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CONSTRUCTION AND VALIDATION OF THE URDU BULLYING SCALE

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop bullying scale in Urdu language encompassing both the perspectives of bullies and victims of bullying. The particular focus was to measure the construct appropriately among the student population who had bullying experiences throughout their academic lives. The present study used a self-constructed questionnaire that served the purpose of identifying bulling experiences among students of University of Peshawar, Pakistan. Initially, 60 items were designed for The Bullying Scale (TBS) where after further examination and corrections 29 items were left. The domains that were covered included: experiences of being bullied, engagement in the bullying behaviors, and bystander thought-processes. The remaining items were then administered on 300 students of multiple fields within the confines of UOP which included students from Medical Colleges, Pre-Medical Institutes and Bachelor programs. As bullying remains one of the significant negative experience during academic years of a person's life, it is important to understand how this phenomenon affects those who both experience bullying and partake in it. This study helps in the appropriate measurement of bullying which can help future researchers to use a psychometrically sound instrument designing interventions as well as prevention of the issue.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a prevalent social issue, that is most frequently observed in schools but certainly not confined to educational settings. Olweus (1993) defines bullying as the recurrent display of unwanted aggressive acts that are intentional in nature and reflective of an imbalance of power between two or more individuals. Bullying can manifest in several forms including physical bullying which involves repetitive negative actions carried out through direct physical contact with the victim such as pushing, shoving, hitting, etc. Verbal bullying in contrast is carried out through words and involves name calling, teasing and threats (Olweus, 1994). Relational bullying, often interchangeably referred to as social bullying involves disrupting a person's social relationships through behaviours such as spreading false information, intentional ostracism and damaging valued friendships in deliberate attempts to hurt the victim (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Cyberbullying, a relatively recent form of bullying involves the repeated and intentional use of electronic technologies and social media platforms to hurt or humiliate others (Kowalski et al., 2014) it also intensifies the psychological harm to the victims by introducing

additional risk factors such as anonymity, persistent accessibility and the enduring nature of online content (Bozyiğit et al., 2021). Bullying is acknowledged as a global concern. According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) the global prevalence of bullying among children and adolescents is deeply concerning, with one in three children (32%) worldwide reporting getting bullied at least once in the past month. Patterns of bullying also vary across genders, boys are more frequently exposed to direct forms of bullying such as hitting, shoving, etc. Whereas girls more frequently experience indirect bullying in forms of social isolation and intentional exclusion (Feijóo et al., 2022). Recent research indicates that girls are the most frequent victims and, in some cases, also the perpetrators of cyberbullying which may be explained by their greater use of social media to seek validation and approval (Yau & Reich, 2019; Tiggemann & Slater, 2017). The consequences of bullying extend beyond the momentary distress and discomfort experienced by the victims. Many victims report a profound psychological impact, including struggles with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem that contribute to difficulty in forming social bonds (Obregón-Cuesta et al., 2022; Weinreich et al., 2023). Research has revealed that bullied individuals are more likely than others to experience physical health problems, including head and stomach aches, sleeping problems and poor appetite (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013). Beyond health issues, bullying has been frequently associated with declines in academic performance, disengagement and high absenteeism (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; UNESCO, 2019). In the social context, victims of bullying report experiencing difficulties with maintaining peer relationships, may avoid participating in social interactions and at times resort maladaptive coping strategies involving substance use and aggression (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Manifestations of bullying vary widely across the globe, and it has been consistently recognized as a pervasive issue that operates across multiple settings, including educational, occupational and social environments. Research suggests that immigrants, religious minorities and ethnic minorities are among the most common targets of bias-based bullying, which can be incredibly detrimental to their psychological wellbeing (Xu et al., 2020). There are a number of factors that can explain why certain people engage in bullying. Research suggests that bullying can serve as an adaptive social strategy that may help the perpetrators attain social dominance, access to resources and social recognition within peer groups (Volk et al., 2022). Furthermore, adolescents who engage in bullying exhibit lower levels of self-regulation and higher impulsivity as compared to their non-bullying counterparts, which further exacerbates their self-control issues (Solas-Martínez et al., 2025). Social Learning theory postulates that behaviour is learned through observation. Accordingly, individuals who are frequently exposed to violence at home or consume violent content online are more likely to engage in bullying as they start to model the aggressive behaviours they observe (Zhou et al., 2023). According to a multilevel analysis that combined student-level and school-level variables to jointly explore the factors influencing school bullying, based on the survey data of Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) 2018, students who have repeated grades, are frequently absent, have been late to classes and those with lower socioeconomic and cultural status experience more severe bullying at school. Furthermore, students who feel less supported by their teachers and parents are bullied more severely than others. Additionally, students in schools with poor disciplinary climate and higher levels of inter-student competition are bullied to a greater extent (Wang & Chen, 2023). Many Western countries, recognizing the severity of this issue have developed anti-bullying interventions and programs, including the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, in attempts to reduce the prevalence of bullying and provide psychosocial support to the victims. While such interventions reflect commendable efforts by Western nations to tackle this issue, despite its alarming prevalence, bullying remains underexplored and under addressed in South Asia and particularly Pakistan.

Rationale

In Pakistan, owing to the collectivistic culture, maintaining peace and harmony often takes priority over addressing issues as deeply rooted as bullying. In Pakistan, bullying operates as a multi-contextual phenomenon that disproportionately affects children, women, men and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Children and adolescents are among the most frequent targets of bullying. Evidence suggests that more than half of the school going children, experienced bullying on the premises of socioeconomic status, appearance, illness and an imbalance of power (Salman et al., 2021). Women in Pakistan are frequently bullied for their physical appearance, skin tone, marital status and even for seeking divorce in the face of an abusive marriage, reflecting the patriarchal norms. Women are the most frequent victims of workplace harassment, evidence suggests that widowed women are more vulnerable as compared to their single, married or divorced counterparts (Shahzadi et al., 2024). In the face of economic instability and rigid social stratification, men in Pakistan who are traditionally assigned the role of a breadwinner, are frequently criticized for being unemployed or failing to meet the financial expectations, contributing to significant psychological distress (Batool & Shahnawaz, 2025). Research indicates that persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Pakistan frequently experience discrimination and are denied social , educational and employment opportunities reflecting structural failures and negative societal attitudes (Ahmad et al., 2022). Collectively, the evidence confirms that bullying in Pakistan is a multi-contextual problem that requires immediate attention. Despite its alarming rate of prevalence, bullying in Pakistan remains under-explored and under-addressed, there are no culturally relevant bullying scales in Urdu. Majority of the existing bullying scales have been developed in the West, which despite having robust psychometric properties, fail to capture culturally specific manifestations of bullying in Pakistan. Although translated versions of Western bullying scales have been developed, they focus primarily on standard forms of bullying and fail to capture the cultural nuances. The present scale addresses issues beyond the universal manifestations of bullying. For example, many items focus on appearance based ridicule, name-calling, offensive remarks, which are quite common in educational settings. Others reflect intentional ostracism, social exclusion and spreading rumors which can be especially hurtful to members of a collectivistic society. More importantly, the scale also highlights attitudinal aspects of bullying, such as power imbalances, lacking empathy for the victims, and deriving pleasure from another person's misfortune, are the factors that are seldom addressed in Western instruments but central to Pakistani context. A culturally validated Urdu bullying scale is essential for accurately measuring bullying. Such a tool will help enhance research and enable educators, counsellors and policy makers to design and implement better interventions to address bullying across diverse settings in Pakistan.

Objectives

1. To develop a culturally relevant bullying scale in Urdu language.
2. To establish psychometric properties of the newly developed bullying scale.

Methodology

Sample

The present study was carried out on 300 participants studying in various disciplines of University of Peshawar. The respondents were between 18 to 40 years (M=122.15; SD=16.47) of age which reflects average adult academic lives of Pakistani student population. The data was acquired through convenience sampling technique, depending upon numerous factors i.e. practicality of acquiring data, accessibility, and informed consent of the participants. Inclusion criteria of the sample required experience of formal schooling. The sample consisted of numerous academic institutes within the confines of University of Peshawar.

Instruments

The current study was carried out to measure bullying with the help of a self-constructed instrument that examined the phenomenon of

bullying from three differentiated perspectives: the victim, the perpetrator, and the bystander. The initial draft contained 60 items which were later refined into 29 items following the expert review and item revision. Each statement was rated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1(Strongly Agree) to 5(Strongly Disagree), which allowed respondents to point out the intensity of their reaction towards the item. The questionnaire was made to capture the extent of bullying experiences in academic environments, encompassing social, emotional, verbal and physical forms of aggression.

Procedure

After the qualitative item analysis the final draft was applied on the students of university of Peshawar studying in different colleges and departments. The students were approached in their institutes and the purpose of the study was explained to them. Those who agreed to participate were given the Urdu Bullying scale. Some individuals completed it in individual setting while others were given it in the classrooms in group setting. They were assured about the privacy and confidentiality of their responses. After they completed the form, they were thanked for their cooperation.

Results

Table 1

Item Total Correlation of Bullying Scale (Items=46, N=300)

Item No	*r*	Item No	*r*	Item No	*r*
1	.49	16	.26	31	.40
2	.53	17	.57	32	.27
3	.24	18	.46	33	.58
4	.23	19	.30	34	.47
5	.27	20	.41	35	.40
6	.45	21	.54	36	.35
7	.22	22	-.03	37	.33
8	.39	23	.54	38	.28
9	.57	24	.51	39	.16
10	.49	25	.59	40	.43
11	.52	26	.54	41	-.14
12	.55	27	.17	42	.39
13	.52	28	.51	43	.13
14	.54	29	-.08	44	.42
15	.60	30	.39	45	.07
				46	.36

Note. *r* = total item correlation for the bullying scale

Table 1 shows correlation of each item with the total score. Item 3,4,5,7,16,22,27,29,32,38,39,41,43 and 45 are excluded as they have correlation below .30. And Item 1, 21 and 25 are delete as they are cross loaded on both factors.

Table 2

Item total correlation of retained items for the bullying scale (items=29 , N=300)

Item No	*r*	Item No	*r*
2	.52	24	.55
6	.40	26	.58
8	.35	28	.56
9	.59	30	.41
10	.48	31	.45
11	.50	33	.63
12	.62	34	.52
13	.51	35	.45
14	.53	36	.41
15	.59	37	.34
17	.58	40	.44
18	.43	42	.46
19	.29	44	.45
20	.41	46	.37
23	.54		

Note. *r* = total item correlation of retained items for the bullying scale

Table 2 shows that item no.19 have correlation below .30, thus this item is excluded from the table.

Table 3

KMO and Bartlett Test of Sphericity of Sampling Adequacy for The Bullying Scale

Kaiser-Meyer-olkin Measure of sampling adequacy	Bartlett's test of sphericity Approx chi-square	Df	P
.895	4195.192	406	.000

Findings in table 3 reveals that Bartlett test of sphericity is significant and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is .895 which is near to 1, thus showing the data is appropriate to run the factor analysis.

Scree Plot of The Bullying Scale

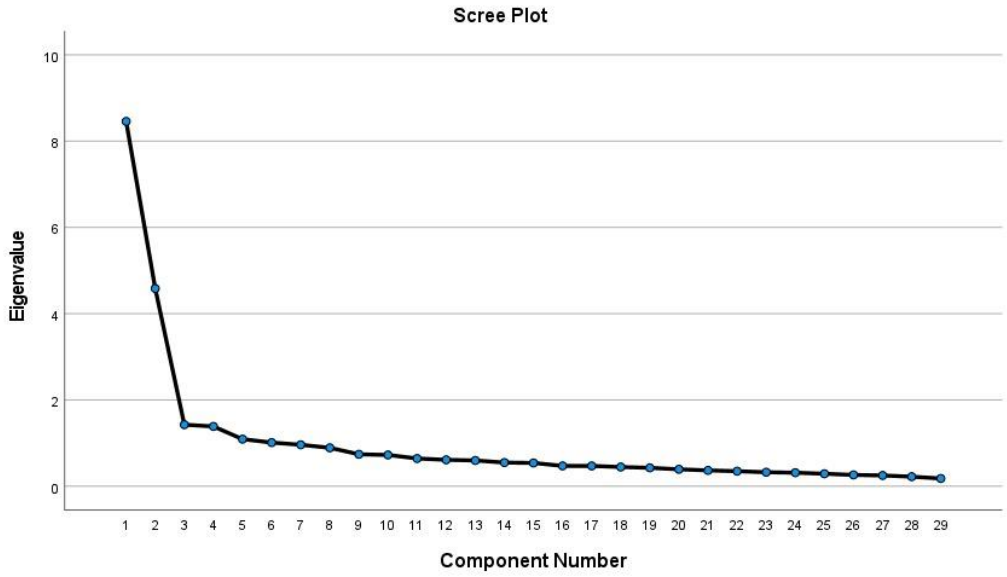


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the scree plot for factor matrix of 29 items of the bullying scale through principal component analysis using direct oblimn method(N=300). The scree plot shows the two factor structure of the scale as the point of inflection starts after the second factor.

Table 4

Eigen Value and Percentages of Variances explained by the two factors of the Bullying Scale

Factors	eigen value	percentage of variance	cumulative percentage
1	8.45	29.16	29.16
2	4.58	15.80	44.97

The table 4 shows the eigen values, percentage of variance and cumulative percentage of the two factors. First factor is explaining 29.16% of the variance and the second factor is explaining 15.80% of the variance. Overall, the factors have explained 44.97% of the total variance.

Table 5
Factor Loading of the Bullying Scale with Direct Oblimin Rotation

The Bullying Scale items	Factor Loading	
	1	2
Factor 1: Victim Scale		
2	.57	.13
6	.65	-.09
8	.65	-.18
9	.70	.10
10	.80	-.14
11	.76	-.08
12	.72	.11
13	.77	-.07
14	.74	-.02
15	.73	.06
17	.51	.27
18	.66	-.07
19	.43	-.01
20	.35	.23
23	.46	.28
Factor 2: Perpetrator Scale		
24	.20	.55
26	.20	.59
28	.11	.64
30	.04	.54
31	-.04	.65
33	.12	.73
34	.00	.70
35	-.15	.77
36	-.17	.73
37	-.20	.70
40	.05	.53
42	-.12	.76
44	-.06	.66
46	.09	.39

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Table 5 shows the factor loadings of the bullying scale on two factors. Factor one comprises of 15 items (2,6,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,17,18,19,20,23) with the factor loading ranging from .35 to .80. Factor two comprises of 14 items (24,26,28,30,31,33,34,35,36,37,40,42,44,46) with factor loading ranging from .35 to .77.

Table 6
Psychometric Properties of the Bullying Scale

Scale	No of items	M	*SD*	Range		α
				Min	Max	
Urdu Bullying Scale	29	122.15	16.47	40	145	.90
Victim Subscale	15	62.20	10.23	15	75	.89
Perpetrator Subscale	14	59.96	10.01	14	70	.89

From table 6 coefficient alpha (r=.905) of 29 items of the bullying scale it is clear that the scale is highly reliable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate a culturally relevant bullying scale in Urdu, to assess manifestations of bullying across diverse contexts among Pakistani students. The study was conducted in multiple phases. Initially, a comprehensive item pool was generated. The first draft contained 46 items capturing multiple types of bullying, including verbal aggression, social ostracism and attitudinal aspects such as feeling pleasure by witnessing another person's misfortune were constructed. The preliminary version of the questionnaire was submitted for expert evaluation. The research supervisor reviewed the item pool and provided extensive feedback and guided the team towards accuracy. It led the research towards conceptual clarity and refinement of item wording. Based on the suggestions of the supervisor, the ambiguous items were rephrased for better understanding.

After the completion of qualitative analysis, the scale was administered to three hundred students (N=300) enrolled at University of Peshawar for quantification of items through experimental try out. To establish the validity of the scale, first, item-total correlations were computed to examine the contribution of each item to the overall scale. Items with correlations lower than r=0.30 (Item 3, 4, 5, 7, 16, 22, 27, 29, 32, 38, 39, 41, 43 & 45) were excluded, leaving behind 32 items. Initially, Item 19 fell slightly below the correlation threshold, but owing to its theoretical significance the item was retained in the refined 32-item version for further analysis.

Furthermore, factor analysis was done to study the underlying factor structure, item 1, 21 and 25 were cross-loaded on both factors and were deleted from the final scale because they failed to clearly represent a single underlying construct and could potentially compromise the conceptual clarity and discriminant validity of the two factors. Followed by this deletion, the entire analysis was re-run on the refined items. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy (KMO= .895) which is close to 1 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2=4195.192, df = 406, p< .001), indicated the appropriateness of data to run factor analysis for factor extraction. Principal component analysis with direct oblimin rotation revealed a two-factor structure, where Factor 1 with an eigenvalue of 8.45 explained 29.16% of the variance and Factor 2 with an eigenvalue of 4.58 explained 15.80% of the variance. Collectively, the factors have explained 44.97% of the total variance. The scree plot also supported the two factor structure solution. Factor 1, labelled as *Victim Subscale*, consisted of 15 items (2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23) with factor loading ranging from .35 to .80. This factor captures various manifestations of bullying, including name-calling, teasing and derogatory labelling that are highly relevant to Pakistani context and highlights the direct experiences of victims which are consistent with previous findings emphasizing the prevalence of verbal and relational bullying across multiple social settings (Olweus 1993, 1994; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2014). Factor 2, labelled *Perpetrator Subscale* comprised of 14 items (24, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 42, 44, 46) with factor loading ranging from .35 to .77. This factor highlights the internal motivations that can drive a person to engage in bullying behaviours such as deriving pleasure from witnessing another person's misfortune. Research suggests that hostile emotions such as envy can evoke feelings of malicious pleasure among adolescents and consequently increase the likelihood of engaging in bullying (Hofleitner et al., 2025). In the context of school bullying, researchers have noticed that bullies often perceive their victims' distress as entertaining which can further reinforce bullying behaviour (Smith, 2014). The emergence of this factor aligns with previous research findings suggesting that affective and attitudinal components can amplify bullying behaviors particularly in collectivist societies where in-group/out group interactions influence peer relationships (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Xu et al.,

2020). The reliability of the 29-item Urdu Bullying Scale, estimated using Cronbach's alpha was .905, which is excellent, indicating high internal consistency. The combination of high reliability and clear factor structure indicates robust psychometrics and suitability for both research and practical use.

Implications

The culturally relevant Urdu bullying scale has far-reaching implications across diverse settings. In educational environments, it can help identify potential victims and perpetrators of bullying, leading towards timely implementation of appropriate interventions in the pursuit of a safer and more inclusive learning environment for everyone. In clinical settings, the scale can help the psychologists and counsellors assess the potential impact of bullying on the victims, which is fundamental for designing interventions and extend psychosocial support to the victims. Policymakers and administrators can also use this scale to design effective policies and bullying prevention programs in attempts to address locally prevalent forms of bullying, including social exclusion, appearance-based ridicule and derogatory labelling. Furthermore, the scale can serve as a reliable instrument for researchers to study the prevalence, patterns and consequences of bullying within the Pakistani context. Overall, the bullying scale is a practical and culturally sensitive instrument with robust psychometrics that can help enhance the development and wellbeing of Pakistani people.

Limitations

Despite the thoroughness of the research methodology, certain limitations must be kept in mind for improving the standard of future studies done by the research team.

1. First of all, the scale was entirely self-constructed by the research team, and although an expert review was done, the study was not exposed to open criticism from people of different viewpoints and different cultures. The feedback was from a limited source and the generalizability of the study is questionable. The study needs to be exposed to large populations to check its scope.
2. Convenience Sampling was used which leads to the issue that the sample was not an accurate representation of the population and the culture because the data was collected from a very limited and restricted setting.
3. The sample size is very minute for it to give accurate and precise results. The study should have been tested over a larger sample.
4. The study relies on self-report measures. The answers can be biased or faulty including issues of recall inaccuracies, social desirability, and underreporting of socially sensitive behaviors.
5. Since the scale has been constructed in Urdu language, it cannot be applicable to other cultures in its original and raw form.

Suggestions

A few suggestions that can improve the study may include;

1. The study should be exposed to multiple contexts and cultures to check its psychometric properties and its accuracy. A cross-cultured applicability should be established.
2. Probability based sampling techniques should be used for sample selection so that the sample can better represent the population.
3. The sample size should be increased as well as population diversity should be increased to make the scale more generalizable.

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Appendix

FINAL DRAFT OF THE BULLYING SCALE

نام _____ عمر _____

جنس _____ تعلیم _____.

زبان _____

ہدایات:

السلام علیکم

زیر نظر سوالنامہ تحقیقی سلسلے میں ترتیب دیا گیا ہے، ہم آپ کے خیالات جاننے میں دلچسپی رکھتے ہیں۔ یہ معلومات تحقیقی مقصد کے لیے استعمال کی جائے گی۔آپ کا نام یا آپکی شناخت ضروری نہیں ہے۔ براہ کرم اپنے حقیقی خیالات اظہار کریں۔

شکریہ۔

درج ذیل دیئے گئے پیمانے کو بطور گائیڈ استعمال کرتے ہوئے، ہر جملے کے کے سامنے دیے گئے ایک جواب کا انتخاب کریں کہ آپ اس سے کس حد تک متفق یا غیر متفق ہیں۔

ا .مکمل متفق	متفق .2	غیر جانبدار .3	غیر متفق .4	مکمل غیر متفق .5

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	مجھے میرے ہم جماعت برے القاب سے پکارتے ہیں۔					
2.	اگر کوئی مجھے چھیڑ نا چھیرتی یاد ھمکی دیتا ادیتی ہے تو میرے ہم جماعتوں میں سے کوئی اسے نہیں روکتا۔					
3.	میرے ہم جماعت میری پیٹھ پیچھے ہنستے ہیں۔					
4.	مجھ سے کلاس میں کوئی بات چیت نہیں کرتا /کرتی۔					
5.	میرے ہم جماعت مجھے نظر انداز کرتے ہیں۔					
6.	مجھے لگتا ہے کہ میرے ہم جماعت مجھ پر ضرورت سے زیادہ تنقید کرتے ہیں۔					
7.	میرے جماعت میں کوئی میرے ساتھ بیٹھنا پسند نہیں کرتا۔					

8.	میرے ہم جماعت میری کسی بات یا رائے کو اہمیت نہیں دیتے۔					
9.	میرے ہم جماعت مجھے بہت زیادہ ٹوکتے ہیں۔					
10.	میرے ہم جماعت مجھے نیچہ د کھانے کی بہت کوشش کرتے ہیں۔					
11.	میرے ہم جماعت مجھے کسی بھی سرگرمی میں حصہ لینے سے روکتے ہیں۔					
12.	اپنے کچھ ہم جماعتوں کے رویے کی وجہ سے میں سکول جانا پسند نہیں کرتا /کرتی۔					
13.	میں دوسروں کے نازیبا سلوک کا شکار ہوتا /ہوتی ہوں۔					
14.	میں نازیبا سلوک کا شکار ہونے والوں کے لیے کوئی ہمدردی محسوس نہیں کرتا /کرتی۔					
15.	میرے ہم جماعت میرے ساتھ بدسلوکی کرتے ہیں۔					
16.	مجھے جو شخص پسند نہ ہو میں اسے سب کے سامنے برابھلا کہتا کہتی ہوں۔					
17.	میرے جن لوگوں کے ساتھ تعلقات اچھے نہیں میں ان کے بارے میں جھوٹی افواہیں پھیلاتا /پھیلاتی ہوں۔					
18.	لوگوں کی صورت کا مذاق اڑانا کوئی بری بات نہیں۔					
19.	اپنے مفاد کے لیے دوسروں پر دباؤ ڈالنے میں کوئی بری بات نہیں۔					
20.	میں دوسروں کو تکلیف میں دیکھ کر بھی ان کے لیے کوئی ہمدردی محسوس نہیں کرتا /کرتی۔					
21.	میں کمزور لوگوں پر غالب ہو کر خوشی محسوس کرتا /کرتی ہوں۔					
22.	دوسروں کو ڈرا دھمکا کر میں بہت پر اعتماد محسوس کرتا /کرتی ہوں۔					
23.	میں بد سلو کی اور بد معاشی کرنے والوں کو عزت کی نظر سے دیکھتا دیکھتی ہوں۔					
24.	عموما دو سروں پر طنز کرتا /کرتی ہوں۔					
25.	میرے خیال میں طنز کرنا کوئی بری بات نہیں					
26.	میں لوگوں کو جان بوجھ کر چھیڑتا /چھیڑتی ہوں					
27.	مجھے لوگوں کو ان کے ذاتی مسائل پر چھیڑ کر مزہ آتا ہے۔					
28.	میں نے کسی کو جسمانی نقصان کی دھمکی دے کر ڈرایا ہے۔					
29.	میں نے سوشل میڈیا کے ذریعے لوگوں کو ڈرایا دھمکایا ہے۔					

Note: This scale is open access, the authors permit the use of this scale for future research.
Victim Scale: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15.
Perpetrator Scale: 16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29.