Language of Cyberbullying: Implications for Mental Health on Pakistani University Female Students: Reasons and Preventions

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The present study explores the language of Cyberbullying (henceforth CB), its consequences, reasons and preventions from the perspectives of female university students. A questionnaire was administered among 378 female university students to look for: (a) commonly emerging linguistic patterns which were exploited by aggressors to victimize the participants, (b) the mental health outcomes of CB attacks (c) the reasons which made the participants vulnerable to CB, and (d) the prevention measures based on the experiences of the participants. The data unveiled that the aggressor used socially and culturally disapproved linguistic expressions and semiotic resources (e.g., images, graphic illustrations and videos) to victimize the participants. The participants admitted that because of the social norms and a fear of family restrictions in attending university, they failed to share CB experiences with their parents, guardians and peers. Eventually, they accumulated depression, which culminated into problems in eating and sleeping, poor academic performance and trust deficits. The data further revealed that the participants were victimized for moral disengagement of the aggressors. Moreover, reporting the concerned authority, blocking aggressor and seeking help from family and friends proved to be more effective ways for victims to shield against CB assaults. The study demands attention by parents, educational institutes and governments to ensure a safe virtual space for young people.

Keywords: language of cyberbullying, mental health outcomes, reasons and prevention program, Pakistan

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Unlike face-to-face communication, participants in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) interact by means of written utterances e.g., by typing a message on a keyboard or keypad that is read by others on their computers or mobile phone screens, either immediately (synchronous) or at some later point in time (asynchronous). Around twenty-five years ago, this activity was largely unknown outside a few organizations in Pakistan. Today, CMC with its various manifestations (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and so on) is proliferating ubiquitously in the lives of most people. According to Lewis (2009) CMC is a variety (or more accurately, a set of specific linguistic varieties operating independently in its own right) in itself. A variety is defined here as a system of linguistic expressions whose use is governed by situational factors, such as tenor (relationship between a texter and a receiver), mode (exchange of written utterances through keyboard or keypad) and domain (the subject matter). This medium has made people realize that their established knowledge, which has enabled them to survive and succeed in spoken and written encounters up until now, seems no longer enough to guarantee survival and success on the internet.

CMC per se has become an important vehicle for embodying interpersonal relations via different internet situations, e.g., Email, SMS, Chat, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blog, Skype, Viber, Snapchat, Flickr, MeetMe, Meetup, TikTok and some others may emerge by the time this study is published. Seemingly, these genres form a massive discourse (converging previously media technologies e.g., telegram, telephone, fax and linking users across space and time) which serves to create awareness, co-ordinate people's beliefs, and bring them together. Turkle (2011) expresses that digitalism embodies an inspirational life 'the second life' which promises avatar of socialization. Rafi (2017) argues that cyber-communication has made possible even for a young woman wearing the traditional Muslim head covering and who has to adhere to traditional Islamic barriers, such as limits on mixed-gender interaction, to communicate with their counterparts. We know that for most people, internet use enhances, extends and supplements what they do offline (Rainie, 2004).

While internet communication is proliferating in the lives of female students who have fewer opportunities for mixed gender communication in Pakistani culture and their parents demand from

them to be in contact when they are away from home. Needless to say, surfing the internet has both opportunities and consequences. Sometimes, peers or strangers for various reasons involve into cyberstalking assuming that they are not seen or perhaps may not be caught. As reported in the past studies mentioned in this study and mostly in Pakistani daily newspapers (such as The Nation and The News) that events of CB are becoming frequent. However, the scholarly research available in Pakistani context to investigate the linguistic repertoire of CB, its consequences and reasons is very scarce. The ultimate goal of the present study is to make female university students aware of how to prevent cyber victimization.

Past researches (See e.g., Antoniadou, Kokkinos & Markos, 2016; Donner, 2016; Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012 and those cited therein) show that neither male nor female students are safe from CB but perhaps due to the prevailing social and cultural norms in Pakistan, the percentage of CB attacks on female students is relatively higher than their counter parts (Rafi, 2019). According to a survey report by Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan, the number of total cases of CB was 1551, from December 2016 to November 2017, and the gender breakdown shows that 67% were female victims. Ringrose et al. (2012) argue that technology doesn't remain unbiased all the time, it facilitates the user according to the purpose that may cause the objectification of females through manipulating images. Misusing or magnifying female's images troubles females seriously such as slut shaming (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). Most families are not really warm and expressive and maintain a communication gap that causes insecurity and hold females back, not letting them voice their problems. There are several negative effects of CB victimization, which have been documented by the past studies (such as Cassidy, Faucher & Jackson, 2013; Copeland, Wolke, Angold & Costello, 2013; McHugh & Howard, 2017; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017) that CB victims face extremely horrible mental and physical health consequences such as anxiety, sadness, sleeping disorder, eating disorder, isolation, decreasing or increasing physical activity, random mood swings, lack of motivation and less focus on academics, low self-esteem, use of drugs, anti-social thoughts, suicidal ideations, and all kinds of severe depression.

It is observed that female students generally don't share CB experiences with anyone due to the fear of losing their reputation,

inviting restrictions on their free mobility and in the worst cases ban on their education as argued by Magsi, Agha and Magsi (2017) that mostly female students suffer in silence and they do not share CB incidents with their families because of a fear of being labelled as immoral. It is not uncommon to degrade females in so many ways in a university setting. They face a harrowing amount of offline bullying in the form of body shaming and stalking. It is important to note that females contribute over 50% population of Pakistan. The increasing percentage of CB among young females is alarming and demands scholarly study to investigate its outcomes, reasons and prevention measures.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to raise awareness among university female students about cyberbullying, its consequences and preventions measures. In a way, the study aims to provide guidelines to CB victims, parents, educational institutes and the concerned governmental and non-governmental departments regarding how to ensure safe virtual space for female students.

Research Questions of the Study

- What are commonly emerging linguistic patterns which are exploited by aggressors to victimize female university students?
- What are mental health consequences of CB among female university students?
- Why are female university students vulnerable to CB?
- How can CB be prevented?

Method

Research Design

The present study was a mixed method research. Both the qualitative and quantitative information was collected from the participants with the help of a questionnaire to answer the research questions.

Sample

Table 1 shows that the data was originally drawn from 378 undergraduate female students of various socio-economic backgrounds of four universities located in the city of Lahore. Only the students who had an experience of cyberbullying were purposely selected as the potential participants of the study. Hence, of 378 participants, 209, acknowledged that they had CB experience. The students who claimed that they never experienced CB were excluded from the main study. The data reveals that 55% of female students had all kinds of CB experiences. This signifies that every second woman student becomes a victim of CB. The participants who were between 18-20 years of age experienced more CB more than any other age group as showcased in table 1; however, those who belonged to age group 27 and above had the least likelihood of being cyber victim. The individuals who were older than 27 years were not part of this study.

The participants who were new to university education appeared to be more vulnerable to CB. Contrary to them, the final year participants were relatively less prone to CB attacks. This does verify that young female participants received relatively more CB attacks than any other age group. We can also think that the first two years are most probably the settling time for female students to understand the dynamics of co-education in a university setting. This is the stage when they are supposed to make their decisions independently in most of the academic and non-academic matters. They do not share their university life with parents and guardians, or in some cases, parents do not show interest in knowing the university life of their children. Eventually, they become vulnerable targets of the aggressors who look for persons with no or low parental and peer interaction. This is more or less a picture of the urbanized culture where parents are so much engaged in their professional and social life that they do not have time for their children. Apart from 5% of the participants, 95% of them were residents of Urban areas who had 24/7 access to the internet. It is important to note that the participants who were using the internet minimum for 1-hour were considered as the sample of this study.

Assessment Measures

A questionnaire including both open and close ended items was administered to elicit the data from the participants who could speak Punjabi (the regional language), Urdu (the national language) and

English (academic and de facto national language). It was however quite natural for them to codeswitch their linguistic repertoire for communication. The data was mainly in English, Romanized Urdu, mixed English, Urdu and Punjabi. The excerpts, which were other than in English, were demonstrated within mathematical symbols (such as, <> see appendix B), however their transliteration was presented while interpreting the results. In addition to some demographic information, the participants were inquired about their experiences of CB and linguistic resources (both signs and text) which were exploited by the aggressors to victimize them. Moreover, implications of CB particularly on their mental health, reasons of being bullied and how did they manage and prevent CB attacks were also explored. Hence, the study was backed up by a large corpus covering qualitative and quantitative data sets.

Procedure

The study considered certain ethical measures while collecting and handling the data. The researchers respected cultural affiliations and opinions of the participants. They were never asked for information that might offend them or might have adverse consequences. The faculty in the sample institutes was informed about the survey and the academic calendar of the participants were strictly followed to ensure no interruption in their regular academic activities. Furthermore, the faculty was requested to support the researchers and to encourage students to participate in the study. In order to establish a rapport, the researchers introduced to the participants the purpose and significance of the study. They were requested to participate and informed that the personal queries were not part of the questionnaire. They were assured that the information they provided would be used only for this study and would not be used elsewhere. Since the data comprised free conversation between the aggressors and victims, the researchers could not forbid the use of racist and sexist language, and other contentious and provocative material.

Results

Firstly, demographics were assessed. The table 1 shows that out of 378 participants, 209 acknowledged that they were bullied online. The remaining 169 female university students claimed that they had no experience of CB. The data reveals that 55% female students had all

kinds of CB experiences. This signifies that every second female student becomes a victim of CB. We can fairly conclude from this that the younger the participants the more chances of CB are. When they reached to the age of 27 and above, they might have learned from their experiences of being bullied once how to avoid or mange CB attacks.

The participants who were new to university education appeared to be more vulnerable to CB. Contrary to them, the final year participants were relatively less prone to CB attacks. This does verify that young female participants received relatively more CB attacks than any other age group. We can also think that the first two years are most probably the settling time for female students to understand the dynamics of co-education in a university setting. This is the stage when they are supposed to make their decisions independently in most of the academic and non-academic matters. They do not share their university life with parents and guardians or in some cases parents do not show interest in knowing the university life of their children. Eventually, they become vulnerable targets of the aggressors who look for the persons with no or low parental and peer interaction. This is more or less a picture of the urbanized culture where parents are so much engaged in their professional and social life that they do not have time for their children. Apart from 5% of the participants, 95% of them were residents of Urban areas who had 24/7 access to the internet. The participants who spent 3-4 hours on average in a day on social media were victimized the most.The participants who were from public sector universities faced CB (58%) more than the students of private sector universities.

The participants expressed that the aggressors were known and unknown men and women internet users. Figure 1 shows that known and unknown men were overwhelmingly involved in CB activities than any other group. The involvement of men in CB attempts can be linked with socio-cultural nuances because as compared to females, males enjoy a freedom of socialization and power in Pakistani society. The feeling that there is no check on them or/and they will not be caught encourages them to involve into CB. In some cases, they believe that they have all rights to control women's life or/and to make it miserable – purely a patriarchal mind set. The data shows very less percentage of both known and unknown females who have bullied others.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants Who Were/Weren't Victimized in the Cyberspace

Participants		Victim	Not a victim
		209	169
Age	18-20	126	118
	21-22	63	45
	23-24	16	03
	25-26	02	01
	27>	02	02
Education	1st year	81	50
	2nd year	108	116
	3rd year	16	03
	4th year	04	0
Residence	Urban	198	11
	Rural	158	11
Time Spent	1 -2 hr	49	60
	3 -4 hr	85	72
	5 -6 hr	37	26
	7+ hr	38	11
University	Public	121	51
	Private	88	118
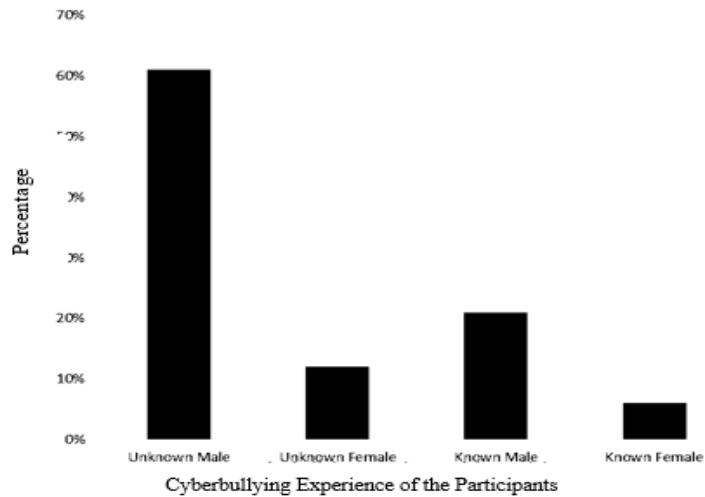
Figure1. Demographics of Aggressors

The analysis was carried out at two phases. At the first phase, the analysis of the data involved careful reading and rereading of the text along with the semiotics (e.g., signs, images and emojis) as meaning making resource. Descriptive Interpretative Method was used in the study. The focus of the analysis was the text along with signs and symbols to gain better understating of their implications on the mental health of the victims. The analysis was not reading for the gist but rather a reading to investigate what was said to victimize the participants and how and why they were victimized. The second phase of the analysis involved an in-depth analysis of the data. The analytical perspectives were taken and reviewed after the process of cross-referencing, integration of the participants' responses and discursive reading of the extracts drawn to explicate the language of CB and its consequences, reasons as well as prevention program. In what follows two phases were presented and discussed by quantifying commonly emerging patterns in the data.

Language of CB

It is quite paradoxical that although both the aggressors and victims were predominantly from Punjabi speech community, there was an increasing trend of communicating in Urdu, English and mixed Urdu & English. As it is evident from table 1, the data comprised 40% Urdu, 27% English, 25% mixed Urdu and English and 8% Punjabi messages. The Punjabi language was used the least for CB. In addition to the use of multilingual repertoire, aggressors also exploited visual resources (such as emojis, images and videos) to amplify the messages.

Table 2

Percentage of Linguistic and Semiotic Resources Used in CB

Type of language				Semiotic resources		
Urdu	English	Punjabi	Mixed Urdu/English/Punjabi	Emoji	Picture massage	Video massage
40	27	8	25	40	39	21

The participants admitted that the Urdu language was used mainly by aggressors to victimize them. Of 300 CB messages, 121 were in the Urdu language. A translation of some of these messages is

presented here to support the finding. The messages in the Roman Urdu are enlisted in appendix B. One plausible reason for carrying out CB in the Urdu language was the level of ease and familiarity for using expletives and colloquial expressions to exert deleterious effects on the victims. It was observed that the aggressors chose the English language to dub popular dialogues of Hollywood and Bollywood films. Although Punjabi is considered a strong language both in a formal and informal communication by the Punjabi speech community, it was however less exploited by the aggressors. The finding reveals somehow a level of comfort or preference by aggressors for choosing a code. The aggressors used flowery tone in the selected excerpts in [1] perhaps to flirt with the participants. The participants admitted when the aggressors were not responded to, they turned out to be violent and insulting. As it is evident from [2], they used strong language to threaten them.

[1]
    a. I love you a lot sweetie
    b. Will you be the mother of my kids?
    c. Never get married to someone else, I will be really hurt
       As noted in [2] and in other selected experts too that the use of

'I' pronoun and its variations (e.g., *Main, Meray, Mera and Mujhay*) in the Roman Urdu reflects a typical patriarchal mind set of the aggressors. The choice of words such as sexy and beautiful in [2] shows how a female's body was exploited by the unknown men aggressors. This finding is constant with Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2017) and Rafi (2019) who reveal that the appearance-related bullying is the most prevalent victimization among youth. However, we may not rule out its possible links with offline discourses in our cultures. The participants responded that the aggressors used purely unethical means to empower them however when they failed to get their desired response for an offer to friendship or/and physical relationship they turned out to be insulting. The purpose of this reaction was to provoke the victims to respond. The excerpts in [2] and [3] also reflect a kind of linguistic repertoire used by the aggressors to victimize females in the digital discourses.

[2]
    a. Will you stay with me in a hotel?

   b.   God has willed you to be beautiful, come and meet me at night
        we will talk in good mood, listen to me once else I will die, I
        am mad about your sister f*****, you are responding

     The aggressor used a counter-discourse in [3] by taunting to the victim that she was not so pretty then why she deterred to respond to his inquiries. The text in [3] is used to hit directly the victim's personality. He used words (such as arrogant, fake and attitude) to denigrate her. The excerpts in [3] imply that the aggressor has other options if he is not responded in positive by the victim. It is observed that the aggressors used such expressions mostly as the last resort to seek the victims' attention. The participants reported that a rejection of friendship, relationship or proposal invariably made aggressors agitated to switch to abusive codes such as S***t", *"B**ch, wh*re* and *c**t* and to show them inferior with morally disapproved and disgusting expressions (e.g., *M*******d, g****i, h*******i,* and *k****i*) in the Urdu language.

[3]

   a.   You are not so pretty, you are just arrogant and fake
   b.   I thought you had a good heart but you are so arrogant and
        have no heart. You are not that pretty that you show so much
        attitude.
   c.   What is your problem? What do you think of yourself? I need
        your cell phone number.

     In addition to the textual commentary, the aggressors employed semiotic resources such as Emoji's and symbols to make the victims' life miserable. They employed different types of semiotics (e.g., manipulating, flirting, dirty, threatening and abusive) as demonstrated with their connotative meanings in table 3. These semiotic resources have cultural connotations and they might not signify the same meanings in other than Pakistani and Indian culture. The participants reported that they were harassed with repulsive video messages (e.g., showing men genitals) and even of naked girls for arousing sexual impulses. The finding is also supported by Korenis and Billick (2014) that dirty Emoji and symbols carrying abusive and insulting expressions are coupled with the verbal messages by aggressors to amplify CB attempts. The participants admitted that they were allured

by sweet followed by flirtatious signs. When the aggressors were repeatedly ignored or rejected, they unleashed their frustration by threatening and abusive signs to belittle them.

Table 3

Semiotic Resources Used by Aggressors to Victimize the Participants

Description	Semiotics	Connotative meanings
Manipulating/sweet	😉	Offering friendship to victims by sending a winking face.
	👩‍❤️‍💋‍👨	Trapping victims by raising expectations and making them emotionally attached.
	💋	Seducing victims by sending the kissing lips.
	💔	Sending broken heart to show false emotions and to gain the attention.
Flirting/dirty	😏	Sending smirking face to give sexual hints.
	🤫	Express sexual activities.
	♋	Portraying an intensive physical relation.
Threatening/abusing	👊	Calling for revenge or/and violence.
	🤢	Offending and/or for body shame.
	🤬	Expressing frustration.
	☝️	Threatening
	✋	Insulting
	💩	Disrespecting and hitting self-esteem.

Mental Health Consequences

Figure 2 highlights the most commonly emerging mental health issues that the participants suffered from. The figure demonstrates that they suffered from acute depression, aggression, sleeping and eating disorders that caused low academic performance and social isolation as revealed by Camelford and Ebrahim (2016). The participants also acknowledged that CB had a profound impact on their mental health, daily routine life, relationships, and performance in studies. A large number of participants (59%) disclosed that they lost trust of their friends after having experienced CB which damaged their socialization badly. They started nurturing indiscriminately hateful feelings against all men, which perpetuated unhealthy ethos in their social circle. Eventually, they had an invariable feeling of irritation and depression, which further discouraged them to socialize.

Some of the respondents (45%) disclosed that when they had depression attacks though they were not experiencing CB anymore, there was a kind of fear in them for being victimized again. They chose to ignore or not to face especially their male peers. 18% of the participants admitted that they had problem with their academic performance. They revealed that they had a great loss in their studies and some of them failed the exams or had low grades. One of the participants disclosed that she was so much disturbed after being bullied that she failed in the first-year exams and she had to take break from her study in order to recover completely.

The participants expressed that they had unpleasant ideations as argued by Kim (2017) that CB victims have suicidal ideations. Studies (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2016; Murshid, 2017; Barzilay et al., 2017) have also linked victimization to suicidal ideation. The feeling to seek revenge to ease insult and pain made 40% of the participants' aggressors. The participants apprised that they felt disgusting when aggressors used inappropriate words and sent vulgar pictures, videos and unethical GIF (Graphic Interchange Format) images with a bunch full of revolting abuses as demonstrated in [4] and table 3. Partly, it is due to insulting phrases and abuses which are always unacceptable to anyone especially to females, may sometime trigger an ideation of anger and revenge. The participants expressed that the following abusive phrases were quite horrifying for them. Since, in most of the cases, they were not empowered socially and there was no authority in their institutions to report CB complaints,

they eventually developed a feeling of helplessness and thought to commit suicide.

[4]

a. S***t", "B**ch, wh*re , c**t

b.   M*******d,   g****i,g****ikibachi,   bc,   lpc,   h*******i, k****iterimaa ka ye and wo

c. Uncultured person, I will vilify you so badly that you won't be able to face anyone around.

The participants shared that they suffered from low self-esteem due to insulting and hurtful moments as supported by Jan, Soomro and Ahmad (2017). They had lost all interest in developing any kind of relationship due to trust issues. They mentioned that they were so disturbed by the threatening messages that they did not find positive feelings in them for others anymore due to their disturbed psychological condition. The participants (33%) stated that they suffered from problems related to sleeping and eating. Around 19% of the participants chose to remained isolated due to uncomfortable and insecure feelings and did not want their peers to talk about them as noted by Ferreira et al. (2016) also. 19% of the participants mentioned that they faced some other problems such as, anxiety, moodiness and irritation. Several scholarly studies (such as Kim, 2017; Kokkinos, Antoniadou & Markos, 2014; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Munawar et al., 2014; Murshid, 2017) from different countries found a positive correlation between CB and the victim's physical, psychological, relational and general wellbeing.

Reasons of Cyber Victimization

Many participants had no idea why they were victimized but some of them expressed that being a female was perhaps the main reason for men to victimize them (e.g., see excerpts in [6]). Since in Pakistani culture men and women don't freely interact with each other maybe that's why men are emotionally inclined towards the opposite sex and tend to develop intimate relationship. The excerpts in [5] indicate how the aggressor used discursive temptation to victimize the participants. The aggressor tried to express how much charming and important the victim was for him. The phrases imply that the aggressor could not live without the victim and both of them would have a wonderful life together. Females are usually postulated offenders

mostly in such cases and are never supported in the matter of sharing such relationships with their families. So, they always keep it hidden. On the other hand, aggressors enjoy this biased social freedom and exploit females through culturally unacceptable content. McHugh and Howard (2017) argue that the aggressor looks for a socially isolated and vulnerable target to victimize. Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2017) find that cyber victimization is significantly correlated with low social support.

[5]

a. I saw you at terminal (bus station), and I want to do friendship with you.

b. I saw you in front of college. You are so beautiful.

c. Excuse me? You be friends with me? You are so beautiful. I know you.

Most of the participants claimed to be victimized after ignoring or rejecting friendship or relationship proposals by the aggressors. They thought that they were victimized due to their alluring beauty. Some participants disclosed that they were harassed with their personal picture which the aggressors accessed through their online profile accounts. Some of them gave the reason that they over-trusted friends who turned out to be the aggressors. Many participants experienced CB through public posts for being a female as noted by the victim in the following example. Some of them reported that an excessive use of social media put them in vulnerable situation. A few of them admitted that they had low information about security settings on social media which made the aggressors hack their social accounts as supported by Navarro et al. (2015).

[6]

a. You are a girl. You have no knowledge so shut your mouth"

b. What do you think of yourself? A scholar? Who just be reading two books think have whole knowledge. You piece of shit. Extremist."

The participants noted that they were victimized by their peers because of break ups, rejections, betraying friends (victims) by passing on their contact numbers and personal information to other male friends. One of the participants while sharing her experience said that one of my friends ditched me and gave access of my contact detail to some unknown person. He blackmailed her and demanded to have

friendship. The text in [7] shows jealousy and enmity between the participants. One of the participants (known woman) threatened the victim to stay away from her boyfriend or to wait for the consequences.

 [7]

a. I will kill you and your friend. You better stay away from each other.

b. You are the reason behind. That all was mine what you have.

Suggestions to Prevent CB

The experiences of victimization empowered the participants to propose various anti-bullying measures. They brought up several suggestions ranging from individual action to the involvement of parents, social institutions (especially, education, media and police) and adherence with religious and cultural values. It is generally observed that CB and its impact on the mental health of young people is usually overlooked both by parents and teachers in Pakistan. The participants proposed that the social institutions must play an effective role to raise awareness at all public platforms to reduce bullying behaviours. We agree with the suggestion by Farrington and Ttofi (2009) that teachers should clearly communicate their antibullying attitude to students as concluded by Rey et al., (2016). Camelford and Ebrahim (2016) argue that the psycho-educational intervention is quite helpful in increasing an understanding of CB and empathy towards other students. They recommended that teachers can use this intervention strategy by playing short YouTube video clips and role-play scenarios in their classrooms.

The participants stated that, while using internet, they pay no attention to cyberstalking to keep the aggressor at bay. Most of them chose to be silent and kept ignoring when they had CB experiences as they thought that a reaction would feed a sick minded aggressor. Eventually, he would be disappointed and seize to carry out CB cycle. Some of them feared that fighting against the aggressor without the support of police, parents, peers and university might aggravate the situation and lead to their character assassination and academic failures.

The participants mentioned that blocking the aggressor could stop CB because involving family could be risky and even troublesome as afterwards parents might impose some restrictions on

them. The participants in the study of Slonje and Smith (2008) also recommended blocking and avoiding messages from the aggressor as the best coping strategy. The participants wished that they would like reporting cybercrime authority if this facility was available within the online applications and the authority was ready to take a prompt action. Some participants favoured involving family and to report police with an evidence to penalize the aggressors. However, according to Carter (2013) a high percentage of CB goes unreported. In addition to this, some of them suggested establishing an online system which could filter offensive material as proposed by Ptaszynski et al., (2016) an automatic acquisition and filtering software to provide a safe cyberspace to users. They recommended having complete knowledge of security settings of online accounts to mask personal information from unknown users.

Many participants envisaged an increase in anxiety and stress among them due to invariably offline and online bullying experiences. They said it was so usual to be stared by unknown men or/and to receive unwanted comments on them when they were particularly alone. They suggested that parents should be aware of their children's activities and marry them when there is suitable time to shield them against illegal affairs, which mostly if not always perpetuate into bullying behaviours. Furthermore, they said worshipping and regular prayer help them to be in the right direction and weed out CB effects. The participants, however, complained about receiving negative and judgmental attitude by their family, friends and society when they were bullied (see e.g., Charteris et al., 2018). The participants said when they were given confidence and protected by their parents, peers and teachers against the aggressors that helped them cope with CB and its consequences. Carter (2013) also suggested seeking peer social support and direction can be invaluable in discharging deleterious effects of CB. In the same vein, Hood and Duffy (2018) concluded in their study that greater parental monitoring and support weakened the impact of CB.

Discussion

Pakistan is a nation of about 220 million people with over 50% female population, whereas only 25% of them have access to higher education and half of them face CB according to the present study. Needless to say, no nation can develop if a considerable proportion of

its population is ignored or/and receive an indifferent treatment especially when they chose to seek university education. The participants who were not computer savvy and failed to make CB public were relatively more vulnerable. The aggressors were mostly unknown men who chose to victimize female students for certain socio-cultural and psychological reasons. They used numerous linguistic expressions (both textual and semiotic) to tempt and harass the victims. CB attacks affected the mental health of the participants which perpetuated into terrible consequences such as depression, trust deficit, sleeping, eating disorder, poor academic performance and social isolation. The study suggests that the best way to prevent CB is to share it with parents and seek the support of friends and teachers. The study also suggests universities to challenge cultural nuances that disempower females and let them suffer in silence.

Regarding demographic characteristics, past studies (c.f., Rafi, 2017 and those cited therein) highlight that the sociocultural dynamics in the remote and rural areas of Pakistan limit women's education away from their home. Those who are allowed to seek higher education spend their life with some do's and don'ts. One of them is mixed gender interaction either face-to-face or via social media or cell phone. They have limited or maybe no opportunities to use social media for communication. Hence, there would be eventually a less probability for being a cyber-victim. Unlike the rural folks, the participants who were from urban areas present diametrically opposite side of the picture. They are more or less encouraged for further education and to be in contact with their parents and friends via social media. The participants who spent from 3-4 hours on average in a day on social media were victimized the most. They may be ranked as moderate or naive users of the internet for socialization. The participants who were from public sector universities faced CB (58%) more than the students of private sector universities. This indicates that more restrictions may cause curiosity for a mixed gender interaction that sometime leads to CB.

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Appendix A

[1]

    a. *<jaan, main bohat pyar kerta hu tumse>*
    b. *<Mairay bachon ki maa bano gi>*
    c. *<Na na shadi na krna 'mera dil toot jay ga>*

[2]

    a. *<Mere sath hotel mai check-in karogi* I will give you relation*>*
    b. *<Ma Sha Allah* you are so sexy *kabhi ao milny,raat ko karygy baat mood bnake ,aik bar sun lo bat wrna mein mar jaoga ,tumhry peachy pagal hu bhain chood! Tum muh nai lagarhi mujy>*

[3]

    a. *<Etni pyari ho ni jitney nakhry han total fashion ha bus>*
    b. *<Itni bhi pyari nahi ho jitna attitude hai, smjhti kia ho khud ko.*
    c. *<App ko kya takleef ha? App khud ko kya samjhtii ho? Mujy tumhra number cahiya>*

[4]

    a. *<S***t","B**ch, wh*re , c**t>*
    b. *< "M*******d, g****i,g****ikibachi, bc, lpc, h*******i, k****iterimaa ka ye and wo>*
    c. *<Beghairatinsantujayitnababnaamkrunga   k   kisi   ko muudikhnay k kabilnairhygi>*

[5]
    a. *<Main ny app ko terminal par dekha main app ko dost bnanachahtahun>*