

“LGBTQ Cyberbullying on Online Learning Platforms Among University Students”

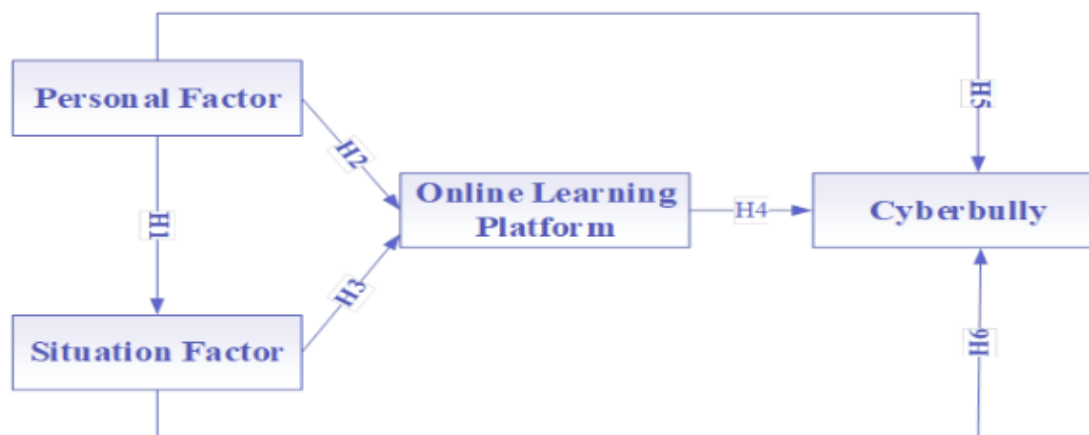
This article focuses on cyberbullying within online learning platforms for students in Thailand. More specifically, its purpose is to analyze factors pertaining to cyberbullying of LGBTQ students on said online learning platforms.

Research Question & Hypotheses

The research question for this study was “what are the factors that influence LGBTQ cyberbullying on online platforms among university students in Thailand” (Suanpang et al., 2021). This question is unique as it allows the researchers to analyze multiple factors instead of specifying a singular factor. The combination of this question and literature review gave the researchers the information needed to draw the theoretical framework of the study (Figure 1). The framework shows the four factors taken into account for the study, each consisting of multiple variables.

Figure 1

Figure 1: Theoretical framework to study the factors influencing the cyberbullying of LGBTQ students on online learning platforms (Suanpang et al., 2021).



The factors and variables are as follows:

1. **Demographic and Personal Psychological Factors-** This factor consisted of four variables: gender, motivation, psychological and technology using behavior (Suanpang et al., 2021).
2. **Situation and Environmental Factor-** This factor consisted of three variables: perceived support, parental involvement, and university climate and environment (Suanpang et al., 2021).
3. **Online Learning Platform Factor-** This factor consisted of five variables: teachers, classmates, dialog of online learning, group work, and relationship between classmates and teachers (Suanpang et al., 2021).
4. **Cyberbullying Effect-** Consists of five variables, social equality, mindset, intellect, physical, society (Suanpang et al., 2021).

The researchers formulated a hypothesis pertaining to each variable and are as follows, respective to their previous numbering.

- 1. The demographics of the students significantly affects the situation of LGBTQ cyberbullying, and the personal factor(motivation and psychological) of the students has significance for the online learning platform behavior.**
- 2. The situation factor of the students has significance for the online learning platform.**
- 3. Online learning platform activities significantly influence the outcomes of cyberbullying.**
- 4. The personal factor of the students has significance for the outcome of cyberbullying of the LGBTQ group.**

Hypothesis one states that the demographics(gender, motivation, psychological and technology using behavior) of students would have an impact on the occurrence of cyberbullying per the individual. Students of sexual minority groups are predicted to have more frequent occurrences of cyberbullying than others. The second hypothesis formulated from factor one(personal) states that the psychological variable held significance for students within online learning platform behavior.

Hypothesis two states that the situation factors(perceived support, parental involvement, and university climate and environment to support the online learning platform) would have an effect on behavior within the online learning platform.

Hypothesis three states that the online learning platform factors variables(teachers, classmates, dialog of online learning, group work, and relationship between classmates and teachers) would influence outcomes of cyberbullying. An example of one of these factors at play would be teachers or counselors supporting victims of cyberbullying.

Hypothesis four states that the personal factor and its variables would significantly impact the outcomes of cyberbullying within the LGBTQ group.

Research Methods

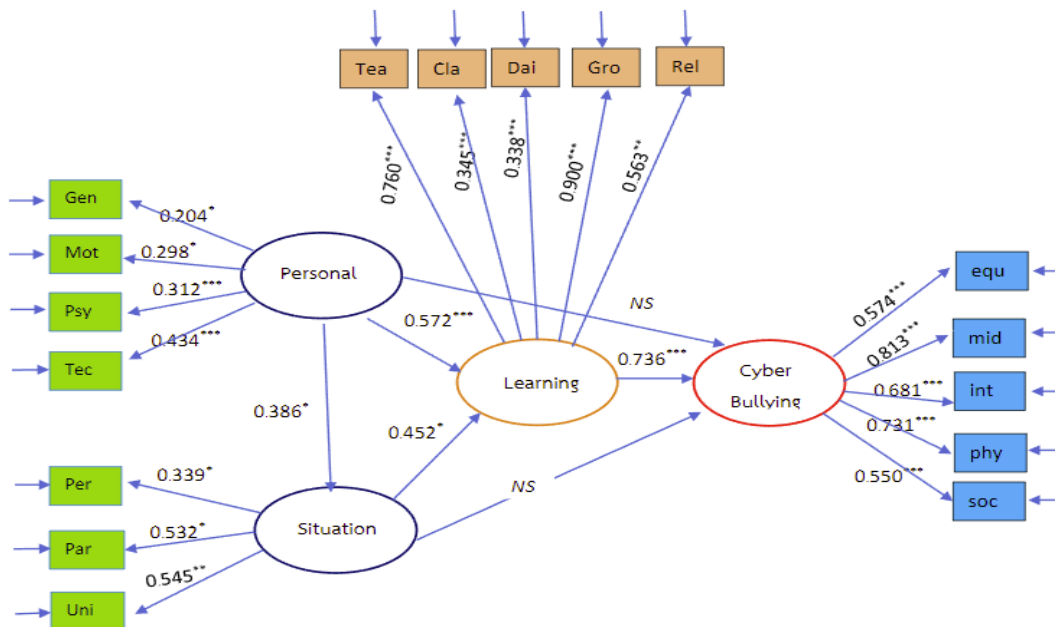
The study used a quantitative research design, which collected its data via online questionnaires. While the researchers didn't specify the type of research design used, I believe it to be the correlational design as it aims to examine relationships using various factors. The survey collected data from 400 undergraduate students in Thailand using a non-probability sampling technique, which is a randomized method of collecting students from the population.

Data type and Analysis

The raw data and questionnaire was not within the article, however it is stated that the structural equation model was used to analyze the data. The causal relationship model analysis is shown below(Figure 2). Data shown in the figure was pulled for an analysis of validity, and passed the model conformity index in all regards.

Figure 2.

Figure 2. The causal relationship model analysis of the factors that influenced LGBTQ cyberbullying on the online learning platform.



The data backed up all hypotheses excluding hypothesis four. The results are below (Table 1).

Table 1.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	<i>b</i>	Significant
H1	0.386*	0.05
H2	0.572***	0.001
H3	0.452 ***	0.05
H4	0.736***	0.001
H5	0.000	No Sig

Relation to Social Science Principles

This article relates to the relativism principle of social science. Relativism states that all things are related, and this study is a great example. The 17 observable factors under each variable were far and wide, however each played a role in ultimately proving or disproving each hypothesis. Factors such as gender, support from parents, university climate, teachers, and more are all related in this case. According to this study, it is logical to expect a drastic change within a few of the 17 observable variables would ultimately have a significant impact on cyberbullying within LGBTQ individuals in Thailand.

The study also relates to the principle of determinism. Determinism states that behavior is caused, determined, or influenced by previous events. Previous events (variables) in this case that could influence cyberbullying could be: parental involvement, prior usage of technology, historical university climate, prior relationship between classmates and teachers. For example, which student is more likely to be bullied online:

Student A goes to a university with a historically poor university climate towards LGBTQ individuals, with many documented incidents of bullying. Student A's parents have no

involvement with teachers or counselors at the school, and teachers hold relatively poor relationships with students.

Student B goes to a university known for its current and history of acceptance of LGBTQ students, his/her parents have expressed concerns to teachers about potential cyberbullying, and teachers at the university are known for holding positive relationships with students.

While a rudimentary example, it seems clear that Student A is much more likely to be bullied online relative to Student B. The prior standing of the university and teachers in question, as well as the proactive actions by Student B's parents places them in a much better situation.

The last principle of social science that relates to this article is objectivity. In today's world, the topic of LGBTQ individuals can be a topic of heated debate, seemingly more so within older age groups. It isn't hard to imagine a scenario where researchers would refuse to do a study relating to LGBTQ students with the goal to propose ideas to curb their bullying. It is equally imaginable that researchers could simply conclude with "data shows low levels of LGBTQ bullying in Thailand, nothing else can be done to curb their bullying." In this study, it was shown that Thailand holds low levels of LGBTQ bullying, and the researchers could have concluded as such if they wished.

Relation to Class Concepts

One concept from class relating to this study is that of the issues stemming from victimization. In module 3, it is stated that studies focusing on victimization may face issues as many are not aware they've been victimized. While it may seem that a victim of cyberbullying would be very well aware, some forms of subtle bullying may slip past few. It is also worth mentioning that students with special needs in terms of this study(if any were within the sample) may not be aware of their bullying, and thus not reported within the survey.

Another concept from class that relates to this study is that of ethical neutrality. The researchers within this article, as stated earlier, did not release any of the questionnaire data or even the questions asked. Past describing the sample as “undergraduate students from Thailand,” there was no further narrowing down of the sample, making it impossible for any to identify any of the students that participated in the study.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs can also play into this article. In reference to the module 4 journal entry in which relations were drawn between each level of the hierarchy to technology, it could be shown that LGBTQ students victimized by cyberbullying are failing to have specific needs within the hierarchy unmet. For example, a student bullied online is highly unlikely to have their “belongingness and love needs” met. This study, and others, have shown that some results of cyberbullying are: suicide, depression, low self-esteem, and more (Suanpang et al., 2021).

The last concept, from module 5, states that cyberbullying has been connected to learned behavior. It would be interesting for researchers to perform another study in order to evaluate the significance of learned behavior leading to bullying. Admittedly, the methods would likely have to be changed as it would be difficult to get individuals to admit in a survey to not only the fact that they learned bullying behaviors from others, but also that they actively or historically bullied others.

Relation to Marginalized Groups

The study heavily relates to the challenges/concerns of marginalized groups. The LGBTQ society is much smaller than that of its counterparts, and as such they face a variety of concerns and challenges today. The group in question of the study is that of LGBTQ individuals and

cyberbullying is a massive concern for those within the group. This study goes in depth to understand reasons behind cyberbullying of LGBTQ students.

A secondary challenge of LGBTQ students would be the prevention of cyberbullying prior to it happening. This study has a multitude of factors playing into the overall percentile of cyberbullying of LGBTQ students, and as mentioned in the example relating to determinism, prior actions from a few of the factors shown within the study can create an environment less prone to cyberbullying. The question would be how effective are preventative techniques for LGBTQ cyberbullying versus cyberbullying of non-LGBTQ students.

The last challenge for LGBTQ students would be their overall acceptance. LGBTQ individuals are treated extremely poorly in some parts of the world relative to others. This article at the very least shows that it is possible for universities and their students to be accepting of LGBTQ students, and proves that fact to other universities and individuals.

Overall Societal Contributions

This study has multiple contributions to society. First, it outlined and explained the factors behind why Thai students have low levels of cyberbullying. In the explanation of each factor the researchers effectively created a theoretical framework by which other universities can follow in order to lower their levels of LGBTQ cyberbullying. It is logical that following the framework would also lower levels of cyberbullying for non-LGBTQ students as well.

Second, this study proves to other universities that it is possible to have low levels of cyberbullying. If schools within Thailand can have such low levels of cyberbullying, it leaves no legitimate excuse for other universities to have high levels. There are a multitude of methods and practices mentioned within the article that are suggested in order to lower levels of cyberbullying, and universities have little reason to not implement such practices.

Lastly, this study positively contributes to society as it raises recognition for cyberbullying for LGBTQ students. In doing the research and publishing it, the researchers have ultimately shown the LGBTQ community that there are individuals and groups out there that care for their plights, and actively wish to help them. The researchers also mentioned at the end of their conclusion that the “great limitation of this study was that it was confined to the cyberbullying of the youth in higher education” (Suanpang et al., 2021). They went further to state that future studies should focus on LGBTQ individuals within other age groups. Further studies are sure to provide more support and recognition to the LGBTQ community.

References

Suanpang, P., Dongjit, J., & Netwong, T. (2021). LGBTQ Cyberbullying on Online Learning Platforms Among University Students. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 15(2), 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4766543>

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