The Effect of Cyberbullying Victimization on Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how being a victim of cyberbullying affects the self-esteem and overall mental well-being of teenager andyoungster. Using a survey-based approach, we gathered data from 300 participants through well-established measures, including the Cyberbullying Victimization Scale (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015)*, the* Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)*, and the Psychological* Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989)*. The results showed a clear and concerning pattern—those who experienced cyberbullying tended to have lower self-esteem and poorer psychological well-being. These findings underscore the serious emotional toll of online harassment and highlight the urgent need for action. Strengthening digital literacy, providing accessible psychological support, and implementing stronger policies can help create safer online spaces, particularly for those most vulnerable to cyberbullying.*

Keywords : *Cyber bullying Victimization , Self esteem , Psychological well-being , Young adults*

INTRODUCTION

The internet and digital devices help teenagers stay connected with friends and meet new people, but they also expose them to negative experiences like online bullying (Palermiti et al., 2017). Online bullying, often called digital bullyingg, happens when someone or a group deliberately and repeatedly harasses, threatens, or humiliates another person through digital platforms, leaving the victim feeling powerless to stop it (Smith et al., 2008).Cyberbullying occurs when people harass or threaten others online by sending or posting harmful messages, pictures, or videos without their consent (Patchin and Hinduja, 2010). Digital bullying is a frequent practice that has received attention from researchers and the public during the past ten decades. This area of study has investigated various aspects of behavior, with a focus on the personal and demographic characteristics of persons involved. Specifically, research have focused on these elements in adolescents, where all types of bullying occur most frequently (Carneyl et al. 2001). However, it is crucial to analyze different populations where the behavior may not be as frequent (e.g. adults) to establish if prior studies' findings are generalizable. According to research, the majority of the individual factors studied in relation to cyberbullying in adults, such as self-esteem levels, fluctuate with age (Robins et al, 2002). It's crucial to investigate whether these characteristics remain associated with cyberbullying behavior throughout age groups.

Experiencing online harassment can have a significant impact on teenagers' mental well-being and personal growth. In recent years, more studies have explored this issue, highlighting its growing importance (Bradshaw et al., 2017). According to Hinduja and Patchin (2008), Onlineharassment occurs when an individual is targeted for bad behaviors online due to teenage hostility and collaboration. Some research in Turkey revealed that there are high incidences of cyberbullying and victimization. Turk and Senyuva (2021). Teenagers make up 35% of those affected by online harassment, highlighting the widespread nature of the problem. Cyber harassment is a global concern with serious consequences for public health (Zhu et al., 2021). Research by Machimbarrena and Garaigordobil (2018) found that around 8% of Spanish teens receive offensive or hurtful messages online.With an internet penetration rate of 22% in Pakistan and 53% worldwide, the internet has become an essential element of daily life (Kemp, 2018). It is now an important arena for human contact and involvement (Lenhart et al, 2010). The digital world has considerably aided in the rapid interchange of thoughts, emotions, ideas, knowledge, and communication by making a variety of activities available at the touch of a button. While technological improvements have significantly enhanced people's lives, they have also presented new obstacles. Cyber bullying has been one of the most important challenges of the previous decade (Barlett et al., 2016).

Cyber bullying Victimization

Online harassment occurs when individuals or groups use digital platforms to repeatedly send harmful or threatening textswith the goal leading to pain or distress (Tokunaga, 2010). It is often seen as a "remote" form of bullying since technology, like smartphones and computers, enables aggression to take place without the offender being physically present (Slonje et al., 2012). Cyberbullying is distinguished by three important characteristics: intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance. However, for an act to be considered cyberbullying, it must also be anonymous and public (Smith & Page, 2015). Furthermore, Sampasa-Kanyinga and Hamilton (2015) found that hostility is a crucial factor in the emergence of cyberbullying.

Terms like online bullying, digital harassment, cyber aggression, and peer harassment in virtual spaces are often used interchangeably (Jones et al., 2015). Online victimization is categorized into four types of

harmful behavior: text-based, visual, social exclusion, and identity misuse. Written and spoken online harassment encompasses threats or damaging messages shared through phone calls, SMS, emails, direct messaging, forums, blogs, and social networking sites (Ioannou et al., 2017, p. 2). Visual forms involve sharing or distributing embarrassing or offensive images or videos, either directly with the person targeted or publicly for others to see (Ioannou et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014; Robinson, 2013).

Deliberately excluding someone from participating in online social interactions is known as digital exclusion (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2017; Ozdemir, 2014). This form of exclusion is a type of online mistreatment where an individual is purposely denied access to a particular group (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2017; Ozdemir, 2014). It often involves isolating a person due to certain traits that are perceived as undesirable (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016).Identity deception occurs when someone creates a fake profile or misuses another person's images or private details without permission (Ioannou et al., 2017). This deceptive act can damage the victim's reputation or social connections by spreading misleading or offensive content in a way that makes it appear as though the victim is responsible.

Every form of online victimization has been linked to negative psychological effects on those targeted, such as depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, and declining academic performance (Ioannou et al., 2017; Kandlapalli, 2017). Unlike traditional bullying, digital aggressors are not confined by factors like gender, physical strength, intelligence, or age, making it challenging to prove an imbalance of power in these situations. Because this power imbalance could not be distinctly identified in online harassment, it was excluded from the definition used to guide this study.

The challenge of proving a power imbalance in online harassment has led researchers to debate whether it should be a defining factor in cyberbullying (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013). The absence of a standardized definition has resulted in varying reports on how common cyberbullying is, as different studies apply different criteria to classify it. This lack of consistency has made it difficult to accurately measure the prevalence of cyberbullying (Holla et al., 2017; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Wright, 2017).

Self- Esteem

Self-esteem is generally understood as an individual's overall perception of their own worth, encompassing both positive and negative beliefs about themselves. It reflects a person's level of self-acceptance, confidence in their abilities, and sense of self-respect, all of which play a crucial role in shaping their emotions and behaviorResearch indicates that self-esteem is a key psychological trait linked to various aspects of life, including academic success, relationships, and mental well-being (Robins & Orth, 2024). Strong self-worth is associated with better social connections, emotional resilience, and overall mental health, while low self-worth can lead to anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal (Harris et al., 2019). Self-worth reflects a person's overall positive perception of themselves.He further explained that high self-worth refers to a person's self-respect and confidence in their own worth. It is understood as an individual's perception or personal evaluation of their own value, encompassing feelings of self-respect, confidence, and the extent to which they hold positive or negative beliefs about themselves (Sedikides & Gress, 2003).

Self-esteem can be divided into two types: trait self-esteem, which is stable over time and reflects an individual's overall value, and state self-esteem, which changes based on situational conditions (Reitz et al., 2016). For instant, a individual's self-worth may temporarily rise or fall in response to accomplishments or failures in various areas of their lives. Furthermore, cultural and societal variables have a substantial impact on self-esteem by affecting what people see as worthwhile features or achievements (Gruenenfelder-Steiger et al., 2016).

These external forces frequently shape how people view themselves in their social and cultural surroundings. The characteristics of strong self-worth are also significant: researchers distinguish between secure high self-esteem, which is characterized by consistent and genuine positive self-perceptions, and defensive high self-esteem, which is frequently dependent on externalvalidation and can lead to sensitivity to criticism and unstable self-views (Bleidorn et al., 2018). This distinction emphasizes the complexities of self-esteem and the significance of cultivating a consistent, internalized sense of self-worth rather than relying on external sources. In essence, prior research strongly supports the idea that self-esteem is more than just a temporary feeling, but a fundamental psychological trait with far-reaching implications for health and life outcomes.

Longitudinal research have found that self-worth has a significant impact on long-term outcomes. Adolescents with strong self-worth, for example, Have a higher chance to excel academically, maintain stable relationships, and advance in their careers later in life. Adolescents with low self-worth tend to have a higher risk of dropping out of school and achieving lower educational outcomes (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). Furthermore, meta-analyses indicate that self-esteem influences positive interpersonal experiences like social acceptability and relationship quality (Cameron & Granger, 2018). Self-worth is an curcial psychological construct that determines how people perceive themselves and manage their personal and social life. Its impacts go beyond short-term emotions, influencing long-term life outcomes across multiple dimensions. Understanding the significance of self-esteem can aid in the development of therapies that promote higher levels of self-worth and overall well-being (von Soest et al., 2016).

Self-worth isdescribed as “one’s good opinion of one’s dignity or worth.” Hewitt (2002) sought to redefine self-worth, moving away from the idea of it being a universal psychological trait and motivator to viewing it as a socially constructed emotion influenced by mood. He described self-worth as a reflective feeling that develops over time through social interactions, is learned and expressed within social contexts, emerges in predictable situations, and can be shaped by social influence and control.

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being as a state of being that encompasses an individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It involves the presence of pleasant emotions, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose, as well as the absence of negative emotions such as anxiety and sadness (Seligman 2011). Social support, physical activity, mindfulness, gratitude, and self-care are all crucial variables in psychological well-being (Cohen et al., 2015). Chronic stress, trauma, and social isolation, on the other hand, have been linked to poor psychological well-being (Brewin et al., 2000; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; McEwen, 2007). Overall, psychological well-being is a complicated concept influenced by a variety of elements, and it is critical for sustaining good mental health and improving overall quality of life.

Psychological well-being is a wide and dynamic concept that includes several aspects of positive psychological functioning. It is frequently defined as the subjective experience of favorably valenced feelings or cognitive evaluations, which include both lower activation affects like peaceful or satisfied and higher activation affects like delighted or thrilled (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012). This concept goes beyond the absence of mental illness to include pleasing psychological states that contribute to overall life satisfaction and happiness. It conveys an individual's capacity to survive and prosper in life while preserving emotional balance and a sense of purpose (Ryff et al., 2004).

Psychological well-being is one of the most widely acknowledged frameworks in this field. It encompasses six key dimensions:independence, mastery over one's environment, personal growth, a sense of purpose in life, meaningful relationships with others, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2014). These dimensions stress many aspects of human functioning, such as self-determination and independence (autonomy), effective environmental management (environmental mastery), and personal development. For example, autonomy

involves refusing social influences and valuing oneself according to personal standards, but environmental mastery involves effectively navigating life's problems and capitalizing on opportunities for progress (Keyes et al., 2018).

According to research, mental well-being has a direct connection with life satisfaction, happiness, and optimism. Factors that influence it include inheritance, environment, life events, and personal choices (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012). Achieving and maintaining psychological well-being frequently necessitates self-awareness, personal growth, and efficient stress and adversity coping methods (Gao & McLellan, 2018). Furthermore, psychological well-being has extensive societal ramifications since it promotes community cohesion and social functioning. Individuals with high psychological well-being, for example, are more likely to make a beneficial contribution to their communities through altruistic action and meaningful relationships.

In addition to its individual benefits, mental well-being is crucial for improve mental health, resilience, and general quality of life. It protects against stress and adversity, resulting in better health outcomes and a longer life expectancy (Boehm and Kubzansky, 2012). Interventions targeted at improving psychological well-being, such as mindfulness exercises or positive psychology programs, have been demonstrated to dramatically enhance mental health results. These types of treatments help individuals develop optimism, a sense of purpose in life, and techniques for dealing with unpleasant emotions (Seligman et al., 2005).Psychological well-being is an essential terms which measures an individual's overall happiness, life satisfaction, and positive psychological functioning. Its value extends beyond individual mental health to broader societal advantages such as resilience, community cohesion, and improved standards of life (Lun & Bond, 2016).

Conceptual Model

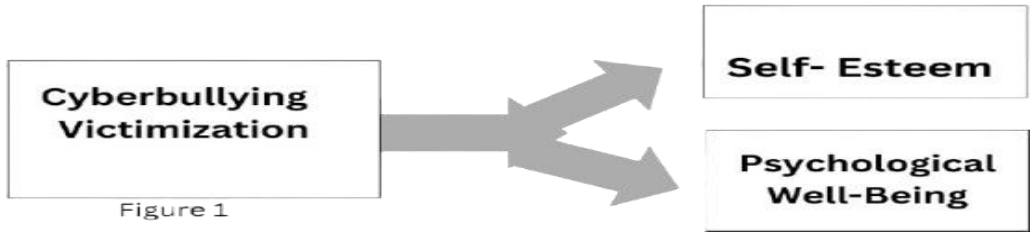

Figure 1

Note : Conceptual model illustrating the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and its effects on self-esteem and psychological well-being in young adults. Cyberbullying victimization (exposure to online harassment) directly impacts self-esteem (negative self-perception) and psychological well-being (anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying and cyberbullying are two significant social issues impacting many children and teenagers. Both involve repeated, intentional, and aggressive actions carried out by an individual or a group against a victim in a situation where there is an imbalance of power (Smith, 2014). However, while traditional bullying is rooted in personal interactions and relationships, cyberbullying specifically involves the use of digital technology. Bullying can manifest in two ways: direct, which includes physical aggression or verbal insults, and indirect, which involves social exclusion or the spread of harmful rumors.It examines the different roles individuals take within a group, such as bully, victim, bully reinforcer, bullying assistant, victim defender, and bystander (Salmivalli et al., 2017). Cyberbullying shares key characteristics with traditional bullying, including intentional harm and a power imbalance, but it occurs in digital spaces such as social media, chat rooms, and blogs, allowing harmful content to spread rapidly to a much larger audience. Like traditional bullying, cyberbullying can take various forms, including online harassment, defamation, "happy slapping," deception, and identity theft. A defining feature of cyberbullying is anonymity, which often leads to more uninhibited behavior and makes it easier for cyberbullies to hide their identities from their targets (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2019).

It explores the various roles individuals assume within a group, including bully, victim, bully reinforcer, bullying assistant, victim defender, and bystander (Salmivalli et al., 2017). Cyberbullying retains fundamental aspects of traditional bullying, such as intentional harm and power imbalance, but takes place in digital environments like social media, chat platforms, and blogs, enabling harmful actions to reach a much broader audience at a faster rate. Similar to traditional bullying, cyberbullying manifests in multiple ways, including online harassment, defamation, "happy slapping," deceit, and identity fraud. One of its defining characteristics is anonymity, which often encourages more uninhibited behavior and allows cyberbullies to conceal their identities from their victims (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2019).

It represents an overall evaluation of a person's self-worth and is considered a crucial element of well-being. From this perspective, self-esteem can serve as a key motivational force, either encouraging or hindering various aspects of an individual's development (Harter & Whitesell, 2003). High self-esteem acts as a protective factor, while low self-esteem can heighten susceptibility to peer aggression and mental health challenges (Ybrandt & Armelius, 2010).The relationship between self-esteem and bullying, including cyberbullying and victimization, is still a topic of debate (Lei et al., 2020). Many studies suggest that people with higher self-esteem are less likely to experience victimization, as strong self-worth can serve as a protective shield (Tsaousis et al., 2016). However, there are conflicting perspectives. Kowalski and Limber (2013) argue that both bullies and victims often struggle with low self-esteem, while other research suggests that some bullies actually have high self-esteem, finding no clear connection between self-worth and bullying behavior (Olweus et al., 2017). The same uncertainty exists in studies on cyberbullying and cybervictimization, where findings remain inconsistent (Palermiti et al., 2017).

Experiencing cybervictimization can have long-lasting negative effects on individuals. Research shows that it is linked to both internal struggles, such as anxiety and depression, and external behaviors, like aggression or risky actions (Lucas-Molina et al., 2018; Müller et al., 2018). Experts have identified three main areas of impact: emotional and psychological well-being, academic performance, and increased likelihood of engaging in harmful behaviors. Many victims of cyberbullying experience significant emotional distress and a higher risk of mental health issues. Moreover, rather than viewing victimization as a simple yes-or-no experience, studies using an intersectional perspective reveal that students from marginalized backgrounds are more vulnerable to cyberbullying due to underlying biases.

Research suggests that this form of aggression is often driven by bias against individuals or groups, as well as the victim's real or perceived identity within a particular community (Poteat et al., 2014). This type of targeted hostility tends to have even more severe consequences. Wright and Wachs explored how ethnicity

influences the impact of cybervictimization on school engagement among seventh and eighth graders. Their study found that Latinx students who experienced cybervictimization showed higher levels of depression and anxiety, especially when they had low academic attachment. Additionally, adolescent cybervictims reported greater levels of suicidal thoughts, depression, and self-harm compared to their Asian and Caucasian peers (Edwards et al., 2016). Sexual minority youth are particularly at risk for online victimization (Elipe et al., 2018). Existing research also suggests that cybervictimization may contribute to both increased violent behavior and emotional or behavioral struggles (Tsitsika et al., 2016).

This type of targeted hostility can have even more damaging effects. Wright and Wachs explored how ethnicity influences the impact of cybervictimization on school engagement among seventh and eighth graders. Their research found that Latinx students who experienced cyberbullying were more likely to struggle with depression and anxiety, especially when they felt disconnected from school. Additionally, adolescent victims of cyberbullying showed higher rates of suicidal thoughts, depression, and self-harming behaviors compared to their Asian and Caucasian peers (Edwards et al., 2016). Sexual minority youth are particularly vulnerable to online harassment (Elipe et al., 2018). Studies also suggest that cybervictimization may contribute to increased aggression and emotional or behavioral struggles, affecting both mental well-being and social interactions (Tsitsika et al., 2016).

This type of hostility carries even more serious consequences. Wright and Wachs examine how ethnicity influences the effects of cybervictimization and school engagement among seventh and eighth graders. Their research indicates that Latinx students who experience cyberbullying are more likely to struggle with depression and anxiety, especially when they feel disconnected from their academic environment. Additionally, adolescent cybervictims report higher rates of suicidal thoughts, depression, and self-harming behaviors compared to their Asian and Caucasian peers (Edwards et al., 2016). Sexual minority youth are particularly vulnerable to online harassment (Elipe et al., 2018). Previous studies also suggest that cybervictimization is linked to increased aggression, as well as emotional and behavioral challenges (Tsitsika et al., 2016).

Cyber victimization is a growing concern that deeply impacts teenagers' mental health and development, with research on the issue increasing in recent years (Bradshaw et al., 2017). It refers to the harassment or targeting of individuals through harmful online behaviors, often driven by adolescent aggression and digital interactions. Studies indicate that cyberbullying and victimization are widespread, including in Turkey (Turk & Senyuva, 2021). Globally, about 35% of adolescents experience cyber victimization, making it a significant issue in many countries. The harmful effects of online harassment have escalated into a major public health concern (Zhu et al., 2021). In Spain, approximately 8% of teenagers report receiving hostile or disrespectful messages online. Similarly, research by Chen and Chen (2020) suggests that around 30% of adolescents in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have been affected by cyber victimization (Machimbarrena & Garaigordobil, 2018).

METHOD

Objective

1) To evluate the relationship between Cyberbullying Victimization , S elf- esteem and Psychological Well-Being among young adults.

2) To investigate the impact of Cyberbullying Victimization on Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being among young adults.

3) To find out the role of demographic variables in study variables.

Hypotheses

1) There is substantial negative relationship between cyberbullying victimization on self-esteem and psychological well-being among young adults.

2) There in significant impact of cyberbullying victimization on self esteem and psychological well-beingamong young adults.

3) Men score higher on self- esteem as compared to women .

Instruments

Cyber bullying Victimization (CBV) Scale

The Cyber bullying Victimization (CBV) Scale, developed by Lee et al. (2017), is a research tool designed to measure how often young adults experience different forms of cyberbullying. It assesses victimization across three key areas: verbal or written harassment, such as receiving threats via text or email; visual or sexual harassment, including unwanted explicit messages or images; and social exclusion, like being blocked or deliberately left out of online groups. By tracking these experiences over a 30-day period, the scale helps researchers identify patterns of online harassment and explore its impact on psychological health and social well-being.

The CBV Scale is made up of 27 items, divided into three categories: 10 questions on verbal or written harassment, 10 on visual or sexual harassment, and 7 on social exclusion.The respondents provide their answers on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("very frequently"), with no reverse-coded items reported in previous studies. While specific details on the scale's reliability and validity aren't widely available, similar toolslike the Cyber Bullying The assessment tool has demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.79 to 0.87.They also demonstrate solid structural validity, with confirmatory factor analysis indices such as RMSEA ≤ 0.06 and CFI ≥ 0.89.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965, is a well-known 10-item questionnaire designed to measure a individual's overall awareness of self-esteem. It captures how individuals feel about themselves, including their self-respect and satisfaction with who they are. Initially designed for high school students, the RSE has been extensively utilized across diverse age groups and backgrounds, with well-established norms for different populations.This scale helps researchers and psychologists assess self-esteem levels, understand self-perception, and explore how self-esteem connects to mental health, social interactions, and academic success.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) is a 10-item measure designed to assess self-worth, comprising five positively framed statements (e.g., "Overall, I am satisfied with myself") and five negatively framed ones (e.g., "I feel I have little to be proud of"). This balance helps reduce response bias. Participants rate each statement on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Disagree (3), and Strongly Disagree (4). Negatively worded items (2, 5, 6, 8, 9) are reverse-scored before calculating the total score, with higher scores reflecting greater self-esteem.

The RSE demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with a Guttman reproducibility coefficient of .92 and test-retest correlations ranging from .85 to .88 over two weeks, indicating high reliability and stability. Its validity is well-established, as it aligns with other self-esteem assessments (such as the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory), predicts mental health outcomes like depression and anxiety, and

effectively differentiates between varying levels of self-esteem. Despite its concise format, the RSE remains a widely utilized tool in both research and clinical contexts. For comprehensive scoring guidelines and norms, Rosenberg's book *Conceiving the Self* (1979) offers further insights.

Psychological Well-Being (Ryff's) Scale

Psychological Well-Being Scale captures eudaimonic well-being emphasizing personal growth, resilience, and a purposeful life rather than merely the pursuit of happiness. Developed by Carol Ryff, the scale draws from philosophical and psychological theories, including those of Aristotle, Maslow and Rogers identified six fundamental dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relationships, environmental adaptability, personal growth, independence, and life purpose. These dimensions provide insight into how individuals manage life's challenges and cultivate a fulfilling, well-rounded existence.

The original scale comprises 42 items, with seven statements per dimension (e.g., "I have confidence in my opinions even if they are contrary to the general view" for independence). A more concise 18-item version includes three statements per dimension (e.g., "I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live" for environmental adaptability). Participants respond using a Likert scale, with the original utilizing a 6-point range (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), while a Swedish adaptation of the 18-item version employs a 7-point scale. Although some statements are framed to indicate higher well-being, research does not always specify which items are reverse-scored.

Mental Well-Being Scale has strong validity, with the original 42-item version demonstrating a solid factor structure. However, shorter 18-item versions have shown mixed results—such as a five-factor structure (excluding *purpose in life*) in the Swedish adaptation. The scale correlates well with indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction, resilience, and physical health outcomes like reduced pain and better sleep. It also maintains measurement invariance across genders, making it a reliable tool for diverse populations.

Reliability is strong, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .86 to .93 for the original subscales and .73 to .90 for the Swedish 18-item version. Test-retest reliability remains stable over time, with correlations of .85 to .88 over two weeks. While widely used, cultural adaptations—such as the Swedish version—sometimes require refinements to improve alignment with the *purpose in life* dimension. The 18-item version produces total scores between 18 and 126, with higher scores reflecting greater well-being. Though abbreviated versions may lack some depth compared to the original, they still maintain solid psychometric properties. For a deeper understanding, Ryff's foundational work and validation studies provide further insights.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Sample (N=300)

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Men	125	41.6
Women	175	58.33
Age		
18-25	180	60
26-33	60	20
Above 33	60	20
Marital Status		
Single	210	70
Engaged	50	16.66

Married	40	13.33
Family System		
Joint	170	56.66
Nuclear	130	43.33
Residential Area		
Urban	120	40
Rural	180	60
Family Monthly Income		
20,000-50,000	80	26.66
51,000- 1Lac	110	36.66
Above 1Lac	110	36.66

This sample consists of 300 individuals, with a majority being women (58.33%). Most participants are young adults between 18 and 25 years old (60%), and a significant portion are single (70%). More than half (56.66%) come from joint family systems, and the majority (60%) live in rural areas. The sample also represents a mix of family income levels, reflecting diverse economic backgrounds.

Table 2 *Psychometric Properties of Scales (N=300)*

Variable	k	α	Range		Skew	Kurt
			Actual	Potential		
CBV	27	.63	26- 49	27- 135	.42	1.23
RSES	10	.74	9- 54	10-50	1.18	1.40
PWB	18	.96	10- 48	18- 90	1.49	5.07

Note. k= number of items, CBV= Cyber-bullying Victimization, RES= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, PWB= Psychological Well-being Scale, Skew= Skewness, Kurt= Kurtosis

This table summarizes the psychometric properties of three scales: Cyber-bullying Victimization (CBV), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB). The The RSES and PWB scales exhibit moderate to high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.74 and 0.96, respectively. In comparison, the CBV scale shows lower reliability at 0.63. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis values offer valuable insights into the distribution patterns of each scale.

Table 3: *Correlation among Study Variables (N=300)*

	VAR	1	2	3
1	CBV	-		
2	RSES	-.36**	-	
3	PWB	-.61**	.38**	-

Note. VAR=Variable, CBV= Cyber-bullying Victimization, RES= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, PWB= Psychological Well-being Scale

*p< .05. **p< .01.

This table presents the correlations between three key study variables: Cyber-bullying Victimization (CBV), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB). The results show that CBV is negatively correlated with both RSES (r = -0.36) and PWB (r = -0.61), suggesting that higher victimization is linked to lower self-esteem and well-being. Meanwhile, RSES and PWB exhibit a positive correlation (r = 0.38). All correlations are statistically significant at p < 0.01.

Table 4:*Linear Regression predicting Self-esteem (N=300)*

VAR	B	S.E	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Constant	24.95**	.44	24.08	25.81
CVB	.05***	.00	.04	.07
R^2	.13***			
Δ R^2	.13			
F	48.95***			
ΔF	48.95			

*p< .05. **p< .01. < *** p< .001

This regression analysis indicates that Cyberbullying Victimization (CBV) is a significant positive predictor of self-esteem (B = 0.05, p < .001), explaining 13% of the variance (R^2 = 0.13). The overall model is statistically significant (F = 48.95, p < .001), and CBV's 95% confidence interval (0.04–0.07) supports its association with self-esteem. However, this positive relationship contrasts with the earlier negative correlation, suggesting underlying complexities that warrant further exploration.

Table 5: *Linear Regression predicting Psychological Well-being (N=300)*

VAR	B	S.E	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Constant	34.35**	1.7	30.92	37.79
CVB	.42***	.03	.36	.48
R^2	.37***			
Δ R^2	.37			
F	183.43***			
ΔF	183.43			

*p< .05. **p< .01. < *** p< .001

This regression analysis demonstrates that Cyberbullying Victimization (CBV) is a significant predictor of psychological well-being (B = 0.42, p < .001), explaining 37% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.37$). The model is highly significant (F = 183.43, p < .001), and the 95% confidence interval for CBV (0.36–0.48) further supports its strong association with well-being. However, the positive relationship observed here contrasts with the earlier negative correlation (r = -0.61), suggesting potential complexities in the relationship. This inconsistency highlights the need for further exploration of mediating or moderating factors that may influence this association.

Table 6: *Mean Differences of GENDER across Study Variables (N= 300)*

VAR	Gender				*t* (298)	*p*	95% CI		Cohen's d
	Men (n=125)		Women (n=175)						
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			LL	UL	
RSES	28.28	3.97	27.25	2.91	2.61	.00	.24	1.79	0.2

Note. RSES= Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

This table explores gender differences in self-worth using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Results indicate that men reported slightly higher self-esteem (M = 28.28) than women (M = 27.25), with a statistically significant difference (t = 2.61, p < 0.05). However, the effect size is small (Cohen's d = 0.2), suggesting a modest practical impact. The 95% confidence interval (0.24–1.79) further supports the presence of this gender-based difference.

Discussion

This study explores how experiencing cyberbullying affects self-esteem and mentall well-being in teenagers, a group particularly vulnerable to online harassment. As digital interactions become more central to daily life, cyberbullying has emerged as a serious social and mental health concern, raising questions about its long-term impact.This research aims to understand whether cyberbullying lowers self-esteem, making individuals feel less confident and valued. It also examines how victimization influences overall well-being, potentially leading to stress, anxiety, or depression.By examining these relationships, this study aims to highlight the emotional impact of cyberbullying and investigate whether factors such as social support or coping mechanisms can mitigate its effects. Ultimately, the goal is to deepen our understanding of cyberbullying's consequences and contribute to initiatives that help young adults navigate online spaces more safely and resiliently.

The study's first hypothesis proposed a significant negative correlation between cyberbullying victimization and both self-worth and overall mental well-being. A 2025comprehensive analysis of 27 longitudinal studies supported this claim, revealing that cyberbullying is linked to long-term mental health challenges. Specifically, victims showed a higher risk of developing depression (r = .27, p < .001) and anxiety (r = .23, p < .001). Additionally, those who experienced cyberbullying exhibited 19–27% greater psychological distress than non-victims. These effects often extend into early adulthood, as prolonged exposure to online harassment can disrupt emotional regulation and strain social relationships.

Short-term psychological effects of cyberbullying are also significant. A 2024 study examining social media activity before and after cyberbullying incidents found that victims experienced lower happiness, a slight increase in suicide risk, and noticeable changes in personality traits. Specifically, they exhibited reduced agreeableness ($t = 2.79$, $p = .007$) and increased neuroticism ($t = –3.42$, $p = .001$). Many also showed shifts in moral perception, feeling a stronger sense of injustice and displaying altered moral motivation in their communication—factors that can further erode self-worth. These findings highlight how cyberbullying can shake the psychological foundation of an individual, potentially triggering a cycle of declining self-esteem and worsening mental well-being over time.

While most studies confirm a link between cyberbullying and declining self-esteem, a 2024 study from India ($n = 120$) found no direct correlation ($r = 0.01$). This suggests that cultural factors may influence how individuals experience and respond to cyberbullying. However, given the study's small sample size, its findings contrast with broader multinational research that consistently highlights the negative effects of cyberbullying on mental well-being. Despite this exception, the overwhelming evidence reinforces the urgency of implementing stronger interventions to prevent cyberbullying and provide psychological support for those affected.

The second hypothesis proposes that cyberbullying victimization significantly harms self-esteem and psychological well-being in young adults. Research consistently supports this, showing that cyberbullying can deeply impact self-worth and contribute to mental health struggles.For example, a 2018 study in Frontiers in Psychology found that cyberbullying victims experienced lower self-esteem and increased suicidal thoughts. However, emotional intelligence served as a protective factor, helping some individuals manage these negative effects. Likewise, a 2020 study in Global Education System Research reported a strong negative relationship between cyberbullying severity and self-esteem, revealing that for each unit increase in cyberbullying exposure, self-worth scores dropped by 2.56 units among adolescents.These findings highlight the serious emotional toll of cyberbullying and the need for effective support systems to help young adults cope with its impact.

These findings align with broader research suggesting that cyberbullying cultivates feelings of isolation and helplessness, ultimately impairing psychological well-being by heightening anxiety, loneliness, and social withdrawal. The lasting and public nature of online harassment further amplifies emotional distress, as victims often feel powerless to escape or control their situation.Collectively, these studies emphasize the pressing need for targeted interventions to alleviate the psychological impact of cyberbullying. Enhancing emotional resilience and enforcing systemic measures to curb online harassment are essential for protecting young adults' mental health.

The third hypothesis, which suggests that men score higher on self-esteem than women, aligns with existing research highlighting gender differences in self-perception. Studies have shown that societal expectations and cultural norms often encourage men to exhibit confidence and independence, while women may be more inclined toward humility.For example, a 2023 study on Indian junior college students found that males reported higher levels of positivity, competence, and self-worth than females, reflecting these ingrained stereotypes (Dhar & Dhar, 2023). Similarly, a 2022 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* identified the "male hubris, female humility effect," where men and individuals with stronger masculine traits tended to overestimate their intelligence, whereas women systematically underestimated their abilities despite comparable performance levels (Reilly et al., 2022).

However, findings on gender and self-esteem are not always consistent. A 2022 study of Indian adolescents, for instance, found that females scored higher in self-esteem, suggesting that cultural context plays a significant role. While Hypothesis 3 holds in environments where traditional gender norms are emphasized,

self-esteem is a complex trait influenced by multiple factors, including age, culture, and the tools used to measure it.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that digital harassment has a profound effect on self-worth and mental well-being in young adults, supporting Hypothesis one . Long-term effects include increased risks of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, with psychological distress often carrying into early adulthood due to emotional struggles and strained social relationships. In the short term, victims experience lower happiness, heightened neuroticism, and shifts in moral perception, which can shake their sense of self-worth and create a cycle of declining confidence and mental well-being.While cultural differences may shape individual experiences such as a small-scale Indian study that found no direct correlation global research overwhelmingly points to the harmful effects of cyberbullying. This reinforces the urgent need for stronger interventions to combat online harassment and provide better psychological support.

The findings also highlight gender differences in self-esteem. While men generally report higher self-esteem due to societal expectations, studies from India and Pakistan suggest that in some contexts, women may exhibit greater self-worth, challenging broader stereotypes.Ultimately, building emotional resilience and implementing systemic support such as digital literacy programs, safer online environments, and accessible mental health resources are key to helping young adults navigate the digital world with confidence and strength.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study has namerous limitations. First, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between cyberbullying victimization, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine these connections over time. Second, the sample may not fully represent the broader population, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should incorporate participants from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to enhance external validity. Third, reliance on self-reported measures may introduce response biases, potentially affecting data accuracy. Using objective assessments and multi-method approaches in future studies could help address this limitation. Furthermore, investigating the underlying mechanisms linking cyberbullying victimization to self-esteem and mental well-being would offer deeper insights, aiding in the development of more effective interventions.

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