



Knowledge, Attitude And Perception Of Cyberbullying Among The Parents In Malaysia

Shirley Jong Meu Ching¹, Aifah Jamaludin¹, Matthew Teo Yong Chang², Nathan Vytialingam¹, Mohammad Abdur Rashid³, Mohammed Shahjahan Kabir⁴, Hardev Singh H S⁵, Abdul Hakim Kader Sultan⁵, Lubna Shirin⁶, Tania Islam⁷, Theingi Maung Maung³, K Sree Raman⁸, Prabal Bhargava⁹, Shaker Uddin Ahmed¹⁰ And Nazmul MHM^{5*}

¹School of Occupational Therapy, Perdana University, Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Department of Occupational Therapy, Manipal University College Malaysia, Melaka, Malaysia

³Faculty of Medicine, AIMST University, Bedong, 08100, Kedah, Malaysia

⁴International Medical School, Management and Science University, Shah Alam 40100, Selangor, Malaysia

⁵Graduate School of Medicine, Perdana University, Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁶Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sungai Buloh Campus, Jalan Hospital, Sungai Buloh, 47000 Selangor, Malaysia

⁷Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁸Perdana University Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (PU-RCSI), Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

⁹School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, 47500 Selangor, Malaysia

¹⁰Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, SEGi University, Sibul, Sarawak, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: Nazmul MHM

Email id: poorpiku@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a big issue that affects youth's life nowadays. The increase of cyberbullying cases was related to the lack of knowledge and awareness among society. Parent's awareness and knowledge of their child's online status are important to provide the best guidance and support when their child is being cyberbullied. Therefore, the current study is aimed to investigate the acquisition of knowledge, attitude, and perception of cyberbullying among parents in Malaysia. Total 196 participants have been participated in this study by a validated online questionnaire. Data were analysed using SPSS version 26. The frequency and percentage for the perception, acquisition of knowledge, and attitude were calculated. The Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to test the significance between variables. 53.6% of the parents strongly agreed that cyberbullying is an issue that needs increased attention from parents. The most frequently used source of knowledge about cyberbullying among the parents were radio or television, and research or investigation. Most of the parent's agreed that cyberbullying required the actions from parents, school, and legislation. Younger parents were more likely to discuss with their child about the cyberbullying. Positive attitude may be associated with age and level of education.

Keywords: Knowledge, attitude, perception, cyberbullying, parents

INTRODUCTION

With the development of technology, a new form of bullying occurs in the first decade of the 21st century called cyberbullying (Zych et al., 2015). Cyberbullying bullies can hide their identity online and this anonymity allows the youth to speak and do more cruel things compared to the traditional bullying which is always face-by-face (Donegan, 2012). Youth who have experienced cybervictimization had higher psychological distress compared with who never experienced cyberbullying (Safaria, 2016) such as depression, sleep disorders, stress, anxiety, helplessness, somatization and suicide (Shaikh et al., 2021). A survey showed that there were 87% of internet users in Malaysia and time spent on internet was 6.6 hours per day (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Lack of parental monitoring can lead to an increased risk of their child being involved in cyberbullying. Parents have a vital role in their children's well-being development. Parent's awareness and knowledge of their child's online status are important to provide the best guidance and support when their child is being cyberbullied (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Thus, this research will focus on investigating the knowledge, attitude, and perception of cyberbullying among parents in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parent's perceptions on cyberbullying

Globally, 76% of parents believed that cyberbullying is one of the bullying types that requires a lot of concern from parents and schools. Besides that, a study done in Saudi Arabia which consisted of 1249 respondents showed that 61% of parents recognize cyberbullying as an issue for their children in school (Alfakheh et al., 2021). According to an international poll, 85% of Malaysian parents were aware of the cyberbullying which is higher than the global average percentage and 23% of them reported that their child has been cyberbullied before. (IPSOS, 2018). According to Clarke (2013) research in the United States, 83.8% of parents agreed that cyberbullying was an issue that needed more concern. Parent's level of education will affect their knowledge and perception on cyberbullying because parents who have higher education level tend to learn about new technologies, safety used and change in their parenting style (Makri-Botsari & Karagianni, 2014). There was a study done in Israel indicated that 33% of parents are aware that the cyberbullying happened in their child's school. Younger parents had shown greater perception of the importance of monitoring their children's online activities (Tal & Prebor, 2020).

Parent's acquisition of knowledge on cyberbullying

A global survey done by the IPSOS among 28 countries has shown that 25% of parents in this world have never heard about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying mostly happened on social media, followed by mobile, and online messaging (IPSOS, 2018). Television was the main resource that the parents learned about cyberbullying compared to other media resources (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Another study done in Saudi Arabia showed that 64% of parents learned about cyberbullying through news on radio or television, followed up by self-investigation, learned from their children and informed by school (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Besides that, Tal & Prebor (2020) indicated that most of the parents gained the knowledge of cyberbullying through the internet, school framework and via the media. Only 14% of parents always attended the school cyberbullying awareness activities, 39% attended once or twice, and 46% of them never attended the programme. Similarly, half of them never searched about the information of cyberbullying either through online or other resources, and only 45% searched once or twice (Tal & Prebor, 2020).

Parent's attitude on cyberbullying

Previous study stated that only 40% of parents in Malaysia know their children's online activity, however the children required the monitoring from their parents as they were immature to analyse the information and risks from the internet (Arifin et al., 2019). Another study concluded that most of the parents read their children's messages on social networks and discussed the cyberbullying issue once a month. They have checked and monitored their children's computer and phone activities once or twice a month. 74% of the parents claimed they did not run a filtering software on their children's computer as they felt it was not necessary (Tal & Prebor, 2020). The parents who have higher attitude mean scores towards the cyberbullying were those with a higher level of education (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Besides, mothers showed higher frequency to check their children's message and talked about the cyberbullying issue compared to the father (Tal & Prebor, 2020). The parents who have set the stricter rules on their child's internet activities resulted in lower possibilities of being cyberbullied (Balakrishnan, 2017). A systematic review concluded that the family factors such as higher socioeconomic status, supportive environment, parent monitor in technology used, authoritative parenting styles will reduce the chance of cybervictimization (Zych et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

This quantitative, cross-sectional study has been conducted in Malaysia through an online survey questionnaire. Targeted sample size was 195 and convenient sampling method was used. The inclusive criteria were adult parent 18 years old above, has children in primary or secondary school, and able to read and understand English. The exclusion criteria where respondent is not an adult parent, pregnant woman, senior citizen (60 years old and above), and unable to read and understand English.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data is an online questionnaire created by Clarke (2013) and adapted by Alfakheh et al. (2021). The questionnaire has a Cronbach's Alpha 0.766 for reliability. A consent form will be given to respondents before proceeding to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 4 parts with a total of 31 questions. Part A is the demography data such as guardian, age, nationality, level of education, occupation, states, monthly income, and number of children. Part B consists of 9 questions about parent's perception on cyberbullying with a 4-point Likert Scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Part C assesses a parent's source of knowledge about cyberbullying by answering 6 questions. The answers 'Yes' or 'No' will be chosen by respondents. Part D determines the parent's attitudes towards cyberbullying. It consists of 8 questions with a Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree.

Data collection

The data were collected through an online questionnaire (Google Forms). The link or QR code to the online questionnaire was shared to the social media and parent support group. Before distributing the online questionnaire into the parent support group on social media, an official letter was emailed to the group manager to get the permission to distribute the questionnaire inside the group. The research sought approval from Perdana University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After getting the approval from IRB, the online questionnaire link or QR codes were shared to the parent's support group. A consent form was included at the beginning of the questionnaire as the permission to respondent to join in this study.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the socio demographic data. The frequency and percentage for the parent's perception, acquisition of knowledge, and attitude were calculated. The Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis tests were used to test the significance between parent's perception and attitude in cyberbullying with sociodemographic factors like parent's gender, age groups, and level of education.

RESULTS

There were 196 participants included into data analysis, and 3 cases were excluded due to not meeting the inclusion criteria.

Demographic Data

Table 1 showed that 68.9% of guardians were mothers and 138 participants age 30-60 years old. All participants were Malaysian. Half of the participants had a high school/ diploma education level (50.5%). Most of the participants were employed (87.5%). There were 133 participants from west Malaysia and 63 participants from east Malaysia. The highest income group were B40 (57.1%). Mean of number of children was 2.40.

Table 1: Demographic of participants

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Guardian				
Father	61	31.1	1.69	.46
Mother	135	68.9		
Age				
Less than 30	58	29.6	1.70	.46
30-60	138	70.4		
Nationality				
Malaysian	196	100	1.00	.00
Level of education				
Less than high school	18	9.2	2.36	.72
High school/ Diploma	99	50.5		
Bachelor's degree	69	35.2		
Master's degree	10	5.1		
Occupation				
Employed	171	87.2	1.18	.51
Unemployed	14	7.1		
Retired	11	5.6		
State				
West Malaysia	133	67.9	1.32	.47
East Malaysia	63	32.1		
Income Group				
No income	12	6.1	2.36	.67
< RM 4360 (B40)	112	57.1		
RM 4360- RM 9619 (M40)	62	31.6		
> RM 9619 (T20)	10	5.1		
Number of children			2.40	1.16

The perception, acquisition of knowledge and attitude of cyberbullying among parents in Malaysia

Table 2 showed that only 16 parents strongly agreed cyberbullying was a problem at their children's school. There were 10.2% and 21.9% of parents strongly agreed that the cyberbullying occurred during school time and

outside school. Half of the participants (53.6%) strongly agreed that cyberbullying is an issue that needs increased attention from parents. There were 61 parents who strongly agreed that cyberbullying is more harmful than bullying in the schoolyard. Only 17.3% of parents discussed cyberbullying with their child. There were 28 parents who strongly agreed that cyberbullying occurred less frequently than bullying in their child's school. 38.3% parent had heard or read that cyberbullying contributed to suicide.

Table 2: Parents' Perception on Cyberbullying

Items	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
1. Cyberbullying is a problem at my child's school.	21 (10.7)	95 (48.5)	64 (32.7)	16 (8.2)
2. Cyberbullying occurs during school time.	19 (9.7)	92 (46.9)	65 (33.2)	20 (10.2)
3. Cyberbullying occurs outside school.	5 (2.6)	11 (5.6)	137 (69.9)	43 (21.9)
4. Cyberbullying is an issue that needs increased attention from parents.	5 (2.6)	7 (3.6)	79 (40.3)	105 (53.6)
5. Cyberbullying is more harmful than bullying in the schoolyard.	8 (4.1)	23 (11.7)	104 (53.1)	61 (31.1)
6. I have discussed cyberbullying with my child.	10 (5.1)	31 (15.8)	121 (61.7)	34 (17.3)
7. My child is likely to talk to me about cyberbullying.	10 (5.1)	54 (27.6)	106 (54.1)	26 (13.3)
8. Cyberbullying occurs less frequently than bullying in my child's school.	12 (6.1)	51 (26.0)	105 (53.6)	28 (14.3)
9. I have heard or read that cyberbullying has contributed to suicide.	11 (5.6)	17 (8.7)	93 (47.4)	75 (38.3)

On the other hand, Table 3 demonstrated that 45.9% of participants strongly agreed that they use social media every day and 88.3% of them believed that there were some issues when a child was cyberbullied. The highest source of knowledge about cyberbullying among the participants was radio or television (n=149), followed by research or investigation (n=110), school (n=86), and child (n=85).

Table 3: Parent's acquisition of knowledge about cyberbullying

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Do you use social media daily?		
Strongly Disagree	9	4.6
Disagree	12	6.1
Agree	85	43.4
Strongly Agree	90	45.9
2. I have learned about cyberbullying from the news on radio or TV.		
Yes	149	76.0
No	47	24.0
3. My child's school has informed me about cyberbullying.		
Yes	86	43.9
No	110	56.1
4. I learned about cyberbullying from my child.		
Yes	85	43.4
No	111	56.6
5. I have done my own research or investigation about cyberbullying.		
Yes	110	56.1
No	86	43.9
6. When a youth is cyberbullied, I believe there are some issues.		
Yes	173	88.3
No	23	11.7

Table 4 demonstrated 48.0% strongly agreed that cyberbullying can cause psychological harm to their children. There were 94 and 91 participants who strongly believed that it is important to monitor their children’s use of the internet and place restrictions on internet use. For school roles, 45.4% and 38.8% of parents strongly agreed that school should be proactive and increase involvement in addressing cyberbullying. For parent parts, there were 45.4% and 40.3% parents strongly agreed that parents should be proactive in addressing cyberbullying and parent involvement can reduce cyberbullying. There were 95 participants who strongly agreed that more laws should be passed to prevent or punish cyberbullying.

Table 4: Parent’s attitudes towards cyberbullying

Items	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
1. I believe that cyberbullying can cause psychological harm to my child.	18 (9.2)	19 (9.7)	65 (33.2)	94 (48.0)
2. I believe it is important to monitor my child’s use of the internet.	12 (6.1)	20 (10.2)	70 (35.7)	94 (48.0)
3. I believe it is important to place restrictions on my child’s use of the internet.	10 (5.1)	19 (9.7)	76 (38.8)	91 (46.4)
4. Schools should be proactive in addressing cyberbullying.	12 (6.1)	12 (6.1)	83 (42.3)	89 (45.4)
5. Schools should increase involvement in addressing cyberbullying.	16 (8.2)	18 (9.2)	86 (43.9)	76 (38.8)
6. Parents should be more proactive in addressing cyberbullying.	15 (7.7)	21 (10.7)	71 (36.2)	89 (45.4)
7. Parents' involvement in addressing cyberbullying would reduce it.	13 (6.6)	15 (7.7)	89 (45.4)	79 (40.3)
8. More laws should be passed to prevent or punish cyberbullying.	13 (6.6)	17 (8.7)	71 (36.2)	95 (48.5)

Differences of parent’s perception in cyberbullying between the sociodemographic factors.

Table 5 indicated that there was non-significant between the father ($M = 94.90, n = 61$) and mother ($M = 100.13, n = 135$) with the statement ‘I have discussed cyberbullying with my child’, $U = 3989, z = -.85, p = .40$, two-tailed. There is no significant difference in parent’s perception between male and female.

However, there was a significant difference between the age and statement ‘I have discussed cyberbullying with my child’. The result indicates that age group less than 30 ($M = 112.24, n = 58$) reporting more frequent to discuss to their children than age group 30-60 years old ($M = 92.72, n = 138$), $U = 3205, z = -3.12, p = .002$, two-tailed. There is a significant difference in parents’ perception between age groups.

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test results among the guardian and age with the statement ‘I have discussed cyberbullying with my child’.

Sociodemographic	n	Mean	U	z	p-value
Guardian			3898	-.85	.40
Father	61	94.90			
Mother	135	100.13			
Age			3205	-3.12	.002
less than 30	58	112.24			
30 - 60	138	92.72			

Table 6 showed that there was not much difference between parent’s education level to discuss cyberbullying with their child, $H = 1.74, df = 3, p = .63$. There is no significant difference in parent’s perception between levels of education.

Table 6: Kruskal Wallis Test result between the level of education with the statement ‘I have discussed cyberbullying with my child’.

Level of Education	N	Mean	H	df	p-value
Less than high school	18	96.81	1.74	3	.63
High school/ Diploma	99	94.83			
Bachelor’s degree	69	104.76			
Master’s degree	10	94.70			

Differences of parent's attitude in cyberbullying between the sociodemographic factors.

Table 7 showed that there was non-significant between the father ($M = 105.64, n = 61$) and mother ($M = 95.27, n = 135$) with the attitude score, $U = 3682, z = -1.20, p = .23$. There is no significant difference in parent's attitudes between male and females.

However, the result indicated that there was a significant difference between the age and attitude score. The age group 30-60 years old ($M = 105.96, n = 138$) reported a higher attitude score than age group less than 30 ($M = 80.74, n = 58$), $U = 2972, z = -2.87, p = .004$, two-tailed. There is a significant difference in parents' attitude between age groups.

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U Test results among the guardian and age with the attitude score.

Sociodemographic	N	Mean	U	z	p-value
Guardian			3682	-1.20	.23
Father	61	105.64			
Mother	135	95.27			
Age			2972	-2.87	.004
less than 30	58	80.74			
30 - 60	138	105.96			

Table 8 indicates that there was a significant difference between the level of education with the attitude score. The highest attitude score was parent with education level less than high school ($M = 133.06, n = 18$), followed by master's degree ($M = 120.20, n = 10$), high school/ diploma ($M = 97.54, n = 99$), and bachelor's degree ($M = 87.72, n = 69$), $H = 10.76, df = 3, p = .013$, two-tailed. There is a significant difference in parent's attitude between levels of education.

Table 8: Kruskal Wallis Test result between the level of education with the parent's attitude score.

Level of Education	N	Mean	H	df	p-value
Less than high school	18	133.06	10.76	3	.013
High school/ Diploma	99	97.54			
Bachelor's degree	69	87.72			
Master's degree	10	120.20			

DISCUSSION

The research aim was to investigate the perception, acquisition of knowledge, and attitude of cyberbullying among parents in Malaysia.

Parent's perception of cyberbullying

Only 8.2% of parents strongly agreed that cyberbullying was a problem at their child's school. A previous study done in Saudi Arabia which consisted of 1249 respondents showed that 61% of parents recognize cyberbullying as an issue for their children in school (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Half of the parents stated that cyberbullying is an issue that needs increased attention from parents. According to Clarke (2013) research in the United States, 83.8% of parents agreed that cyberbullying was an issue that needed more concern. Only very few parents discussed cyberbullying with their child and 38.3% parent had heard or read that cyberbullying contributed to suicide. Compared to a previous study in Saudi Arabia, 71.8% parent believed that cyberbullying can contribute to suicide (Alfakheh et al., 2021).

The result showed that the sociodemographic factors, parent's gender and level of education do not differ much in discussing cyberbullying with their children. A previous study concluded that parent's level of education will affect their knowledge and perception on cyberbullying because parents who have higher education level tend to learn about new technologies, safety used and change in their parenting style (Makri-Botsari & Karagianni, 2014). This finding was different from our research probably due to convenient sampling methods and contributing to unequal sampling size in each education group. Moreover, current research showed that younger age parents were more likely to discuss cyberbullying with their child. Another study stated that younger parents had shown greater perception of the importance of monitoring their children's online activities (Tal & Prebor, 2020).

Acquisition of knowledge of cyberbullying

In addition, the most frequent source of knowledge used by the parent were radio or television, research or investigation, school, and child. Another study done in Saudi Arabia showed that 64% of parents learned about cyberbullying through news on radio or television, followed up by self-investigation, learned from their children and informed by school (Alfakheh et al., 2021). Besides that, Tal & Prebor (2020) indicated that most of the parents gained the knowledge of cyberbullying through the internet, school framework and via the media.

Attitude of cyberbullying among parents

There were 94 and 91 parents who strongly believed that it is important to monitor their children's use of the internet and place restrictions on internet use. A Malaysia previous study showed that parents have a medium level of awareness on their children's online activities, and it was highlighted that parents who have limited knowledge of their child's online activities seem to have lower awareness about the cyber threats (Arifin et al., 2019). For school roles, 45.4% of parents strongly agreed that school should be proactive in addressing cyberbullying. A previous study done among ASEAN showed that Malaysia has included the programme 'Klink Dengan Bijak' (KDB) into school syllabus (Niña M. Ruiz, 2019). There were 95 participants who strongly agreed that more laws should be passed to prevent or punish cyberbullying. Niña M. Ruiz (2019) recommended that a cyberbullying law should be established to eliminate the negative impacts of cyberbullying on students. The result showed that the demographic factors, parent's gender do not have much difference in attitude mean score. However, previous research indicated that mothers showed higher frequency to check their children's message and talked about the cyberbullying issue compared to the father (Tal & Prebor, 2020). The results were incongruent because generally Malaysian parents have medium level of awareness on their children's online activities and lower awareness about the cyber threats (Arifin et al., 2019). Besides that, the parents who were 30-60 years old have higher attitude scores than those less than 30. A systematic review concluded that the family factors such as higher socioeconomic status, supportive environment, parent monitor in technology used will reduce the chance of cybervictimization (Zych et al., 2019). Our research showed that the higher attitude score was those less than high school and followed by master's degree. Nevertheless, the parents who have higher attitude mean scores towards the cyberbullying were those with a higher level of education (Alfakeh et al., 2021). This result was different from our study because the use of convenient sampling methods, thus contributes to unequal sampling size in each education group.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we found that half of the participants strongly agreed that cyberbullying is an issue that needs increased attention from parents. The most frequently used source of knowledge about cyberbullying among the parents were radio or television, and research or investigation. Most of the parents agreed that cyberbullying required the actions from parents, school, and legislation. Younger parents were more likely to discuss with their child about cyberbullying and age can be associated with attitude towards managing cyberbullying. There were some limitations in this research. The convenient sampling method caused the data collected to be unequal to each state in Malaysia. Thus, the results may not represent all states in Malaysia. Moreover, the pilot study was not done in this study due to limited time. The current study was to determine the parent's perception, acquisition, and attitude in cyberbullying, recommended to specify one of the areas and study more deeply to gain more insight or ideas about the cyberbullying, thus the further action plan can be implemented in Malaysia.

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