Moral Disengagement as a Mediator in the Relationship between Psychopathic Traits and Cyberbullying Behavior among Malaysian Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a growing problem among adolescents and has been linked to various negative psychological outcomes. This study examined the relationships between psychopathic traits, moral disengagement and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia, with particular focus on the mediating role of moral disengagement. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used and data were collected from 389 secondary school students using structured questionnaires. Psychopathic traits were measured using the Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory–Short Version (YPI-S), moral disengagement was assessed using an adapted Moral Disengagement Scale, and cyberbullying behavior was measured using the E-Bullying Scale (E-BS). Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The results showed that psychopathic traits were positively associated with cyberbullying behavior ($r = .725$, $p < .001$), and moral disengagement significantly predicted cyberbullying behavior ($B = 0.573$, $p < .001$). In addition, moral disengagement partially mediated the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior. These findings suggest that adolescents with higher psychopathic traits are more likely to engage in cyberbullying partly because they justify harmful behavior through moral disengagement.

Keywords: psychopathy, moral disengagement, cyberbullying behavior, adolescents, Malaysia

Online technology has become an essential part of daily communication and social interaction. However, it has also created opportunities for negative behaviors such as cyberbullying. According to Patchin & Hinduja (2013), cyberbullying refers to bullying that occurs through electronic devices, including computers and mobile phones, within online environments. Similar to traditional bullying, it is intentional, repeated and harmful to the victim and is generally considered an immoral behavior (Romera et al., 2019). What makes cyberbullying different is its reliance on digital platforms, which allows harmful content to spread quickly and makes it more difficult to control (Chun et al., 2020).

Cyberbullying has been associated with a wide range of negative outcomes. Victims often experience low self-esteem and loneliness (Barlett et al., 2024), as well as anxiety, behavioral problems, and difficulties in peer relationships (Marciano et al., 2020). In addition, cyberbullying has been linked to lower academic performance and increased school absenteeism (Gardella et al., 2017). More severe consequences include depression (Hu et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024), self-harm (Heerde & Hemphill, 2019) and suicidal thoughts and attempts (John et al., 2018; Li et al., 2024). Some studies have also reported that victims are more likely to engage in substance use (Barlett et al., 2024). Similar patterns have been observed among university students where cyberbullying is associated with various psychological and behavioral problems (Kabiri et al., 2022).

Although cyberbullying is often studied among children and adolescents, it is also increasingly reported among university students worldwide (Wei et al., 2023; Bussu et al., 2025). In the Middle East, studies have shown that cyberbullying remains a serious issue among students (Al-Darmaki et al., 2022; Mahasneh et al., 2024). For example, previous research reported that the prevalence of cyberbullying ranges from 65% to 86% across several Middle Eastern countries (Mahasneh et al., 2024), while studies in Iran reported prevalence rates between 20% and 53% among university students (Kabiri et al., 2020; Shadmanfaat et al., 2021). A recent study reported that

52% of Malaysian adolescents have experienced cyberbullying, underscoring the urgent need to better understand the factors associated with this behavior (Sani et al., 2025). These findings highlight that cyberbullying is a widespread problem that requires further investigation.

However, the reported prevalence of cyberbullying is not consistent across studies. These differences may be influenced by variations in research context, sample characteristics, and measurement approaches. For instance, differences in definitions, time frames and measurement tools can lead to different findings (Chun et al., 2020). In addition, the use of different cutoff points to define cyberbullying may also affect prevalence rates (Olweus & Limber, 2018). Furthermore, cyberbullying is often studied separately from traditional bullying, which makes it difficult to fully understand and compare the overall pattern of bullying behavior.

Cyberbullying can take various forms. Common behaviors include sending offensive messages, repeatedly harassing others, and spreading false or embarrassing information online (Singh et al., 2024). Other forms include impersonation, sharing private information, and excluding individuals from online groups (Zhang et al., 2022). More severe behaviors, such as cyberstalking and threats, occur less frequently but have stronger negative impacts on victims (Watts et al., 2017). Despite these differences, all forms of cyberbullying involve repeated and harmful actions toward others.

From a psychological perspective, individual traits and cognitive processes may explain why some individuals engage in cyberbullying. The dark triad personality traits and moral disengagement have been widely identified as factors that contribute to harmful and antisocial behavior (Bandura, 2016; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Previous studies have found that these factors are associated with cyberbullying perpetration (Gajda et al., 2023; Orue & Calvete, 2019). However, many of these studies treat the dark triad as a single construct, which may overlook the unique influence of each trait. In addition, the psychological mechanism that explains how these traits lead to cyberbullying behavior is still not fully understood.

Among the dark triad traits, psychopathy is particularly important due to its association with impulsivity, lack of empathy and antisocial tendencies. These characteristics may increase the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behavior. However, limited research has specifically examined how psychopathy influences cyberbullying through moral disengagement, especially among adolescents in non-Western contexts such as Malaysia.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying behavior among 389 adolescents in Malaysia. By focusing on this mechanism, the study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how psychopathy, as a key dark personality trait, contributes to cyberbullying behavior.

Psychopathy personality and cyberbullying

Psychopathy is characterized by traits such as low empathy toward others, a tendency to seek excitement, and poor self-control (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Furnham et al., 2013). Individuals with these characteristics are more likely to act impulsively and show little concern for the consequences of their actions. Previous studies have also shown that personality traits are linked to various forms of online deviant behavior. These include cyberstalking (Kircaburun et al., 2018), online antisocial behavior (Moor & Anderson, 2019), and cyberbullying (Park et al., 2024). In addition, research has found associations between dark personality traits and more serious online misconduct, such as online fraud (Smith et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2021) and technology-facilitated sexual violence (Gunnoo et al., 2024).

Psychopathy is commonly conceptualized in contemporary research as a personality disorder that consists of interconnected interpersonal, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. Earlier perspectives often described psychopathy as a single-dimensional construct; however, more recent evidence suggests that it is better understood as a multidimensional construct with three key components. The first component involves an interpersonal style characterized by manipulation, dishonesty, and a sense of superiority in social interactions. The second component reflects affective deficits, including low empathy, lack of guilt or remorse, and shallow emotional responses. The third component relates to behavioral tendencies such as impulsivity, irresponsibility,

and a strong desire for sensation-seeking activities (Cooke & Michie, 2001). Although previous studies have examined the relationship between dark personality traits and cyberbullying, these studies have primarily focused on composite constructs such as the dark triad or dark tetrad (Gajda et al., 2023). This approach may overlook the distinct influence of individual traits, particularly psychopathy, which has been shown to have a stronger association with aggressive behavior. In addition, the mediating role of moral disengagement in explaining how psychopathy contributes to cyberbullying remains insufficiently explored, especially among adolescents in non-Western contexts such as Malaysia.

H1: Psychopathic traits are positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.

Moral Disengagement and Cyberbullying Behavior

Bandura's (2016) social cognitive theory suggests that individuals may engage in harmful behavior when they deactivate their internal moral controls through a process known as moral disengagement. This mechanism allows individuals to justify unethical actions, minimize the consequences of their behavior, and reduce feelings of guilt. In the context of cyberbullying, moral disengagement enables individuals to rationalize harmful online actions and engage in such behavior without experiencing moral restraint.

Previous studies have consistently shown that moral disengagement is positively associated with aggressive and antisocial behaviors, including both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. For example, Fang et al. (2020) found that moral disengagement played an important role in explaining cyberbullying behavior, while Thornberg et al. (2024) reported that individuals who rapidly disengage from moral standards are more likely to engage in bullying behavior. Similarly, Nocera et al. (2022) demonstrated that moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying perpetration.

Although previous studies have examined moral disengagement in relation to cyberbullying, several limitations remain. Zhang et al. (2022) treated the dark triad as a composite construct and did not examine the distinct effects of each personality dimension. In addition, Gholami et al. (2025a) noted that the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between dark personality traits and cyberbullying has not been fully explored. These findings suggest that moral disengagement is a critical mechanism in understanding why individuals with maladaptive personality traits are more likely to engage in cyberbullying.

Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence, moral disengagement is expected to increase the likelihood of cyberbullying behavior among adolescents.

Hypothesis 2 : Moral disengagement is positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.

The Mediating Role of Moral Disengagement in the Relationship Between Psychopathy and Cyberbullying

Moral disengagement has been identified as a potential psychological mechanism that explains how psychopathic traits contribute to disruptive and antisocial behavior (Paciello et al., 2020). Individuals with high levels of psychopathic traits are typically characterized by low empathy, impulsivity, callousness, and a lack of remorse. These characteristics may increase their tendency to rationalize harmful actions, minimize the consequences of their behavior, and disengage from moral standards. As a result, they may be more likely to engage in harmful behaviors without experiencing guilt or shame.

Empirical evidence supports this proposition. Pechorro et al. (2024) found that psychopathy was positively associated with moral disengagement. Similarly, Gajda et al. (2023) and Kokkinos and Antoniadou (2024) suggested that individuals with psychopathic traits are more likely to dehumanize others, deny the harmful consequences of their actions, and perceive aggressive behavior as trivial. This tendency toward moral disengagement enables them to justify unethical behaviors, including cyberbullying.

Previous studies have also shown that moral disengagement plays an important role in explaining aggressive behavior in both offline and online contexts. For example, Fang et al. (2020) reported that moral disengagement mediated the relationship between callous-unemotional traits and cyberbullying. In addition, Nocera et al. (2022) found that moral disengagement mediated the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying perpetration. Consistent with Bandura (2016) social cognitive theory, moral disengagement weakens moral self-regulation and allows individuals to engage in harmful online behavior without feeling guilty.

Although previous studies provide evidence for the role of moral disengagement, research specifically examining its mediating role in the relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying remains limited, particularly among adolescents in Malaysia. Therefore, this study proposes that moral disengagement serves as an important mechanism through which psychopathic traits increase the likelihood of cyberbullying behavior.

Hypothesis 3: Moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.

Aim and Hypotheses

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether psychopathic traits are associated with cyberbullying behavior, whether psychopathic traits are related to moral disengagement, and whether moral disengagement is associated with cyberbullying behavior. In addition, this study aims to investigate the mediating role of moral disengagement in explaining how psychopathic traits contribute to cyberbullying behavior.

Previous studies have shown that psychopathy is associated with aggressive and antisocial behaviors, including cyberbullying. However, the psychological mechanism through which psychopathic traits influence cyberbullying behavior remains insufficiently explored. Furthermore, limited research has examined the mediating role of moral disengagement in this relationship, particularly among adolescents in non-Western contexts such as Malaysia. This study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on psychopathic traits and testing moral disengagement as a mediating variable.

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H1:** Psychopathic traits are positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.
- **H2:** Moral disengagement is positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.
- **H3:** Moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior among Malaysian adolescents.

Conceptual Framework

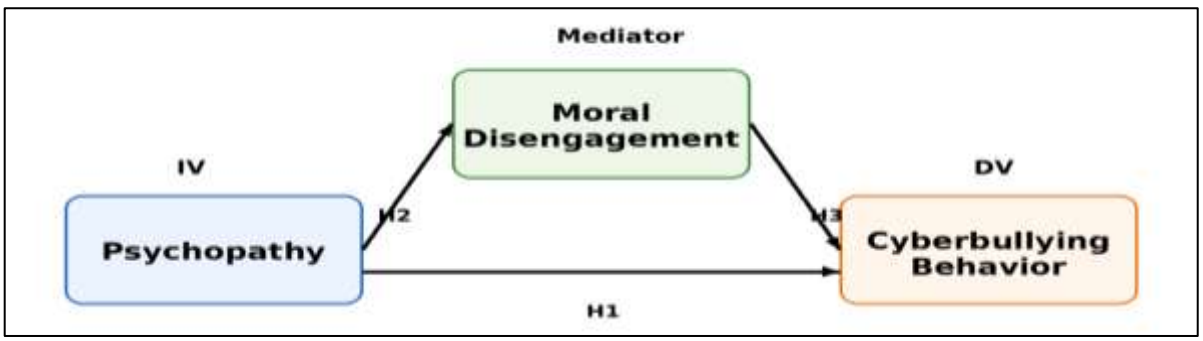

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study. Psychopathy is proposed as the independent variable, cyberbullying behavior as the dependent variable, and moral disengagement as the mediating variable. The model suggests that psychopathic traits may influence cyberbullying behavior both directly and indirectly through moral disengagement. Specifically, adolescents with higher levels of psychopathic traits are expected to show greater tendencies toward moral disengagement, which in turn may increase their likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behavior.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach based on deductive reasoning to examine the relationships among psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. A cross-sectional research design was used, in which data were collected at a single point in time. The main purpose of the study was to test both the direct relationships between the variables and the mediating role of moral disengagement.

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire. The target population consisted of secondary school students in Malaysia. A random sampling technique was used to select the respondents and a total of 389 students participated in the study.

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the direct relationships between the variables. To test the mediating effect of moral disengagement, the PROCESS macro (Model 4) by Andrew F. Hayes was employed. The significance of the indirect effect was assessed using a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. This method is widely recommended for mediation analysis because it provides robust estimates without requiring the indirect effect to follow a normal distribution.

Measures

Cyberbullying Scale

The dependent variable in this study is cyberbullying behavior among secondary school adolescents. The instrument used to measure this construct was adapted from a previously established scale employed in earlier studies. Specifically, cyberbullying behavior was assessed using the E-Bullying Scale (E-BS) developed by Lam and Li (2013). Each item is rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (0 times) to 6 (6 times or more). Higher scores indicate higher levels of cyberbullying behavior.

The E-Bullying Scale consists of two dimensions, namely minor and serious forms of cyberbullying. According to Azami and Taremian (2021), the instrument was validated in a study conducted in Iran, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the cyberbullying perpetration scale was 0.84, indicating good internal consistency reliability.

Psychopathy

Psychopathic traits were measured using the Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory–Short Version (YPI-S), an 18-item instrument developed to assess the behavioral, affective, and interpersonal dimensions of psychopathy among adolescents aged 12 to 18 years Colins et al. (2012). The instrument assesses three primary dimensions: interpersonal traits (e.g., manipulativeness and grandiosity), affective traits (e.g., callous-unemotional characteristics), and impulsive-behavioral tendencies.

The items were translated and culturally adapted to suit the Malaysian context and the comprehension level of secondary school adolescents while preserving the original conceptual meaning. Each item on the YPI-S is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The short version of the YPI has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency in community samples of adolescents and supports the three-dimensional model of psychopathy. Colins et al. (2012) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71 for the instrument, indicating acceptable reliability.

Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement was measured using an adapted version of the Moral Disengagement Scale originally developed by Bandura (1996) and later revised to fit the context of cyberbullying by Moore et al. (2012). The scale consists of eight items representing the core mechanisms of moral disengagement: moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame (Zeng et al., 2020).

Respondents were asked to rate each item using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The adapted scale has been widely used among student populations in China to assess moral disengagement in the context of cyberbullying (Zheng et al., 2019). Higher scores indicate a greater tendency to disengage from moral self-regulation and justify harmful behavior. Previous studies have reported good internal consistency for this instrument, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and the PROCESS macro (Model 4) by Andrew F. Hayes. SPSS was used to perform data screening, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis.

To test the mediation model, PROCESS macro (Model 4) developed by Andrew F. Hayes (2018) was employed. This model is appropriate for examining the direct and indirect effects of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a single mediator. In this study, psychopathic traits served as the independent variable, cyberbullying behavior as the dependent variable and moral disengagement as the mediating variable.

The significance of the indirect effect was assessed using a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. Bootstrapping is recommended because it does not assume normality of the indirect effect and provides a more robust approach for mediation analysis than traditional methods.

RESULTS

H1: Psychopathic traits are positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among adolescents.

Table 1. Correlation between Psychopathic Traits and Cyberbullying Behavior (H1)

Variable	r	p-value	Result
Psychopathic Traits → Cyberbullying Behavior	.725	< .001	Supported

The correlation analysis revealed that psychopathic traits were positively and significantly associated with cyberbullying behavior ($r = .725$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that higher levels of psychopathic traits among adolescents are associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behavior.

H2: Moral disengagement is positively associated with cyberbullying behavior among adolescents.

Table 2. Linear Regression Analysis of Moral Disengagement on Cyberbullying Behavior (H2)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value	95% CI	Result
Moral Disengagement → Cyberbullying Behavior	0.573	0.046	0.538	12.565	< .001	[0.483, 0.663]	Supported

Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of moral disengagement on cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. The results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 387) = 157.882$, $p < .001$. The findings also showed that moral disengagement explained 29.0% of the variance in cyberbullying behavior ($R^2 = .290$).

Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed that moral disengagement had a significant positive effect on cyberbullying behavior (B = 0.573, SE = 0.046, β = 0.538, t = 12.565, p < .001). The positive regression coefficient indicates that higher levels of moral disengagement are associated with a greater likelihood of adolescents engaging in cyberbullying behavior.

The 95% confidence interval for the regression coefficient ranged from 0.483 to 0.663 and did not include zero, providing additional evidence that the relationship between moral disengagement and cyberbullying behavior was statistically significant.

H3 ; Moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents**.**

Table 3. Mediation Analysis of Moral Disengagement in the Relationship Between Psychopathic Traits and Cyberbullying Behavior (H3)

Path	B	p-value	Result
Psychopathic Traits → Moral Disengagement (a path)	0.53	< .001	Significant
Moral Disengagement → Cyberbullying Behavior (b path)	0.13	.010	Significant
Psychopathic Traits → Cyberbullying Behavior (Direct Effect, c′ path)	0.56	< .001	Significant

Mediation analysis using PROCESS macro (Model 4) was conducted to examine the role of moral disengagement as a mediator in the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. Based on a sample of 389 respondents, the results indicated that psychopathic traits had a significant positive effect on moral disengagement (B = 0.53, p < .001). In turn, moral disengagement was found to have a significant positive effect on cyberbullying behavior (B = 0.13, p = 0.01).

The direct effect of psychopathic traits on cyberbullying behavior remained significant after the mediator was included in the model (B = 0.56, p < .001). In addition, the bootstrap analysis using 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals showed that the indirect effect was significant, as the confidence interval did not include zero (BootLLCI = 0.02, BootULCI = 0.12). These findings indicate that moral disengagement significantly mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. Furthermore, the results suggest that moral disengagement functions as a partial mediator in this relationship.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships between psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. In addition, the study investigated whether moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior. Overall, the findings supported all three hypotheses and provide further evidence that both personality traits and cognitive mechanisms play important roles in explaining cyberbullying behavior.

The first hypothesis proposed that psychopathic traits would be positively associated with cyberbullying behavior. The results supported this hypothesis, showing a strong and significant positive relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying behavior. This finding suggests that adolescents with higher levels of psychopathic traits are more likely to engage in cyberbullying. Individuals with psychopathic characteristics, such as low empathy, impulsivity, and lack of remorse, may be less concerned about the emotional harm they cause to others and more willing to engage in aggressive online behavior. This finding is consistent with previous studies that reported a positive relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying among adolescents (Orue & Calvete, 2019; Nocera et al., 2022). It also supports the view that psychopathy is one of the most important dark personality traits associated with harmful online behavior.

The second hypothesis stated that moral disengagement would be positively associated with cyberbullying behavior. The results confirmed this hypothesis, indicating that adolescents who are more likely to justify harmful actions are also more likely to engage in cyberbullying. Moral disengagement allows individuals to

reduce feelings of guilt by minimizing the consequences of their actions, blaming the victim, or viewing harmful behavior as acceptable. In online environments, this cognitive process may make it easier for adolescents to bully others without experiencing moral conflict. This finding is consistent with Bandura (2016) Social Cognitive Theory and previous studies showing that moral disengagement is a significant predictor of cyberbullying (Fang et al., 2020; Thornberg et al., 2024).

The third hypothesis proposed that moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior. The mediation analysis supported this hypothesis. Psychopathic traits were found to significantly predict moral disengagement, and significantly predicted cyberbullying behavior. The indirect effect was statistically significant, indicating that moral disengagement serves as an important mechanism through which psychopathic traits influence cyberbullying. However, the direct effect of psychopathic traits on cyberbullying remained significant after moral disengagement was included in the model, suggesting partial mediation. This means that moral disengagement explains part, but not all, of the relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying. Other psychological or environmental factors may also contribute to this relationship. This finding is consistent with Nocera et al. (2022), who found that moral disengagement mediated the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying perpetration.

Taken together, the findings suggest that adolescents with psychopathic traits are more likely to engage in cyberbullying because they tend to justify harmful behavior and disengage from their moral standards. This study extends previous research by focusing specifically on psychopathy rather than treating the dark triad as a single construct. It also contributes to the literature by examining these relationships among Malaysian adolescents, a population that has received limited attention in prior research.

Practical Implications

The findings have important practical implications. Schools and counselors should develop intervention programs that not only address problematic personality tendencies but also strengthen adolescents' moral reasoning and empathy. Programs that help students recognize and challenge justifications for harmful behavior may reduce their likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that psychopathic traits and moral disengagement are significant predictors of cyberbullying behavior among adolescents. More importantly, moral disengagement acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between psychopathy and cyberbullying, highlighting its central role in explaining how personality traits contribute to harmful online behavior. These findings provide valuable insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners seeking to better understand and prevent cyberbullying among adolescents.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and cyberbullying behavior. Second, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and inaccurate responses. Third, the study focused only on psychopathic traits and did not examine other dimensions of the Dark Triad such as Machiavellianism and narcissism. In addition, the sample consisted of secondary school adolescents in Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups and cultural contexts.

Future research should use longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships among these variables and include multiple sources of data, such as teacher or peer reports, to reduce potential bias. Researchers are also encouraged to examine other dark personality traits and additional psychological factors, such as empathy and peer influence, that may further explain cyberbullying behavior. Replicating this study in different populations and cultural settings would help to confirm the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between psychopathic traits, moral disengagement, and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. The findings showed that psychopathic traits were positively associated with cyberbullying behavior, moral disengagement was positively associated with cyberbullying behavior, and moral disengagement partially mediated the relationship between psychopathic traits and cyberbullying behavior. These results suggest that adolescents with higher levels of psychopathic traits are more likely to engage in cyberbullying, partly because they tend to justify harmful actions and disengage from their moral standards.

The study contributes to the existing literature by focusing specifically on psychopathy rather than treating the Dark Triad as a single construct and by examining these relationships among Malaysian adolescents, a population that has received limited attention in previous research. The findings highlight the importance of addressing both personality characteristics and moral reasoning in efforts to prevent cyberbullying. Overall, this study provides new evidence that moral disengagement is an important psychological mechanism linking psychopathic traits to cyberbullying behavior among adolescents.

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