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Assessing and Controlling Social Desirability Bias in Cyberbullying Research

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p.376). Cyberbullying has the potential to disrupt or destroy the lives of children, adolescents, and their families (D’Auria, 2014). Cyberbullying is associated with negative outcomes for individuals and organizations, including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, murder, suicide, and others (Kowalski et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important to identify the causes and effects of cyberbullying to effectively prevent it.

Much research has attempted to understand the determinants and consequences of cyberbullying based on the perspectives of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders (see Chan et al., 2021 for a review). Furthermore, prior research noted that perpetrators’ cyberbullying behavior is socially undesirable, social desirability (SD) bias should be assessed and controlled (Aboujaoude et al., 2015). Despite the fact, prior cyberbullying research has not paid much attention to SD bias from the perspectives of bystanders and victims. Since SD bias can contaminate variables, leading to a distortion in the causal relationships between dependent and independent variables, it is important to assess and control SD bias.

Based on the research gaps, the purpose of this study is to assess and control SD bias in cyberbullying related behaviors in the context of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. To assess SD bias, this study will use two methods: indirect questioning (Fisher, 1997) and SD scale using the 16 items of the balanced inventory of desirable responding (BIDR-16). Based on prior research (Kwak et al., 2021), the covariance technique will be used to control SD bias if SD bias is detected. We expect to contribute to research on cyberbullying and SD bias by examining SD bias in the perspectives of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders of cyberbullying.

Keywords

Social Desirability Bias, Cyberbullying, Protection Motivation Theory, Social Desirability Scale

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