Lived Experiences of Parents with Adolescent Victims in Cyberspace

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: *Original Research* **How to cite this article:** Motamedi Qalati, M., Namdarpour, F., Sharifi Esfahani M. (2024). Lived Experiences of Parents with Adolescent Victims in Cyberspace. *Iranian Journal of Educational Sociology, 7*(1), 150-165. http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijes.7.1.15 © 2024 the authors. Published by Iranian Association for Sociology of Education, Tehran, Iran. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.	**Purpose:** In the current era, cyberspace has become one of the most concerning issues that can influence the social and psychological world of humans, leading to adverse outcomes for them. A phenomenon that has recently attracted the attention of parents, researchers, and experts is the victimization of adolescent girls in cyberspace. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study was to identify the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls, based on the lived experiences of their parents. **Methodology:** The research method was qualitative and conducted through thematic analysis. The statistical population included parents of female students victimized in cyberspace in secondary school during the 2023-2024 academic year in the city of Isfahan, and the sampling method was purposive. To collect the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, and theoretical saturation was achieved after interviewing 16 parents. In this study, the Guba and Lincoln (1985) method was employed for validating the findings. Data analysis (coding and theme identification) conducted with MAXQDA software for thematic analysis. **Findings:** In this study, 17 basic themes based on mothers' lived experiences and 19 basic themes based on fathers' lived experiences were extracted. From these basic themes, 8 organizing themes were identified: innate characteristics, lack of skills, dependence on the internet, absence of friendly and intimate family relationships, economic pressure, lack of interest in education, and cyber literacy, which were categorized under 3 overarching themes: individual, familial, and environmental. **Conclusion:** The study's findings highlight the complex interplay between individual, family, and environmental factors influencing teenage girls' vulnerability in cyberspace. Addressing these factors holistically, through supportive family relationships, educational initiatives, and enhanced digital literacy, is crucial for safeguarding adolescents against online risks. *Keywords: Victimization in cyberspace, Cyberspace, Adolescent girls, Qualitative approach.*

1. Introduction

Cyberspace is a real electronic environment where individuals' communications occur dynamically and directly, in a rapid, borderless manner with its unique tools (Abasi & Moradi, 2015). Additionally, the internet and computers have made cyberspace conceivable and controllable by humans. The widespread presence of the internet has enriched the lives of adolescents (Parsakia, Rostami, Saadati, & Navabinejad, 2023). They extensively use the internet for learning academic, social skills, and entertainment without familiarizing themselves with its functions and proper usage (Parsakia, Rostami, Darbani, et al., 2023). Since cyberspace allows adolescents to have an attractive and exciting space without the need for physical movement or displacement, it has become the most important public space where they are present and establish social interactions and relationships with their peers. Despite its many advantages, this space is the biggest threat and danger to adolescents in the current era (Alavi & Mahoor, 2023). One of these dangers and disadvantages is adolescents becoming victims of bullies in cyberspace. The term "victim" in Persian is used to mean a sacrifice. In Persian etymology, a victim means something or someone sacrificed with the intention of gaining God's satisfaction or someone who loses their life due to an unintended incident (such as accidents and earthquakes) or due to being involuntarily placed in a difficult situation or unsuitable environment or because of another person's actions (Fariba et al., 2022). Victimization in cyberspace is a major problem among adolescents. They receive aggressive, threatening, harassing, embarrassing, and ostracizing behaviors through electronic devices by a bully in cyberspace; therefore, these behaviors inflict harm and stigma on the victim. They are also repetitive (Chun et al., 2020). A person or group that inflicts harm on another person or group through the deliberate, repeated use of information and communication technologies, by sending cruel texts and graphics, is called a cyberbully, and individuals who are subjected to such bullying behaviors in cyberspace and are unable to defend themselves against them are called victims of cyberspace (Brown et al., 2014).

Buelga and colleagues (2019) defined victimization in cyberspace in two forms: direct and indirect. Direct victimization includes direct attacks (insulting and mocking the individual) and social behaviors (removing or blocking the individual from social groups). Indirect victimization includes manipulating personal images (creating videos of the individual or tampering with their photos), identity theft (creating a fake internet profile with the victim's personal information), and hacking (someone changing the victim's social network password so that they cannot access it) (Buelga et al., 2019). Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2015) reported a higher likelihood of internal and external emotional problems in adolescents victimized in cyberspace compared to those traditionally victimized (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015). The negative consequences of victimization in cyberspace are so serious that it has been mentioned as a global public health issue (Ferrara et al., 2018). According to research by Marciano and colleagues (2020), a victim, after being victimized in cyberspace, exhibits aggressive behaviors in this space, and the cycle of bullying-victimization continues (Marciano et al., 2020). Bullying can start virtually and then turn into traditional bullying, meaning a victim of cyberspace can also become a victim in real space (Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022; Şener et al., 2022). Despite research conducted on victimization in cyberspace, researchers such as Bradshaw and colleagues (2017) and Carvalho and colleagues (2017) see the need for newer and more research in this area as necessary (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Carvalho et al., 2017). Also, research has confirmed the negative psychological, emotional, academic, social, and behavioral consequences of being victimized in cyberspace by peers, including psychological problems like stress and guilt (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2019), mental health issues and related disorders (Kwan et al., 2020), low self-esteem (Fan et al., 2019), shame (Arató et al., 2022), internal problems like depression and anxiety (Marciano et al., 2020), behavioral problems like eating disorders including body dissatisfaction, undereating and overeating behaviors, social adjustment problems (Ramos Salazar, 2021), school problems and academic progress (Gardella et al., 2017), anger (Chan & Wong, 2017), loneliness (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2019), low participation in social activities, emotional distress (Navarro, Ruiz-Oliva, et al., 2015; Navarro, Yubero, & Larrañaga, 2015), and ultimately suicidal thoughts (Dorol--Beauroy-Eustache & Mishara, 2021; Tamarit-Sumalla et al., 2022; Thompson et al., 2012).

Modecki and colleagues (2014) report that victimization in cyberspace, due to the anonymous identity in cyberspace and consequently the imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, is much more destructive than traditional victimization. Research has been conducted on the prevalence of victimization in cyberspace, but the results vary; therefore, it is difficult to understand how many people are involved in this phenomenon (Modecki et al., 2014). The

prevalence of victimization in cyberspace peaks in mid-adolescence (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2022). Sener et al. (2022) reported the prevalence of victimization in cyberspace among adolescents as 35% (Şener et al., 2022). Moreover, Chen and Chen (2020) found that in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, the common rate of victimization in cyberspace among adolescents is about 30% (Chen & Chen, 2020). In Iran, statistics show that about 42% of adolescents using virtual networks have experienced victimization in cyberspace; therefore, victimization of adolescents in cyberspace is one of the most important issues in today's world. Also, adolescent girls, given their stronger feelings and emotions, are more vulnerable in this space. On the other hand, parents play a fundamental role in going through stages of development and in raising their children, and the way they interact with their children, the support, self-esteem, and confidence they give to their children, as well as their parenting style, have a significant impact on the mental health, vulnerability, and behaviors of adolescents in both real and virtual spaces; therefore, in this study, we have dealt with identifying the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace by conducting comprehensive interviews and studies of the parents of adolescent girls victimized in cyberspace in order to prevent their victimization in this space (Danesh et al., 2023; Fariba et al., 2022; Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022).

Rahmati and Seifi (2021) in their research found that bullying and victimization in cyberspace, given their breadth, variety, and different dimensions, are influenced by many factors at different ages, which can play a protective or hazardous role. Therefore, bullying and victimization in cyberspace cannot be reduced to a single factor. Instead, a set of individual, innate characteristics, social, policies, and programs must be in harmony with developmental differences in the nature and prevalence of cyber harassment, as well as risk and protective factors related to specific age groups (Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022). Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2022) addressed the experience of victimization in cyberspace among students in terms of the effects of social support, feelings of loneliness, and self-efficacy. They found that social support and self-efficacy have a negative relationship with victimization in cyberspace, and feelings of loneliness have a positive relationship with victimization in cyberspace (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2022). According to research by Hong et al. (2018), at the individual level, no variable was indirectly associated with victimization in cyberspace. However, gender and depression were directly related to victimization

in cyberspace. At the microsystem level, parental neglect was related to victimization in cyberspace, and parental neglect and family dysfunction were associated with direct victimization in cyberspace. Weak relationships with peers caused direct and indirect victimization of victims in cyberspace, and victimization at school was associated with victimization in cyberspace. At the system level, higher levels of parental bullying and weak relationships with peers led to an increased risk of victimization in cyberspace. Also, higher levels of family dysfunction and weak relationships with peers were associated with a higher risk of indirect victimization (Hong et al., 2018). Also, according to research by Olenik-Shemesh and Heiman (2016), factors such as low body respect, low social support, low self-esteem, and low social self-efficacy are predictors of victimization in cyberspace (Olenik-Shemesh & Heiman, 2017).

Based on what has been said, the present study aimed to answer the question: What are the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls?

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

In the present study, a qualitative approach and thematic analysis method were used. The research timeframe was in the second half of 2023, and the statistical population consisted of parents with adolescent daughters (ages 16-18) who were victims of cyberspace in the city of Isfahan. The sampling method in this research was purposive. Theoretical saturation occurred after 16 interviews with parents. In this study, no new findings emerged in the last three interviews.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Researcher-Made Questionnaire

The research tool was a semi-structured interview, and the duration of the interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. Parents of secondary school female students victimized in cyberspace were contacted. The purpose of the research was explained to them, and they were invited to participate in the interview. Written consent was also obtained from the participants. At the beginning of the interview, a general conversation was conducted to relax the participants, demographic questions were answered, and then the main research questions were stated. Based on the responses of the interviewees, additional questions were asked for further clarity. After the initial interviews, other questions were

added to the initial ones and posed in subsequent interviews. When new information was obtained from an interviewee, if the next interviewee did not mention that category, it was posed as a question for this interviewee and subsequent interviewees. The process continued until it was determined whether this category was also applicable to them. Interviews continued until saturation was reached.

2.3. Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed, the recorded interviews were transcribed and each interview was assigned a number. For the analysis of the interview texts, thematic analysis was used with the help of MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. In this research, Guba and Lincoln's (1985) method was employed for validating the findings (Lincoln et al., 1985).

3. Findings and Results

Initially, the interview text was read several times, and content related to the research question was identified and coded. Coding was based on the interview and the pre-defined numbers. Eventually, for each code, a label was chosen, and then basic themes that had the closest concept to each other were grouped together, and appropriate meanings and words were created. In other words, basic themes were categorized into organizing themes and ultimately into overarching themes. Organizing and overarching themes are essentially the answers to the research question. Some of the answers to the research question "What are the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls?" are shown in Table 1 based on the lived experiences of mothers and in Table 2 based on the lived experiences of fathers.

Table 1

Qualitative Coding Based on Mothers' Lived Experiences

Overarching Category	Organizing Category	Basic Category	Examples
Individual	Innate characteristics	Introversion and isolation of the child	Gets angry easily, sometimes behaves badly, mood fluctuates, mostly keeps to themselves, lounging in a corner, not sociable, always retreats to their room. I have to beg or threaten them to come out and greet guests, they never leave their room.
		Aggressiveness and incompatibility of the child	Is aggressive and sometimes acts impulsively, at times withdrawn, sometimes I don't know what's wrong, they just won't talk to me.
	Lack of skills	Lack of friends or healthy friendship relationships	They were never really close with their friends, always finding fault in others, to avoid relationships, would become upset and always did certain things, meaning they would imitate the bad behaviors of their undesirable friends, not following the good ones, just imitating the bad.
	Internet dependency	Inappropriate sleep times and staying up late at night	Stays up late at night, sleeps in late till 2 or 3 PM during holidays.
		Excessive use of cyberspace	With me, just barely manages to say good morning out of obligation, is irritable, aggressive, no longer listens to me, comes home from school, eats something, sleeps, then gets up and goes to their phone until night.
Family	Lack of friendly and intimate family relationships	Lack of a proper relationship with siblings	Has two brothers who are married, interacts coldly, and hardly ever comes out of their room when they visit. Doesn't interact with their brothers' wives, I wish they would be friends, but they are not.
		Absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child	I want to be close, but they don't talk to me so I can't connect with them. They're mostly with their friends, most times when I want to talk, they're sitting in front of the TV.
	Neglect in parenting	Non-acceptance or partial acceptance of the child's behaviors by parents	He always says; "You don't understand me, that's why I shout, that's why I did this."
		Lack of parental awareness or	I don't know much. Just what they tell me. There's secrecy. No other way, sometimes I secretly check their phone to see what they're doing, haven't seen much. They delete things. Their phone is now

		supervision over the child's behavior	password-protected. It wasn't before, but they've realized and set a password, though they haven't shown that they know I checked, but they've set a password.
		Inappropriate parental reaction to the child due to excessive phone use	As soon as I talk to them, give advice, and explain our family situation, that their father is sensitive about their actions, their older brother and sister-in-law, they immediately become aggressive, pick up their phone, and don't listen to my complete conversation.
		Discrimination or perceived discrimination among children by parents	I think I don't differentiate between them, but they say you do. Because they are the child, the younger one, I pay attention to them. They say you love them more.
		Insufficient planning by parents for the child's leisure time	If there's free time, like in the summer wanting to go to classes, for example, language requires effort and practice but if they barely study their lessons, they definitely won't do it, and that they stay up late at night, wake up late in the morning, don't study well, their leisure time is spent hanging out with friends outside.
		Not spending enough private time with the father	With me, just barely manages to say good morning out of obligation, is irritable, aggressive, no longer listens to me, comes home from school, eats something, sleeps, then gets up and goes to their phone until night.
		Imposing inappropriate restrictions by parents based on the child's age and developmental stage	My daughter wants to dress like most of her friends who now dress inappropriately in society, I don't want her to be like that and unfortunately, there are many such kids around her.
	Economic pressure	Lack of financial means to fulfill the child's desires	"Why did you bring me into this world if you couldn't provide for my needs? If I ever get married, that is if, I'll only have children when all conditions are met." These are the reproaches my daughter makes towards us.
Environmental	Cyberspace literacy	Lack of sufficient parental knowledge about cyberspace and its uses	Very little, just the basics of social media, and no, I don't know how to monitor and control.
	Lack of interest in education	Disinterest in school and academic decline	Sleeps too much, their sleeping bothers me a lot, very little planning in their studies, even though I talk a lot with them, telling them to plan.

Table 2

Qualitative Coding Based on Fathers' Lived Experiences

Overarching Category	Organizing Category	Basic Category	Examples
Individual	Innate characteristics	Introversion and isolation of the child	Very calm, sometimes I even worry about how they will defend themselves in society tomorrow because of their excessive calmness, often alone and withdrawn.
		Aggressiveness and incompatibility of the child	Doesn't talk to me or their mother, is thin-skinned, easily hurt, takes things personally, sensitive, lacks gratitude, often cries.
	Lack of skills	Lack of friends or healthy friendship relationships	I think, because they don't have many friends or don't go out much, they get caught up in social media. However, participating in real-life classes outside of social media could influence them to use it less.
	Internet dependency	Inappropriate sleep times and staying up late at night	Sometimes at 1, 2, 3 in the middle of the night, I've woken up to find my daughter had an exam and was on her phone, which frustrated me. I told her this is not the way to study, being on the phone all the time is not beneficial.
		Excessive use of cyberspace	They used to say during the pandemic, instead of school, they had to study on their phone, now they say they use it for studying, but I don't think so, the pandemic is over. What are they doing with the phone at two or three in the morning! There's no teacher or class at that time.
Family	Lack of friendly and intimate family relationships	Lack of a proper relationship with siblings	They don't get along with their brothers or their brothers' wives, when guests come, they mostly stay in their room, they don't even call their brothers.
		Absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child	My job requires me not to be home much, but my attention to them is very high, yet they don't often come to me.

	Insufficiency in family outings and social relationships	We don't have much contact with relatives because most are not nearby, and we don't have much interaction with relatives.
Neglect in parenting	Non-acceptance or partial acceptance of the child's behaviors by parents	Since using the phone, their attire has been disheveled, truthfully, we are not satisfied, their dress has become more alive, and no matter what we say, in the neighborhood, among relatives and acquaintances, we tell them to be mindful, they become aggressive, don't listen to us, hopefully, it gets better.
	Lack of parental awareness or supervision over the child's behavior	We try to be with them, either myself or their mother, to use it less, to supervise, but they don't listen, have become bad-tempered, more aggressive.
	Inappropriate parental reaction to the child due to excessive phone use	I tell them to study, if you've studied, get up, help your mother, there's dishwashing, cooking, help her out, but they don't go, we tell them, but they don't go.
	Discrimination or perceived discrimination among children by parents	They have a younger brother, honestly, they are quite jealous of him because we pay attention to both, but they don't see the affection given to themselves.
	Insufficient planning by parents for the child's leisure time	I say I'm not home much, but my paycheck situation is such that I deposit half of my salary into a card in their mother's possession, I've left it to their mother to write down whatever they like and enroll them in any class that's deemed appropriate.
	Not spending enough private time with the father	I think I need to spend more time, for them, as they say, being alone with them is much more impactful than being with their brother, just the two of us going out, or me watching the brother, so they can go out alone with their mother, spend more time together.
	Imposing inappropriate restrictions by parents based on the child's age and developmental stage	After all, their mother doesn't let them go out with friends or for a stroll, at least with the phone, they could limit themselves, what's the point if I take that away too, opposing them.
	Lack of daily event awareness between parent and child	I don't have much information about their relationship with their classmates and friends, whether outside or inside school, but I remember they once took money from me saying they wanted to go to a cafe with friends, I think they don't hang out that much, I don't have information on this.
Economic pressure	Lack of financial means to fulfill the child's desires	Money, everything is about money, work from morning to night to make some money, which they give late. If it comes and my situation improves so that I can work less, somehow retire. Then I can go on the phone with my daughter. Pay more attention, spend more time. Less work on Thursdays and Fridays, go on trips, shopping together.
Cyberspace literacy	Lack of sufficient parental knowledge about cyberspace and its uses	I don't have a new phone. I'm a construction worker, I don't need it, my daughter and her mother have it, her mother knows more, the banking tasks I have are done by my wife or Fatemeh. I don't understand new phones. I don't know what they do on the phone.
Lack of interest in education	Disinterest in school and academic decline	Her mother knows, ask her mother. I don't have information about their grades. But going to school and studying like this is futile. Won't get anywhere. Staying up at night has frustrated everyone. Lights on, neither her sister can sleep, nor can we rest at night. I don't think their grades are good, staying up at night, don't think they'll become a doctor or anything impressive, ask her mother again.

Based on the results obtained, it cannot be definitively stated that the factors affecting victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls based on the lived experiences of parents in the city of Isfahan include 17 basic themes based on mothers' lived experiences and 19 basic themes based on fathers' lived experiences which are similar between mothers' and fathers' basic themes and all fall under 8 organizing themes and 3 overarching themes. The aim of this research is not to say that these themes are the only factors affecting the occurrence of victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls. In fact, these factors, based on the lived experiences of the interviewees, are those that have been observed more in adolescent girls victimized in cyberspace and may even be incompatible with each other or have some overlap. In Table 3 and Table 4, the basic, organizing, and overarching themes of mothers and fathers are categorized along with the frequency of respondents who have shaped the factors affecting the occurrence of victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls from the research findings.

Table 3

Extracted Themes Based on Mothers' Lived Experiences

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Frequency
Individual	Innate characteristics	Introversion and isolation of the child	5 codes from 4 texts
		Aggressiveness and incompatibility of the child	9 codes from 6 texts
	Lack of skills	Lack of friends or healthy friendship relationships	4 codes from 3 texts
	Internet dependency	Inappropriate sleep times and staying up late at night	5 codes from 3 texts
		Excessive use of cyberspace	7 codes from 5 texts
Family	Lack of friendly and intimate family relationships	Lack of a proper relationship with siblings	5 codes from 5 texts
		Absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child	13 codes from 8 texts
	Neglect in parenting	Non-acceptance or partial acceptance of the child's behaviors by parents	3 codes from 3 texts
		Lack of parental awareness or supervision over the child's behavior	5 codes from 4 texts
		Inappropriate parental reaction to the child due to excessive phone use	4 codes from 4 texts
		Discrimination or perceived discrimination among children by parents	2 codes from 2 texts
		Insufficient planning by parents for the child's leisure time	3 codes from 3 texts
		Not spending enough private time with the father	1 code from 1 text
		Imposing inappropriate restrictions by parents based on the child's age and developmental stage	10 codes from 6 texts
	Economic pressure	Lack of financial means to fulfill the child's desires	3 codes from 3 texts
Environmental	Cyberspace literacy	Lack of sufficient parental knowledge about cyberspace and its uses	5 codes from 5 texts
	Lack of interest in education	Disinterest in school and academic decline	6 codes from 5 texts

Table 4

Extracted Themes Based on Fathers' Lived Experiences

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Frequency
Individual	Innate characteristics	Introversion and isolation of the child	3 codes in 3 texts
		Aggressiveness and incompatibility of the child	2 codes in 2 texts
	Lack of skills	Lack of friends or healthy friendship relationships	4 codes from 4 texts
	Internet dependency	Inappropriate sleep times and staying up late at night	3 codes from 3 texts
		Excessive use of cyberspace	3 codes from 3 texts
Family	Lack of friendly and intimate family relationships	Lack of a proper relationship with siblings	4 codes from 4 texts
		Absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child	7 codes from 10 texts
		Insufficiency in family outings and social relationships	3 codes from 5 texts
	Neglect in parenting	Non-acceptance or partial acceptance of the child's behaviors by parents	3 codes from 3 texts
		Lack of parental awareness or supervision over the child's behavior	12 codes from 6 texts
		Inappropriate parental reaction to the child due to excessive phone use	7 codes from 5 texts
		Discrimination or perceived discrimination among children by parents	2 codes from 2 texts
		Insufficient planning by parents for the child's leisure time	3 codes from 2 texts
		Not spending enough private time with the father	1 code from 1 text
		Imposing inappropriate restrictions by parents based on the child's age and developmental stage	4 codes from 3 texts
		Lack of daily event awareness between parent and child	2 codes from 2 texts
	Economic pressure	Lack of financial means to fulfill the child's desires	4 codes from 3 texts
Environmental	Cyberspace literacy	Lack of sufficient parental knowledge about cyberspace and its uses	7 codes from 6 texts
	Lack of interest in education	Disinterest in school and academic decline	6 codes from 6 texts

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Parents have significant concerns about the security and health of their children during developmental stages, especially during the critical period of adolescence. One of the current world concerns of parents, arising from the growth and expansion of technology and technology, is the victimization of their adolescent daughters in cyberspace. Adolescent girls are more vulnerable in cyberspace due to their emotional nature. Given the incredibly high attraction of this space, adolescents today have many activities in cyberspace. Since parents cannot sufficiently monitor their children's online activities due to the characteristics of cyberspace, and on the other hand, they face a new

phenomenon, they become confused; therefore, accurately and completely identifying the factors affecting the victimization of adolescents to prevent their victimization in cyberspace is necessary. Thus, our goal in this research was to identify the factors affecting the victimization of adolescent girls in cyberspace based on their parents' lived experiences. The results of the analysis of interviews with parents of victimized adolescent girls in cyberspace, using MAXQDA software, led to the identification of 8 organizing themes based on the parents' lived experiences, and 17 basic themes based on the mother's lived experiences and 19 basic themes based on the father's lived experiences, under 3 overarching themes.

Therefore, the factors affecting the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace, based on the lived experiences of parents (mother and father), include: overarching themes of individual, familial, and environmental nature. The individual theme includes 3 organizing themes of innate characteristics with 2 basic themes (introversion and withdrawal of the child, and aggression and non-compliance of the child) based on the parents' lived experiences, lack of skills with a basic theme (not having enough friends or healthy friendship relations) based on the parents' lived experiences, and internet dependency with 2 basic themes (inappropriate sleep time and staying up late at night, and excessive use of cyberspace hours) based on the parents' lived experiences; the familial theme includes 3 organizing themes of not having friendly and intimate family relationships with 2 basic themes (lack of a proper relationship with siblings and absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child) based on the parents' lived experiences, and a basic theme (insufficient family outings and social relations) based on the father's lived experiences, parental neglect in child upbringing with 7 basic themes (non-acceptance or partial acceptance of child's behavior by parents, ignorance or insufficient parental supervision over children's behavior, inappropriate parental treatment of the child due to excessive phone use, making or feeling differentiation between children by parents, insufficient parental planning for child's leisure time, not spending enough private time with the father, and imposing age and developmental phase inappropriate restrictions by parents) based on the parents' lived experiences, and a basic theme (ignorance about daily events between parent and child) based on the father's lived experiences, and economic pressure with a basic theme (lack of financial means to fulfill child's desires) based on the parents' lived experiences; the environmental theme includes 2 organizing themes of cyber

literacy with a basic theme (parents' insufficient awareness of cyberspace and its use) based on the parents' lived experiences, and lack of interest in education with a basic theme (disinclination towards school and academic decline) based on the parents' lived experiences.

What are the factors affecting the victimization of adolescent girls in cyberspace? (Based on the lived experiences of mother and father) Includes 3 overarching themes of individual, familial, and environmental nature.

4.1. Individual Category

The overarching individual theme: Includes 3 organizing themes of innate characteristics, lack of skills, and internet dependency.

4.1.1. Organizing Theme of Innate Characteristics

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, two basic categories of introversion and withdrawal of the child, and aggression and non-compliance of the child were placed in the organizing theme of innate characteristics, which, along with factors of lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the innate characteristics factor can also play an important role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Introversion and withdrawal were identified as basic categories as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace. According to research findings, there is a positive and significant relationship between introversion and internet addiction (Parsakia, Rostami, Darbani, et al., 2023; Parsakia, Rostami, Saadati, & Navabinejad, 2023). Since internet dependency is a predictor of victimization in cyberspace (Alimoradi et al., 2019; Kee et al., 2022; Manda et al., 2019; Marciano et al., 2020; Ramos Salazar, 2021; Shapka et al., 2018), introversion in adolescents facilitates their victimization in cyberspace.

Aggression and non-compliance of the child were another basic category extracted from interviews with parents. Aggression and the inability to regulate emotions, stemming from family dysfunction, lead to the child's non-compliance with the family and, ultimately, their victimization in cyberspace (Andrés et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2019; Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022); therefore, family conflicts cause the adolescent's non-compliance. As a result, they easily disregard rules and turn to cyberspace under the influence of

emotional deficiency stemming from fragile relationships within the family, increasing their chances of victimization in this space (Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022).

4.1.2. Organizing Theme of Lack of Skills

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, the basic category of not having enough friends or healthy friendship relations was placed in the organizing theme of lack of skills based on the parents' lived experiences, which, along with factors of innate characteristics, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the lack of skills factor can also play an important role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Not having friendly and intimate relationships was identified as a basic category as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace based on the parents' lived experiences. This finding aligns with the results of previous research (Arató et al., 2022; Baldry et al., 2015; Dorol--Beauroy-Eustache & Mishara, 2021; Firoozeh et al., 2021; Mozaffar et al., 2022; Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022).

4.1.3. Organizing Theme of Internet Dependency

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, two basic categories of inappropriate sleep time and staying up late at night, and excessive use of cyberspace hours were placed in the organizing theme of internet dependency based on the parents' lived experiences, which, along with factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the internet dependency factor can also play an important role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Inappropriate sleep time and staying up late at night were another basic category extracted from interviews with parents that contribute to adolescents' victimization in cyberspace. A review of 23 studies revealed that reduced sleep time is among the symptoms of internet addiction (Alimoradi et al., 2019). Adolescents become so engrossed in cyberspace that they lose track of time, leading to sleeplessness and sleep deprivation (Manda et al., 2019). Since internet dependency is a predictor of victimization in cyberspace (Alimoradi et al., 2019; Dargahi H & Razavi S.M, 2007; Manda et al., 2019), inappropriate sleep time and

staying up late also cause adolescents' victimization in cyberspace.

Excessive use of cyberspace hours and phone addiction were other basic categories extracted from interviews with parents. Research has shown that excessive use of cyberspace hours is one of the manifestations of internet and phone addiction; therefore, victimization in cyberspace is highly correlated with excessive use of cyberspace hours, browsing the internet, and participating in various online activities, aligning with the findings of previous research (Álvarez-García et al., 2015; Atadokht et al., 2014; Ramos Salazar, 2021; Shapka et al., 2018).

4.2. Familial Category

Overarching Familial Theme: Includes 3 organizing themes of not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, and economic pressure.

4.2.1. Organizing Theme of Not Having Friendly and Intimate Family Relationships

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, two basic categories of not having a proper relationship with siblings and the absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child were placed in the organizing theme of not having friendly and intimate family relationships based on the parents' lived experiences, and the basic category of insufficient family outings and social relationships was also placed in the organizing theme of friendly and intimate family relationships based on the father's lived experiences. Alongside factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the factor of not having friendly and intimate family relationships can also play a significant role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Not having a proper relationship with siblings was identified as a basic category as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace, extracted from interviews with parents. The supportive role of siblings in the family often correlates with a reduction in victimization in cyberspace. This finding aligns with previous studies (Arató et al., 2022; Barragán Martín et al., 2021; Dorol--Beauroy-Eustache & Mishara, 2021; Firoozeh et al., 2021; Mozaffar et al., 2022; Rahdar et al., 2020; Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022; Shader & Beauchaine, 2020).

The absence of a friendly relationship between parents and child was another basic category extracted from interviews with parents. Indeed, intimacy, emotional relationship, and emotional support, along with parental supervision and guidance, diminish the likelihood of risky behaviors such as victimization of adolescents in cyberspace (Galambos et al., 2003). This finding aligns with previous research (Boniel-Nissim & Sasson, 2018; Dorol--Beauroy-Eustache & Mishara, 2021; Elsaesser et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2018; Hood & Duffy, 2018; Mozaffar et al., 2022; Rahdar et al., 2020; Tomczyk & Wąsiński, 2017).

Insufficient family outings and social relationships were another basic category extracted from interviews with the father. In the present study, insufficient family outings and social relationships were among the subcategories identified as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Intimate relationships with others, especially relatives, reduce distress and worries stemming from adolescents' feelings of loneliness and make them feel supported and backed in all aspects when problems arise. Leisure time is satisfactorily filled, and they maintain continuous interaction with others. In fact, family outings and social relationships are among the factors that can significantly protect adolescents against social harms (Rahdar et al., 2020). One of these harms is the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace; therefore, if parents only involve their children once a year in activities related to family members, such as visiting neighbors and relatives, they should not expect their children to exhibit appropriate developmental behavior within their peer group (Rahdar et al., 2020); thus, reduced interaction with peers stems from a lack of warm and intimate interactions with family members and other leisure activities of the family, like insufficient outings and social relationships. Ultimately, insufficient family outings and social relationships lead to weaknesses in communication skills, having few friends, and not having a friend, which are influential factors in the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace (Parsakia, Rostami, Darbani, et al., 2023; Parsakia, Rostami, Saadati, & Navabinejad, 2023).

4.2.2. Organizing Theme of Parental Neglect in Child Upbringing

Based on the results of the analysis, seven basic categories (non-acceptance or partial acceptance of child's behaviors by parents, ignorance or insufficient parental supervision over children's behavior, inappropriate parental treatment of the child due to excessive phone use, making or feeling differentiation among children by parents, insufficient parental planning for child's leisure time, not spending enough private time with the father, and imposing age and developmental phase inappropriate restrictions by parents) based on parents' lived experiences, and the basic category (ignorance about daily events between parent and child) based on the father's lived experiences were placed in the category of parental neglect in child upbringing. Alongside factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the factor of parental neglect in child upbringing can also play a significant role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

Non-acceptance or partial acceptance of child's behaviors by parents was among the basic categories obtained from interviews with parents. Explaining this finding, it can be said that non-acceptance and weak relationships with parents make adolescents more inclined towards cyberspace, ultimately increasing their chances of victimization in cyberspace. This finding aligns with previous research (Hood & Duffy, 2018; Hosseinkhanzadeh et al., 2014; Lereya et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2013; Perren et al., 2012; Rahdar et al., 2020; Soltanifar, 2008; Su et al., 2016; Tomczyk & Wąsiński, 2017; Van Dijk et al., 2014).

Ignorance or insufficient parental supervision over children's behavior was another basic category identified as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace, extracted from interviews with parents. Indeed, family control and supervision and being aware of the adolescent's online activities significantly correlate with a reduction in their victimization in cyberspace. This finding aligns with previous research (Appel et al., 2014; Boniel-Nissim & Sasson, 2018; Buelga et al., 2016; Elsaesser et al., 2017; Fridh et al., 2015; Galambos et al., 2003; Hood & Duffy, 2018; Hosseinkhanzadeh et al., 2014; Lereya et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2013; Perren et al., 2012; Rahdar et al., 2020; Soltanifar, 2008; Su et al., 2016; Tomczyk & Wąsiński, 2017; Van Dijk et al., 2014).

In the present study, inappropriate parental treatment of children due to excessive phone use was among the basic categories identified as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace based on parents' lived experiences. Interpreting this finding, it can be stated that the family relationships of victims of cyberspace are associated with weak, negative, avoidant, and conflict-ridden communication patterns with parents, which are among the influential factors in the victimization of

adolescents in cyberspace. In these families, parents exhibit behaviors towards adolescents that are threatening, demeaning, mocking, and insulting. This finding aligns with the results of previous research (Chen & Wei, 2011, 2013; Serafini et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2012; Van Dijk et al., 2014).

Differentiating or feeling differentiation among children by parents in the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace was another basic category extracted from interviews with parents. Since parental discrimination among children and comparing them with each other leads to the creation of feelings of insecurity, fear, reduced self-belief, jealousy, and escape from the family in them, and generally, these factors cause family relationship dysfunction, making adolescents spend more time in cyberspace to replace family interactions. As a result, they are more exposed to victimization in cyberspace (Arató et al., 2022; Sorgi et al., 2021).

Insufficient parental planning for child's leisure time in the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace was another basic category extracted from interviews with parents. Leisure activities provide families with the opportunity to experience change in a relatively calm situation, which causes the adolescent's adaptation and greater flexibility in the family (Chan & Wong, 2017). In efficient families, parents provide more support to their children during family leisure times, consult with them, use their opinions, and these factors ensure their child has enough confidence in relation to peers and feels important to friends (Rahdar et al., 2020). Favorable relations with peers are effective in dealing with cyberbullies. In inefficient family environments, parents do not pay attention to planning for the child's leisure time, which can lead to excessive inclination towards cyberspace and, as a result, the victimization of the adolescent in this space (Aphane, 2023).

4.2.3. Economic Pressure

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, the basic category of lacking financial resources to fulfill the child's desires was placed in the organizing theme of economic pressure based on the parents' lived experiences. Alongside factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, the factor of economic pressure can also play a significant

role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

In the present study, lacking financial resources to fulfill the child's desires was identified as one of the subcategories as influential variables on the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace. Indeed, there exists a significant and inverse relationship between economic status and inclination towards risky behaviors (Mozaffar et al., 2020). In other words, lower-than-average family income and unemployment are associated with an increased risk of adolescent victimization in cyberspace (Jansen et al., 2012; Silvestri, 2015); therefore, it seems that economic status is a factor that predicts the increased risk of adolescent victimization in cyberspace (Tamarit-Sumalla et al., 2022).

4.3. Environmental Category

Overarching Environmental Theme: Includes 2 organizing themes of cyber literacy and lack of interest in education.

4.3.1. Organizing Theme of Cyber Literacy

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, the basic category of parents' insufficient awareness of cyberspace and its applications was placed in the organizing theme of cyber literacy based on the parents' lived experiences. Alongside factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, and lack of interest in education, the factor of cyber literacy can also play a significant role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

The basic category of parents' insufficient awareness of cyberspace and its applications is among the variables that play a role in the occurrence of adolescent victimization in cyberspace. This finding aligns with previous research (AlShabibi & Al-Suqri, 2021; Aphane, 2023; Kumar & Mallipeddi, 2022). It can be stated that parents' cyber literacy regarding the internet, as well as parents' use of the internet and their way of processing information and evaluating media program content, makes them suitable role models for their children. On the other hand, parents who use the internet and have sufficient knowledge about it become familiar with their adolescents' world, games, and leisure activities, share in their emotions, and even play with their children (Aphane, 2023; Kumar & Mallipeddi, 2022); therefore, parents' sufficient cyber literacy regarding

cyberspace and its applications is one of the factors of adolescent victimization in cyberspace.

4.3.2. Organizing Theme of Lack of Interest in Education

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of parents' interviews, the basic category of disinterest in school and academic decline was placed in the organizing theme of lack of interest in education based on the parents' lived experiences. Alongside factors of innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, and cyber literacy, the factor of lack of interest in education can also play a significant role in the formation of victimization of adolescents in cyberspace.

The basic category of disinterest in school and academic decline is one of the variables that influence the victimization of adolescents in cyberspace. It can be said that adolescents who excessively use mobile phones and the internet, compared to those who use them moderately, spend less time studying. Therefore, when adolescents lose the opportunity to study and complete homework due to being engrossed in mobile phones and the internet, their academic performance decline and disinterest in education can be predicted (Bhattacharya et al., 2019; Parsakia, Rostami, Saadati, & Navabinejad, 2023; Ramos Salazar, 2021; You et al., 2019). Adolescent victimization in cyberspace can also be predicted based on their academic characteristics (Rahmati & Seyfi, 2022).

4.4. Limitations and Suggestions

This study, while providing valuable insights into the factors influencing adolescent girls' vulnerability in cyberspace, has certain limitations. First, the focus on a specific demographic—teenage girls in Isfahan based on their parents' experiences—may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or cultural contexts. Secondly, the reliance on qualitative data through parental reports could introduce bias, as parents may not fully comprehend or accurately convey their children's online experiences. Finally, the rapid evolution of digital landscapes means that the factors identified may shift over time, necessitating ongoing research to stay relevant.

Based on the research conducted by the researcher, to date, no domestic or international research has comprehensively examined the factors influencing victimization in cyberspace among adolescent girls based on

their parents' lived experiences. The themes extracted align with the findings of other related research mentioned in the literature review. Considering the extracted components, it can be concluded that to prevent victimization of adolescent girls in cyberspace, simultaneous attention to the overarching themes of personal, familial, and environmental factors based on parents' lived experiences, namely innate characteristics, lack of skills, internet dependency, not having friendly and intimate family relationships, parental neglect in child upbringing, economic pressure, cyber literacy, and lack of interest in education, is crucial. The present study exclusively examined adolescent girls victimized in cyberspace in the secondary school stage in Isfahan city based on their parents' lived experiences. Therefore, generalizing its results to other victimized adolescents in cyberspace and other cities should be done with caution. Further research in this area is recommended given its novelty and the seriousness of its consequences. Since interviews were conducted with parents of victimized adolescent girls in cyberspace, the researcher suggests future research to interview parents of victimized adolescent boys in cyberspace. Additionally, future research should pay attention to the types of victimization in cyberspace and study the factors influencing victimization in each type.

Moreover, organizing educational workshops for parents to increase media literacy, improve communication with adolescent children, secure attachment, authoritative parenting style, and anger management to prevent their adolescent children's victimization in cyberspace is recommended.

Authors' Contributions

This research is derived from the doctoral dissertation of Mrs. Maryam Motamedi Qalati, Department of Counseling, Faculty of Psychology, Counseling, and Social Work, Islamic Azad University, Khomeini Shahr Branch, titled "Study of Factors Influencing Victimization in Cyberspace among Adolescent Girls and Design and Validation of a Questionnaire Based on Factors."

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher committed to observing all ethical standards, including confidentiality, non-disclosure of the interviewees' names, and others. It was registered on 13/08/2023 by the National Ethics Committee in Biomedical Research at Islamic Azad University, Khomeini Shahr Branch, with the identification number IR.IAU.KHSH.REC.1402.077.

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