

Cyberbullying and Anti-Cyberbullying among Adolescents in Community Websites

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Abstract. Cyberbullying is widespread in the online community and imposes a great impact on teenagers. This study administered interview questionnaires to obtain data from 200 teenagers living in Kaohsiung City chosen through convenience sampling. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS 19. The results showed that teenagers' anti-cyberbullying attitude, subjective norm for anti-cyberbullying, and perceived anti-cyberbullying control could significantly affect their intention to perform anti-cyberbullying behaviors in community websites on a weekly basis.

1. Introduction

Community websites have become a huge part of people's daily life. Teenagers, in particular, use community websites to engage in interpersonal interactions and to express their ideas. According to *survey*, in *year*, 88% of Taiwanese are Facebook users, one of the most popular community websites across the world. Moreover, 40.4% of Taiwanese teenagers aged 12 to 20 years use the Internet mainly for Facebook [1, 2]. Teenagers often establish, develop and maintain interpersonal relationships through community websites. Regrettably, cyberbullying behaviors are commonly observed in these communities. According to the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), an estimated 14.9% of high school students were cyberbullied in 2016 [3]. A survey conducted by Opinium for Plan International UK found that 44% of 1,002 young people aged between 11 and 18 have experienced online abuse [4]. Teenagers all over the world are currently facing the problem of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying poses a negative and harmful impact on young people's mental well-being, which distorts the correct formation of self-consciousness, social attitude, social behavior, interpersonal communication, and cultural psychology [5]. The subjective normative and perceived behavioral control factors from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen [6] are used in this study to understand how anti-cyberbullying behaviors could be adopted by adolescents while participating in online communities. This study hopes to increase awareness on cyberbullying among adolescents in community websites to develop appropriate guidance and counseling for young adults. The purpose of this study is to understand how the factors that affect attitude toward behavior, the subjective normative factors (parents, teachers, peers, reference groups), and the perceived behavioral control factors could influence adolescents' intention to participate in cyberbullying behaviors in community websites.

2. Literature Review

Adolescents engage in cyberbullying behavior mainly for emotional catharsis, for fun, to satisfy one's interest, and to identify with others [7, 8, 9]. According to a survey by Wajngurt, about 40% of students would choose to ignore and walk away from the bully, while only 13% would directly confront the bully; also, approximately 70% of the students aged 18 to 23 would be upset with cyberbullying [10]. In 1991, Ajzen [6] proposed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which holds that behavioral intentions are affected by factors that influence attitude toward behavior, subjective normative factors,

and perceived behavioral control factors. Anti-cyberbullying intention reflects an individual's willingness to adopt anti-cyberbullying behaviors. Attitude toward anti-cyberbullying refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the interest in anti-cyberbullying. Subjective norm involves the belief in whether peers and people of importance think that the individual should agree or engage in anti-cyberbullying. When an individual experienced a high-care parent-child relationship, the likelihood of anti-cyberbullying is higher than those who had a low-cared parent-child relationship [11]. Perceived behavioral control refers to a person's perception of the ease or difficulty in performing anti-cyberbullying behaviors, including both internal and external control factors; the former involves the subjective assessment of the adolescent, and the latter is mainly derived from the law and related criminal offences including intimidation against security crimes, blatant insults, and defamation [12].

3. Research Method

3.1 Research framework

This study developed the research framework shown in Figure 1 based on the TPB Model [6, 13].

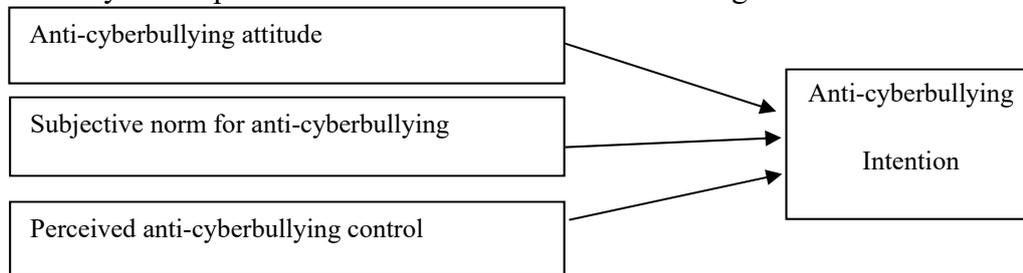


Figure 1. Research Framework

3.2 Research procedure

Participants of this study were asked to answer an interview questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 for ... and 5 for ...). Data obtained was analyzed using SPSS 19. A total of 38 items were included in the questionnaire: 5 items for background information and network supervision situation scale; 8 items for community website cyberbullying behavior scale (questions 1-4 for the “injurer”, and 5-8 for the “victim”) adopted from Wei [11], TPB, and related literatures; 3 items (questions 9-11) for behavioral motivation scale compiled by Zeng [7]; 10 items (questions 12-21) for behavioral intention scale; 5 items (questions 22-26) for the internet bullying attitude scale; 7 items (questions 27-33) for the subjective norm scale; and 5 items (questions 34-38) for the perceptual behavioral control scale compiled by Wei [11]. The Cronbach’s α value for each construct was greater than 0.67 after deleting 26 questions which indicate that ...

The students in public schools and advanced schools under the jurisdiction of Kaohsiung City were recruited as participants of this study. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed; 225 were returned and 200 were considered valid. Among the respondents, 90 (45%) are males and 110 (55%) are female respondents. There were 40 (20%) respondents aged 15 and 16 years old, 138 (69%) aged 17 and 18 years old, and 22 (11%) were over 18 years old.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Background Information

Among the 200 participants, 96% of them were Facebook users; 42% were unwilling to add their parents as Facebook friends, and 23% were unwilling to add their seniors as Facebook friends. A total of 40.5% had experienced cyberbullying and 59.5% had not. The role of cyberbullying behaviors on the youth community website was divided into three categories: (1) individuals who bullied others

online (percentage); (2) individuals who were victims of cyberbullying (percentage); and (3) individuals who witnessed cyberbullying (percentage). A total of 25 respondents (12.5%) had confessed to spreading vulgar or forged content to attack others, 18 (9%) admitted that they had discriminated or ridiculed others online, and 14 (7%) said that they had bullied others on social websites. Further, 33 respondents (16.5%) stated that they had been the subject of ridicule and/or discriminatory activities online, 17 (8.5%) had been the victim of vulgar or forged words online, 16 (8 %) had been bullied by others, and 3 (1.5%) had been attacked by others using bad images uploaded on community websites. In addition, a total of 5 respondents (2.5%) said that they had uploaded images of others being attacked in the social network

4.2 Cyberbullying Behavior

The average number of behavioral motivation of cyberbullying was 0.87 (SD = 0.97), with emotional catharsis as the highest (1.29), followed by for fun and interest (0.71), and to obtain approval from friends (0.61).

The average number of anti-cyberbullying behavioral intention was 2.36 (SD = 0.56), with *"I will complain to a good friend"* as the highest (2.785), followed by *"I will block or delete the bully as a friend"* (2.69), and *"I will admonish the perpetrators of bullying"* (2.64).

The average number of anti-cyberbullying attitude was 3.30 (SD = 0.67), with *"I think cyber bullying behavior is an unethical behavior"* (3.36) as the highest, followed by *"It is improper for a group to attack others on the Internet"* (3.325), and *"I don't like cyberbullying behavior"* (3.27).

The average number of subjective norm was 3.03 (SD = 0.56). The top four factors with the highest scores were *"Teachers oppose cyberbullying behavior"* (3.42), *"Parents oppose cyber bullying behavior"* (3.265), *"Cyberbullying results in jail time or compensation"* (3.15) and *"Cyberbullying behavior will be severely punished based on school rules and regulations"* (3.105); and *"A friend suggested to respond to cyberbullying behavior"* (2.555) obtained the lowest score.

The average number of perceived behavioral control was 2.80 (SD = 0.67). Among them, *"I was able to decide to use the community websites and online message content"* (3.02), *"I can refuse friends to jointly implement the cyberbullying behavior on the social networking site"* (2.97), and *"Young people think that he/she can decide for themselves on social networking sites and online messages, and feel that school rules and laws cannot protect them"* (2.55) obtained the highest scores.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Based on TPB, this study administered interview questionnaires and performed statistical regression analysis to understand the various factors that influence an adolescent's intention to engage in anti-cyberbullying activities. This study believed that anti-cyberbullying attitude, subjective norm and perceived anti-cyberbullying control could significantly affect the intention to engage in anti-cyberbullying; however, the R^2 obtained for the regression model was 15.9%. This suggests that the factors mentioned have low explanatory power on their influence on anti-cyberbullying behavior intention. The coefficient estimation result indicates that the perceived behavior control has the best explanatory power ($\beta = 0.192$), followed by the subjective norm ($\beta = 0.163$). Finally, the factor with the lowest influence was anti-cyberbullying attitude. Based on the results, the following multiple regression equation was derived:

$$\text{anti-cyberbullying intention} = 0.160* (\text{anti-cyberbullying attitude}) + 0.163* (\text{anti-cyberbullying subjective norm}) + 0.192* (\text{perceived anti-cyberbullying control})$$

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

Facebook is the most frequently used community websites for young adults. Oftentimes, teenagers are willing to let their parents or their teachers know about their behavior on community websites; however, there will be always be cases when they would hide some information to them (such as unscrupulous information about their peers or details about the opposite sex). At this age of modern

technology, adolescent cyberbullying behavior is becoming a serious problem that warrants immediate attention. The motivation on cyberbullying was found to be mainly emotional catharsis. Moreover, the main forms of cyberbullying were found to be discriminatory or ridiculous voting activities and spreading of vulgar or forged content.

The average of top three question items above the average of behavioral intention are less than three that show a neutral anti-cyberbullying intention, and the top three options of behavioral attitudes are high which show a positive adolescent anti-cyberbullying attitude. The average scores for the subjective norms including the opinions of parents (value), and teachers (value), and institutional laws (value) and school rules (value) were high which shows that they positively influenced the anti-cyberbullying behaviors of teenagers; however, the average score for friends' suggestions (2.555) was low which indicate that it has the least positive influence. The average score for internal perceived anti-cyberbullying control (value) was higher than that of perceived anti-cyberbullying control (2.8), and external perceived anti-cyberbullying control (value). This shows that the adolescent's perceived behavioral control significantly influenced their anti-cyberbullying behavioral intention compared to attitude and subjective norms; therefore, to rebuild the trust between teachers and students, teachers should remind and instill appropriate attitudes and right manners when using community websites. Anti-cyberbullying campaigns in the campus to strengthen adolescents' internal perceived behavioral control could be done to improve their anti-cyberbullying intention. In addition, parents should nurture their children and be involved during their formative years to be able to guide them and help them learn socially-accepted behaviors. Facebook and other community websites should also join forces in launching anti-cyberbullying campaigns to inspire and be an example for young people.

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