



## BORDERLINE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CYBER-VICTIMISATION -A SINGLE CASE STUDY.

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### ABSTRACT

Dialectical behaviour therapy is a form of cognitive behaviour therapy that applies principles of learning to elicit the reasons and the strengthening factors behind maladaptive behaviours and alternate them with more healthy and helpful skills. The present study aims to assess the efficacy of brief dialectical behaviour therapy for borderline personality traits with cyber-victimisation. As a single experimental design, 20 years aged young female, diagnosed with borderline personality traits along with cyber-victimisation was taken up for the study. Borderline traits and cyber-victimisation were targeted maladaptive behaviours. The intervention was given for the duration of 8 weeks, during which DBT in a brief format consisting of mindfulness skills, emotion regulation skills, interpersonal effectiveness skills and distress tolerance skills was given. The sessions were based on weekly basis with each being 60 minutes session. Follow after a month revealed greater reduction in the targeted maladaptive behaviours. The study reveals that brief DBT is effective in reducing borderline personality traits and cyber-victimisation.

**KEYWORDS :** brief dialectical behaviour therapy, borderline personality traits, cyber-victimisation.

### INTRODUCTION

DBT has dialectical and biosocial theory of psychological disorders as its base in which theory emphasises the role of difficulties in regulating emotions and behaviour. Such emotion dysregulation is the root cause for many of the mental health problems like labile affect, impulsivity, difficult interpersonal relationships and for self-image. DBT skills directly address these dysfunctional patterns. The objective of DBT skills training is to facilitate individuals change in behavioural, emotional, thinking and interpersonal patterns that underlie the problems in living.

Trait domain qualifiers are helpful in describing the characteristics of the individuals personality that are most prominent and that contribute to personality disturbance. Trait domains are part of normal personality characteristics in individuals who do not have personality disorder or personality difficulty. They represent set of dimensions that correspond to the underlying structure of personality and are not diagnostics categories.(ICD 11:6D11)

Borderline personality disorder is characterised by affective instability, emptiness, suicidality or self-harm, unstable relationships, unstable identity and cognitive dysfunction. In the DSM 5 (American psychiatric Association 2013), nine criteria for BPD are listed, with five required to make a diagnosis.

Cyber-victimisation is a harmful, intimidating, humiliating, embarrassing, harassing, threatening experience that an individual encounters via information and communication technologies.

### SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the current world modern technologies have become the indispensable part of daily living. The usage of such technologies has increased the prevalence of cyber bullying especially among school and college students. On an average, approximately 20 to 40% of youth report being victimised by a cyber bully(Aricak et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) and in general at least 40 to 50% of those who are victims by cyber bullies know the identity of the perpetrator(Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007).

A key criterion in the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder among youth is the instability of interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association 2013), which

manifest not only in the romantic relationships as in adult borderline personality disorder or in relationship quality with family of origin, but in relationship with your peers (Kevin Cecil Runions et al., 2020). A cross-sectional study of adolescent girls (n=110) who met borderline disorder criteria (Beck et al. 2017) found significant correlation between peer attachment and security and borderline features ( $r=0.33$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), such that higher borderline personality were associated with greater insecurity. The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) revealed significant relationships between victimisation and borderline personality features,  $B=0.59$ ,  $SE=0.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Young people with borderline personality features are at elevated risk of being victimized by peers, but it is unclear to what extent they are bully or victims.(Kevin Cecil Runions et al., 2020). Thus youth with greater level of insecurity can fail to be assertive which in turn makes them more vulnerable to being victimised.

There are strong empirical evidences that dialectical behaviour therapy(DBT; Linehan 1993a,b) is an effective treatment for borderline personality disorders amongst the clinical population. According to the American psychiatric Association's practice guidelines (American psychiatric Association 2001), DBT manualised outpatient treatment (Linehan 1993) – is one psychotherapeutic approach that has been shown to be efficacious in randomised controlled trials (Koons et al. 2001; Linehan et al.1999; Verheul et al.2003).Although several DBT studies have focused on middle-aged women meeting for criteria for BPD(e.g., Linehan, Armstrong, Suarez, Allmon, & Heard, 1991), there is evidence that DBT is feasible and effective with male and female adolescents (Groves, Backer, Van den Bosch, & Miller, in press), as well as with other populations (Feigenbaum, 2007).

### NEED FOR THE STUDY

There are investigations suggesting that brief DBT can be effective in community mental health settings. But there are lack of studies on the effectiveness of brief DBT for individuals with borderline personality traits who experience cyber-victimisation, especially in Indian settings. The reasons behind the current study on implementation of DBT in brief format for treating individuals with borderline personality traits experiencing cyber-victimisation are 1) DBT being a flexible principle-based-based treatment, 2) it focuses on teaching skills, 3) it is designed for chronically suicidal patients, and 4) it can be altered to specific needs.

### METHODOLOGY OBJECTIVE

To study the efficacy of brief dialectical behaviour therapy for

individuals with borderline traits experiencing cyber-victimisation.

**HYPOTHESIS**

There will be significant level of reduction in borderline personality traits thereby being empowered against cyber-victimisation.

**SAMPLE**

20 years aged female who was diagnosed with borderline personality trait disturbance along with cyber-victimisation

**VENUE**

The intervention was implemented at Vazhikatti Mental Health Centre, Peelamedu, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

**STUDY DESIGN**

Single experimental design was applied.

**MEASURES**

**Social demographic data sheet**

The schedule consists of questions related to the demographic characteristics like age, birth, gender, family structure and personal information of the young female in the main sample.

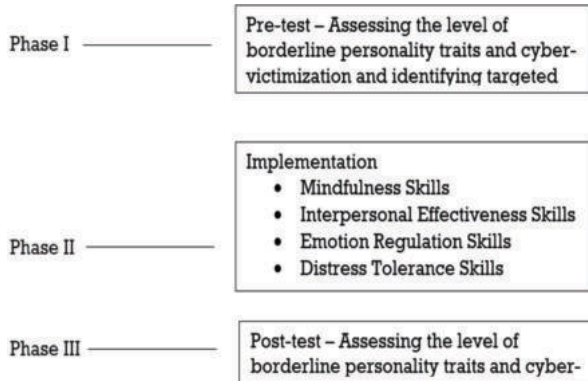
**International personality disorder examination (IPDE)**

IPDE ICD-10 module screening questionnaire was used to assess and diagnosis of the personality disorder

**Cyber-Victimisation scale (CYBIVICS)**

CYBIVICS developed by Menisini et al.,(2011) was used to assess the level of victimisation.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF BRIEF DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOUR THERAPY**



**The intervention was carried out in three phases:**

Phase I: Assessing the pre-test level of borderline personality traits and cyber-victimisation IPDE screening questionnaire and CYBIVICS were used to measure the pre- intervention level of difficulties.

**Phase II:**

**Implementation**

Intervention involved following procedures:

- 1) Skills acquisition
- 2) Skills reinforcement
- 3) Skills generalisation

**Phase III:** IPDE and CYBIVICS were administered after a month of the last session to measure the level of reduction in borderline traits and cyber-victimisation, post-intervention.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study was conducted with objective of determining the efficacy of brief dialectical behavior therapy. Below tables shows the level of borderline personality traits and cyber-victimization.

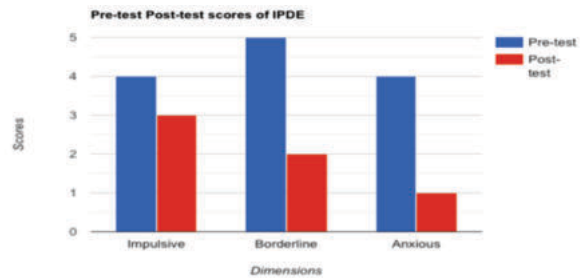
Tables and graphs reveal much difference between pre-test and post-test for targeted behaviours. Borderline traits, anxiety and cyber-victimisation levels had reduced significantly while impulsivity had reduced very mildly.

**Table 1: IPDE Pre-test :**

Paranoid	√					
Schizoid					√	
Dissocial						√
Impulsive	√	√	√	√		
Borderline	√	√	√	√	√	
Histrionic	√	√				
Anankastic	√					√
Anxious	√	√		√	√	
Dependant	√					√

**Table 2: IDPE Post - test:**

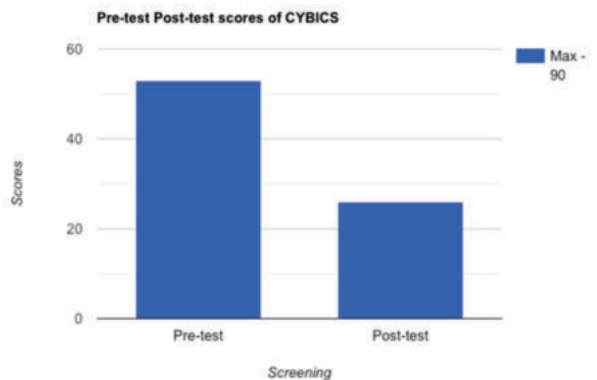
Paranoid	√					
Schizoid					√	
Dissocial						√
Impulsive	√	√		√		
Borderline	√	√				
Histrionic	√	√				
Anankastic	√					
Anxious	√					
Dependant				√		



**Fig: 1**

**Table 2: CYBIVICS Scores:**

VARIABLE	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
Cyber-victimisation	53	26



**Fig: 2**

The intervention focused on borderline traits and cyber-victimization.

First, second, third and fourth sessions focused on skill acquisition, while rest of the sessions focused on skills reinforcement and skills generalisation. At the beginning of each session homework that was assigned to them earlier was discussed. Also during each session, the difficulties encountered by the subject in applying the skills were discussed. Total number of 8 sessions were conducted, each session paced on weekly basis, each session for 60 mins.

## CONCLUSION

The study findings concludes that brief DBT is effective in reducing borderline personality traits and cyber-victimization. Borderline personality traits can cause significant vulnerability and interpersonal chaos in an individual's life and DBT, even in brief format can be helpful in reducing the vulnerability and improve interpersonal relationship. This has been proven through the current study. The limitations of this study is that it has been conducted on a single subject and the results may vary while applied to larger population. Also it is evident from this study that though targeted behaviours were reduced, impulsivity level did not reduce observably.

## Future Research:

Brief DBT can be applied for general population like colleges and schools, in Indian society.

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