



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Impact of Parental Neglect on Cyber-Victimization: Mediating Role of Social Media Addiction among Adolescents South Punjab Pakistan**

<sup>1</sup>Humaira Yasmeen, <sup>2</sup>Mehak Haroon and <sup>3</sup>Novera Obaid Qazi

1. M. Phil Student Department of Psychology, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer Department of Psychology, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer Department of Psychology, University of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author** noveraqazi.16@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

This research paper has explored the connection between parental neglect and cyber-victimization among teenagers in South Punjab, Pakistan, and how the social media addiction mediates this relationship. Parental neglect has been identified as one of the psychosocial risk factors that affect the behaviors of adolescents online and their susceptibility to digital harm. As the use of social media is growing at a rapid pace, teens become more vulnerable to cyber threats, such as victimization. Social media addiction can also contribute to this vulnerability by exposing individuals to more online and decreasing their self-regulation. The design was a cross-sectional quantitative design. The sample consisted of adolescents (14-19 years old) in South Punjab, Pakistan, schools and colleges. Purposive convenient sampling was used to collect data using standardized questionnaires. The number of participants was both male and female adolescents who used social media extensively on a daily basis. All measures of the study were found to have acceptable internal consistency through the reliability analysis. Statistical analyses included correlation, regression, mediation, and independent samples t-test. Results showed that there were positive correlations with parental neglect and social media addiction and cyber-victimization. Parental neglect was an important predictor of cyber-victimization and accounted for a minor amount of variance. This relationship was partially mediated by social media addiction, which means that neglected adolescents have a higher risk of becoming addictive online, which puts them at risk of cyber-victimization. The difference by gender indicated that males were more socially addicted to media and cyber-victimized, whereas there was no significant difference by gender in the parental neglect cases. The research notes that more parental intervention and control of online activities among the adolescents is necessary. Awareness initiatives in schools and online literacy interventions are suggested to decrease risky online practices and cyber-victimization.

**Keywords:** Parental Neglect, Cyber Victimization, Social Media Addiction

**Introduction**

The social media has transformed the communication, friendship formation and identity expression of the youths, offering both exciting opportunities and significant threats. On the one hand, such online services may provide social support and a sense of belonging, on the other hand, they expose young people to such digital threats as cyberbullying and addictive behaviors. The mental health, behavior, and academic performance of adolescents may be harmed by cyber-victimization, which is the harassment, threat, and humiliation online (Xin et al., 2021; Muzaffar, et. al., 2019; Salam, et al., 2024)). Excessive use of social media, especially by adolescents who need social support by using it, predisposes to the risk of addiction and negative online experiences (Montag et al., 2024; Ryan et al., 2014; Muzaffar, et. al., 2020; Asghar et. al., 2025). Research has shown that the more often one uses social media and the less informed he or she is about the precautions

involved in using social media, the more likely he or she is to be cyber-victimized as well as addicted (Doğan et al., 2025).

Parental encouragement, love, and care have a profound impact on the healthy development of adolescents. Warmth, effective communication, and respect towards the independence of the adolescent characterize positive parenting, which helps to develop self-confidence, emotional stability, and resilience against negative peer or online pressures (Cardak et al., 2012; Lereya et al., 2013). On the other hand, feelings of loneliness, rejection or insecurity among teenagers may be caused by parental neglect, which consists of lack of supervision and emotional interaction. Such unmet emotional needs can cause them to overuse social media, thus becoming more susceptible to addiction (Kausar & Jan, 2025).

In addition, widespread social media usage increases the vulnerability to cyberbullying that can be in the form of threats, rumors or use of personal information inappropriately (Nocentini et al., 2010). Other aspects, such as poor parent-child relationships, unsafe internet behaviors, and excessive internet use, further increase this risk (Yang et al., 2013). Young people with less tight familial relationships are more likely to find de facto validation and companionship online, which makes them more susceptible to cyber-victimization (Mobin et al., 2017; Ybarra et al., 2007). Therefore, parental neglect can indirectly cause cyber-victimization through facilitating social media addiction.

Despite the increased interest on these matters, there exists a dearth of studies which have examined the relationship between parental neglect, social media addiction and cyber-victimization, especially in the cultural setting of South Punjab, Pakistan. The study will explore the connection between parental neglect and cyber-victimization of adolescents, where social media addiction may be a.

### **Literature Review**

Cyber-victimization has been linked to a number of undesirable effects, such as emotional distress and unhealthy internet use. Xin et al. (2021) also found out that adolescents who become victims of cyber-victimization are highly vulnerable to internet addiction. On the same note, Doğan et al. (2025) found that there was a strong correlation between cyber-victimization and social media addiction, which means that the more individuals are engaged online, the more they are exposed to online risks.

The problem of social media addiction is developing among adolescents and is promoted by such psychological and social factors as peer pressure and the need to fit in (Montag et al., 2024). Overuse of social media does not only affect mental health, but also predisposes individuals to become cyber-victims. As Bhola and Mahakud (2014) indicated, teens tend to use social networking sites to socialise and stay connected, underscoring their reliance on internet-based resources to socialise.

The issue of parental neglect is a major predictor of undesirable behaviors online among adolescents. Kausar and Jan (2025) established that when adolescents believe that their parents have a greater degree of neglect, they are more susceptible to becoming addicted to social media, especially when the adolescents are socially isolated. According to Kirik et al. (2015), teenagers tend to use social media without any parental supervision when they do not know positive things to do on the Internet. Likewise, Zebron et al. (2013) also indicated that an overuse of Facebook in Zimbabwe interfered with the relationship between parents and children and parental control to the extent that adolescents participated in unsupervised online activities.

To sum up, the available research indicates that the risk of cyber-victimization can be increased indirectly because of social media addiction due to parental neglect. Although a lot of research has been done on these relationships on a global level, very few have

studied them in the cultural setting of South Punjab, Pakistan, necessitating further research.

### Conceptual Framework

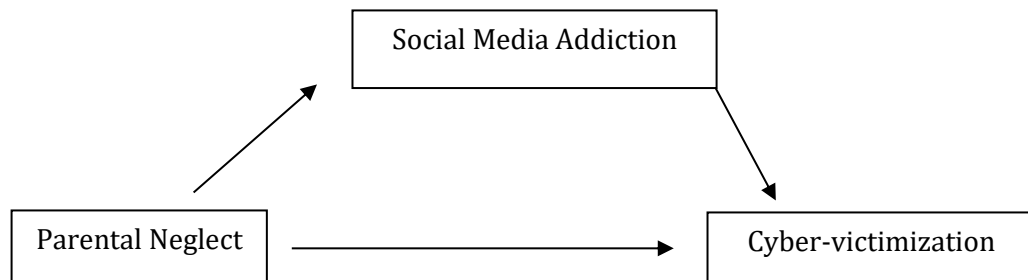


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

In this model, social media addiction serves as a mediator between the indirect impact of parental neglect on cybervictimization and its direct effect.

Although there is already the research on the topic of cybervictimization and the role of social media, the number of studies that specifically address the topic of parental neglect as a distinct predictor and the indirect impact through social media addiction is limited (Doğan et al., 2025; Wright et al., 2020). The available literature is either focused on individual factors or falls within a western setting, and this leaves a huge gap in our comprehension of the impacts of neglect on cybervictimization in the non Western regions like South Punjab, Pakistan. Moreover, the literature on mediated models which include psychosocial and contextual factors is still deficient, which highlights the need to study the influence of parental neglect in fostering cybervictimization in the context of social media addiction.

We aimed to provide in-depth information about parental neglect, cyber victimization and mediating role of social media addiction among adolescents South Punjab Pakistan. This research also creates awareness to adolescents regarding the close connection they have with mobile phone use and how they are indirectly fulfilling their addiction need through the use of the mobile phones of others and in so doing they become cyber-victims of them. Educators and parents should be fast to detect teenagers who have been victims of cyberbullying and provide them with the necessary distraction.

### Operational definition of the problem

#### Parental Neglect

According to Straus, Kinard, and Williams (2011), parental neglect is the disregard for a child's basic needs, which include their physical, emotional, administrative, and intellectual needs. The incapacity of a parent to take the appropriate actions required to meet their child's growth requirements is known as parental neglect (Straus, 2001). Parental neglect creates a sense of loneliness that poses a threat, influences behavior, and causes social problems.

#### Social Media Addiction

Merriam-Webster (2014) defines social media as a technological communication system that is employed to establish virtual societies through which individuals are allowed to share knowledge, personal messages, and other contents.

## **Cyber-victimization**

The purposeful and recurrent application of the emerging information and communication technologies to inflict harm on other individuals is termed as cyber-victimization (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

## **Material and Methods**

Research Design: To find out the effects of parental neglect on adolescent cyber-victimization and social media addiction, a survey research design was employed.

## **Participant**

**1419 years (adolescence).**

## **Sample**

A purposive continent sampling was used to select a sample of 350 participants, all aged between 14 and 19, in Multan. G power calculator was used to determine the sample size.

## **Procedure**

The study obtained data among adolescents (14-19) that use social media and mobile phones and both parents were present. After providing consent, the participants provided demographic data and completed three questionnaires, including Parental Authority Questionnaire, Social Media Addiction Scale, and Cyber-Victimisation Scale, following the verbal instructions. This was done in a classroom environment and took about 30 minutes and this was done with the consent of the teacher.

## **Instruments and Measurements**

### **Parental Authority Questionnaire.**

Baumrind (1971, 1991) used a modified version of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991) to measure parenting style. The short version of PAQ would suit adolescents or young adults and it can be utilized to determine the permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authority of a parent. There are 12 items in the PAQ's original short form. Participants were asked to judge how much they agreed with this on a four-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 4: strongly agree).

### **Social Media Addiction Scale - Student version**

In 2018, Sahin developed an instrument to measure social media addiction. It contains a total of 29 items and the scoring is done on a five-point Likert scale. The greater the scores, the more addicted to social media.

### **Cyber-Victimization Scale (CYBVICS)**

The creators of the Cyber-Victimization Scale are (CYBVIC; Buelga et al. 2010, 2012). It is a 18-item Likert-type scale, scoring scale (from 1, never, to 5, always) that measures direct and indirect cyber-victimization.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Demographic characteristics of sample (N=350)**

Variable	categories	f	%age
Gender	Male	180	51.4
	Female	170	48.6
Age Group	14-15	97	27.7
	16-17	90	25.7
	18-19	163	46.7
Birth Order	First born	119	34.0
	Middle born	162	46.3
	Last born	69	19.7
Education	Metric	101	28.9
	F.A/FSc	158	45.1
	B.A	91	26.0
No. of hours	1-6	76	21.7
	7-12	181	51.7
	13-18	85	24.3
	19-24	8	2.3

**Note:** f= Frequency, %= Percentages

The 350 adolescents (51% male) were aged 14–19, mostly middle-born, with 45% in F.A./FSc, and most spent 7–12 hours online daily.

### Reliability of the scales

**Table 2**  
**Reliability of Scales used in the Study (N=350)**

Sr. no.	Scales	No of items	Alpha value
1	Parental neglect	12	.744
2	Cyber-victimization	18	.903
3	Social media addiction	29	.878

All study scales demonstrated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of .744 for parental neglect, .878 for social media addiction, and .903 for cyber-victimization

### Correlation Analysis

**Table 3**  
**Correlation of the Scales used in study (N=350)**

Correlations					
	M	SD	PN	CV	SMA
PN	36.09	4.819	-	.181**	.261**
CV	39.78	14.17		-	.384**
SMA	97.44	17.48			-

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Note:* PN: Parental Neglect, CV: Cybervictimization, SMA: Social Media Addiction

Parental neglect was positively related to social media addiction and cyber-victimization, with social media addiction also significantly linked to cyber-victimization.

## Regression Analysis

**Table 4**  
**Linear Regression predicting parental neglect on Cyber-Victimization among adolescents South Punjab Pakistan (N=350)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	26.983	3.808		7.085	.000
PN	.424***	.124	.181	3.429	.001
R	.181				
R <sup>2</sup>	.033				

Note: Parental Neglect (PN), Cyber-victimization (CV)

As indicated in Table 4, the findings of this research show the impact of PN on CV. We can see that the R<sup>2</sup> value is .033 with a frequency of 11.757, which means that our predictor independent variable parental neglect causes a 3% change in the dependent variable cyber-victimization. The table shows the coefficient results. The findings revealed that PN positively predicted CV (B=.181, P<.001).

## Mediation Analysis

**Table 5**  
**Mediating effect of social media addiction on parental neglect and cybervictimization**

	Coeff	SE	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	ΔF	LLCI	ULCI
Step 1						
Constant	74.59***	4.61			65.52	83.66
PN	.757***	.150			.462	1.052
R <sup>2</sup>	.088					
F	25.54					
Step 2						
Constant	5.105	4.720			-4.178	14.388
PN	.202	.120			-.034	.438
SMA	.293***	.041			.212	.375
R <sup>2</sup>	.068					
F	25.542	31.734		6.192		

Note: PN: Parental Neglect, CV: Cybervictimization, SMA: Social Media Addiction

Social media addiction partially mediates the relationship between parental neglect and cyber-victimization, with parental neglect increasing SMA, which in turn raises the risk of cyber-victimization.

## t-Test

**Table 6**  
**Independent samples t-test for gender and PN, SMA, CV, among adolescents (N=350)**

Variables	Male n=180		Female n=170		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PN	30.24	5.86	30.11	6.24	.197	.554	0.021
CV	43.76	14.46	35.58	12.60	5.626	.001	0.060
SMA	99.77	16.26	94.98	18.42	2.585	.225	0.275

Note: Parental Neglect (PN), Cyber-victimization (CV), Social Media Addiction (SMA)

T-test results showed significant gender differences in cybervictimization and social media addiction, with males scoring higher, but no difference in parental neglect.

## **Discussion**

The current study examined the relationship between parental neglect and cyber-victimization among South Punjab adolescents in Pakistan with the social media addiction as an intermediate factor.

To conclude, the results partially support the suggested conceptual framework, as it is important to note that the family environment has a significant impact on online behavior of adolescents and their susceptibility to cyber threats.

### **Relationship between parental neglect and cyber-victimization**

The findings showed that there was a strong positive relationship between cyber-victimization and parental neglect among adolescents. This means that adolescents with a reduced level of parental attention, emotional support, and supervision are prone to negative online experiences. Even though the statistical significance is high, the effect size is not as large which means that there is a weak direct impact.

The implication of this finding is that lack of parental engagement may impede adolescent advice on how to be safe online, and hence, exposing them to more internet-related dangers like bullying and manipulation. The finding aligns with past research, which indicates that poor parent-child relationships make one susceptible to cyber-victimization (Ybarra et al., 2007; Mobin et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the  $R^2$  is low, which means that other variables such as peer influence, level of online activity, personality, and digital literacy also have a remarkable impact.

### **Parental neglect and addiction to social media**

The examination found out that there is a notable positive association between parental neglect and social media addiction, meaning that the degree of perceived parental neglect is more apt to result in an over-reliance on social media platforms. This can be explained by the fact that social media serves as an alternative to emotional bonding, entertainment and validation in case parental support is lacking. This conclusion complements the studies of Kausar and Jan (2025) that reported that children with a higher exposure to parental neglect are more likely to be addicted to social media because of emotional loneliness, and Kirik et al. (2015), who emphasized that a lack of parental guidance results in uncontrolled and excessive use of social networking platforms among teenagers. Academic pressures, lack of recreation facilities and more access to smart phones can be considered as other factors that could prompt adolescents in South Punjab to extensively use social interactions on mobile platforms in order to fulfill their emotional and social needs.

### **Addiction to social media and cyber-victimization**

A strong positive relationship was found between social media addiction and cyber-victimization, indicating that the teens who use social media a lot and show signs of addiction are more likely to experience cyber-bullying or other harmful relationships. This finding is consistent with that of Xin et al. (2021) and Doğan et al. (2025), who observed that the more people use social media, the higher the chances of being exposed to dangerous online environments and becoming victims. This can be due to the fact that more frequent users will have a more substantial presence on the Internet, and as such, they will be more noticeable by the potential offenders, and they may also engage in risky behaviors like

accepting messages of strangers or sharing personal data, which makes them more vulnerable.

### **Mediation role of social media addiction**

The study has shown that, parental neglect is related to cyber-victimization directly and indirectly through social media addiction which indicates that the social media addiction mediates the relationship between parental neglect and cyber-victimization. This implies a cycle in which emotional deprivation through parental neglect leads to adolescents relying more on social media, which, in turn, predisposes them to online hazards and risks the likelihood of becoming cyber-victims. However, the partial mediation also implies that other elements, such as peer influence, personality characteristics, digital literacy, and the educational setting, may also play a role in cyber-victimization.

### **Gender differences**

The results of the study showed considerable gender differences in cyber-victimization and social media addiction, where males had more in either of the two, and parental neglect showed no significant difference. The higher social media dependency in males can possibly be attributed to their more active online lifestyles which can include gaming and entertainment that expose them to more online dangers and cyber-victimization. The lack of gender disparity in parental neglect implies that both male and female adolescents have equal parental interactions and parental surveillance in the cultural background in South Punjab.

### **Theoretical and contextual ramifications**

The results are consistent with ecological theories of adolescent development, underscoring that behavior is molded by the interaction of family dynamics and digital contexts. In this framework, parental neglect has been identified as a distal risk factor that compromises emotional and supervisory support, and social media addiction has been identified as a proximal process that directly increases adolescents to be at risk of cyber-victimization. The impact of these factors could be increased in South Punjab, Pakistan due to the high rate of digital proliferation, widespread smartphone use, and lack of sufficient parental digital literacy since most parents might lack the technological expertise to effectively monitor or guide their children in their interactions online.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, the study reveals that parental neglect contributes to raising the vulnerability of adolescents to cyber-victimization either directly or indirectly through social media addiction. The mediated pathway has a rather important psychological mechanism, which uncovers the influence of the family environment on risky online behaviors, even though the direct effect of the former is rather minimal. These findings highlight the importance of parental involvement and digital literacy in reducing the risk of adolescents being exposed to online harmful circumstances.

### **Recommendations**

According to the results, it is advised that parents are to be actively engaged in the daily lives of their adolescents to support them emotionally, supervise, and communicate openly to avoid the sense of being neglected and vulnerable. Particular attention should be paid to enhancing the level of digital literacy of parents in order to monitor and direct safe online behavior. To minimize the possibility of addiction and victimization of adolescents, schools need to introduce organized awareness on responsible use of social media and cyber safety. Moreover, mental health professionals

and school counselors ought to detect at-risk adolescents and offer early interventions to address excessive use of social media and emotional neglect. These combined efforts can help minimize adolescents' exposure to cyber threats and promote healthier online and offline developmental environments.

**References**

- Asghar, N., Cheema, A. T., & Muzaffar, M. (2025). The Impact of Media Coverage on Political Behavior among Pakistani Students: A Case Study of GC Women University Sialkot. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 266–279. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2025\(6-II\)23](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2025(6-II)23)
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, 4(1–2), 1–103.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting styles on adolescent competence and substance use. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(1), 56–95.
- Bhola, R. M., & Mahakud, G. C. (2014). A qualitative analysis of social networking usage. *International Journal of Research & Development of Health*, 2(1), 34–44.
- Buelga, S., Cava, M. J., & Musitu, G. (2010). Cyberbullying: Adolescent victimization through mobile phone and internet. *Psicothema*, 22(4), 784–789.
- Buri, J. R. (1991). Parental authority questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57(1), 110–119.
- Cardak, M., Sariçam, H., & Onur, M. (2012). Perceived parenting styles and rejection sensitivity in university students. *The Online Journal of Counselling and Education*, 1(3), 57–69.
- Doğan, E., Şen, İ. E. Y., & Şahin, Y. L. (2025). The relationship between cyber victimization, social media addiction, social media literacy, and platform usage in adolescents. *Current Psychology*, 44(15), 13859–13871.
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Kausar, N., & Jan, R. A. (2025). Perceived parental negligence and social media addiction among adolescents: Moderating effects of social isolation. *Journal of Regional Studies Review*, 4(4), 1–10.
- Kirik, A., Arslan, A., Çetinkaya, A., & Gül, M. (2015). A quantitative research on the level of social media addiction among young people in Turkey. *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science*, 3(3), 108–122.
- Lereya, S. T., Samara, M., & Wolke, D. (2013). Parenting behavior and the risk of becoming a victim and a bully/victim: A meta-analysis study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 37(12), 1091–1108.
- Merriam-Webster. (2014). Social media. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social>
- Mobin, A., Feng, C. X., & Neudorf, C. (2017). Cybervictimization among preadolescents in a community-based sample in Canada: Prevalence and predictors. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 108(5–6), e475–e481.
- Montag, C., Sindermann, C., Becker, B., & Panksepp, J. (2016). An affective neuroscience framework for the molecular study of internet addiction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1906.

- Muzaffar, M., Chohdhry, S., & Afzal, N. (2019). Social Media and Political Awareness in Pakistan: A Case Study of Youth, *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3 (II), 1-13
- Muzaffar, M., Yaseen, Z. & Safdar, S. (2020). Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns in Pakistan: A Case of Study of 2018 Elections, *Journal of Political Studies*, 27 (2), 141-151
- Nocentini, A., Calmaestra, J., Schultze-Krumbholz, A., Scheithauer, H., Ortega, R., & Menesini, E. (2010). Cyberbullying: Labels, behaviours and definition in three European countries. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 20(2), 129–142.
- Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies move beyond the schoolyard: A preliminary look at cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 4(2), 148–169.
- Ryan, T., Chester, A., Reece, J., & Xenos, S. (2014). The uses and abuses of Facebook: A review of Facebook addiction. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 3(3), 133–148.
- Şahin, C. (2018). Social media addiction scale–student form: The reliability and validity study. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 17(1), 169–182.
- Salam, Z., Jamil, M., & Muzaffar, M. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Political Awareness and Engagement among University Students: A Quantitative Study. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 691–702. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024\(5-IV\)61](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024(5-IV)61)
- Straus, M. A. (2001). *Beating the devil out of them: Corporal punishment in American families and its effects on children* (2nd ed.). Transaction Publishers.
- Straus, M. A., Kinard, E. M., & Williams, L. M. (2011). The multidimensional neglectful behavior scale, Form A: Adolescent and adult-recall version. *Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire*.
- Wright, M. F. (2020). Parental mediation, cyberbullying, and cyber victimization: The role of parenting in adolescents' online experiences. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(9), 2481–2493.
- Xin, M., Chen, P., Liang, Q., Yu, C., Zhen, S., & Zhang, W. (2021). Cybervictimization and adolescent internet addiction: A moderated mediation model. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), 2427.
- Yang, S. J., Stewart, R., Kim, J. M., Kim, S. W., Shin, I. S., Dewey, M. E., ... Yoon, J. S. (2013). Differences in predictors of traditional and cyber-bullying: A 2-year longitudinal study in Korean school children. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 22(5), 309–319.
- Ybarra, M. L., Diener-West, M., & Leaf, P. J. (2007). Examining the overlap in Internet harassment and school bullying: Implications for school intervention. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41(6), S42–S50.
- Zebbron, S., Sigauke, E., Musingafi, M. C., & Campus, M. W. R. (2013). Impact of Facebook on parent-child relationship in the African context: The Zimbabwean experience. *Information and Knowledge Management*, 3(3), 31–38.