Cyberbullying Among University Students in Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to examine behaviors and factors of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand; and to find approaches which high education institutes in Thailand could employ to prevent and tackle the problem of cyberbullying. It adopted a mixed method approach. The qualitative part of the study was done through 18 semi-structured interviews; and the information deriving from this part was used to develop a questionnaire for the quantitative part of the study. The quantitative data was collected through questionnaire, of which the sample group was undergraduate students in Thailand. There were 1,928 respondents, comprising of 598 male students and 1,312 female students. According to the findings, individuals who were victims of cyberbullying have a high tendency to use cyberbullying as a method of retaliation. Likewise, the individuals who have friends who often cyberbully others are highly likely to be cyberbullies themselves. In addition, it was found that low self-esteem and a low level of empathy play a crucial role in cyberbullying. Additionally, online anonymity can be a crucial factor of cyberbullying. It is recommended that high education institutes should adopt a policy to educate students about cyberbullying and how to manage their anger. Furthermore, they should have appropriate measures to receive complaints concerning cyberbullying, and to soothe the feelings of the victims. There should be a counceling service in place for the students. Additionally, there should be mechanisms to encourage the improvement of self-esteem and increase empathy among university students.

Keywords

Cyberbullying, University students, Thailand

Introduction

Over the past decade, cyberbullying has become a prominent online behavior. It has gained broad attention from the general public owing to its negative effects on the victims' emotions such as frustration, grief, embarrassment, stress, self-devaluation, social isolation, depression, and suicidal attempts (e.g. Ayas & Deniz, 2014; Goodman, 2011; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Slonje et al., 2013). To tackle the problem, the victims would spend less time on social media or even deactivate their social networking accounts, especially if they are famous people or celebrities (Gilby, 2017). The seriousness of cyberbullying has intensified both among celebrities ("*Thai PBS* คนดังกับความเสี่ยงโดนกลั่นแกล้งผ่านโลกเสมือนจริง Cyberbullying," 2016) and common people (ETDA, 2019), leading to more awareness on the issue as well as the legal, social, and technological measures against it (Chin, 2019; Nandhini & Sheeba, 2015; Suwannakit, 2017; Thongraveewong, 2015; Wahab et al., 2015).

At present, Thailand ranks in the world's top countries for social media usage (Leesa-nguansuk, 2019) and, thus, inevitably faces cyberbullying problems. Although there are many previous studies on cyberbullying in Thailand (Archaphet, 2017; Charoenwanit, 2017; Samoh et al., 2014; Songsiri et al., 2011; Suwannakit, 2017; Thongraweewong, 2015), studies on the causes or factors influencing cyberbullying behavior are still scarce. Moreover, the prior research related to cyberbullying mostly focuses on the youth population across primary- and secondary-school-age (Ayas & Deniz., 2014; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Kraft & Wang, 2009; Law et al., 2012; Udris, 2015). Hence, the goal of this study is to explore the factors influencing cyberbullying in Thailand with the focus on undergraduate students. Even though there are similar studies on this issue in foreign countries (Alipan et al., 2019; Ata & Adnan., 2016; Crute et al., 2012; Faucher et al., 2014; Turan et al., 2011), the previous research on cyberbullying among this group is still limited and does not examine the causes of cyberbullying (Nakseeharach, 2018) This is interesting because this group is highly exposed to electronic devices and actively engages in online interactions (ETDA, 2018).

This article, therefore, examines the nature of behaviors, including causal factors, of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand.The factors are divided into 2 groups. The first group is pertinent to societal factors; and the second one concerns psychological factors. With regard to the first group, there are 5 factors. Firstly, desire for revenge is a factor which comes from anger, embarrassment and insecurity (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009), which are caused by an individual who are cyberbullied, and he chooses to employ the same method (cyberbullying) to retaliate the bully. Secondly, peer relationships are a factor which is based on Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (Tibbetts, 2015), which elaborates that human behavior can be derived from the learning from others with whom he has a close relation, such as friends. This is especially the case for a person in his adolescence. This factor could lead to cyberbullying among undergraduate students. Thirdly, the imbalance of power

between victims and perpetrators in cyberspace also plays a crucial role in cyberbullying. This factor is a counterpart of bullying in the physical world. Both in the physical world and cyberspace, the inequality of power appears in the form that the stronger tend to bully the weaker (Kowalski et al., 2008). As bullying also happens in cyberspace, the imbalance of power can also be used to explain the nature of cyberbullying (Nocentini et al., 2010). Fourthly, anonymity in cyberspace is the factor which can be conducive to losing inhibitions, which control acts of people in cyberspace (Christie & Dill, 2016). It is particularly the case for adolescent Internet users who typically disseminate messages through online social networking platforms without revealing their real identities to avoid their behaviors being monitored (Rainie et al, 2013) This includes the case of cyberbullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Fifthly, belief in self-righteousness is the factor which has not been examined in the context of cyberbullying in Thailand before. According to Falbo and Belk (1986), it is human nature for an individual to always hold that his belief or act is ultimately correct, and deny listening to opinions which are different from his. In certain cases, this may lead to improper, violent or aggressive verbal expression to attack those who have different opinions, such as slander or offensive words. These are considered to be a form of cyberbullying (Charoenwanit, 2017).

In regards the second group, there are 2 psychological factors. Firstly, self-esteem is the factor which, as proposed by Brewer and Kerslake (2015), can be used to predict the likelihood of cyberbullying others. Typically, a person with low self-esteem cyberbullies others. Secondly, empathy is the factor which is a kind of social emotion. If the person has a high level of social emotion, his aggressive behaviors decrease (Tibbetts, 2015). These two psychological factors play a significant role in controlling human behaviors; and also have an effect on whether a person will cyberbully others. The findings of this study can serve as fundamental information for policy-making to deal with the problem of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed method research approach to collect data. The quantitative data was collected through questionnaire. The population of this research consisted of 1,681,149 undergraduate students in Thailand (651,722 males and 1,029,427 females) (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2018). They were selected from higher education institutions in four different regions of the country: Northern Region, Central Region, North-eastern Region, and Southern Region (as classified by the Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior). 1,928 samples were selected by accidental sampling, and the sample size was calculated based on Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% sampling error level. Questionnaires were used as the data collection tool.

The questionnaire contents were divided into 9 sections: 1) personal information, 2) cyberbullying, 3) desire for revenge, 4) self-respect, 5) empathy, 6) imbalance of power, 7) self-righteousness, 8) peer relationships, and 9) anonymity on social media. The reliability of data collection tools was verified by three experts towards the application of Index of item-Objective Congruence. The questions had scores ranging between 0.66-1.00. After revising the questions based on the experts' recommendations, the researcher tested the quality of the research tools by experimenting with 50 undergraduate students who were not selected as the research samples. Then, the errors were fixed to finalize the questionnaires before the data collection period started. The reliability of the questionnaire structure was once again measured by Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) based on the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) with the range between .874 and .939. The results showed that the reliability of all questions was fairly high.

With regard to the qualitative data collection, the researcher used purposive sampling. The researcher collected data from those who were involved in or had close relationships with the behaviors of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand, comprising of student counseling officers, representatives of undergraduate students, experts in information technology, IT law and cyberbullying, psychologists, criminologists. There were 18 informants in total. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were open-ended, allowing the interviewees to give opinions which were used to construct a framework for quantitative data collection at a later stage. This study primarily took a quantitative approach, which qualitative data playing a supportive role.

The names of the selected universities from the four regions where the research was conducted are not disclosed in order to preserve confidentiality and privacy of the universities and the informants based on the principles of research ethics. The data collection process in this research was approved by the Committee for Research Ethics (Social Sciences), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University's Institutional Review Board (MUSH-IRB), by which the researcher requested and coordinated with experts, stakeholders, and the sample universities to collect data. For the quantitative part of this study, there were 1,928 returned questionnaires out of 2,200 distributed questionnaires (87.63%). There were 1,928 respondents, which composed of 1,312 females (68.7%) and 598 males (31.3%). The majority of the 1,205 respondents (66.9%) were under 20 years old, while 596 respondents were 20 years old or over (33.1%). 832 respondents were freshmen (43.5%), making up the majority; 627 were sophomores (32.8%); 287 were junior students (15%); and 28 were senior students (1.5%). In terms of the types of accommodation, most of the respondents, 956 of them, lived in dormitories with friends (50.1%); 532 stayed with parents or relatives (27.9%); and 420 lived alone (22%).

Research Findings

According to the research results, it can be seen that 1,672 Thai undergraduate students (86.7%) had cyberbullied, while only 256 (13.3%) had not cyberbullied. The figures and percentages of cyberbullying among undergraduate university students in Thailand are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of cyberbullying among undergraduate university students in Thailand

Cyberbullying behavior	Number (People)	Percentage
Not committed to cyberbullying behavior	256	13.3
Committed to cyberbullying behavior	1,672	86.7
Total	1,928	100

The majority of the cyberbullies had blocked or deleted one friend or more from their online networks ($\bar{x}$ = 1.67; SD = 0.82). The second most evident behavior was posting an embarrassing picture of a friend ($\bar{x}$ = 1.56; SD = 0.76), and the third was mocking a celebrity on social media ($\bar{x}$ = 1.46; SD = 0.70), as shown in Figure 1.

Legend (top to bottom):
- Post parody or the embarrassment of others on social media just for fun. Regardless of whether to make someone feel pain or not
- Mocking a celebrity on social media
- Using social media to make someone look bad
- Disguised as someone else or using a fake name online to destroy other people's relationships
- Using social media to influence others or disgust the person you don't like
- Blocked or deleted a friend or more from their online networks
- Post secret things, personal information or pictures of others without their permission
- Use your cell phone to record video clips or take pictures while your friend is forcing others to do embarrassing things to spread online
- Post a rumor, gossip or a friend's embarrassment
- Post embarrassing pictures of people you don't know
- Posting embarrassing pictures of friends
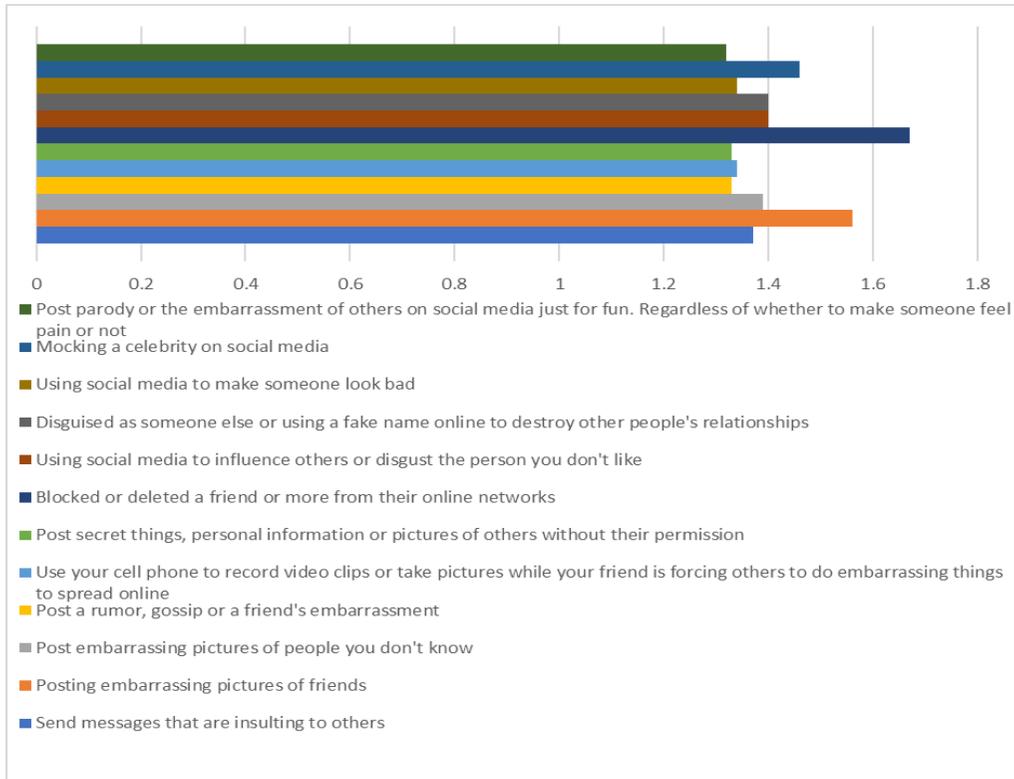- Send messages that are insulting to others

Figure 1 shows the behavioral mean cyberbullying of undergraduate university students in Thailand

In terms of the causal factors influencing undergraduate students in Thailand, the research examined 7 factors in total, as described below.

1) Desire for revenge is a factor deriving from frustration or discontent due to previous cyberbullying victimization experiences. A victim of cyberbullying may choose to use the same approach to seek revenge, without considering the rightfulness of the action. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 1.79 and a standard deviation of 0.85 on average ($\bar{x}$= 1.79; SD = 0.85).

2) Peer relationships is a factor extracted from Differential Association theory which explains that human behavior, regardless of its positivity or negativity, can be learned from interactions with others, especially parents, peers and teachers. Based on the theory, it can be assumed that peer relationships should be considered as a causal factor leading to cyberbullying among undergraduate students because, at this stage of life, individuals are lingering between adolescence and adulthood and pursuing acceptance from others. In other words, they are under the influence of peers more than individuals in other age groups.

Overall, this factor had a mean score of 1.74 and a standard deviation of 0.68 on average ($\bar{x}$= 1.74; SD = 0.68)

3) Imbalance of power in cyberspace is another causal factor influencing cyberbullying which shares some similar elements with physical bullying. An individual with higher physical strength tends to bully another individual who is physically weaker. Apart from the imbalance of physical power, there are also imbalance of power in other aspects such as wealth and authority. Nonetheless, when bullying has expanded into cyberspace, where physical power, wealth or authority is not clearly elaborated, the characteristics of imbalance of power in cyberspace are different from those in a physical space but still cause cyberbullying to occur. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 2.08 and a standard deviation of 0.829 on average ($\bar{x}$= 2.08; SD = 0.829).

4) Anonymity in cyberspace is a unique characteristic of the virtual community by which social media users in certain platforms are not required to use their real names to identify themselves but may use pseudonyms or fake identities to access the online platforms. This anonymous presence encourages individuals to commit a crime or engage in deviant behavior. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 2.27 and a standard deviation of 0.81 on average ($\bar{x}$= 2.27; SD = 0.81).

5) Belief in self-righteousness is a factor emerging from the fact that Thai people tend to use social media as opinion-sharing platforms. Naturally, there is always a diversity in ideas and arguments, and the false belief in self-righteousness can cause an individual to cyberbully his or her opposition. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 2.26 and a standard deviation of 0.72 on average ($\bar{x}$= 2.26; SD = 0.72).

6) Self-esteem is another factor which can be used for controlling and predicting the tendency of cyberbullying. According to the previous studies, individuals with low self-esteem tend to engage in cyberbullying, and family is a main social institution that affects the development of self-esteem. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 3.03 and a standard deviation of 0.47 on average ($\bar{x}$= 3.03; SD = 0.47).

7) Empathy is a factor related to social emotions. Based on the prior research, it was found that individuals with low empathy have a higher chance to engage in cyberbullying. Furthermore, they are more likely to express selfishness and aggressive behavior. Overall, this factor had a mean score of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.553 on average ($\bar{x}$= 3.63; SD = 0.553).

The overall averages of the seven causal factors influencing cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students are demonstrated in Figure 2.
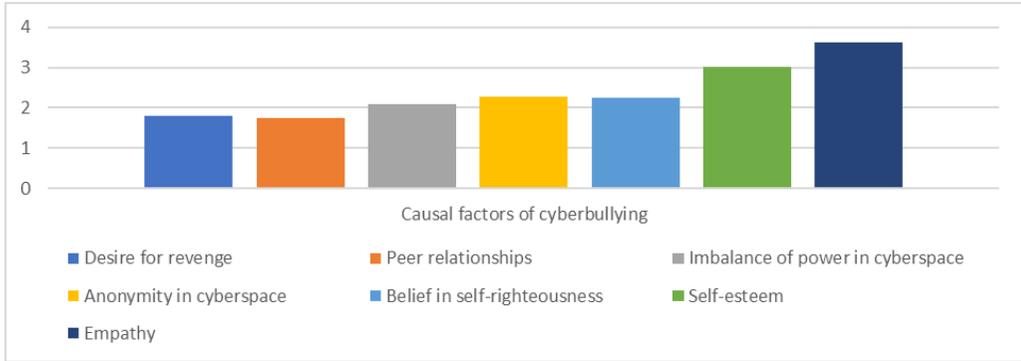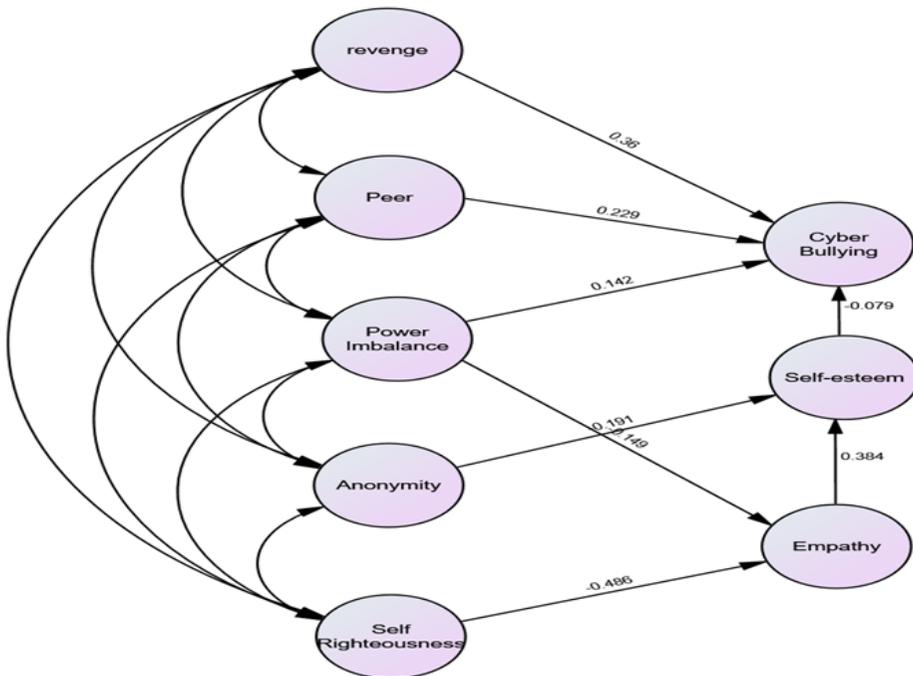
Figure 2 shows the overview of the mean of causal factors of cyberbullying

When analyzing all of the seven causal factors towards Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in order to test the hypotheses, the results of structural analysis are provided as follows.

x^2 = 371.41, df = 31, p < .000, RMSEA=.075 (.069-.082), GFI=.966, CFI = .951

Figure 3 shows the relationship of causal factors in cyberbullying among undergraduate university students

According to Figure 3, it was found that "desire for revenge" had a positive relationship with cyberbullying among university students who were the samples of this research ('the sample') at a significance level of 0.001 ($ß=.360$; $p<0.001$). This indicates that the more individuals would like to seek revenge, the more they engage in cyberbullying behavior. In the same manner, "peer relationships" had a direct positive relationship with cyberbullying behavior among the samples at a significance level of 0.001 ($ß=.229$; $p<0.001$), showing that individuals who befriend with cyberbullies have a high tendency to engage in cyberbullying behavior as well.

On the other hand, with "self-esteem" as a mediator variable ($ß=-.191$, $p<0.001$), "anonymity in cyberspace" had an indirect negative relationship with cyberbullying behavior among the samples at a significance level of 0.001, leading to cyberbullying behavior ($ß=-.079$, $p<.001$). This shows that the anonymous social media users tended to have low self-esteem, which resulted into a higher tendency of cyberbullying. Likewise, with "empathy" ($ß=-.486$, $p<.001$) and "self-esteem" ($ß=.384$, $p<.001$) as mediator variables, "belief in self-righteousness" also had an indirect negative relationship with cyberbullying among the samples at a significance level of 0.001, leading to cyberbullying ($ß=-.079$, $p<.001$). This indicates that individuals who highly believed in their self-righteousness tended to have low empathy and low self-esteem, leading to a higher tendency to engage in cyberbullying.

Moreover, it was found that "imbalance of power" had a direct positive relationship with cyberbullying among the samples at a significance level of 0.005 ($ß=.142$, $p<0.005$). This means individuals who had more power or believed that they had superior power than others tended to have a higher tendency to engage in cyberbullying. When "empathy" ($ß=-.149$, $p<.001$) and "self-esteem" ($ß=.384$, $p<.001$) were mediator variables, "imbalance of power" also had an indirect relationship with cyberbullying among the samples at a significance level of 0.001, by which it led to cyberbullying ($ß=-.079$, $p<.001$). This indicates that individuals who had more power or believed that they had more superior power than others tended to have low empathy and low self-esteem, ultimately leading to a higher tendency to engage in cyberbullying. That is to say, "imbalance of power" had both direct and indirect relationships with cyberbullying among the samples.

According to the qualitative findings, exclusion of an individual from an online social group is regarded as a form of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand. It can be done with ease. Furthermore, the excluded person might not know that he is no longer in that particular online social group. The qualitative findings also show other interesting forms of cyberbullying, for instance, secret photography, revenge on ex-lovers by hacking into the university's computer system to withdraw all the subjects that their ex-lovers had registered or body, appearance, and personality shaming the others (need explanations). According to the information from in-depth interviews, there are additional variables that

could contribute to cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students. They include emotional elements such as anger, hatred, dislike, a desire for revenge, jealously, inhibition, a lack of consideration, and a lack of empathy. Cyberbullying is also caused by issues such as a lack of parenting or a lack of familial closeness. Furthermore, association with friends that frequently abuse and bully others in cyberspace. Self-righteousness can lead to verbal attacks on others who disagree with you. Entering cyberspace without revealing your genuine identity enhances your willingness to commit violent acts. Imbalance of power, particularly among social media users who are well-known or have a huge following and may influence others. In addition, some perpetrators were found to have mental health problems that were more prone to aggressive behavior.

Discussion and Conclusion

With regards to the research results, the majority of the samples, 1,672 undergraduate students in Thailand (86. 7% of the research population) , engaged in cyberbullying behavior. This conforms to a study conducted by Chanwit Pornnapadol which revealed that Thai youth had experienced cyberbullying more than youths in the United States, Germany, and Japan (Chinpong, 2018). In this study, it could be observed that the most popular form of cyberbullying committed by Thai undergraduate students was blocking or deleting a friend or more from an online platform, by which the deleted or blocked person(s) was often considered as a troublesome individual who had conflicts with, or whose behaviors were different from, others or the social norms. This is in line with the information from the in-depth interviews that the exclusion of some friends from a social networking group was considered to be a form of cyberbullying. This form of cyberbullying was typically found in the groups of undergraduate students in Thailand. From the perspective of students, online and physical spaces were an inseparable social space. Thus, when a student was blocked, deleted or prevented from participating in a social networking platform which included other friends, it was not different from being expelled from a group of friends in a physical space which was deemed as a form of bullying (Boonmongkol et al., 2014), and also conforms to a study conducted by Slonje et al. (2013) which stated that social exclusion was often used as a form of punishment for those who had deviant behavior which violated social norms. The reason why this form of punishment is popular may result from the fact that it is convenient to delete or block a person from an online platform as well as the fact that direct confrontations with the excluded person(s) can be avoided. Most of the time, the excluded person(s) does not realize that he or she is excluded because the nature of virtual community allows people to exclude another person(s) by creating a new group chat without giving a notice to friends. More importantly, blocking or deleting a person is not as violent as other forms of cyberbullying because it can prevent direct confrontations with the excluded person(s).

Nonetheless, social exclusion from online communication channels could have more effects on the mental states of the excluded person(s) than social exclusion in a physical space. This is because the excluded person(s) has a very small chance of realizing the fact, unless he or she knows it by chance or a friend decides to tell him or her. This way, the mental states of the excluded person(s) are seriously harmed more or less. In particular, he or she may feel betrayed by his or her trusted person(s), and then feel unwanted or unaccepted by the peers. The feeling of being a clown among peers, without realizing it before, can lead to social isolation, loneliness, depression, social anxiety, self-harm, and eventually hatred towards others. Therefore, the researcher noticed that social exclusion from online communication channels is not only a common form of cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students but also tremendously affects the victims' mental states.

In conclusion, the causal factors influencing cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students can be described as follows.

1) Desire for revenge: cyberbullying which results from the desire for revenge is a by-product of cyberbullying victimization. A study conducted by König (2010) found that seeking revenge through cyberbullying is common among those who have been victims of bullying in a physical space. In the same manner, this study found that most research participants used cyberbullying to take revenge against those who posted a message or digital data or made them feel hurt on online platforms, for example, mocking them. This result is in line with the qualitative data deriving from interviewing with students, as some students chose to use cyberbullying to retaliate against their bullies as a measure to protect themselves, their friends and acquaintances who were bullied first. Moreover, it is interesting that some students who cyberbullied others were in fact the victims of bullying in a physical space before. In addition, this research, which used the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to examine the relationship between desire for revenge and cyberbullying, found that desire for revenge had a direct relationship with cyberbullying, with those who were frustrated by cyberbullying victimization using cyberbullying as a means to seek retribution. This conforms to the studies conducted by Calvete et al. (2010) and Hinduja and Patchin (2007), which revealed that frustration, dissatisfaction and embarrassment are the causes of revenge, in which victims of cyberbullying may also choose to retaliate to the bully using the same approach.

2) Peer relationships: the age range of Thai undergraduate students was 18-25, which means they are in transition between adolescence and adulthood, the stage of life where individuals start to have their own social groups and give high importance to peer acceptance. An interesting fact found in this study is that a number of research participants had peers who had used the internet as a tool to seek revenge against others; this means that most research participants had peer relationships with those who engaged in cyberbullying. This study found

peer relationships had a direct relationship with cyberbullying, meaning that individuals who had peer relationships with cyberbullies tended to have higher engagement in cyberbullying. This is consistent with the data deriving from the qualitative part of this study which found that some students wanted to be accepted by their peers until they surrendered to their bullying friends and started cyberbully victims, some of which were people whom the bullies did not know in person or did not have any problems with.This conforms to the studies conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2013), Moon et al. (2011), and Shadmanfaat et al. (2019). To put it simply, Thai undergraduate students sought acceptance from their peers who highly influenced their behavior and attitudes. This conforms to Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory.

3) *Imbalance of power:* similar to in-person bullying, the imbalance of power is a crucial factor influencing cyberbullying. Similar to the results from the studies conducted by Kowalski et al. (2008), Nocentini et al. (2010), and Ybarra et al. (2012), the in-depth interviews from this study show that the number of "likes" which a person had received or the number of his online followers could lead to his feeling of superiority to other Internet users. The number of "likes" or the number of large followers feed to growth of the feeling of superiority. This feeling could make owners of social media account holders feel that they are more important and, in turn, have more influences on the communities in cyberspace than others. This can be considered as one of the characteristics of the imbalance of power that occurs in cyberspace. Also, it encouraged the person to be bold enough to do something without thinking about the consequences as he believed that he was popular, accepted and the center of attention. When applying this factor to the Structural Equation Model (SEM) of the relationship between imbalance of power and cyberbullying, it could be observed that imbalance of power had both direct and indirect influence on cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students. In other words, the higher perceived imbalance of power between cyberbullies and victims of cyberbullying, the higher chance of cyberbullying engagement. Nevertheless, according to the findings of this study, this factor could be controlled by empathy and self-esteem. That is to say, if Thai undergraduate students had a higher level of empathy, they would have a higher level of self-esteem and, eventually, a lower level of superiority complex in cyberspace. This corresponds to the study carried out by Brewer and Kerslake (2015) which noted that an individual who has a low level of empathy will have a higher tendency of engagement in cyberbullying.

4) *Anonymity in Cyberspace:* it is universally accepted in the field of cyberbullying studies that a major factor influencing cyberbullying is identity concealment. Concealing ones' identity online brings out the dark side of social media users making them more aggressive, violent, and rude, as demonstrated in the studies conducted by King (2010), Kowalski and Limber (2007), Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2012). It is in accordance with the data from this studies in-depth interviews that online anonymity makes Internet users lose their inhibitions,

daring to conduct online deviant or violent acts including cyberbullying. However, the results from the SEM analysis showed that anonymity did not have a direct relationship with cyberbullying; In other words, self-esteem acts as an intermediary between anonymity and cyberbullying. To put it simply, an individual with high self-esteem is less likely to appear in social media anonymously, resulting into a lower chance of cyberbullying. This discovery corresponds to the research conducted by Brewer and Kerslake (2015). Above all, it can be assumed that self-esteem can be used as a factor controlling cyberbullying among undergraduate students.

5) Belief in self-righteousness: this is a factor deriving from the concept of moral behavior based on social norms, a tool to control the behavior of each member of a society, in which any individual who violates a social norm must be punished by social sanction. Theoretically, Emile Durkheim explained that an individual's violation of social norms can demonstrate the scope of moral boundaries within his or her society, and social norms also lead to the sense of self-righteousness or superiority over the socially sanctioned person. This conforms to Seager (2014)'s concept of social influence or group pressure. According to the observations on social networking in Thai society, there are many cases of the utilization of cyberbullying as a form of cyber sanction. When a member in a virtual community violates a social norm, he or she may be punished by a cyber sanction, for instance, being condemned or shamed on online platforms. If a member has an opinion that is inconsistent with the mainstream trend, that member may fall victim to a social media attack, especially by means of digging up personal information or various online activities in the past that could be subject to condemnation. Being verbally abused by other social media users who believe they are right can lead to social exclusion of a person who violates a social norm, which is a form of cyberbullying. Additionally, the in-depth interviews conducted in this study show that undergraduate students liked to express their opinions on social media platforms, and believed that their opinions were right. If they found opinions which were different from theirs, they would promptly send violent and aggressive messages to attack the Internet users who posted those different opinions. It was particular the case for political opinions. This conforms to Slonje et al. (2013)'s research, which stated that social exclusion is often used for punishing a community member who violates a social norm of the community in which other community members may express their opposition or dislike towards the member or may bully him or her in order to force the member to change their behavior back to the norms established by the online community. If the community member does not improve or change his or her behavior, he or she may be socially excluded. According to the SEM analysis results in this study, belief in self-righteousness did not have a direct relationship with cyberbullying, but it had an indirect relationship with cyberbullying when empathy and self-esteem are mediator variables. To illustrate, a person who highly believes in self-

righteousness tends to have low empathy and low self-esteem, resulting into higher engagement in cyberbullying. This finding also conforms to the study conducted by Brewer and Kerslake (2015).

Recommendations

This study found that the causal factors influencing cyberbullying among undergraduate students in Thailand included direct factors (desire for revenge and peer relationships) and indirect factors (imbalance of power, anonymity in cyberspace, and belief in self-righteousness) which were controlled by mediator variables (empathy and self-esteem). These factors affected the direction of countermeasure or policy implementation to reduce cyberbullying because they indicated that an anti-cyberbullying policy or a countermeasure against cyberbullying should be diversely designed based on these factors in order to prevent cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students effectively and appropriately. Here are the recommendations.

1. Higher education institutions in Thailand should implement a policy promoting emotion management, including how to control frustration, anger, and desire for revenge which is caused by cyberbullying victimization among the students. The policy should raise awareness on the fact taking revenge by using cyberbullying will never solve the problem but intensify the conflict. Universities should implement cyberbullying management mechanisms such as a warning system, negotiation procedures, raising awareness, and victim remedy and reparation. This can help the victims to feel supported by the universities and decide not to use social media as a tool for seeking revenge.

2. There should be peer-to-peer patterns of support, counseling and guidance to emotion management between students to assist the victims of cyberbullying. This is because during young adulthood, peers play a significant and influential role. Moreover, peers are the very first group of people who will notice and realize cyberbullying problems that may occur. Therefore, peer-to-peer support is expected to be quick and easily accessible.

3. Some causal factors may not directly influence cyberbullying, but they may have some impacts if they are controlled by the mediation factors. These causal factors include imbalance of power, anonymity in cyberspace, and belief in self-righteousness, while the mediation factors include self-esteem. According to findings of this study, it can be seen that if a student had high self-esteem, he or she tended to disclose self-identity or personal information on social media which resulted into a lower level of cyberbullying. Therefore, universities should promote self-esteem among their students to recognize their own values. University professors and staff members should genuinely praise them, sincerely listen to their problems, give advice and provide resolutions. Universities and all staff should shift their

hierarchical mindset from adult-centered to student-centered by providing students a friendly, respective, supportive environment within the campuses.

4. In terms of empathy, which is another significant mediation factor controlling the students' cyberbullying behavior, universities should promote the concept of "empathy" among their students by focusing on the feelings of cyberbullying victims instead of the bystanders' point of view. This is because cyberbullying diversely and sensitively affects each victim. Verbal abuse or certain digital data may not hurt everyone, but at the same time it may seriously harm some people and cause depression, loss of confidence, or even self-devaluation. This policy is expected to reduce cyberbullying among Thai undergraduate students effectively and sustainably.

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