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Violence and aggression in virtual social networks from the perspective of teenagers: A phenomenological study

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Abstract

Developing cyberspace provided virtual communication content among teenagers and their peer therefor maybe led to communication problems in cyberspace. Cyberbullying is one of the problems that can provide a content for common types of violence. The purpose of this study was using to investigate the experiences of adolescents of violence and aggression in cyberbullying using to qualitative method. The data collection was conducted using semi-structured interview and Colaizzi method. 16 students of the age 14 to 16 years old in Tehran's 18th district who were active in virtual social networks were selected based on the inclusion criteria. The analysis Interviews was led to the identification of 2 main themes (repartee and bullying display) and 7 sub-themes (motivation, modeling, transferring verbal controversy, self-fake show, virtual quarrel, virtual group quarrel, escalation of the quarrel) and 102 initial concept. However violence in virtual social networks firstly were experience as a verbal controversy, and then with a self-fake show it is expressed as bullying to satisfy the need to be seen.

Keywords: Aggression, virtual social networks, adolescents, cyber bullying

Extended Abstract

introduction

Social networks are one of the most influential new communication technologies which has influenced personal and collective aspects of the live of its users (Karimian, Parsamehr & Afshani, 2016). These networks may have some advantages and disadvantages for teenagers. In one hand, some of

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the benefits includes socializing teenagers that make them able to begin and maintain relationships, starting and keeping contact with friends and other kind of communications. But on the other hand, some of the disadvantages of these kind of networks might be addiction to the virtual world, lack of direct and face to face contact and misunderstanding different type of messages (Oprea & Stan, 2012). One of the major damages in this area is cyberbullying. This phenomenon has caused a lot of teens to be exposed to virtual violence, harassment and interpersonal abuse (Perry, 2015). Research in our country suffer from a lack of studies about virtual violence especially in adolescents. thus, the present study was conducted to aim investigate the experiences of adolescent in virtual violence and aggression.

Method

The present study was a qualitative study using the phenomenological approach that describes the experiences of teens who have experienced violence in cyberspace. The sampling method is purposive and included sixteen first grade high school students from district 18 of Tehran (aged 14 to 16 years old). Data collection was conducted using in-depth and semi-structured interviews. During the interview, a few general questions were asked about of all participants such as "what do you know about violence and aggression in virtual networks?" and "please say about the experiences of clashes in cyberspace". Then Colaizzi analysis method was used for data analysis.

Findings

2 main themes, 7 sub themes and 102 primary concepts were extracted from the 16 interviews. The main theme was «repartee» which included sub-themes such as motivation, modeling and transferring verbal controversy. Power showing, amusement, failure compensation and not dimming were of motives for being skilled in repartee. Result showed educating others, violence learning, and verbal controversy were the most influential factors in learning repartee. Repartee was used to mocking friends, standing against the family, challenging in academic situations and applying the skills in fights.

The second main theme is bullying, which includes sub-themes such as showing self-fake, virtual quarrel, virtual group quarrel, and exacerbation of the quarrel. This finding showed that by bullying, teenagers are looking for a reputation and attracting others' attention. In fact, they display an image of exaggeration and play the role of bullying. They are running virtual quarrels, argue, interrupting people's conversations, and using language strategies like threats, humiliation, threats of suppression, threats of hacking, inducing fear and anxiety, disgust, and slang words. They call their friends in virtual quarrels and support each other during the fight as there is a collective litigation in cyberspace. These quarrels can be intensified specially if the fight or challenge is in relation to a girl or they are competing for having a girl or using honorable adultery.

discussion

The findings of this study showed violence and aggression in cyberspace is a common phenomenon associated with verbal violence. A special kind of

verbal violence is repartee. Rhyming words are used to in conversations transmitting anger in an apparently appealing form. Repartee is not only specified to this word, but it also contains the rude words, despicable and deceitful. The findings indicate that repartee is followed by different motivations in adolescents and from their point of view, the prevalence of repartee is an incentive to pursue it. For example, they may indicate themselves by showing their power and skills. Concerning the finding of the verbal controversy, Lavasani and Yousefian (2007) have shown that humiliation, insulting, tagging, mocking among students and teachers is commonly used which indicates the prevalence of verbal aggression among adolescents.

Other the results indicated that advertising messages plays an important role in attracting teenagers. The messages placed on the relevant channels often contains the violent situation and aggressive reactions and responses. In fact, they are modeling these channels by paying attention, memorizing and whispering messages (Zimmerman & Ybarra, 2014). Research indicates that social modeling has influenced violent virtual behavior and verbal violence particularly among anonymous people comparing to known individuals.

Other findings of this research show that verbal conflicts and repartee are used in different situations which has consequences including creation of conflict as the most important one. Verbal controversy raises tension between the two sides and consequently both sides will show an increased tension leading to a fight. Another verbal controversy is the weakening of the friendly relationship which causes disruption in friendship. Verbal conflicts also lead to social punishment in educational context. Verbal controversy in the family and with parents also is one of the possible consequences which can lead to disrespect parents. Research indicates that virtual violence can lead to educational outcomes such as dropouts, social consequences such as fear and feeling of disability, high levels of anxiety and delinquency (Graham & Wood, 2018).

Other finding indicated that during bullying, violence and aggression become more intense and it leads to the formation of virtual, group, and real quarrels. bullying people has characteristics such as suffering from an emotional vacuum, needing others attention, having a bullying culture in everyday life context, exposing an exaggerated image of self and using negative language tricks. Peter and Petermann's (2018) showed that the imbalance of power is a feature of virtual violence; That is, annoying people have usually more power than victims either because of the specific skills or obscurity in cyberspace. For example, in current study, these adolescents showed the repartee language skills.

However, violence and virtual aggression have two main dimensions. The first dimension represents the modeling of violence and verbal controversy in the form of repartee. Looking at adolescents' experiences showed that various motivations and related advertisements leads to experiencing lash and biting tongue in the groups along with repartee modeling. The second dimension of virtual violence is bullying show off.

Teens based on their need to be seen and some emotional vacuums shows self-fake which expresses self-magnification. Hence, by taking the role of virtual bullying and creating fights, threats and disgust, adolescent would be looking for an answer to the need of expressing themselves.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.