

SCHOOL BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING AND STUDENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION IN A KLANG VALLEY NGO SCHOOL

KANAN, Y. V.¹ – OOI, P. B.² – HO, M. C.³ – VOON, S. P.⁴ – YEOH, S.^{5*}

¹ Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Open University Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

² Department of Medical Sciences, Sunway University, Selangor, Malaysia.

³ Centre for Pre-U Studies, UCSI University Springhill (Seremban/PD), Selangor, Malaysia.

⁴ Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Sarawak, Malaysia.

⁵ Teaching and Educational Development, Taylor University, Selangor, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author
e-mail: sunwei.yeoh[at]taylor.edu.my

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Abstract. This study addresses the critical interplay between bullying, cyberbullying, and adolescent life satisfaction, recognizing their profound impacts on various aspects of adolescents' lives beyond individual well-being, including community dynamics and psychological development. Conducted among 152 respondents aged 13 to 17 from a non-governmental organization (NGO) school in the Klang Valley, the study utilized comprehensive survey tools such as the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ), Cyberbullying Perpetration Scale (CBP), Cyberbullying Victimization (CBV), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to collect and analyze data. Results highlight a significant relationship between school bullying, cyberbullying, and satisfaction with life, underscoring the need for multifaceted interventions that extend beyond mere awareness-raising efforts. It emphasizes the importance of promoting personal and social resources, including optimism and empathy, through targeted programs aimed at enhancing overall satisfaction and quality of life among adolescents. Additionally, direct engagement with perpetrators is advocated to raise awareness of the detrimental impact of their actions on victims' well-being. These findings underscore the urgency of addressing bullying and cyberbullying comprehensively to safeguard adolescent mental health and well-being.

Keywords: school bullying, cyberbullying, perpetration, victimization, satisfaction with life

Introduction

Bullying in secondary schools persists as a concerning issue, profoundly affecting the well-being and educational attainment of students. According to a recent study conducted by the United State National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), approximately 20.2% of students aged 12-18 reported being bullied during the 2019-2020 school year. This statistic underscores the gravity of the problem and emphasizes the urgency for effective intervention strategies. Bullying can manifest in various forms, including physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying, with detrimental consequences for victims such as increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, bystander effects are prevalent, with many students witnessing bullying but feeling powerless to intervene. As reported by the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, a staggering 84% of individuals under the age of 18 have encountered instances of bullying. Bullying can manifest in diverse forms, sometimes escalating to physical violence, which can lead to serious harm or even fatalities. The emergence of new

technology as an integral aspect of the lifestyle and interactions of the current generation of students has brought cyberbullying to the forefront of attention in the past decade (Slonje and Smith, 2008). With the advent of various communication technologies facilitated by Wi-Fi and the Internet, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and others, instances of cyberbullying have proliferated, primarily occurring on social networking sites, messaging platforms, gaming platforms, and even within online chat rooms (Slonje and Smith, 2008). According to the Health Ministry, one in five Malaysian teenagers has engaged in bullying and harassment using electronic devices such as the Internet or mobile phones (Arumugam, 2023). Bullying can also manifest verbally, encompassing behaviors such as teasing, making derogatory remarks about appearance, taunting, issuing threats, and employing insults to belittle others (Sullivan et al., 2003). This form of harassment is particularly insidious because offensive messages or images can spread rapidly and reach a wide audience.

Furthermore, cyberbullying affects a significant portion of individuals, with estimates ranging from 10% to 40% reporting victimization (Agatston et al., 2012). However, the complexities surrounding cyberbullying present novel challenges for educators, psychologists, and school communities, as it involves navigating covert identities and electronic technologies (Elbedour et al., 2020). Cyberbullying is characterized by the use of various technologies with the intent to harm others, distinguishing it from traditional bullying by its reliance on electronic means and the often unseen audience witnessing the aggression (Agatston et al., 2012). Malaysia's standing in cyberbullying statistics further highlights its prevalence, ranking second in Asia and sixth among 28 countries surveyed (Rosli, 2018). Bullying and cyberbullying exert a profound impact on life satisfaction, significantly diminishing overall well-being. Recent studies continue to underscore this correlation, with research by Mishna et al. (2022) revealing that individuals subjected to bullying or cyberbullying experience notable declines in life satisfaction. These negative experiences often trigger heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy, ultimately eroding overall happiness and contentment (Mishna et al., 2022; Alhujaili and Karwowski, 2019). As cyberbullying becomes increasingly pervasive due to technological advancements, its detrimental effects on life satisfaction are further magnified, emphasizing the critical need for proactive measures to address and mitigate these harmful behaviors.

While prior research has predominantly examined the correlation between school bullying, cyberbullying, and life satisfaction, there remains a notable gap in understanding the impact on students from diverse communities and nationalities attending NGO schools. This gap is significant as it hinders our comprehension of how school bullying and cyberbullying influence the life satisfaction of NGO school students. Moreover, it impedes our ability to discern the differential effects of being a victim, perpetrator, or bystander of bullying on student life satisfaction. Subsequently, this study will analyze the student's satisfaction with their life who are from various nationalities as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders in school bullying and cyberbullying. In this study, school bullying is defined with reference to Olweus (1994), encompassing three essential components: the deliberate intention to harm the victim, a recurring pattern of bullying behavior, and an evident power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator. In this study, cyberbullying is defined as the persistent and repetitive behavior of harassing, mistreating, or mocking another individual online or via electronic devices, such as cell phones (Slonje and Smith, 2008). Additionally, the research investigates cases of cyberbullying where individuals experience both

victimization and perpetration, indicating that they are subjected to bullying while also engaging in bullying others (Marciano et al., 2020). This dual perspective allows for a comprehensive examination of the dynamics and impacts of cyberbullying on individuals involved in both roles. Lastly, in this study, life satisfaction is defined as the extent to which a student evaluates the overall quality of their life or expresses contentment with their life circumstances. Furthermore, satisfaction with life among students is assessed based on their interpersonal relationships with peers and experiences of bullying both within the school environment and online (Navarro et al., 2015). This multifaceted approach considers various aspects of students' social interactions and experiences of victimization, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their subjective well-being.

The study aims to investigate the impact of bullying, including cyberbullying, on the life satisfaction of secondary students, particularly those in NGO schools in the Klang Valley, aged 13-17 (Arnarsson et al., 2020). Bullying, recognized as a pervasive global issue, significantly hampers academic performance and student well-being (Solberg et al., 2007). This research, building upon previous studies, seeks to unravel the complexities of bullying, its prevalence among students, and its correlation with life satisfaction (Arnarsson et al., 2020). By delving into students' roles as bullies or victims and their levels of satisfaction, the study aims to illuminate the nuances of bullying in both physical and digital realms (Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, it endeavors to identify potential intervention and prevention strategies, fostering positive relationships among students (Bilić et al., 2014). Moreover, the research aims to raise awareness among educators, parents, and students about the various forms and consequences of bullying, equipping them with tools to address and mitigate bullying behaviors (Abayomi and Daniels, 2021). Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to a safer and more supportive learning environment, promoting the psychological well-being and academic success of students (Arnarsson et al., 2020).

Materials and Methods

The study's objectives were accomplished through the application of a correlational design, supplemented by elements of a cross-sectional strategy. This approach involved examining the relationships between variables at a specific point in time, allowing for an exploration of the connections between bullying, cyberbullying, and life satisfaction among secondary school students in NGO schools within the Klang Valley. By incorporating a correlational design, the study was able to investigate the extent to which experiences of bullying correlated with levels of life satisfaction among students, thereby providing valuable insights into these dynamics.

Sample and population

This research study involved the participation of 152 secondary students from a single NGO school located in the Klang Valley region. The participants included individuals of both genders, with ages spanning from 13 to 17 years old. Additionally, the participants represented diverse nationalities, including Myanmar, Indonesian, Sri Lankan, among others. The study's student sample was drawn from a non-governmental organization school situated in the Klang Valley. This educational institution caters to a diverse student body, boasting over 2,300 students hailing from more than 25 nationalities and spanning ages from 2 to 17 years old. Offering education

from early childhood to upper secondary levels, the school accommodates students throughout various stages of their academic journey. Research activities were conducted within the lower secondary to upper secondary classrooms, facilitated by classroom teachers with support and guidance from the researcher.

Instruments

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ) assesses various types of bullying perpetration and victimization, including physical, verbal, psychosocial, and cyberbullying. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating frequency over the past few months. Consisting of 45 items, the OBQ measures bullying occurrences, locations, attitudes toward bullying, and social environment awareness and response. With a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.777, it's widely regarded as the "gold standard" in bullying studies due to its comprehensive nature and reliability (Olweus, 1994). The Cyberbullying Perpetration Scale (CBP) comprised 20 items categorized into four groups: verbal bullying, visual bullying, sexual bullying, and social exclusion (Lee et al., 2017). Participants rated the CBP questions using a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for CBP was calculated to be 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. The Cyberbullying Victimization Scale (CBV) consisted of 27 items categorized into four groups: verbal bullying, visual bullying, sexual bullying, and social exclusion (Lee et al., 2017). Participants rated the CBV questions using a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for CBV to be 0.88, indicating high internal consistency. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), known for its internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.84), has been validated in various studies (Arnarsson et al., 2020; Bilić et al., 2014). Developed by Diener et al. (1985), SWLS gauges overall life satisfaction using a 7-point Likert scale. This efficient instrument, comprising five questions, offers a valid and adaptable approach for assessing life satisfaction across diverse age groups and contexts, thus optimizing time and resource allocation in research endeavors (Arnarsson et al., 2020). Example items include statements like "I am happy with my life." In this study, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 was obtained, indicating good internal consistency.

Results and Discussion

Demographic

The study included 152 students from lower to upper secondary levels, aged 13 to 17 (*Table 1*). Demographically, 66 (43%) were female, and 86 (57%) were male. Regarding age distribution, 20 (13%) were 13-14 years old, 86 (57%) were 15-16 years old, and 46 (30%) were 17-18 years old. Nationality breakdown showed 38 (25%) Myanmarese, 20 (13%) Indian, 20 (13%) Indonesian, 17 (11%) Malaysian, 14 (9%) Sri Lankan, 13 (9%) Pakistani, 10 (6%) Somalian, 11 (7%) Bangladeshi, and 7 (5%) Filipino students. Two African males, seven Bangladeshi males, and four Bangladeshi females participated. Four Filipino males and three Filipino females were involved. Nine Indian males and eleven Indian females participated, as did nine Indonesian males and eleven Indonesian females. Fourteen Malaysian males and three Malaysian females took part. There were 23 Myanmarese males and 15 Myanmarese females. Five Pakistani males and eight Pakistani females participated, along with eight Sri Lankan males and six Sri Lankan females. Five Somalian males and five Somalian females were

involved. All students were aged 13-17. 75.1% reported no involvement in cyberbullying perpetration but 24.9% acknowledged some level of involvement, ranging from rarely to very often. 73.5% of students reported no experience of cyberbullying victimization. Nonetheless, the data reveals that 26.6% of students have indeed been victims of cyberbullying. The data indicates that male students encounter bullying incidents two to three times a month more frequently than female students. Nevertheless, the differences in responses between genders are minor. It is evident that both genders can be victims of bullying. This indicates that both genders are susceptible to being victims of bullying, debunking stereotypes about bullying being more prevalent among one gender over the other. Various locations where students have experienced bullying are as follows: 14% reported being bullied on the playground or field, 11% in the hallways or stairwells, 9.8% in the classroom when the teacher is absent, 7.9% on the school bus, 7.3% on the way to and from school, 4.9% during lunch break, 4.3% at the school bus stop, and 3% in the classroom when the teacher is present.

Table 1. Demographic breakdown and bullying/cyberbullying involvement.

Category	Frequency (N=152)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	66	43
Male	86	57
Age distribution		
13-14 years old	20	13
15-16 years old	86	57
17-18 years old	46	30
Nationality		
Myanmar	38	25
Indian	20	13
Indonesian	20	13
Malaysian	17	11
Sri lankan	14	9
Pakistani	13	9
Somalian	10	6
Bangladeshi	11	7
Filipino	7	5
Involvement in cyberculling perpetration		
No involvement	113	75.1
Involved (rarely to often)	37	24.9
Experiance of cyberbullying victimization		
No experiance	112	73.5
Victimized	40	26.6
Bullying location		
Playground/field	34	14
Hallways/stairwells	27	11
Classroom (teacher absent)	24	9.8
School bus	19	7.9
On the way to/from school	18	7.3
Lunch break	12	4.9
School bus stop	11	4.3
Class room (teacher present)	7	3

There are some discrepancies in the specific percentages reported, both sets of data underscore the pervasive nature of bullying across various locations within schools. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, students reported experiencing bullying in common areas such as school hallways or stairwells, inside classrooms, the cafeteria, as well as outdoor areas on school premises. Additionally, online or text-based bullying was reported by a significant percentage of students. Similarly, the findings from the current study indicate that bullying occurs in multiple settings, including playgrounds, hallways, classrooms, school buses, and during lunch breaks. These findings emphasize the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying in schools. Anti-bullying initiatives should encompass all areas of the school environment and extend to online platforms. Schools must implement strategies to promote a positive and inclusive climate, increase supervision in high-risk areas, and provide support for both victims and perpetrators of bullying. By acknowledging the various locations where bullying occurs, educators and policymakers can tailor interventions to effectively address these issues. This comprehensive approach is essential for creating safer and more supportive school environments where all students can thrive.

There is a moderate positive correlation ($r=.445$) between school bullying and cyberbullying perpetration. Similarly, there is a strong positive correlation ($r=.508$) between school bullying and cyberbullying victimization. Conversely, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r=-.222$) between school bullying and satisfaction with life. There is a strong positive correlation ($r=.600$) between cyberbullying perpetration and cyberbullying victimization. Conversely, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r=-.243$) between cyberbullying perpetration and satisfaction with life. Lastly, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r=-.293$) between cyberbullying victimization and satisfaction with life (*Table 2*). The correlations observed between school bullying, cyberbullying, and satisfaction with life shed light on the complex interplay between these variables among secondary school students. The moderate positive correlation between school bullying and cyberbullying perpetration suggests that students who engage in bullying behaviors in traditional school settings are also likely to perpetrate cyberbullying. Similarly, the strong positive correlation between school bullying and cyberbullying victimization indicates that students who experience bullying at school are also more likely to be victims of cyberbullying. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of bullying across both physical and virtual environments, highlighting the need for comprehensive anti-bullying interventions that address both forms of aggression.

Table 2. *Inferential statistics.*

Category	School bullying	Cyberbullying perpetration	Cyberbullying victimization	Satisfaction with life
School bullying	1			
Cyberbullying perpetration	.445**	1		
Cyberbullying victimization	.508**	.600**	1	
Satisfaction with life	-.222**	-.243**	-.293**	1

*Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Conversely, the negative correlations observed between bullying and satisfaction with life suggest that students who experience or perpetrate bullying are more likely to report lower levels of life satisfaction. This aligns with previous research indicating the detrimental effects of bullying on psychological well-being and overall quality of life

among adolescents. Furthermore, the negative correlation between cyberbullying perpetration and satisfaction with life underscores the harmful consequences of engaging in online aggression. Similarly, cyberbullying victimization is associated with decreased satisfaction with life, indicating the detrimental impact of being targeted by online harassment. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of addressing bullying and cyberbullying within school environments to promote the well-being and satisfaction of students. Comprehensive prevention and intervention efforts should aim to create safe and supportive school climates, educate students about respectful behavior online and offline, and provide support for victims and perpetrators alike.

Limitations and recommendations

The study's limitations include a small sample size from a single school, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings. Replicating the study with larger, more diverse samples is essential for robust evidence. Cross-sectional design limitations should be considered, urging the need for longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships among variables. Self-report measures, while valuable, are subject to biases like social desirability. Future studies could incorporate diverse data collection methods and involve various stakeholders. Recommendations for future research include longitudinal designs with larger, diverse samples, exploring different student groups and employing mixed methods approaches. Understanding students' internet usage and its link to bullying and life satisfaction is crucial. Community awareness programs, psycho-educational initiatives, and staff training are suggested to address bullying effectively. Establishing clear bullying rules and consequences is essential. Ultimately, a holistic approach involving research, education, and policy is needed to combat bullying effectively and promote student well-being.

Conclusion

Addressing cyberbullying and school bullying requires more than just raising awareness; programs should also prioritize fostering satisfaction and quality of life. Recent research and past studies suggest that lower life satisfaction correlates with negative peer relationships. Thus, it's vital for school professionals to monitor children's well-being and implement programs that promote personal and social resources for overall quality of life enhancement. Existing efforts to combat traditional bullying, focusing on traits like optimism, empathy, and resilience, have shown positive outcomes in conflict resolution. These programs should also encompass cyberbullying, given evidence linking it to decreased life satisfaction. Direct engagement with perpetrators can raise awareness of their actions' impact on victims' well-being and foster empathy, social acceptance, and fairness, leading to increased happiness and satisfaction.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with any parties involved in this research study.

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