test mean score for knowledge of cyber bullying. A similar result showed entry-level students' awareness of cyber bullying is above average. After joining the awareness program, 143 (79.44%) of students increased their level of knowledge to an adequate category. The previous study confirms that a program or course in cyber bullying enhances the participant's ability "Cyber-bullying prevention WebQuest course can immediately enhance the knowledge and reduce the intention of cyber-bullying and is successful for retaining learning effects.". Another study supported by, states that when we looked at the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the CBSS for the experimental group, it was observed that a significant difference existed in favor of the post-test.

Conclusion

While the awareness program in cyber bullying gives a good understanding of cyber bullying, it is also mandatory to develop appropriate coping strategies. Adequate knowledge enhances adequate coping strategies. The educational program should exceed limits to the theory part, to implement scenarios of the ways of cyber bullying, The awareness program should start from the primary level, using the technology methods and devices from an early age.

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