

Cyber-Bullying Impact on Young Adults; Examining Stress, Coping Mechanism and Self-Esteem

 Noor Ul Ain Soomra¹

 Ishtiaq Ahmad^{1,2}

 Sidra Tul Muntaha^{*1}

 Zaheen Saba³

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Abstract

The current study aimed to identify the relationship among Cyberbullying, stress, coping and self-esteem in young adults. A correlational study design was used with purposive sampling for data collection. An online survey method was used to collect data due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, and N = 152 students from public and private universities from around the country participated in this study. Scale of Revised Cyber-bullying Scale II (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2018) $\alpha = .75$, perceived stress scale (Sheldon Cohen, 1994), $\alpha = .87$, coping scale (Hamby et al., 2013). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) $\alpha = .70$ was used to assess the variables. The researcher also devised a demographic sheet. Descriptive statistics were calculated. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses were computed to find a relationship among cyberbullying, stress, coping, and self-esteem. Linear regression analyses were carried out to analyse the role of cyberbullying, stress, and dealing with self-esteem. The findings of the study revealed that cyberbullying, stress, and coping predicted self-esteem, whereas coping was a significant mediator between cyberbullying and stress. This study will be helpful for the students in highlighting the issue of cyberbullying and the importance of coping, which affects their self-esteem.

Keywords: Cyber-Bullying, Stress, Coping, Self-esteem, Young adults

1 Introduction

¹University of Layyah, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: sidrak895@gmail.com

²Hazara University Mansehra, Pakistan

³University of Layyah, Pakistan



About a decade ago, the concept of cyberbullying did not even exist; hitherto, it has become prevalent one day. The individuals who do cyberbullying don't need to be sturdy or reckless; these people want admittance to a mobile or PC and a wish to threaten (Bryson & Fissel, [2023](#)). Utilising electronic tools, online harassment, or cyberbullying is indeed a target of exploitation or intimidation (Blanchflower & Bryson, [2024](#)). Web-based intimidation is also mentioned or referred to as cyberbullying. As the digital domain has extended and technology has improved, it's become better liked, especially among adolescents (Hassan et al., [2022](#)).

Any person can do cyberbullying, and such people generally have trouble having up close and individual experience with their mortality. In truth, the namelessness of cyberbullying may cause understudies who regularly would not bully within the traditional sense to be cyber bullied (Poland, [2010](#)). The ambiguous nature of cutting-edge innovation, adjusting among hazards and openings, shows itself obviously in a developing cultural matter known as cyber-bullying (Walrave & Heirman, [2011](#)). Tokunaga, in [2010](#), said that in the United States adolescences, more than 97 per cent of the total are associated with the Internet somehow.

Children and teenagers accessing the Internet at home is rapidly growing. According to a survey, over 66% of fourth to ninth-graders use the Internet in their bedrooms for comfort. Children can participate in Internet-based activities, such as game playing, searching for information, and visiting with sidekicks (Huang et al., [2024](#)). Regardless, the heavenly body of advantages has started late, clouded by different records of the Internet's lamentable public consequences, which appear in both academic composition and acclaimed media (Pascual-Sanchez & Nicholls, [2023](#)). A respectable proportion of thought has been given to Internet wrongdoings, containing digital following and cyberbullying (Bhat et al., [2010](#)), which, on the whole, spot the well-being of kids and youngsters who utilise the Internet into question (Tokunaga, [2010](#)). Among the children, hostility, bullying, and antagonism are long-lasting and persistent communal issues (Jones et al., [2011](#)). Cyberbullying is irritating, insulting, mocking, daunting or threatening others. Adolescents and young adults usually do more cyberbullying.

Literature Review

Cyberbullying is focused, conscious behaviour done more than once after some time. Secondly, the purpose of cyber-bullying meetings is honest, minor trauma (psychologically, privately, or communally). Thirdly, it identifies cyber-bullying from conventional perturbing that the previous is completed utilising different electronic tools. So, cyberbullying includes using communication innovation to irritate, scare, compromise, or, in any case, hurt others (Raza et al., [2023b](#)). Standard types of cyberbullying incorporate sending compromising instant messages, posting offensive or malevolent emails on long-range interpersonal announcement destinations, for instance, Facebook, My Space or passing on unfavourable or mortifying pictures or recordings to the Internet without approval (Hinduja & Patchin, [2009](#)).

Practically speaking, cyber-bullying actions are frequently like mental, social, and indirect types of customary tormenting (e.g., talk dispersion, badgering, compromising, rejection), even though various attributes separate the two structures. Cyberbullies can remain "essentially" unknown using brief/expendable email and texting records, anonymisers and pen names, informal communication locales, talk rooms, and message sheets (Kowalski et al., [2012](#)).

There is a scarcity of research relating to the development of cyberbullying in Pakistan. In 2014, Imran pointed out a multifaceted assessment of cyberbullying in Pakistan alongside Sweden by selecting an aggregate of twelve women aged 15-16 who were survivors of cyberbullying in the two countries. The outcomes relent that, in reality the two countries come down the threat of cyberbullying (Raza, et al., [2023](#)). Researchers found that suffering from cyberbullying through unintended communication on social media is an unceasing source of pain for Pakistani women.

In Pakistan, women practised more indirect sexting, further originating discussions on such topics in an immoral way (Musharraf & Anis-ul-Haque, [2018a](#)).

Hassan, Luo, et al., (2022) led an examination to perceive in what way cyberbullying happens in university female students inside their campuses in Sindh, Pakistan. It was seen that there was a high-rise recurrence of extorting and undermining encounters by female understudies on campuses of university (Mushtaque et al., [2021](#)). It was likewise uncovered that 45% of females didn't disclose such occurrences to their families and legal code offices because they feared being seen as corrupt and lacking confidence in them.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the relationship among cyber-bullying, stress, coping and self-esteem.
2. To investigate the effects of stress on coping and self-esteem.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design & Sample

Co-relational research design was applied to examine the relationship among cyber-bullying, stress, coping and self-esteem (Dewi et al., [2023](#)). The purposive sampling was used for data collection. The sample size was determined by G-power analysis. Data from 152 university students was collected through an online survey (Seyhan Şahin & Ayaz-Alkaya, [2023](#)). Men (33%) and women (69%), with a mean age of 21%, participated in this research.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

Male and female university students, ages 19 to 25, from both public and private universities were eligible to participate in this study (Lindert, [2017](#)). Those with physical disabilities, however, were not allowed to participate due to the exclusion criteria (Savani et al., [2023](#)).

2.3 Measures

Demographic sheet

The demographic sheet was designed to support the participants' essential data (Mukhtar et al., [2023](#)). It comprised age, gender, area, program of study, semester, university, occupation, marital status, duration of daily smartphone usage, mainly used social sites, victim of cyberbullying, type of cyberbullying and stress due to cyberbullying (yes/no).

Revised Cyberbullying Inventory II (RCBI-II)

The Revised Cyberbullying Scale II (RCBI- II) was developed. It comprises two parallel forms with ten statements that must be responded to via both perspectives of a bully and victim. The response format is a four-point Likert scale, where 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = twice or three times, 4 = more than three times (Muhammad et al., [2023](#)). The responses are added to receive a total score in each form.

Perceived Stress Scale

Stress was measured by administering the Perceived Stress Scale (1994) by Sheldon Cohen. It includes ten items in the form of statements (Ndiege & Mwaura, [2023](#)). The response format ranges from 0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, and 4 = very often. This scale includes reversing responses of four positively stated items, 4, 5, 7, 8. Cope was measured using the coping scale (Maurya et al., [2023](#)). The questionnaire on this scale checks out the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural techniques used to deal with any issue. It includes 13 items, and some items are clear about mental and emotional attitudes. Answer to every item assigned a range from 4 to 1 (Darawsheh, [2023](#)).

The sum of all items can be the total score, and the higher levels of coping indicated the higher scores (Sanchez, [2023](#)).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965)

Self-esteem was evaluated by administering Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. It includes ten items in the form of statements. There are five positively worded and five negative-worded statements. The response format is a four-point Likert scale and ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Some items of the scale have reversing scoring, e.g., items 2,5, 6,8 and 9.

2.4 Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from the Riphah Institute of Clinical and Professional Psychology research ethical committee to conduct research. Formal permission was taken from the authors concerned (AlQaderi et al., 2023). First, considering the moral considerations, written informed consent about participants' willingness to participate in the study was obtained from each participant. The participants were briefed that their information would only be used for research and kept confidential. Besides, participants were allowed to withdraw from research at any time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data was collected online through Google Forms; these respective demographic sheets, information sheets, and scales were designed by Google Forms and shared on different social sites. The participants took at least 7-10 minutes to complete these questionnaires (Maurya et al., 2022).

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study always complied with ethical guidelines. Psychometric tools were utilised in the study with permission from the authors. All study participants were informed of their rights, including the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant gave their verbal or written agreement, with the understanding that their information would be kept confidential. The subjects received thorough training on every facet of the study procedure. There was open reporting of the outcomes. Participants' physical and mental well-being was of the utmost importance. The entire dataset was kept private and used only for scientific investigations.

3 Results

The present study planned to find out the relationship among cyber-bullying, stress, coping and self-esteem in young adults by performing statistical analysis through SPSS 21 (Gohal et al., 2023). The first section of this chapter represents descriptive statistics, and future inferential statistics were completed to assess the research hypotheses, like Pearson Product Moment Correlation Linear Regression analysis.

Table 1: Psychometric Properties of Scales (N=152)

Variables	K	M	SD	Range Potential		Actual		a
				min	max	min	max	
IDT	10	13.22	3.40	1	40	0.00	24.00	.75
CV	10	18.63	8.02	1	40	0.00	37.00	.92
Stress	10	22.18	7.25	0	40	0.00	39.00	.87
Coping	13	38.63	8.90	1	52	0.00	52.00	.93
SE	10	18.27	3.18	0	30	0.00	30.00	.70

Note. IDT=I did this, CV= Cyber-victimization, K= numbers of items, M= mean, SD= standard deviation, a= Cronbach's Alpha

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables of the present study. It also represents the internal consistency of the scales used in this research (Li et al., 2022). The reliability analysis indicates that the reliability of IDT (the first section of the cyber-bullying scale) is .75, which means high reliability. In contrast, the reliability of cyber-victimisation (second

section of the cyber-bullying scale) is .92, indicating excellent reliability. The reliability of stress shows high reliability. The coping scale had excellent reliability. The reliability of self-esteem is .70, which means good reliability (Yosep et al., [2023](#)).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Demographic characteristics of study (N=152)

Variables	M (SD)	f (%)
Age	21.93 (2.83)	
Gender		
Male		50 (32.3)
Female		101(65.2)
Birth order		
Firstborn		42(27.1)
Middle born		68(43.9)
Last born		39(25.2)
Only child		2(1.3)
Family system		
Nuclear		95(61.3)
Joint		56(36.1)
No. of siblings		
1-3		48(30.9)
4-6		95(61.4)
7-10		4(2.5)
Family income	503065.79(1423174.32)	
Social status		
Upper		1(6)
Upper-middle		23(14.8)
Middle		119(76.8)
Lower		9(5.8)
Program of study		
BS Hons/MA		97(62.6)
MS/MPHIL		25(16.1)
Medical		29(18.7)
Semester		
1-4		101(65.2)
5-last/final		43(27.7)
Completed		7(4.5)
University		
Public		63(40.6)
Private		88(56.8)
Occupation		
Working		43(27.7)
Non-working		108(69.7)
Duration of phone usage		
1-5 hours		33(21.3)
6-10 hours		102(65.8)
11-18 hours		16(10.3)
Mostly used social sites.		
WhatsApp		59(38.1)
Facebook		33(21.3)
Instagram		34(21.9)

Variables	M (SD)	f (%)
Snapchat		20(12.9)
Others		5(3.2)
Are you a victim of cyber-bullying		
Yes		76(49.0)
No		75(48.4)
Types of cyber-bullying		
No/nothing, never faced		74(47.7)
Inappropriate messages/calls		22(14.2)
Picture bullying, fake pictures, shared pictures		7(4.5)
Inappropriate content, threatened, harassed by social sites, others.		23(14.8)
Misuse social accounts, hacked accounts, fake accounts		26(16.8)
Types do you feel stress due to cyberbullying		
Yes		85(54.8)
No		66(42.6)

M= mean, SD= standard deviation, f= frequency, %= percent

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics. Most participants were female (65%), and the male ratio was 32%. Most participants belong to the nuclear family system and have middle-class social status. Most of the participants are undergraduates in private universities and are not working. The phone usage duration was 6-10 hours, and most participants used WhatsApp. The majority of the participants were the victims of cyber-bullying, and the ratio was 49%. Most of the participants faced misused social accounts, hacked accounts and fake accounts type of cyber-bullying. Almost all of the victims of cyberbullying feel stress due to the cyber-bullying.

Table 3: Correlation between Demographic and Scales. (N=152)

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age		21.93	2.83	-	.15*	.02	.004	.16*	.21**	.39**
Gender					-	-.12	.02	.15	-.21**	.05
IDT	10	13.22	3.40			--	.68**	.35**	.22**	.05
CV	10	18.63	8.02				-	.53**	-.07	-.03
Stress	10	22.18	7.25					-	-.16*	-.14
Coping	13	38.63	8.90						-	.40**
SE	10	18.27	3.18							-

*Note: IDT=I did this, CV= Cyber victimization, SE=self-esteem, **p<.001*

Table 3 shows that Pearson product-moment correlation was used to explore the relationship among age, gender, cyber-bullying(I did this & this happened to me), self-esteem, stress and coping. Findings indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between age and gender. There is a significant positive relationship between IDT and Cyber-victimization, self-esteem, stress and coping, and a negative relationship between cyber-victimisation and self-esteem, coping, and there is a positive relationship between cyber-victimisation and stress. Self-esteem has a negative relationship with anxiety and a significant positive relationship with coping. Stress has a significant negative relationship with coping.

Table 4: Linear Regression Showing Predictors of Self-esteem in Cyberbullying Victims (N=152)

Variables	B	B	SE	t
Constant	13.75		1.4	9.48
IDT	-.05*	-.05	.10	-.53
CV	.03*	.09	.04	.81
Stress	-.04*	-.11	.03	-1.23
Coping	.14	.40**	0.2	4.97
ΔR	.17			
R^2	.17			
F	7.7			

Note: CV= Cyber-victimization, β = standardized coefficient of beta, R^2 = R Square

Table 4 shows that cyber-victimisation positively predicts self-esteem and stress negatively predicts self-esteem. Coping firmly predicts self-esteem ($\beta=.40$, $p<001$). The results of linear regression analysis showed that the overall model accounted for a 17% variance in the model.

4 Discussion

The current study was conducted to investigate the relationship among cyberbullying, stress, coping and self-esteem in young adults. Cyberbullying, stress, coping and self-esteem have a significant impact on adults. So, there was a need to study these variables in young adults.

Descriptive statistics showed that most participants were studied in private universities (57%), and most were undergraduates (63%). Most of the population was non-working. The duration of smartphone usage was 6-10 hours (66%), and the most used social site was WhatsApp (38%) by the participants. The victims of cyber-bullying were (49%), and the majority of the participants faced problems regarding hacked accounts, bullying through fake accounts and misused social accounts (17%). When asked about the stress, most of them reported yes (55%), and they feel stressed due to the cyberbullying they faced.

It is reported cyberbullying, psychological distress and trust. The findings of this research support the current study because mostly the same demographics were represented in the previous research.

The first hypothesis is hypothesised as there is likely to be a relationship among cyberbullying, stress, coping and self-esteem. Findings of the Pearson correlation indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between IDT (I did this) and cyber-victimisation, self-esteem, stress and coping. A significant negative relationship exists between cyber-victimisation and self-esteem coping, which shows that when there is a high rate of cyberbullying, victims have low self-esteem. Cyber-victimisation has a significant positive relationship with stress. Another result showed that self-esteem has a significant negative relationship with stress and a significant positive relationship with coping, according to Raza et al. (2023a).

The findings of previous studies supported our study. Previous findings proved that there is a significant relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem (Harmen, Hansen, Cochran, 2005). Victims of cyberbullying may lose hope, and it may lead to depression and stress. Victims of Cyberbullying and the increase of cyberbullying leads to low self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Flisher, Bhana, 2004). Cyberbullying causes low self-esteem (Khalid et al., 2023). Non-cyber-bullies have low self-esteem (Jankauskiene et al., 2008). Self-esteem is positively related to coping.

The second hypothesis is that Cyberbullying, stress and coping are likely to be the predictors of self-esteem in cyberbullying victims. Results of regression analysis showed that cyberbullying (cyber-victimisation) positively predicts self-esteem and stress negatively predicts self-esteem.

Coping is a predictor of self-esteem. Findings supported our study.

Findings of previous studies indicated that when people rate themselves, that increases or decreases their self-esteem. When individuals suffer from cyberbullying, it has adverse effects on self-esteem. In other meanings, cyberbullying negatively predicts self-esteem. Self-esteem is related to happiness (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Shehata et al., 2023). A person who is stressed must have low self-esteem (Argyle, 2001; Campbell, 1981). Stressful events are negatively related to coping. A person with low stress will have more coping strategies. Coping is a predictor of self-esteem (Fairbrother & Warn, 2004).

5 Implications

The current research will be beneficial for the students. It will also benefit the psychologist and counselors as it help them to explore more about coping strategies that lead to a healthy lifestyle. The awareness of cyberbullying like THTM (this happened to me) will help individuals understand different types of cyberbullying so that next time, they will be careful and manage the situation. Moreover, it will show that personal capacities like coping and self-esteem play a role in resolving the problems caused by external chaos.

6 Limitations and Suggestions

Since this study was purely quantitative, it was impossible to investigate their qualitative comprehension. Qualitative research should, therefore, be done in this area in the future. The sample size in this study was not as large as in previous studies. More participant studies should be carried out to improve the generalizability of the findings. Most study participants are from Pakistan's urban areas; therefore, a larger sample size for future research should come from more rural areas to get more broadly applicable findings.

7 Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to evaluate the aspects of the interaction between stress, coping mechanisms, cyberbullying, and young people's self-esteem. An online survey was used to gather the data using trustworthy and valid scales. Girls made up the majority of the student body. The current study's findings indicated a strong correlation between the factors. It is appropriate to conclude that cyber-bullying victims' self-esteem is impacted by their ability to cope with stress. Understanding these ideas can help everyone, especially students, improve their coping skills and develop a strong sense of self-worth to continue to lead balanced, healthy lives.

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