

The Structural Equation Modeling Role of Irrational Beliefs in Predicting Intermediate Cyber Bullying Experience: Difficulty in Emotion Regulation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of irrational beliefs in predicting the experience of cyber bullying with mediation: difficulty in emotion regulation. The research method was descriptive correlational. The study population consisted of all male secondary school students in Ardabil province during the academic year of 2019-2020. A sample of 409 were selected through cluster random sampling and completed questionnaires of cyber-bullying experience, irrational beliefs and difficulty in emotion regulation. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation tests and Pattern of structural equations. Model fit indices showed that experience of cyber bullying was positively correlated with irrational beliefs and difficulty in regulating students' emotion. It confirmed the path of irrational beliefs in bullying directly and also with difficult mediation in emotion regulation. The study suggests irrational beliefs mediated by difficulty in emotion regulation can predict students' experience of cyber bullying.

Keywords: Irrational beliefs, difficulty in emotion regulation, students, cyber bullying

Introduction

One of the dangers of the new age is cyber bullying. Cyberbullying refers to intentional acts of humiliation, slander, gossip, harassment, threats, embarrassment, and deprivation that an individual or group commits electronically against others. The prevalence of this bullying, like the prevalence of traditional bullying, has many negative effects on the victim. For this reason, in this study, this new type of bullying was selected to examine its relationship with several other important variables. In recent research, one of the most important factors related to adolescent cyber bullying is the difficulty in implementing emotion regulation strategies (Gul, et al., 2019; Karaer & Akdemir, 2019). The difficulty pattern in emotion regulation is used in a broad sense to describe the difficulty in identifying and describing emotions, emotion regulation, and behavior. People who have difficulty regulating their emotions take a number of dangerous actions, one of which is related to the difficulty in regulating their emotions, the dangerous use of smart phones (Fu, et al., 2019). On the other hand, irrational beliefs can be one of the main causes of dysfunctional and low-regulation negative emotions. According to Ellis (2001), irrational beliefs are dysfunctional beliefs that prevent a person from achieving their personal goals and have an unrealistic character. Given the prevalence of bullying in schools, which in recent decades has been one of the main causes of maladaptation in adolescence, as well as its negative impact on academic experience and life outcomes of adolescents, and on the other hand due to the importance of difficulty in regulating emotion. It can identify vulnerabilities

to many mental disorders, so that in each mental disorder there is a problem with emotion-regulation and emotion regulation. Therefore, the present study was conducted to investigate the role of irrational beliefs in predicting cyberbullying experience with mediation: difficulty in regulating emotion.

The hypotheses of the present research model include the following:

- Irrational beliefs have a positive and direct effect on cyber bullying.
- Irrational beliefs have a positive and direct effect on difficulty in regulating emotion.
- Irrational beliefs with difficult mediation in emotion regulation have a positive and indirect effect on cyber bullying.
- Difficulty in regulating emotion has a positive and direct effect on cyber bullying.

Method

The method of this research was descriptive correlation. The statistical population of the present study was composed of all male high school students in Ardabil province in the academic year of 2019-2020 (N = 21756). The list of all public boys' secondary schools in Ardabil province, which includes 179 schools, was prepared and two schools were selected from Ardabil, Parsabad, Garmsar, Meshkinshahr and Khalkhal counties, and two classes were selected from each school. From this population, 409 questionnaires were included in statistical analysis. The data collected in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation. To answer the hypotheses, the data were analyzed by Pearson correlation tests, using SPSS 25 software and Lisrel 8.8 software for the structural equation model.

Tools

Cyberbullying-Victim Experience Questionnaire: This Questionnaire was designed and validated by Antoniadou, et al., (2016). This scale has two factors (cyber and victim), each of which contains 12 items. In Basharpour and Zardi (2018) research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for cyber bullying, cyber victim and for the whole scale were 0.75, 0.78 and 0.79, respectively.

Irrational Beliefs Questionnaire: This questionnaire was made by Motamedin, et al., (2012) and has 40 items. This questionnaire has four sub scales with a total score. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.76 for the total score and between 0.73 and 0.81 for the sub-scales.

Difficulty Emotional Regulation Scale: This Scale was designed and validated by Bjureberg, et al. (2016) and has 16 items and 5 factors. The results of Bjureberg et al. (2016) showed that this scale has good reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the whole scale was 0.94).

Results

The results of correlation coefficient in Table (1) show that cyber bullying with irrational beliefs, components of helplessness against change, expecting approval from others, avoiding the problem of emotional irresponsibility and difficulty in emotion regulation, lack or lack of emotional clarity, difficulty

in Conflict, difficulty in controlling impulsive behavior, limited access to emotional regulation strategies and unaccepted emotional response were positively related ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1 -Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of irrational beliefs variables, difficulty in emotion regulation and cyber bullying.

Predictive variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Irrational beliefs (1)	1											
helplessness agent against change (2)	0.95	1										
Expect others to approve (3)	0.87	0.77	1									
Avoidance of problems (4)	0.79	0.69	0.60	1								
Emotional irresponsibility (5)	0.91	0.80	0.69	0.70	1							
Difficulty in regulationing emotions (6)	0.77	0.74	0.61	0.65	0.74	1						
Lack or absence of emotional clarity (7)	0.68	0.65	0.52	0.56	0.67	0.84	1					
Difficulties in conflict (8)	0.71	0.70	0.61	0.54	0.64	0.84	0.67	1				
Difficulty in controlling impulsive behavior (9)	0.64	0.62	0.55	0.47	0.60	0.82	0.64	0.64	1			
Limited access to emotional regulation strategies (10)	0.66	0.63	0.48	0.52	0.64	0.90	0.68	0.67	0.64	1		
Unacceptable emotional response (11)	0.59	0.56	0.45	0.55	0.57	0.81	0.65	0.58	0.56	0.66	1	
Cyberbullying (12)	0.45	0.45	0.23	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.46	0.34	0.36	0.49	0.35	1
Mean	93.64	34.97	24.82	11.25	22.60	36.86	4.11	7.48	7.11	11.33	6.82	21.41
Standard deviation \pm	27.60	11.26	7.61	3.91	7.86	13.51	2.37	3.13	3.01	4.58	3.06	8.16

The results of Table 2 also show that the hypotheses of the present study were examined by the method of structural equations and the relationships between variables and structures are significant and confirmed and the structural relationships of the variables are significant at %95 confidence level: ($0.05 > p$) and ($T > 1.96$).

Table 2 - Fit indicators of cyber bullying prediction model based on irrational beliefs with difficulty mediating emotion regulation

Variables	Path coefficient	value T	value P	result
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Irrational beliefs about cyber bullying	0.79	14.28	0.01	confirmed
Irrational beliefs about the difficulty in regulating emotion	0.48	8.52	0.02	confirmed
Difficulty regulating excitement over cyber bullying	0.15	3.59	0.02	confirmed
Irrational beliefs about cyberbullying with difficulty mediating emotion	0.56	-	0.01	confirmed

Discussion

In explaining the findings of the first hypothesis, it can be said that under the influence of irrational thoughts and beliefs, people engage in confrontational behaviors which are far from reason and may be emotional, wrong and inappropriate behaviors will hit the situation, bullying is one of them. Also, explaining the findings of the second and third hypotheses, it can be said that the existence of irrational beliefs causes a high level of arousal experience. Repeated experiences of high levels of arousal can make a person psychologically prone to anxiety, depression, and other profound emotional effects, so that the deeper a person's involvement with emotional problems, the more difficult it is to regulate those emotions, it is likely to use smartphones as an emotion regulation strategy, in a way, satisfying their needs through various cell phone functions including bullying and aggression towards others. In explaining the results of structural equations, it can be said that low control of emotions and high difficulty in controlling impulsive behaviors are the cause of explosive and inappropriate behaviors of children and adolescents, so that the children with high impulsivity do not have enough control over themselves and such behaviors appear when the environmental conditions are ready. The two main limitations of the present study were males and high school students from Ardabil province. Geographical and educational levels to be implemented. Practically, holding educational workshops to get acquainted with and how to deal with this type of bullying is recommended for students and parents by school psychologists and counselors.

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Conflicts of interest

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