MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cyberbullying phenomenon: an investigation among Afghan university students

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Abstract: Online application is almost entirely used for modern communication, which might encourage negative or cyberbullying (CB) behaviors. Therefore, the present study aimed at investigating the prevalence rates of cyberbullying perpetration (CP) and cyber victimization (CV) among Afghan university students. The study also sought to investigate the most common and dominant social media platforms which promote CP and CV and as well as the reasons for not reporting these incidences. In addition, it also explored the significant difference in the prevalence rate of CP and CV by gender, age, and internet frequency. The researcher targeted a sample size of 629 respondents. A descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analyzing the data. The results revealed that Afghan students were highly perpetrated and victimized by cyberbullying. It was also found that Facebook had the most dominant role in promoting and prevalence of cyberbullying. Gender differences were found in the CP. Female students were more to the exposure of being victimized than male students. Age groups and internet frequency were found statistically significant differences in the prevalence of CV but it was opposite to the CP among Afghan students. A significant positive correlation was found between CP and CV. Some practical implications were presented to the authorities and other involved parties.

Subjects: Criminal Law & Practice; Socio-Legal Studies - Public Policy; Interpersonal Media & Communication; Mass Media & Communication

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The main objective of the current study was to investigate the CB phenomenon and as well as to explore the prevalence rates of CP and CV among university students in Afghanistan. Hence, the results of the study showed that the prevalence rate of CP among Afghan university students were relatively mild. Where students were moderately perpetrated to quarrel with others online, used offensive posts to defame others, harmed others mentally, threatened others, humiliated others through the internet, mocked others by email, harmed others by sharing their photos, and bullied others by disseminating false news.
Keywords: Cyberbullying perpetration; cyberbullying victimization; cyberbullying phenomenon; Afghan university students; social media

1. Introduction
Cyberbullying (CB) is an aggressive and purposeful act committed by a person or a group employing electronic forms of contact against a victim who is unable to defend himself/herself repeatedly and over time (Kokkinos et al., 2014). Some other researchers consider cyberbullying (CB) as part of traditional bullying in its developed form that mostly occurs by technological tools and applications (Antoniadou et al., 2016). Others, on the other hand, regard it as a separate sort of aggressiveness with distinct participant profiles, goals, personal qualities, and roles that deserve a thorough examination (Antoniadou & Kokkins, 2015). To some extent, online technology is now almost entirely used for modern communication, which might encourage disruptive or hazardous behaviors (Hashemi, 2021b). Cyberbullying (CB) is primarily an example of such disruptive or harmful behavior. According to Calvete et al. (2010) cyber-bullies take advantage of the properties of information and communication technology, CB has been considered as a more convenient form of hostility (i.e., anonymity, infinite audience, limited adult supervision, etc.). Because of its convenience, CB is used for a variety of purposes, including deliberate and purposeful hostility. Therefore, paying more attention to the phenomena of cyber-perpetration (CP) and cyber-victimization (CV) requires a thorough and deep understanding.

Considering this, the study of cyber perpetration (CP) and cyber victimization (CV) have grown significantly in recent years across the world. According to Roberts (2009), the process of victimizing people via the use of information and communication technology is known as a CV. Governments, corporations, and people may all be cyber-victims. In this regard, the term CV refers to the harassment acts and behaviors where people are being victimized by the cyber perpetrator. In other words, CV is well defined as the point to which an individual has been cyberbullied, while CP is the degree to which an individual has been involved in bullying others. According to some reports, CP and CV have also emerged as a new phenomenon in several remote societies of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and some other Arabic countries. Therefore, it is considered as a hybrid term for the young people who are bullied in various ways and then take their own lives as a result of the bullying. Even, bullying-related suicides have lately been documented in developed countries like Canada, the United States of America (US), and the United Kingdom (UK). Such cases also highlight the seriousness of various types of bullying (both online and offline), particularly on social media platforms, where the victim has nowhere to hide and is continually subjected to hostility (Abaida, 2020). Even this situation can affect the academic performance of Afghan university students (Hashemi, 2021a).

Although traditional bullying has been long-standing and prevalent social challenges exist among university students in Afghanistan (Sabri, 2019). But no studies have been conducted in recent years in terms of the investigation of CP and CV existence among Afghan university students and as well as to explore its effect and future implications. The possible reasons behind this issue may be the existence of the following factors such as decades of war, illiteracy, poverty, ICTs availability and accessibility and lack of a codified law to combat this phenomenon (Hashemi & Kew, 2021). Hence, regardless of the negative impact of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration on Afghan society, regular exposure to and connection with online technology makes Afghan university students vulnerable to certain online interactions that may at some time, jeopardize their safety, and as well as their emotional and psychological well-being.

Given that, one of the possible hazards of relying on internet based-technology is cyberbullying. Due to its harmful and serious consequences, it is regarded as one of the most egregious examples of technology misuse in the last decades after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (Daqiq
& Hashemi, 2021). Most importantly, insulting, defamation, joking, fraud, exclusion, harassment, deceit, and hacking are all common and are examples of CB among university students in Afghanistan. This situation has led victims of CB to become accustomed to being bullied and as a result, have come to feel that they deserve it. They may even blame themselves for their suffering, resulting in the need to cope with guilt and humiliation. However, no attention is paid to this situation among the university students, by practitioners and their lecturers to come up with a solution and cope with this problem among students. Therefore, the present study would be an attempt to bridge the gap in highlighting the cyberbullying behaviors and practical implications among university students in the Afghan context. Moreover, the study is significant to the growing body of literature in Afghanistan concerning CB victims among university students since no studies in this regard have been conducted. Hence, the present study aimed to investigate the CB phenomenon and CB behavior among university students.

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the phenomenon of CB in various contexts across the world (Alfandari, 2019; Antoniadou et al., 2016; Aricak, 2009; ARICAK et al., 2020; Ata & Adnan, 2016; Balakrishnan, 2015, 2018; Bernardo et al., 2020; Bevilacqua et al., 2017; R. C. Forssell, 2020; Cáceres-Reche et al., 2019; Calvete et al., 2010; Dilmaz & Aydoğan, 2009; Dogar, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2016; R. Forssell, 2016; Francisco et al., 2015; Jenaro et al., 2018). A study conducted by Antoniadou et al. (2016) investigated the correlation between bullying and CB among adolescents. Their findings revealed that being a man, online disinhibition, online activity, and psychopathic characteristics were all predicting variables for CB, whereas being a woman, online disinhibition, and thrill-seeking were all predictive variables for traditional bullying. Online disinhibition, assertiveness, and a lack of peer relationships predicted CV, whereas traditional victimization (TV) was predicted by Internet capabilities. While another study was conducted by (Aricak, 2009) exploring the two possible predictors of CB (psychiatric symptomatology) among university students. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between “non-bully-victims,” “pure-victims,” “pure-bullies,” and “bully-victims.” Pure-victims and bully-victims reported considerably more mental symptoms than non-bully-victims. Hostility and psychoticism were found to be significant predictors of CB in the route analysis. Furthermore, his findings revealed that nearly half of the participants in the present survey admitted to pretending to be someone else over the internet or the phone at least once.

Moreover, Balakrishnan (2018) explored the effects of bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders on the actions, emotional reactions among Malaysian adults. His findings indicated that the majority of bullies expressed regret, yet the majority did nothing after committing a crime. After being victimized, the majority of victims experienced rage, despair, and depression, with the majority claiming to have defended themselves. After a CP/CV, the majority of bully victims regretted their acts, pitied the victims, and felt furious. Similarly, Balakrishnan (2015) studied the role of gender, age, and internet frequency on cyberbullying among Malaysian adolescents. His findings demonstrated that CB is remained prevalent after school years, according to the total incidence rate. Although there were no significant gender differences. Females outnumbered males as cyberbullies and cyber victims. Their findings also revealed there were no significant differences in age, but younger individuals were found to be more involved in CB behaviors (both as victims and bullies) than their older counterparts. Significant variations in Internet usage were found, with those who spent 2–5 hours per day online reporting being more victimized and engaging in CB than those who spent less than an hour per day online.

Furthermore, Bernardo et al. (2020) carried out a study on the influence of bullying and CB in students who drop out from the university level. Their findings showed that Kids who were bullied, likely to consider dropping out than students who were not bullied. Their findings also indicated that some factors associated with social integration helped instructors to act as moderators. On the other hand, Bevilacqua et al. (2017) concluded the findings of their study as CP and CV prevalence differ by school type and school quality, supporting the theory that school organizational/management characteristics influence students conduct. Future longitudinal research will
use these data to determine which school variables and procedures promote or prevent bullying and CB behaviors. While another study carried out by Brewer and Kerslake (2015) focused on the factors that affect CB. Their findings showed that loneliness, empathy, and self-esteem are all predicted levels of CV and perpetration when taken together. Self-esteem was found to be a significant individual predictor of CP and CV, where individuals who have poor self-esteem reporting the most CB experiences. Empathy was found to be a major individual predictor of CP. Their findings also suggested that self-esteem and empathy-based treatments might be effective in coping CB.

Similarly, Dogar (2019) studied the behavior of CB among college students. The findings of his study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between sports college students’ CB behaviors and their age, sex, parental educational status, means of following matches, frequency of watching matches, attendance at away matches, membership in sports associations, social media accounts, purposes, and levels of using such accounts. As a result, it was discovered that students’ and instructors’ efforts alone will not be adequate in avoiding CB activities. Families, society, and the government should all be aware of this problem to find a solution.

In addition to that, Francisco et al. (2015) studied the hidden side of CB among college students. Their findings revealed that the instrument’s potential and how college students undervalued their role in CB. In addition, different forms of aggressiveness, coping mechanisms, and resources for dealing with CB were identified and explored. Additionally, Kokinos and Antoniadou (2019) conducted a study on CB and CV among undergraduate students. The findings of their study showed that CB was shown to be negatively associated with conscientiousness, while CV was shown to be adversely associated with depression. Low agreeableness, frequent Internet usage, and greater degrees of negative Internet outcomes predicted CB, while low agreeableness, high Extraversion, high loneliness, and high compulsive Internet usage predicted CV. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that CB and CV may be associated with students who engage in problematic Internet usage, have particular personality characteristics, and experience a variety of social and psychopathological symptoms. To confirm this, a study undertaken by Kokinos et al. (2014) investigating the profile of university student participants concerning the CB phenomenon. Their findings indicated, CB/CV endorsed more psychiatric symptoms, more psychopathic characteristics, and were high thrill-seekers, but cyber-victims scored higher on empathy. Callous/uncaring and impulsive/irresponsible characteristics, depression, Internet usage, and a lack of social skills were all correlated to CB.

Cyberbullying phenomena in geographical regions has also be investigated and reported variously. A study conducted by Rafi (2019) discovered that the aggressors used a variety of language tools to victimize the subjects. However, for the majority of victims, being apathetic on social networking sites and having offline conflicts were the primary causes of cyberbullying. Participants praised their parents’ and friends’ support and expressed confidence in educational institutions and Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency’s anti-cyberbullying initiatives. On the other hand, Ifti khar and See Beh (2018) compared traditional cyberbullying in Pakistan. Their findings revealed that cyberbullying is a new topic of study, in different sectors like education, banking, telecom, and hoteling service industries, respectively, 36 percent, 55 percent, 50 percent, and 59 percent of respondents were bullied conventionally, while 18 percent, 30 percent, 27 percent, and 49 percent were cyberbullied, which is regrettably a very high ratio. The number of people who were bullied [traditionally] was 50 percent, and the percentage of people who were cyberbullied was 31 percent.

Comparing to Iran, cyberbullying phenomenon has been widely investigated and reported to be prevalent 22.3 percent of the time, while cyber victimization was reported to be prevalent 18 percent of the time. Both tendencies were also shown to be stronger in males than in girls. (Mohseny et al., 2021). In the meantime, Ifti khar and See Beh (2018) found that the rate of cyberbullying among high-school students in Tehran was found to be high in this study. Unlike conventional
bullying, the EQ score is not linked to distinct types of cyberbullying behaviors. When gender was taken into account, however, the male victims had higher EQ ratings. While another study in the same context was carried out by Kabiri et al. (2020) who examined CP with associated four life domains (self, family, school, and peer) to fully understand their effects on cyberbullying perpetration and cyberbullying victimization. Their findings revealed that these four domains have affected directly and indirectly the interaction of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration among school students in Iran.

2. Research questions
(1) To what extent are the prevalence rates of CP and CV among the university students of Afghanistan?

(2) Which social media platforms play the most common role in promoting and prevalence CB?

(3) What are the reasons for students’ not reporting the incidents of CB?

(4) Is there any significant difference in the prevalence rate of CP and CV across gender, ages, and internet frequency?

(5) Is there any correlation between cyber-Perpetration and cyber-victims?

3. Method
The present study employed a quantitative research design in which an online survey was used to explore the CB phenomenon among university students in Afghanistan. The researcher used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data obtained from each research question.

4. Sampling
A convenience sampling technique was used to target sample size of 629 respondents from different universities in Afghanistan. The respondents included 474 males and 155 females whose ages were ranged from 18- above 30. There were no age restriction, every student from various age groups participated in the questionnaire. A consent form was attached by the survey ensuring them that their identity will remain secret and as well as confidential.

5. Instruments
The items of the questionnaire concerning the CB phenomenon were designed based on the literature studied. The questionnaire was adapted from the studies conducted by Abdelrazek and Eltantawy (2020) focusing on CB behavior and CV, and the questionnaire on not reporting the incident of CB adapted from the work of (Li, 2010). The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part of the questionnaire had four items aimed to explore the demographic profile of the students. The second part contained 12 items that sought to investigate the CB behavior of the respondents. While the third part of the questionnaire with 17 items explored the CV among the respondents. The last part of the questionnaire consisted of 9 items aimed to figure out why the CV do not report their incidents after being bullied. The questionnaire was constructed based on the five points Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. All the questionnaire were translated into Dari language (national language of Afghanistan) since English is a foreign language.

6. Validity and reliability
The questionnaire was sent to three research experts in the English department of Takhar University for revision. Their feedback and comments were incorporated and considered in the questionnaire. According to their comments, very few items were recognized as irrelevant and problematic. The researcher then considered their suggestions and edited the problematic items. For reliability, the researcher piloted 48 respondents randomly to ensure the reliability of the items. The Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.843 was considered quite reliable.
7. Procedure and analysis
The questionnaire was administered through Google form with an invitation letter and requesting the students to take part in the questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire was shared on social media sites (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter). Students and friends publicly shared it on their Facebook pages. Hundreds of university instructors were also handed the questionnaire, with the suggestion that they share it with their student groups. The respondents had 25 days to complete and submit it back to the researcher. Furthermore, a consent form addressed the issue of privacy and confidentiality, assuring respondents that the information they supplied would only be used for research purposes.

The analysis of the data began right after the closure of the questionnaire. The researcher used SPSS version 26 to analyze the data. The study employed descriptive statistical analysis to compute the percentage and frequency of the data concerning the research questions 1, 2, and 3. The inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data on investigating the 4th and 5th research questions on whether there are any significant differences in the prevalence rates of cyberbullying behavior and cyberbullying victims according to gender, ages, and internet frequency and as well as to explore whether there is any relationship between a CP and CV, respectively.

8. Results
Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. There were 474 male respondents and 155 female respondents who participated in the study. The ages of 427 respondents ranged from 18 to 25, while 140 respondents aged 25–30 years old. Sixty-two respondents were aged above 30 years old. There were 403 respondents who demonstrated using the internet 1–3 hours per day while 144 respondents indicated that they have dedicated 3–5 hours of their time using the internet in 24 hours. Only 82 respondents use the internet for more than 5 hours daily.

Table 2 demonstrates the CP rates among university students. The percentage for agreeing (A) and strongly agree (SA) rows were computed and the mean for each statement was also tabulated. A small number of the respondents (13%) with the lowest mean (1.96) strongly agreed with the statement that was asked about the quarrel via the internet. 37.4% with a mean score of 2.75 strongly agreed that they unknowingly share other’s secrets online.

| Table 1. Illustrates the respondents’ demographics |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| Gender                                       |
| Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Male      | 474      | 75.4          | 75.4               |
| Female    | 155      | 24.6          | 24.6               |
| Total     | 629      | 100.0         | 100.0              |
| Age       |
| Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| 18–25     | 427      | 67.9          | 67.9               |
| 26–29     | 140      | 22.3          | 22.3               |
| above 30  | 62       | 9.9           | 9.9                |
| Total     | 629      | 100.0         | 100.0              |
| Internet Frequency                            |
| Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| 1–3       | 403      | 64.1          | 64.1               |
| 3–5       | 144      | 22.9          | 87.0               |
| more than 5 | 82   | 13.0          | 100.0              |
| Total     | 629      | 100.0         | 100.0              |
Table 2. Shows the prevalence rates of CP

| No | Cyber Perpetration                                                                 | SD  | D   | N   | A   | SA  | %   | Mean |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 1  | I quarrel with others via the Internet.                                           | 49.4| 29.4| 7.5 | 3.2 | 10.5| 13.7| 1.96 |
| 2  | I share others’ secrets online unknowingly.                                       | 36.6| 19.7| 6.4 | 6.5 | 30.8| 37.4| 2.75 |
| 3  | I send offensive posts about others for defamation.                               | 45.2| 25.3| 6.7 | 5.2 | 17.6| 22.9| 2.25 |
| 4  | I use social media to cause mental harm to others.                               | 36.9| 19.7| 4.9 | 8.6 | 29.9| 38.5| 2.75 |
| 5  | I send threatening e-mails.                                                       | 26.6| 14.8| 4.0 | 13.8| 40.9| 54.7| 3.28 |
| 6  | I humiliate others online by spreading rumors.                                    | 38.5| 19.6| 3.2 | 5.7 | 33.1| 38.8| 2.75 |
| 7  | I mock others through e-mails.                                                    | 28.5| 14.5| 4.1 | 7.3 | 45.6| 52.9| 3.27 |
| 8  | I harm others by posting their photos.                                            | 26.7| 21.6| 5.6 | 6.5 | 39.6| 46.1| 3.11 |
| 9  | I bully others by disseminating false news.                                       | 23.7| 11.0| 2.2 | 14.9| 48.2| 63.1| 3.53 |
| 10 | I give up my real personality to hurt others online.                              | 14.0| 3.5 | 1.3 | 12.7| 68.5| 81.2| 4.18 |
| 11 | I delude others using social media.                                                | 32.8| 22.7| 4.0 | 11.8| 28.8| 40.5| 2.81 |

(Continued)
| No | Cyber Perpetration | SD  | D   | N   | A   | SA  | %    | Mean |
|----|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 12 | I blackmail others by posting their porn photos to their pages. | 30.8 | 17.6 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 42.8 | 47.4 | 3.11 |

Note. The acronyms SD stands for (strongly disagree), D (disagree) N (neutral) A (Agree) SA (strongly Agree)
While 22.9% with a mean score of 2.25 agreed on sending offensive posts and 38.5% of the respondents with a mean score of 2.75 used social media to harm others mentally. Concerning the 5th item, 54.7% of the respondents with a mean score of 3.28 strongly agreed on sending threatening e-mails. 38.8% of the respondents with a mean score of 2.75 strongly agreed on humiliating others through online resources and 52.9% of the respondents mock others through emails. There were 46.1% of the respondents with a mean of 3.11 agreed that harm others by posting their photos. 63.1% of respondents which holds a 3.53% mean score, agreed on bullying others by disseminating false news. 81.2% of the respondents with a mean score of 4.18 strongly agreed on losing their personality to hurt others online and 40.5% with a mean score of 2.81, 47.4% with a mean score of 3.11 strongly agreed on deluding others by social media platforms and blackmailed others by posting porno photos, respectively.

Table 3 shows the prevalence rates of CV among Afghan university students. We computed the percentage of agreed (A) and strongly agreed (SA) on rows along with their mean score. As demonstrated in the aforementioned Table, most of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed on CV where they have experienced being victims of CB. As can be seen, their prevalence rates were between 80% to almost 96% with mean scores of 4.23 to 4.66. It shows the highest percentage with the highest mean score of being CV. According to this Table, the prevalence rates of CV among university students were greater than expected.

As it is shown in Table 4, most of the respondents (269) with a percentage of (42.8%) indicated that Facebook has a major role in the prevalence of the CB phenomenon among university students in Afghanistan. While (124) respondents with a percentage of (19.7%) demonstrated that WhatsApp has the second major role in promoting the CB phenomenon among university students. To consider the prevalence role of other social media platforms, Instagram (78), emailing (48), Telegram (39) Twitter (24) Skype (10), and likewise Snapchat (10) respondents, respectively. Additionally, 27 respondents mentioned other platforms that have a common role in the prevalence of the CB phenomenon.

According to Table 5, the majority of students agreed and strongly agreed on each item representing the reasons for not reporting CB incidents to their universities. Sixty-one percentage of the respondents with a mean score of 3.52 strongly agreed on the first item that university staff does not believe in them reporting such incidents. While 59.8% of respondents holding 3.49 mean score agreed that universities cannot do anything in this regard. 64.4% of the respondents with a mean score of 3.65 believed that they do not report such incidents because it may put them in trouble. 62.6% with a mean score of 3.57, 63.4% with the mean score of 3.62, 65.5% holding a mean score of 3.67, 64.2% with a mean score of 3.65, 57.1% with a mean score of 3.45, and 63.8% of the respondents with a mean score of 3.60 believed and strongly agreed on the statement tabulated in Table 5 not to report CB incidents due to the reasons indicated, respectively.

As shown in Table 6, the significant value for the cyber perpetration (0.010) is less than the alpha value (0.05). Based on this result, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean score of males and females in terms of the prevalence rates of CB behavior among university students. Concerning CV, the significance value (0.511) is greater than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, it is considered that there was no significant difference in the mean score of males and females concerning the prevalence rates of CV among university students.

According to Table 7, the significance value for the CP (0.311) is greater than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that was no significant difference in the prevalence rates of CP according to age groups. Considering the CV, the p-value (0.004) was less than the alpha value (0.05). Hence, it can be concluded that age groups affected the prevalence rates of the CB phenomenon among university students. The younger students in terms of their ages were more on the exposure to cyber victimization.
Table 3. Shows the CV rates of the students

| No | Cyber Victimization                                                                 | SD  | D  | N  | A  | SA | %  | Mean |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|------|
| 1  | I was scammed by an online account.                                                 | 16.7| 0.0| 1.6| 8.4|    | 73.3| 81.7 | 4.22 |
| 2  | I received messages from fake accounts for defamation.                              | 3.2 | 4.6| 1.6| 17.3|    | 73.3| 90.6 | 4.53 |
| 3  | I received offensive messages from anonymous accounts.                               | 3.2 | 0.0| 1.6| 21.9|    | 73.3| 95.2 | 4.62 |
| 4  | I was lured by fake accounts into malicious links.                                  | 3.2 | 0.0| 1.6| 21.9|    | 73.3| 95.2 | 4.62 |
| 5  | My photos were hacked and posted unknowingly by fake accounts.                      | 3.2 | 0.0| 1.6| 21.9|    | 73.3| 95.2 | 4.62 |
| 6  | I face threats to my safety by fake accounts.                                       | 3.0 | 0.6| 1.1| 21.9|    | 73.3| 95.2 | 4.62 |
| 7  | I am subject to various cyberattacks to obtain my personal data.                    | 3.0 | 0.6| 1.1| 17.8|    | 77.4| 95.2 | 4.66 |
| 8  | I was forced into unbearable things by fake accounts.                                | 12.1| 6.2| 1.6| 6.8 |    | 73.3| 80.1 | 4.23 |

(Continued)
| No | Cyber Victimization                                                                 | SD | D | N | A  | SA | %   | Mean |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|----|-----|------|
| 9  | I was blackmailed financially by fake accounts.                                     | 3.2| 0.0| 1.6| 21.9| 73.3| 95.2| 4.62 |
| 10 | I was blackmailed sexually by fake accounts.                                        | 3.2| 0.0| 1.6| 21.9| 73.3| 95.2| 4.62 |
| 11 | Fake accounts posted pornographic images to my page deliberately.                   | 3.0| 0.6| 1.1| 21.9| 73.3| 95.2| 4.62 |
| 12 | I was defamed by spreading rumors.                                                  | 3.0| 0.0| 1.1| 21.9| 73.9| 95.9| 4.64 |
| 13 | Fake accounts posted my edited personal photos deliberately.                        | 3.0| 0.0| 1.1| 21.9| 73.9| 95.9| 4.64 |
| 14 | After editing their content, my video clips were published.                         | 3.2| 0.0| 1.6| 21.9| 73.3| 95.2| 4.62 |
| 15 | I suffered from psychological stress with fake accounts.                            | 3.2| 0.0| 1.4| 21.9| 73.4| 95.4| 4.62 |
| 16 | Some online accounts made fun of me in public deliberately.                         | 3.2| 0.0| 1.6| 21.9| 73.3| 95.2| 4.62 |
| 17 | Fake accounts frequently contacted me for bullying.                                 | 2.7| 0.2| 1.7| 21.1| 74.2| 95.4| 4.64 |
| Social Media | Platforms | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------------|
| Twitter      | 24        | 3.8       | 3.8     |
| Facebook     | 269       | 42.8      | 46.6    |
| WhatsApp     | 124       | 19.7      | 66.3    |
| Snapchat     | 10        | 1.6       | 67.9    |
| Skype        | 10        | 1.6       | 69.5    |
| Telegram     | 39        | 6.2       | 75.7    |
| Emailing     | 48        | 7.6       | 83.3    |
| Instagram    | 78        | 12.4      | 95.7    |
| Other        | 27        | 4.3       | 100.0   |
| Total        | 629       | 100.0     |         |

As shown in Table 8, the significance value (0.403) was greater than the alpha value (0.05) which was not considered to be a significant difference. Therefore, it can be concluded that hours of internet use did not affect the prevalence rates of CP among university students. As for the CV, the p-value (0.017) was less than the alpha value (0.05). Hence, it can be considered that there was a significant difference in the mean rank of the prevalence rates of CV among the university students according to their internet frequency. The more who use the internet, the more he or she has been victimized by bullying.

According to Table 9, the relationship between CP and CV was obtained through the Pearson correlation test. As shown, the p-value (.000) for both CP and CV was less than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, it was evident to be significant and found a strong positive correlation between CP and CV.

9. Discussion and conclusion
The main objective of the current study was to investigate the CB phenomenon and as well as to explore the prevalence rates of CP and CV among university students in Afghanistan. Hence, the results of the study showed that the prevalence rate of CP among Afghan university students were relatively mild. Where students were moderately perpetrated to quarrel with others online, used offensive posts to defame others, harmed others mentally, threatened others, humiliated others through the internet, mocked others by email, harmed others by sharing their photos, and bullied others by disseminating false news. The result of this study is consistent with the studies carried out by (Abdelrazek & Eltantawy, 2020; Balakrishnan, 2015; Li, 2010; Saladinò et al., 2020) whom their respondents received these behaviors of CB. However, this result contradicts the result of a study carried out by Mohseny et al. (2021) in Iran where they have reported the prevalence rate of CP and CV between 18% and 23%. As for CV, unexpectedly the result indicated that the prevalence rates for CV were extremely high. More specifically, the results revealed that students who were victimized by CB exceeded more than 90%. This result was in line with the results found by (Bernardo et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2016; Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2019; Monks et al., 2012).

The result of the study concerning the second research question on “which social media play the most common role in promoting and prevalence of CB among Afghan university students”. The result in this respect revealed that Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, emailing, Telegram and Twitter were among the social media platforms that play the most common and major role in the prevalence of CB among Afghan university students, respectively. More to the point, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram were found the most common and famous social media platforms that can promote the prevalence of the CB phenomenon among Afghan university students. The reason
Table 5. Highlights the percentage and mean score of CV who do not report

| No | Not Reporting Cyberbullying                                                                 | SD  | D  | N  | A  | SA | %  | Mean |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| 1  | I don’t think school staff would understand or believe me.                                 | 25.8| 7.3| 5.9| 11.8| 49.3| 61.0| 3.52 |
| 2  | I don’t think the school would or could do anything to stop it.                            | 25.3| 9.1| 5.9| 10.8| 49.0| 59.8| 3.49 |
| 3  | I could get myself into trouble because I could also be at fault.                          | 21.3| 8.4| 5.9| 13.0| 51.4| 64.4| 3.65 |
| 4  | I could get myself into trouble even if I had done nothing wrong.                          | 24.2| 7.3| 5.9| 12.9| 49.8| 62.6| 3.57 |
| 5  | The cyberbully could get back at me and make things even worse.                            | 19.7| 11.0| 5.9| 14.3| 49.1| 63.4| 3.62 |
| 6  | Other students could make fun of me.                                                       | 21.3| 7.3| 5.9| 14.1| 51.4| 65.5| 3.67 |
| 7  | My parents could find out and might restrict my access to the Internet or other technologies. | 20.3| 9.5| 5.9| 13.2| 51.0| 64.2| 3.65 |

(Continued)
| No | Not Reporting Cyberbullying | SD | D | N | A | SA | % | Mean | SD | D | N | A | SA | % | Mean |
|----|----------------------------|----|---|---|---|----|---|------|----|---|---|---|----|---|------|
| 8  | I need to learn to deal with cyberbullying by myself. | 22.3 | 13.8 | 6.8 | 10.5 | 46.6 | 57.1 | 3.45 | | | | | | | |
| 9  | Cyberbullying is no big deal. People should just ignore it. | 22.3 | 8.1 | 5.9 | 14.5 | 49.3 | 63.8 | 3.60 | | | | | | | |
Table 6. The significant difference in the prevalence rates of CB according to gender

| Independent Sample t-test | F       | Sig.  | t     | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
|---------------------------|---------|-------|-------|----|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cyber Perpetration        |         |       |       |    |                 |                 |
| Equal variances assumed   | 6.747   | 0.010 | 9.303 | 627| 0.000           | 0.90472         |
| Equal variances not assumed| 10.363  | 0.000 | 321.275 | 0.000 | 0.90472 |
| Cyber Victims             |         |       |       |    |                 |                 |
| Equal variances assumed   | 0.432   | 0.511 | −0.577 | 627| 0.564          | −0.05641        |
| Equal variances not assumed| −0.585 | 0.559 | 268.824 | 0.559 | −0.05641 |

Table 7. Illustrates the significant difference in the prevalence rates of CB by age groups

ANOVA

|          | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F   | Sig. |
|----------|----------------|----|-------------|-----|------|
| C_P      | Between Groups | 2  | 1.467       | 1.169 | .311 |
|          | Within Groups  | 626 | 1.255       |      |      |
|          | Total          | 628 | 1.255       |      |      |
| C_V      | Between Groups | 2  | 6.200       | 5.634 | .004 |
|          | Within Groups  | 626 | 1.100       |      |      |
|          | Total          | 628 | 1.100       |      |      |

Table 8. The significant difference in the prevalence rates of CB according to frequent use of the internet

ANOVA

|          | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F   | Sig. |
|----------|----------------|----|-------------|-----|------|
| Cyber Perpetration | Between Groups | 2  | 1.142       | .909 | .403 |
|          | Within Groups  | 626 | 1.256       |      |      |
|          | Total          | 628 | 1.256       |      |      |
| Cyber Victimization | Between Groups | 2  | 4.548       | 4.113 | .017 |
|          | Within Groups  | 626 | 1.106       |      |      |
|          | Total          | 628 | 1.106       |      |      |
could be that most of the students have Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram accounts, and these social media platforms are considered the most frequently used and well-known platforms in Afghanistan. The result in this respect is similar to the studies carried out by (Abaido, Hood & Duffy, 2018; Kokkinos et al., 2016; Safaria, 2016) who found Facebook and Instagram as the dominant social media platforms that promoted the prevalence rate of CB phenomenon.

As for the third research question on why students of CV do not report the incident of bullying. The result of the study, particularly in this regard showed that there was the uncertainty of believing in the university staff that can help them in this respect. This uncertainty would lead them to get into trouble or students would make fun of them. Meanwhile, some students have addressed that if their parents figure out of their victimization, he/she would never let them access the internet or other technological devices. The result indicated that a major reason to intend not to report the incident of bullying could be their knowledge of dealing with it and or ignoring that as a big deal. These results were consistent with the result of a study conducted by (Li, 2010; Wozencroft et al., 2015) who found these reasons as a barrier to intent not reporting the CB behavior.

Turning to the fourth research question on whether there was any significant difference in the prevalence rates of CP and CV across gender. The result regarding this revealed that there was a significant difference in the prevalence rate of CP between males and females. Male students were found more perpetratred than female students who were expected to be more of cyber annoyance. This result is inconsistent with the result by (Aricak, 2009; Monks et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2014; Wozencroft et al., 2015) who found no gender differences in the prevalence rate of CP. This is because males do not view CP as more problematic but rather females tend to view CP as a dangerous and problematic phenomenon. Interestingly, the result concerning CV indicates that there was no significant difference in the prevalence rate of CV between males and females. Comparing Iran and Pakistan as the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, (Iftekhar & See Beh, 2018; Mohseny et al., 2021) contradicts our finding indicating that female students were more victimized than male students. On the other hand, this result supports the findings of many studies conducted by (Abaido, 2020; Alfandari, 2019; Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015a; Aricak, 2009; Smith et al., 2018; Schenk et al., 2013; Wong, et al., 2018; Wozencroft et al., 2015) who found no gender differences in the prevalence rate of CV. On the contrary, the result of a study conducted by (Musharraf & Anis-Ul-Haque, 2018; Saladino et al., 2020; Savoldi et al., 2016) revealed that there was a significant difference in the prevalence rate of CV by gender.

In regard to the significant difference in the prevalence of CP and CV according to their ages. The result revealed that age groups did not have any impact on the behavior of CP. While there was a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of CV according to their age groups. Those who had older ages were found to be more victimized in terms of CB. More importantly, the age groups had effects on the CB behavior of university students. This result was inconsistent with the result of a study carried out by Cáceres-Reche et al. (2019) who found the first-year school students were more cyber victimized than those who were elder and adolescent. Comparing the
result of this study to a result of a study conducted in Pakistan by Rolfi (2019) who found that age groups had affected the cyberbullying phenomenon both in CP and CV among students. He found that the prevalence rate of CV decreased when the ages of the participants increased. Therefore, it can be evident that age groups have significant effects on the CV and CP among university students.

With respect to the significant difference of CP according to the internet frequency. The result showed that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of the frequent use of the internet. The finding in this respect was specifically inconsistent to the study conducted by Saleem et al. (2021) who found that there was no significant difference in the prevalence of CB according to the internet frequency. But on the contrary, there was a statistically significant difference in the CV according to their frequent use of the internet. This particular result indicates that those who use the internet more often will surely have been affected by CV. For further elaboration, those who were addicted to using the internet would have been more cyber victimized. As expected before this study, the result revealed that female students were more victimized by cyberbullying phenomenon. This finding supports the result of a study conducted by Francisco et al. (2015) who found that those who used the internet more than 5 hours would have been more to the exposure of CV.

Concerning the last research question, on whether there was any correlation between CP and CV. The result showed that there was a significant positive correlation between CP and CV. This result was in line with several results found by various researchers (Balakrishnan, 2015; Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Francisco et al., 2015; Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2019) indicating that a correlation exists between CP and CV. Contrary to this finding, the result of a study carried out in Pakistan by Shahbaz Butt et al. (2019) revealed a significant positive correlation between CB and CV. The point to indicate the correlation between CP and CV was to figure out how CP would lead to CV.

In conclusion, the current study was considered as the first step towards investigating the CB phenomenon among university students in the Afghanistan context. The result of the study revealed that the prevalence rates of CP among Afghan university students existed moderately. While the prevalence rates in terms of CV were found extremely high. Besides, Facebook was found as the most dominant social media platform that promotes the prevalence of the CB phenomenon among university students. Moreover, gender was found to have a prevailing role in the CP and CV among the students. In addition, age groups did not have any effect on the prevalence rates of CP among university students. Meanwhile, a significant difference was found between age groups in the prevalence of CP. Internet frequency was found not significant in terms of CP but it differed in the prevalence of CV. Finally, a significant positive correlation was found between CP and CV.

10. Implications and recommendations
In light of the result obtained, various practical implications and recommendations were observed to be addressed for future consideration of the researchers. The need of undertaking an additional study to understand the various kinds of bullying is still unknown in Afghanistan due to cultural and societal issues. Despite the fact that Afghanistan does not have a transparent policy in place and is one of the countries not equipped to deal with cybercrime, victims must be encouraged to report any acts of bullying that may have a negative impact on their psychological or mental health. The reason may be the decades of conflicts that has left 70% illiteracy and devastation.

Additionally, more qualitative research is needed to examine the socio-psychological effects of CB on victims in conservative communities. The initiatives of CB prevention and intervention should be implemented at the community, school, and family levels. Professional counseling and mental health assistance should be viewed as proactive actions that must be recognized more culturally and socially in Afghanistan. Government officials should also pay greater attention to the issues that young people face when utilizing social media networks, enforcing tougher penalties against those who break the rules.
Meanwhile, it would also be beneficial for university policymakers to recognize the significance of creating unique rules for institutions with clear instructions for students on when and to whom they should report. University staff who receive these reports should be confident that the policy’s design allows them to properly manage occurrences. Even if they know-how, the majority of university students do not intend to report the CB phenomenon. As a result, the institution should focus on encouraging students to report CV by assuring them that their report will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

Students, who are a critical segment in the battle against CB, must understand the responsibilities that come with using technology. They should be informed of the repercussions of technology used so that appropriate conduct may be instilled in them from a young age. They must be aware of the risks and the need of seeking assistance from responsible adults when CB happens. Students should be aware that they may need to be persistent when reporting occurrences to responsible adults for people to recognize the gravity of the situations. They can also inquire about the adults’ plans for resolving the issue. Finally, the present study was only limited in focusing the university students while the future studies may apply to investigate CB phenomenon among the school students considering the factors of age, gender and ethnic groups in the prevalence of CB in Afghanistan.

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