



Demographic Factors on Cyberbullying and Victimization among University Students

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Married male respondents belonging to joint families exhibited significantly higher cyberbullying and victims in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried male respondents belonging to joint families.
- Married male were more susceptible to cyberbullying than married women.
- A non-significant interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types', 'Gender x Marital Status', and 'Family Types x Marital Status' was recorded.

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ABSTRACT

As a result of technological advancements, communication methods have evolved, and in India, everyone uses various gadgets to access the Internet. Digital communication has transformed traditional bullying into cyberbullying. The study, conducted in 2023, aims to investigate the effects of gender, marital status, and family type on cyberbullying among university students. A sample of 150 university students, ages 16 to 27, was obtained from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. The study hypothesizes that gender, family types, and marital status have a significant impact on students cyberbullying because of variations in coping mechanisms and susceptibility to mental health issues. It is expected and verified that gender, family types, and marital status, which are divided into two categories, have a major impact on cyberbullying. Data analysis has used three-way ANOVA and other suitable statistical procedures to examine the impact of demographic factors on cyberbullying outcomes. The study presents novel findings on married men, indicating that they are more susceptible to cyberbullying than married women. The outcome, constraints, and future course to address the impact of cyberbullying and the variations in student gender, family structure, and marital status are also discussed and may be crucial inputs for future policy advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

Due to its adverse impact on people's psychological well-being and academic performance, cyberbullying, a widespread problem in the digital age has attracted the attention of researchers, educators, and legislators. The act of using electronic communication to threaten, harass, or cause harm to another person is known as cyberbullying. Because it occurs so frequently in virtual environments and goes beyond the boundaries of conventional face-

to-face interactions, it presents particular difficulties (Tokunaga, 2010). It is critical to comprehend the dynamics of cyberbullying and how it intersects with demographic variables like gender, marital status, and family structure to develop effective preventive measures and support systems in educational settings. Even though studies on cyberbullying have increased recently, there is still a significant amount of information lacking about how different demographic groups are affected by it, especially college students.

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It has long been acknowledged that a person's gender plays a major role in determining whether they become the victim of traditional bullying or engage in it themselves (Smith et al., 2019). There have been mixed results from earlier research; some point to a higher frequency of cyber victimisation among women pointed out by Hinduja & Patchin (2008). Some earlier research revealed that females were more likely to be cyber victims, more recent studies have produced contradicting results while other studies reveal similar rates for both sexes. The intricacy of gender dynamics in cyberbullying contexts is highlighted by Kowalski et al., (2014) comparable rates of victimisation from cyberbullying amongst genders (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kowalski et al., 2014). Studies have shown that there are gender variations in the perpetration of cyberbullying, with a higher frequency of male perpetrators (Kwan & Skoric, 2013). Gender differences are crucial to customizing intervention tactics to meet the distinct requirements of male and female pupils (Nath et al., 2023).

Additionally, the makeup of a person's family and marital status can have a big impact on how vulnerable they are to cyberbullying. Due to variables like less parental supervision and familial support, adolescents and young adults from non-traditional family types, such as single-parent families or those with divorced parents, may be more vulnerable to cyber victimisation (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). This study intends to add to a deeper knowledge of the underlying mechanisms driving university students' cyberbullying behaviors by exploring the interplay between gender, family type, and marital status in the context of cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration.

Livingstone & Smith (2014) pointed out that because there may be less parental support and supervision in non-traditional family types, like single-parent families, teenagers from these households may be more susceptible to cyberbullying. Ybarra et al., (2007) emphasized the necessity for cooperative treatments, including for families and educational institutions, by highlighting the similarities between experiences of bullying at school and online harassment. Social media and their addiction may facilitate negative and inappropriate behaviors (Khangani & Priya, 2024). Various media channels also have sources of motivation, encouragement, empowerment, and extension services for more impactful outcomes (Meinamet al., 2023; Nain et al., 2019). Against this backdrop, the present investigation was undertaken.

METHODOLOGY

The current study involved 150 university students who were male students ($n = 75$, 50.0%) and females ($n = 75$, 50.0%) aged between 16 and 27 years of age ($M = 21.7667$, $SD = 2.19339$). There are three major demographic variables included in this study, namely gender, family types, and marital status which are considered predictor variables. A self-prepared survey featuring demographic questions, reliable, validated demographics, and a revised cyberbullying inventory was used to measure responses. A total sample based on gender, family type, and marital status of students was selected by random sampling technique from the Banaras Hindu University of the Varanasi district. Establishing rapport with the subjects and gathering data in a peaceful setting were the goals. The statistical analysis was performed using ANOVA (2x2x2 factorial design).

Erdur-Baker and Kavsut developed the RCBI 28-item self-report inventory in 2007, which was later revised and renamed by Topcu & Erdur-Baker in 2010 to include a 4-point Likert scale. The subjects must answer both of the subscales on this scale (the victim and bully scales) based on their experiences over the last 12 months. The bully scale and victim scale have Cronbach coefficients of .92 & .80, respectively, according to the RCBI (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2010). The Cronbach coefficient for the Bully scale in this sample was determined to be .91, while the Victim scale yielded a coefficient of .87 & .91 for the total amount of cyberbullying.

The researcher established simple, secure, powerful approaches and rapport with students. Permission was obtained from all the subjects before collecting the data from them, and after that, proper instructions were given for filling out the questionnaire properly. Participants were able and free to withdraw from the study without any reason at any moment during the process of the information collection. All responses are kept anonymous, and the questionnaire is utilized for this study purpose only. Scoring was done as per the manual and the results were statistically analyzed.

RESULTS

Among the 150 respondents, 50.0 per cent were males and 50.0 per cent were female. The total number of types of families was categorized into two groups: nuclear and joint, 56.0 per cent of respondents reported a nuclear family and 44.0 per cent of respondents reported a joint family. The third and last predictor was marital status which has two categories married and unmarried, 31.3 per cent of respondents reported married and 68.7 per cent of respondents reported unmarried.

To evaluate the reliability of the data collected for the study, the Cronbach Alpha test was made and the significance of the reliability of the primary data was statistically proved. In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's Alpha value for cyber victimisation, cyberbullying, and overall reported is (.877, .911 & .912%) statistically excellent for ensuring the data reliability for all the 150 respondents entered for analysis. As the data had parametric characteristics, several three-way ANOVA were employed to analyze the difference between and among the variables. Responses to the cyberbullying scale were put in a 2x2x2 factorial design and analyzed by three-way analysis of variance to find out the main and interaction effect of three independent variables such as gender, family types, and marital status on cyberbullying. They were showing results of 'F' Value (ANOVA) of Gender, family types, and marital status about their cyberbullying.

Table 1. The extent of cyberbullying across the genders, marital status, and family types

Gender	Marital Status	Types of Family	
		Joint	Nuclear
		Means $\pm$ SD Values (Respondents)	
Male	Married	1.837 $\pm$.914 (11)	1.655 $\pm$.690 (11)
	Unmarried	1.369 $\pm$.2965 (23)	1.469 $\pm$.581 (30)
Female	Married	1.457 $\pm$.509 (10)	1.069 $\pm$.847 (15)
	Unmarried	1.162 $\pm$.262 (22)	1.301 $\pm$.315 (28)

The mean and SD values of cyberbullying for male and female participants are given in Table 1. The mean comparison table demonstrated that married male respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly higher cyberbullying in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried male respondents belonging to joint families show significantly lower cyberbullying in comparison to nuclear families. The married female respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly higher cyberbullying in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried female respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly lower in comparison to nuclear families.

Table 2. Summary of 2*2*2 analysis of variance: indicating significant differences in cyberbullying across the genders, marital status, and family types

Variability	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	F Value	Probability
Cyberbullying	SS _A	1.270	1	4.358	.039*
	SS _B	.086	1	.295	.588 NS
	SS _C	3.126	1	10.725	.001**
	SS _{AB}	.275	1	.945	.333 NS
	SS _{BC}	.005	1	.018	.893 NS
	SS _{AC}	.141	1	.485	.487 NS
	SS _{ABC}	.172	1	.590	.444 NS
	SS _{Error}	41.386	142		
	SS _T	353.786	150		

* and ** indicate statistically significant respectively at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

SS_A Gender (Male and Female Students), SS_B Family Types (Nuclear and Joint), SS_C Marital Status (Married and Unmarried), SS_{AB} Gender x Family Types, SS_{BC} Gender x Marital Status, SS_{AC} Family Types x Marital Status, SS_{ABC} Gender x Family Types x Marital Status, NS- Non-Significant

The obtained mean $\pm$ SD values of cyberbullying over the levels of analysis, 2 'Gender' (Male and Female) $\times$ 2 'Types of Family' (Joint and Nuclear) $\times$ 2 'Marital Status' (Married and Unmarried) are given in the Table 2. The results revealed a significant main effect of 'Gender' ($F(1/150) = 4.358, p < 0.05$), and 'Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 10.725, p < 0.01$). A non-significant interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types' ($F(1/150) = .945, p > 0.05$), 'Gender x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .018, p > 0.05$), 'Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .485, p > 0.05$), and three-way interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .590, p > 0.05$) were founded. In conclusion, Gender, and marital status were significant predictors of cyberbullying among students. There were no significant interaction effects between the three factors.

The mean and SD values of cyber victims for male and female participants are given in Table 3. The mean comparison table demonstrated that married male respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly higher cyber victims in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried male respondents belonging to joint families show significantly lower cyber victims in comparison to nuclear families. The married female respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly higher cyber victims in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried female respondents belonging to

Table 3. The extent of cyber victims across the genders, marital status, and family types

Gender	Marital Status	Types of Family	
		Joint	Nuclear
		Means $\pm$ SD Values (Respondents)	
Male	Married	1.649 $\pm$.795 (11)	1.467 $\pm$.473 (11)
	Unmarried	1.528 $\pm$.419 (23)	1.645 $\pm$.625 (30)
Female	Married	1.614 $\pm$.650 (10)	1.542 $\pm$.526 (15)
	Unmarried	1.276 $\pm$.298 (22)	1.329 $\pm$.302 (28)

Table 4. Summary of 2*2*2 analysis of variance: indicating significant differences in cyber victims across genders, marital status, and family types

Variability	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	F Value	Probability
Cyber Victim	SS _A	.550	1	2.182	.142 NS
	SS _B	.014	1	.054	.817 NS
	SS _C	.485	1	1.924	.168 NS
	SS _{AB}	.004	1	.017	.897 NS
	SS _{BC}	.731	1	2.898	.091 NS
	SS _{AC}	.354	1	1.405	.238 NS
	SS _{ABC}	.060	1	.239	.626 NS
	SS _{Error}	35.813	142		
	SS _T	371.372	150		

* and ** indicate statistically significant respectively at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

joint families exhibit significantly lower in comparison to nuclear families.

The obtained mean $\pm$ SD values of cyber victims over the levels of analysis, 2 'Gender' (Male and Female) $\times$ 2 'Types of Family' (Joint and Nuclear) $\times$ 2 'Marital Status' (Married and Unmarried) are given in the Table 4. The results revealed a non-significant main effect of 'Gender' ($F(1/150) = 2.182, p > 0.05$), 'Types of Family' ($F(1/150) = .054, p > 0.05$), and 'Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 19.24, p > 0.05$). A non-significant interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types' ($F(1/150) = .017, p > 0.05$), 'Gender x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 2.898, p > 0.05$), 'Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 1.405, p > 0.05$), and three-way interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .239, p > 0.05$) are founded. In conclusion, Gender, and marital status are significant predictors of cyber victims among students. There are no significant interaction effects between the three factors.

Table 5. The extent of cyberbullying overall (cyberbullying and cyber victims) across genders, marital status, and family types

Gender	Marital Status	Types of Family	
		Joint	Nuclear
		Means $\pm$ SD Values (Respondents)	
Male	Married	1.743 $\pm$.607 (11)	1.561 $\pm$.428 (11)
	Unmarried	1.448 $\pm$.314 (23)	1.557 $\pm$.526 (30)
Female	Married	1.535 $\pm$.572 (10)	1.576 $\pm$.554 (15)
	Unmarried	1.219 $\pm$.263 (22)	1.315 $\pm$.280 (28)

The mean and SD values of the cyberbullying total for male and female participants are given in Table 5. The mean comparison table demonstrated that married male respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly higher cyberbullying and victims in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried male respondents belonging to joint families show significantly lower cyber victims in comparison to nuclear families. The married female respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly lower cyberbullying and victims in comparison to nuclear families while unmarried female respondents belonging to joint families exhibit significantly lower in comparison to nuclear families.

Table 6. Summary of 2*2*2 analysis of variance: indicating significant differences in cyberbullying overall (cyberbullying and cyber victim) across the genders, marital status, and family types

Variability	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	F Value	Probability
Overall (cyberbullying & cyber victim)	SS _A	.873	1	4.667	.032*
	SS _B	.008	1	.042	.838 NS
	SS _C	1.519	1	8.117	.005**
	SS _{AB}	.087	1	.465	.497 NS
	SS _{BC}	.153	1	.818	.367 NS
	SS _{AC}	.236	1	1.261	.263 NS
	SS _{ABC}	.109	1	.582	.447 NS
	SS _{Error}	26.568	142		
	SS _T	349.820	150		

* and ** indicate statistically significant respectively at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

The obtained mean $\pm$ SD values of cyberbullying over the levels of analysis, 2 'Gender' (Male and Female) $\times$ 2 'Types of Family' (Joint and Nuclear) $\times$ 2 'Marital Status' (Married and Unmarried) are given in the Table 6. The results revealed a significant main effect of 'Gender' ($F(1/150) = 4.667, p < 0.05$), and 'Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 8.117, p < 0.01$). A non-significant interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types' ($F(1/150) = .465, p > 0.05$), 'Gender x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .818, p > 0.05$), 'Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = 1.261, p > 0.05$), and three-way interaction effect of 'Gender x Family Types x Marital Status' ($F(1/150) = .582, p > 0.05$) are founded. In conclusion, Gender, and marital status are significant predictors of cyberbullying overall (cyberbullying and cyber victims) among students. There are no significant interaction effects between the three factors.

DISCUSSION

Without standardization of scale items, we can't assume any research in generalization form on the research globe. In this perspective, the Cronbach alpha value is calculated for cyberbullying scales for item analysis. This scale generated three Cronbach alphas based on standardized item values found .912 overall, .911 for cyberbullying and .877 for cyber victims. According to Hair et al., (2003), if the alpha coefficient range is greater than 0.9 then it would be internal consistency 'excellent' and if the alpha value range found between 0.8 to 0.9 then it would be called 'very good' internal consistency level for scale. In this study, both scales found excellent and very good levels of internal consistency.

Gender, family types, and marital status are the main issues in this research that are involved in cyberbullying which are interconnected to young age students. For this purpose, ANOVA and descriptive statistical analysis were done to compare each independent variable to each dependent variable. The comparison revealed notable differences in cyberbullying rates based on marital status, gender, and family structure. Several studies have found gender differences in perpetrator and victimisation, with females often reporting higher rates compared to males (Kowalski et al., 2014; Schacter et al., 2016).

Married males from joint families showed significantly higher cyberbullying compared to their counterparts from nuclear families. Conversely, unmarried males exhibited lower cyberbullying. Similarly, married females from joint families reported higher cyberbullying rates than those from nuclear families, while unmarried females reported lower rates. These variations may be caused by gender-specific elements like socialization, online conduct, and coping techniques. This suggests that family structure interacts with marital status and gender to influence cyberbullying tendencies. Students' experiences of cyberbullying may be influenced by elements like parental participation, family communication, and parental supervision of their online activity (Wright et al., 2019). There are two (gender, and marital status) main simple effects found significant while none of the two-way interaction effects and three-way interaction effects were found significant. It means two independent variables have a good impact on the cyberbullying of students and emerged as significant predictors of cyberbullying levels. The social support networks of married or committed students might differ from those of single students, which could have an impact on how resilient they are to cyberbullying (Drouin et al., 2015).

Married male respondents from joint families have considerably more cyber victims than respondents from nuclear families, while single male respondents from joint families have significantly fewer cyber victims than respondents from nuclear families. In contrast to nuclear families, married female respondents from joint families report being considerably more cyber victims, whilst single female respondents from joint families report being significantly less. There are all three (gender, family types, and marital status) main simple effects found non-significant. Similarly, none of the two-way interaction effects and three-way interaction effects were found significant. It means none of the independent variables have a good impact on the cyber victims of students and none of the variables emerged as significant predictors of cyber victim's levels. The social support networks of married or committed students might differ from those of single students, which could have an impact on how resilient they are to cyberbullying (Drouin et al., 2015).

The third descriptive ANOVA table of cyberbullying overall (cyberbullying and cyber victims) revealed that, compared to nuclear families, married male respondents from joint families have significantly more cyberbullying and victims, while unmarried male respondents from joint families have significantly fewer cyber victims. When compared to nuclear families, married female respondents from joint families show much fewer instances of cyberbullying and victims, while single female respondents from

joint families show significantly fewer instances than those from nuclear families. There are two (gender, and marital status) main simple effects found significant while none of the two-way interaction effects and three-way interaction effects were found significant. It means two independent variables have a good impact on the cyberbullying total of students and emerged as significant predictors of cyberbullying total levels. Understanding the intricacies of cyberbullying experiences among university students requires intersectional approaches that take into account the interactions between gender, family kinds, marital status, and other identity characteristics (Schacter et al., 2016). Protective elements including social support, coping mechanisms, and digital literacy might lessen the effects of cyberbullying, even though some demographic characteristics may make children more susceptible to it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

CONCLUSION

In a cohort of young adolescents, standardized and psychometrically potent scales were employed to evaluate a range of hypotheses. The marital status and gender were the two main predictors with a substantial impact on cyberbullying. Additionally, the variations in predictor variables showed that unmarried male and female members of nuclear families are more likely to be bullied than married male and female members of joint families. Nonetheless, the findings derived from the qualitative data verified that gender disparities and family structure continue to be difficult circumstances for the researchers studying bullying. In conclusion, married men who are unable to handle stress or difficult circumstances are more likely to engage in bullying behavior.

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