

CYBERBULLYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INTEGRATED ANALYSIS OF PREVALENCE, PLATFORM DYNAMICS, PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES, AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

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Abstract

Cyberbullying has become a problem that has surfaced in university life because students have started relying on social media and messaging applications for communication and learning purposes. While cyberbullying has been recognized as an issue worldwide and its effects on victims have been extensively studied, empirical data regarding its occurrence and prevalence in Pakistani universities is scarce. This research paper aims to investigate the frequency of cyberbullying among university students, its types, platforms, emotional impacts, and awareness of university-based support mechanisms. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 54 respondents who were studying at Air University Multan Campus. The questions covered five major aspects, including cyberbullying victimization, perpetration, and emotions involved, coping strategies, and knowledge of university-based resources. All results were analyzed based on the students' experiences, platforms, and other demographic variables. According to the findings, cyberbullying affects most of the respondents in the selected sample. Instagram and WhatsApp proved to be the primary platforms associated with cyberbullying, and verbal abuse, spreading rumors, and ostracizing were the most common types of cyberbullying behaviors observed by the participants. In addition, most respondents expressed emotional distress due to cyberbullying, and many did not seem aware of university-based resources to report their experiences.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

With the rise of use of mobile phones, social networking sites, instant messaging services, and digital learning platforms, life for students has changed completely. The internet is providing them an opportunity to communicate, organize their academics, and connect socially. However, these tools have created another avenue for humiliation and harassing. With the advent of cyberbullying, it becomes important to discuss its implications in the context where internet usage has become widespread among students. The main distinction between cyberbullying and conventional bullying is that it does not have any restrictions as far as time and place are concerned. Any offensive material can be posted and distributed many times, and even screenshots and copies can help in preserving the content in question. This may make cyberbullying very stressful for college students who are under pressure anyway. The international discourse on digital harassment is shifting towards viewing it as a problem for mental health as well as education. Evidence from reports issued by health organizations and educational institutions, together with academic studies carried out recently, has established that digital harassment has started impacting student psychological wellbeing and participation in the classroom. The use of apps such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok in Pakistan is growing very fast amongst youth. The present literature links cyberbullying to anxiety, depression, isolation, insomnia, and reduced concentration on academics. In Pakistan, it has been found that cyberbullying is a prevalent issue at their local institutions; however, most of the articles have studied either one of these aspects. This research paper fills this void by studying all these aspects under a single umbrella in one institution.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although there is growing alarm regarding online harassment, there are inadequate amounts of campus-specific information within Pakistani universities regarding the frequency of cyberbullying among students, the online platforms where it takes place, the types of cyberbullying that happen, the emotional toll it takes on them, and the extent of their knowledge about the support available. Consequently, any measures that can be taken to prevent cyberbullying will only be generalized, underutilized, and challenging to formulate.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To determine the occurrence and frequency of cyberbullying victimization and cyberbullying behaviors among university students.
2. To establish the main online channels used for cyberbullying activities.
3. To study the link between cyberbullying victimization and psychological effects.
4. To investigate if gender acts as a moderator in the psychological effect of cyberbullying.
5. To explore whether time spent on social media each day affects cyberbullying exposure.
6. To analyze the knowledge of university students regarding available resources at the institution and how they cope with cyberbullying.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the frequency and form of cyberbullying victimization and perpetration at the university level?
2. Which social media sites are most frequently linked to cyberbullying behavior?
3. Is there an association between cyberbullying victimization and psychological distress?
4. Is there a difference in cyberbullying behaviors and their psychological consequences based on gender?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. H1: Cyberbullying victimization is positively correlated to psychological consequences for university students.
2. H2: University female students experience significantly higher psychological effects caused by cyberbullying compared to their male counterparts.
3. H3: Increased social media use is positively correlated to increased cyberbullying victimization for university students.
4. H0 (Null): No significant correlations exist between cyberbullying victimization, gender, social media use, and psychological effects.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study provides original empirical findings on the issue of cyberbullying through survey research conducted in a Pakistani university context, which lacks proper documentation regarding the day-to-day experiences of students being harassed via cyberspace. This study has practical importance because it highlights the areas needing urgent intervention to address this issue. From an academic perspective, this study will also help develop theory regarding cyberbullying among students.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Foundations and Rational of the Study

2.2.1 Cyberbullying among University Students is a Big Problem

We know that cyberbullying is an issue at universities. A lot of students say they have been bullied online or have bullied someone. Since we use the internet and our phones much to talk to each other it has become a normal part of how students interact with each other.

2.2.2 Cyberbullying Affects University Students

Many studies have found that students who are cyberbullied feel really bad about it. They get anxious, depressed and upset. It even affects how well they do in school. Cyberbullying is a deal and it hurts university students mentally.

2.2.3 Social Media Platforms are Used for Cyberbullying

We know that social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook are where most cyberbullying happens. This is because everyone uses them you can be anonymous. It is easy to access them. So these platforms make it easy for people to bully each online.

2.2.4 How You Use the Internet Affects Your Chance of Being Cyberbullied

If you spend a lot of time online or use media a lot you are more likely to be cyberbullied. This is because the time you spend online the more chances you have of running into someone who wants to bully you.

2.2.5 Do Boys and Girls Experience Cyberbullying Differently

Some studies say that girls are emotionally hurt by cyberbullying than boys. But other studies do not find any differences, between how boys and girls experience cyberbullying.

2.2.6 Universities Need to Do More to Stop Cyberbullying

One thing we know from past research is that students do not know what to do if they are cyberbullied. Universities do not do a job of telling students what the rules are and how to report cyberbullying. So universities need to do more to help the students who get affected; and institutions should stop cyberbullying from happening in the place.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

A number of recent studies have demonstrated that cyberbullying among college students is not

uncommon and not limited to any particular country. Research findings in various college settings have invariably highlighted cyber harassment as something that occurs on an ongoing basis within the student community, particularly when interaction takes place largely through social networking and other messaging tools. This growing literature provides proof that cyberbullying is more of a college issue than a teenage issue.

The existing body of research on cyberbullying in higher education presents a coherent yet fragmented understanding of the phenomenon, where each study contributes a specific dimension but rarely engages with the issue in an integrated manner.

Arif et al. (2024) foreground the psychological consequences of cybervictimization, arguing that persistent exposure to online harassment produces measurable emotional distress among university students. Their findings reinforce the position that cyberbullying is not merely episodic but structurally embedded in students' digital interactions. However, their analysis remains largely outcome-oriented; by privileging anxiety, stress, and depression as endpoints, the study does not sufficiently interrogate how students navigate or resist such experiences. This limits its explanatory power, particularly in relation to adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. A similar emphasis on psychological impact is evident in Albikawi (2023), whose work with female nursing students situates cyberbullying within a nexus of emotional distress and problematic internet use. While the study is valuable in identifying a gendered vulnerability—especially in relation to intensive online engagement—it simultaneously narrows its scope by focusing on a highly specific cohort. The implication that cybervictimization may be differently experienced across academic disciplines or gendered spaces are not fully developed, hence leave broader applicability uncertain.

Huang et al. (2021) shift the analytical lens from individual outcomes to the structural characteristics of digital environments. Their argument that social media platforms facilitate visibility, surveillance, and confrontation is particularly significant, as it locates cyberbullying within the architecture of communication technologies themselves. Yet, while the study successfully problematizes platform design, it stops short of examining how institutional frameworks respond to or regulate these environments, thereby leaving a critical gap between digital behavior and administrative accountability.

In the Pakistani context, Musharraf et al. (2019) provide an important intervention by linking cyberbullying roles—victim, perpetrator, and bully-victim—to self-perception and social functioning. Their findings complicate the binary understanding of bullying by demonstrating fluid role transitions among students. However, the study does not sufficiently engage with the technological or platform-specific conditions under which these roles emerge, nor does it consider institutional mechanisms that might mitigate such dynamics. Saleem et al. (2025) extend this national perspective by emphasizing the prevalence of cyberbullying within Pakistani higher education institutions and highlighting the inadequacy of institutional responses. Their work is particularly useful in exposing the disjuncture between the scale of the problem and the limited policy frameworks available to address it. Nevertheless, the study adopts a largely descriptive approach; while it identifies institutional shortcomings, it does not integrate psychological, behavioral, and technological variables into a unified analytical model.

Earlier large-scale syntheses, such as Kowalski et al. (2014), establish a robust statistical relationship between cyberbullying and negative psychological outcomes. Although their meta-analysis provides strong empirical grounding, its primary focus on adolescents restricts its relevance to university populations, where patterns of interaction and autonomy differ significantly. This gap has been partially addressed by Selkie et al. (2016), who argue that cyberbullying persists into young adulthood and continues to affect academic performance and mental health. However, their work remains limited in its treatment of platform-specific practices and institutional mediation. Zalaquett and Chatters (2014) contribute to this discussion by highlighting the emotional and academic repercussions of cyberbullying, particularly loneliness and disengagement. Their findings underscore the broader social consequences of digital harassment, yet they do not sufficiently explore the behavioral conditions that increase susceptibility, such as patterns of online interaction or network size.

Cassidy et al. (2017) introduce a crucial dimension by examining reporting behaviors, revealing that many students refrain from reporting cyberbullying due to a lack of trust in institutional support systems. This insight exposes a critical weakness in university governance structures. However, the study does not

connect these reporting patterns to specific forms of cyberbullying or to the digital environments in which they occur, thereby limiting its analytical depth. Walker et al. (2020) address behavioral exposure by suggesting that increased social media engagement correlates with higher likelihood of victimization. While this finding aligns with broader assumptions about digital immersion, the study acknowledges inconsistencies in causal direction. It remains unclear whether heavy usage leads to victimization or whether victimized individuals alter their online behavior, a question that requires more nuanced methodological approaches.

The question of gender is examined by Barlett and Coyne (2014), whose meta-analysis suggests that while women may be more susceptible to relational and image-based forms of cyberbullying, overall gender differences remain inconsistent. This inconsistency challenges any attempt to generalize gendered vulnerability and instead points to the importance of contextual and cultural variables—an area that remains underexplored in many regional studies.

Finally, Akbulut and Eristi (2011) provide a typological framework by identifying various forms of cyberbullying, including harassment, exclusion, impersonation, and privacy violations. Their classification is analytically useful, as it demonstrates that cyberbullying is not a singular act but a constellation of behaviors. However, the study does not extend this typology to examine how different forms produce distinct psychological or social outcomes, leaving an important dimension of the phenomenon insufficiently theorized. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that while cyberbullying among university students is well-documented in terms of prevalence and psychological impact, the literature remains fragmented across thematic lines. Psychological outcomes, platform dynamics, behavioral exposure, gender differences, and institutional response are often examined in isolation. What is largely missing is a comprehensive framework that integrates these variables within a single analytical model, particularly within the Pakistani higher education context. This fragmentation justifies the need for a study that systematically brings together prevalence, platform use, psychological effects, coping strategies, and institutional awareness into a unified investigation. Collectively, the preceding empirical literature suggests four consistent findings. First, cyberbullying

is common among college students; second, it is associated with psychological distress; third, it is guided by communication behaviors on the chosen platform; and fourth, it is affected by social support and institutional response. On the other hand, research conducted in Pakistan rarely investigates

cyberbullying prevalence, use of social media platforms, psychological distress, coping mechanisms, and institutional response in a comprehensive survey. This study attempts to fill this gap by combining all these elements in one study.

Table 1: *Meta synthesis of the previous studies*

Authors & Year	Study Focus / Topic	Key Findings	Research Gaps Identified
Arif et al. (2024)	Cyberbullying and psychological distress among university students	Strong association between cybervictimization and anxiety, stress, and depression among students	Limited exploration of coping mechanisms and institutional interventions
Albikawi (2023)	Cybervictimization among female nursing students	Cyberbullying linked with emotional distress and problematic internet use	Gender-specific sample limits generalizability; lacks platform-specific analysis
Huang et al. (2021)	Digital environments as sites of cyberbullying in universities	Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, messaging apps) facilitate visibility, hostility, and reduced privacy	Does not examine institutional awareness or policy response
Musharraf et al. (2019)	Cyberbullying roles and psychosocial outcomes in Pakistani college students	Cyberbullying roles (victim, bully, bully-victim) significantly affect self-perception and social functioning	Limited focus on prevalence across platforms and reporting mechanisms
Saleem et al. (2025)	Prevalence of cyberbullying in Pakistani higher education	Cyberbullying is widespread; institutional measures are insufficient or poorly implemented	Lack of integrated model combining prevalence, effects, and institutional response
Kowalski et al. (2014)	Meta-analysis of cyberbullying and psychological outcomes	Consistent relationship between cyberbullying and depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem	Focus largely on adolescents; limited higher education emphasis
Selkie et al. (2016)	Cyberbullying among young adults in college settings	Cyberbullying persists beyond adolescence and affects mental health and academic performance	Limited discussion on platform-specific behaviors and institutional policies
Zalaquett & Chatters (2014)	Cyberbullying in college students and emotional well-being	Victims report increased loneliness, depression, and reduced academic engagement	Lacks comprehensive behavioral and platform-based analysis
Cassidy et al. (2017)	Cyberbullying experiences and reporting behaviors among university students	Many students do not report incidents due to lack of trust in institutional support	Does not explore digital behavior patterns contributing to exposure
Walker et al. (2020)	Social media usage and cyberbullying exposure	High social media engagement increases likelihood of cyberbullying exposure	Mixed findings on causality; lacks focus on coping strategies
Barlett & Coyne (2014)	Gender differences in cyberbullying	Women more likely to experience relational and image-based bullying; mixed findings overall	Inconsistent gender results across contexts; needs localized studies
Akbulut & Eristi (2011)	Types and forms of cyberbullying behaviors	Identified multiple forms: harassment, exclusion, impersonation, and privacy	Does not link specific forms to emotional outcomes

violations

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework identifies cyberbullying victimization experience, comprising the number of occurrences, the manner in which they occurred, and the media through which they took place, as the principal independent variable. Psychological effect serves as the primary dependent variable, whereas coping strategies and organizational knowledge form

secondary variables associated with the response construct. Practically speaking, the model makes the assumption that students experiencing increased instances or increased severity of cyber bullying will have greater emotional impacts from their experience. This model also makes the assumption that support, knowledge, and coping will be factors in how the emotional impact is managed.

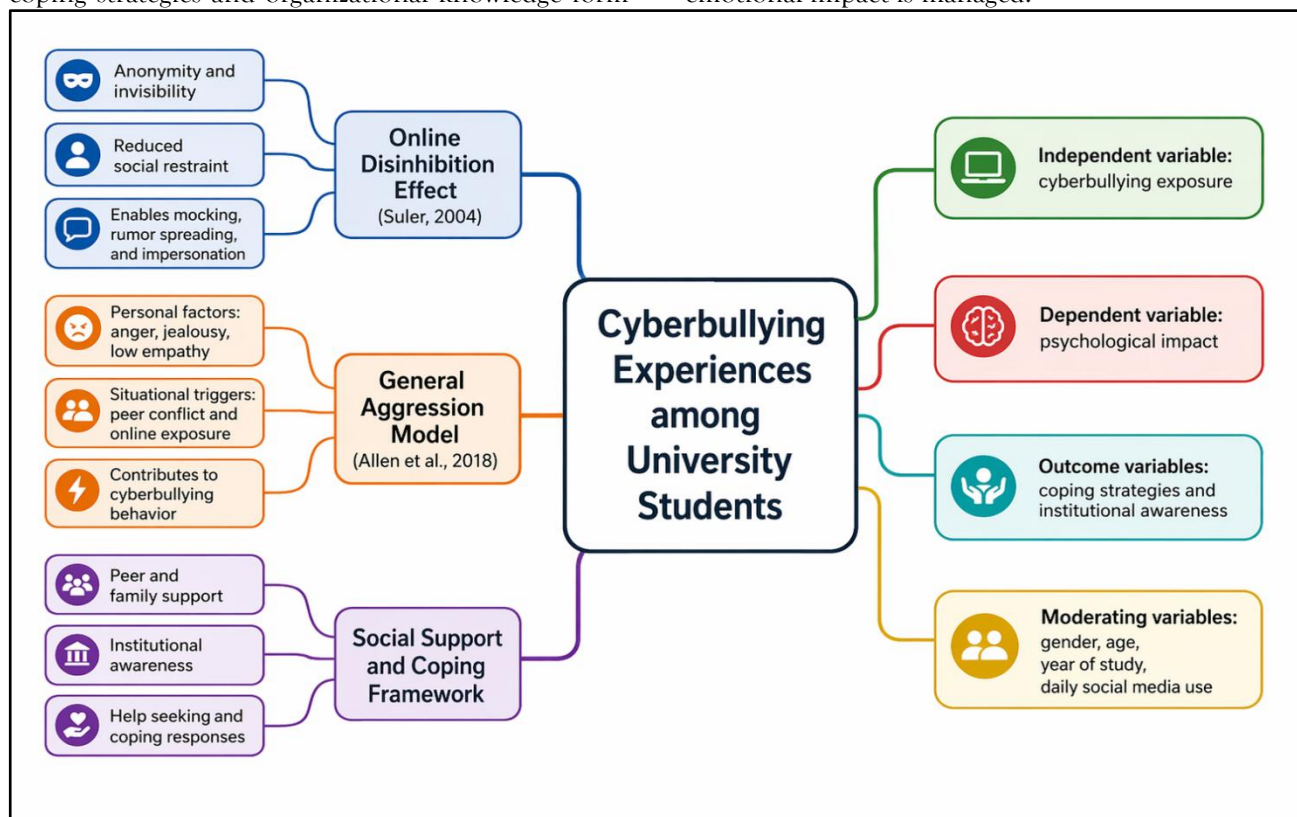


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 presents the framework used in this study and illustrates the connection between cyberbullying exposure, emotional impact, coping responses, and awareness of institutional support.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study utilizes a quantitative survey research design that involves a cross-sectional design method. The rationale behind the use of such design stems from the objective of examining various patterns of experiences, making comparisons, and assessing the relationship among various dimensions of cyberbullying.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population of this study comprises undergraduate and graduate students at Air University, Multan Campus. Since the access to these individuals was restricted and the research had to be conducted during an academic time frame, the sampling technique used in this study was convenience sampling. This means that the survey questions were sent through electronic media to the students, and out of those who received them, 54 responses were recorded.

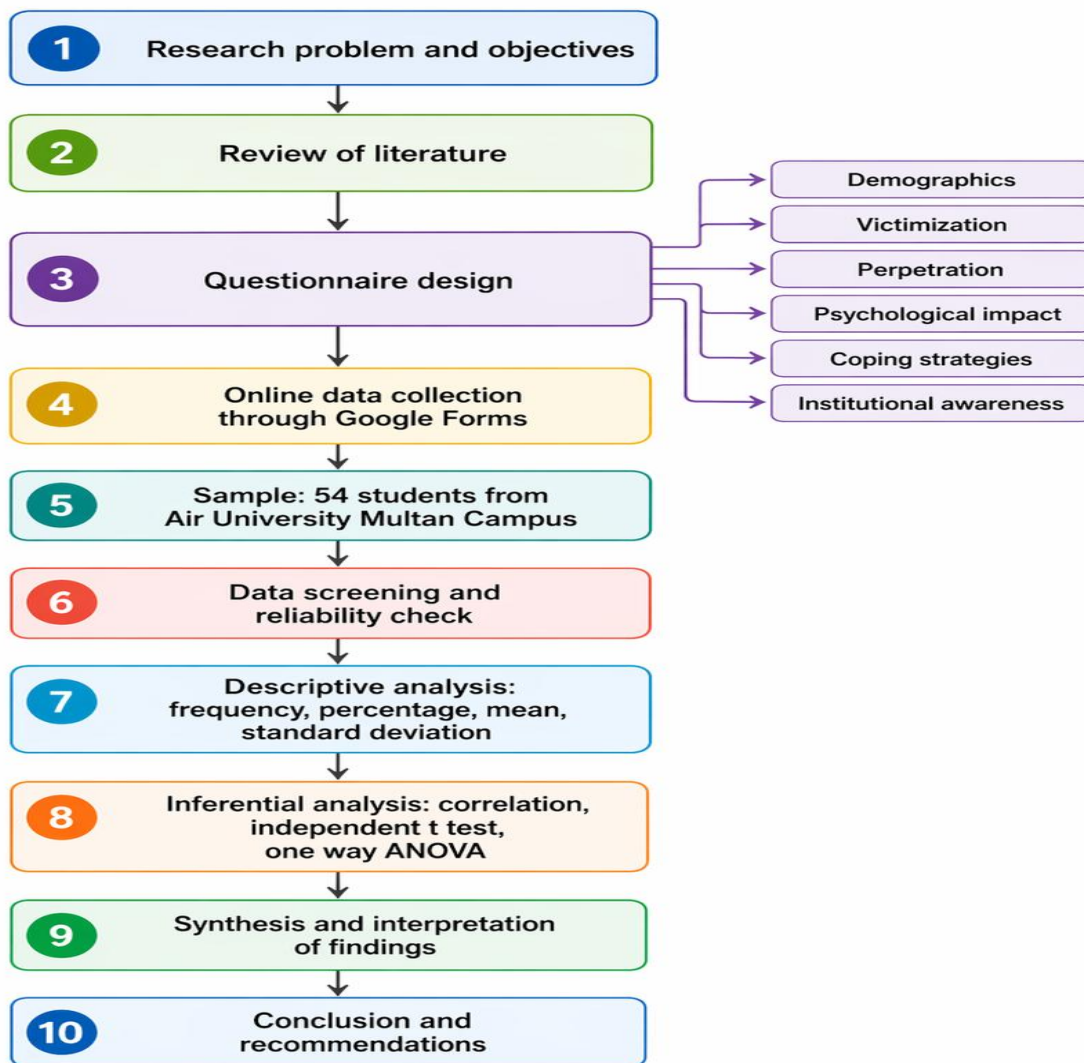


Figure 2. Research methodology flowchart

3.3 Research Instrument

Data collection was conducted using an online structured questionnaire consisting of 42 questions divided into six blocks. These blocks focused on demographic data, victimization experiences related to cyberbullying, cyberbullying as a perpetrator, impact on psychology, coping skills, and awareness of institutions. Appropriate questionnaires with response categories that would allow for the collection of data based on frequency and perception were utilized. It was adopted from previous research done in universities on cyberbullying and student wellbeing, but modified to fit the Pakistani university context.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity of content was achieved by ensuring the congruence between the items in the questionnaires, the objectives of the research and the theoretical

perspectives adopted. The analysis on reliability indicated that the multi-item scales had excellent performances; thus, the instrument was highly reliable internally.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure Methodology

The questionnaire was distributed online via WhatsApp groups within the department and among peers in April 2026. The respondents were made aware of the objectives of the study and that their participation was entirely voluntary. Personal identifiers were not sought from the participants, and all completed questionnaires received were suitable for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques Approaches

Data was analyzed using Python and both descriptive and inferential methods. The descriptive approach was employed to generate the patterns of demographics, usage, prevalence, and mean scale

scores. In order to analyze the associations and differences at the group level among the various

variables, the inferential approach was employed.

4. Results and Data Analysis

4.1 Characteristics of the Participants' Demographics

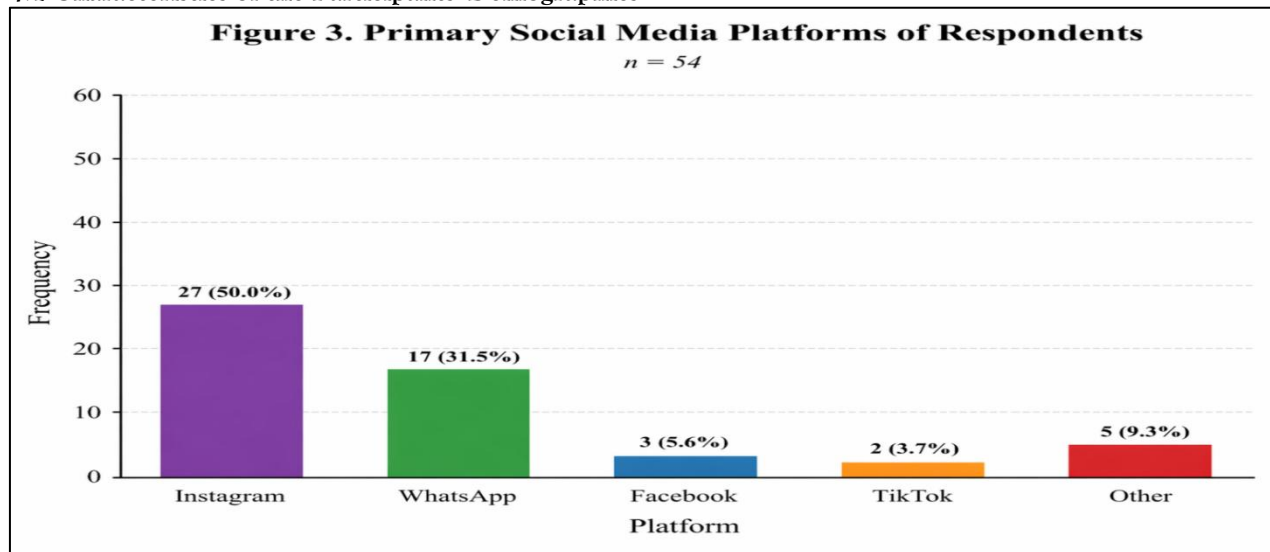


Figure 3. Primary social media platforms of respondents

Figure 3 and Table 2 show who the participants are in terms of their age, gender, and other demographic students. Most of the people who answered were between 21 and 23 years old. Instagram and

factors. There were more men than women in the group, and most of the people in it were third-year WhatsApp were the most popular social media sites, and a lot of people used them for several hours a day.

Table 2: Demographic Analysis

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	61.1
	Female	21	38.9
Age Group	18 to 20 years	20	37.0
	21 to 23 years	29	53.7
	24 to 26 years	2	3.7
	27 years or above	3	5.6
Year of Study	2nd Year	4	7.4
	3rd Year	43	79.6
	4th Year / Final Year	7	13.0
Primary Platform	Instagram	27	50.0
	WhatsApp	17	31.5
	Facebook	3	5.6
	TikTok	2	3.7
	Other	5	9.3
Daily Social Media Use	Less than 1 hour	3	5.6
	1 to 2 hours	12	22.2
	3 to 4 hours	21	38.9
	More than 4 hours	18	33.3

4.2 Statistics on Reliability

The scales utilized in this study exhibited high internal consistency reliability. This suggests that the

survey was reliable for examining various dimensions such as victimization, perpetration, emotions, coping strategies, and institutional awareness.

Table 3: Scale Reliability Statistics (*Calculated using perpetration score columns)

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
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Cyberbullying Victimization	8	0.937	Excellent
Cyberbullying Perpetration	6	0.911*	Excellent
Psychological Impact	7	0.956	Excellent
Coping Strategies	7	0.911	Excellent
Institutional Awareness	7	0.933	Excellent

4.3 How common is cyberbullying?

Most of the people who took the survey said they had been the target of at least one type of cyberbullying. This indicates that cyberbullying is prevalent in the

online interactions of students within the studied population. Verbal attacks, spreading rumors, and social exclusion were the most common types of cyberbullying.

Table 4: *Cyberbullying Victimization Item Means (1 = Never, 5 = Very Often; n = 54)*

Form of Cyberbullying	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
Received hurtful or offensive messages	2.48	1.25	1
Someone spread false rumors about me online	2.28	1.22	2
Intentionally excluded from online groups/chats	2.26	1.19	3
Embarrassing photos/videos posted without consent	2.20	1.24	4
Someone impersonated me online	2.09	1.14	5
Personal information shared without permission	2.00	1.08	6
Subjected to repeated negative comments on posts	1.98	1.12	7
Threatened or intimidated online	1.94	1.05	8

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for the Main Variable of the Study

The descriptive statistics regarding the key variables suggest the presence of exposure to cyberbullying among the participants. The emotional impact is

more evident than that of being cyberbullying perpetrators, although coping strategies have been employed to some extent. Also, people are still not sure about institutional help.

Table 5: *Descriptive Statistics for Major Study Variables (n = 54)*

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Range	Interpretation
Cyberbullying Victimization	2.16	1.02	1 to 5	Low moderate exposure
Cyberbullying Perpetration	1.85	1.10	1 to 5	Low perpetration
Psychological Impact	2.51	1.04	1 to 5	Moderate psychological stress
Coping Strategies	2.56	1.04	1 to 5	Moderate engagement
Institutional Awareness	2.95	0.98	1 to 5	Near neutral awareness

4.5 Analysis of Correlation

The analysis of the relationship indicates that students with greater experiences of cyberbullying also exhibited significant emotional distress. The results indicate that students experiencing emotional

difficulties exhibited heightened attention to institutional support matters. In conclusion, cyberbullying is closely linked to student well-being and institutional response.

Table 6: *Pearson Correlation Matrix / ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05 (two tailed)*

Variable	Victimization	Psych. Impact	Coping	Awareness
1. Victimization		0.400**	0.308*	
2. Psychological Impact	0.400**			0.617**
3. Coping Strategies	0.308*			
4. Institutional Awareness		0.617**		

4.6 Gender Difference Analyzed by Independent Samples t Test

There were no significant differences between genders regarding the emotional impact experienced.

The results indicate that both males and females have articulated the psychological impacts of cyberbullying in a comparable manner.

Table 7. *Independent Samples t Test: Psychological Impact by Gender*

Group	n	Mean (M)	SD	t value	p value
Male	33	2.50	1.12	-0.097	0.923
Female	21	2.53	0.94		

4.7 One Way ANOVA of Social Media Use and Victimization

There is a growing trend in the occurrence of victimization as daily social media use increases,

however the differences between different usage levels are not important enough to form clear differences among the groups.

Table 8. *One Way ANOVA: Victimization by Daily Social Media Usage (F = 0.497, p = 0.686)*

Social Media Usage Category	n	Mean (M)	SD
Less than 1 hour/day	3	1.54	0.14
1 to 2 hours/day	12	2.05	1.02
3 to 4 hours/day	21	2.18	1.02
More than 4 hours/day	18	2.29	1.13

Figure 4 brings the vivid and inferential findings together by focusing on the most important patterns

in occurrence, platform use, emotional impact, and institutional awareness.

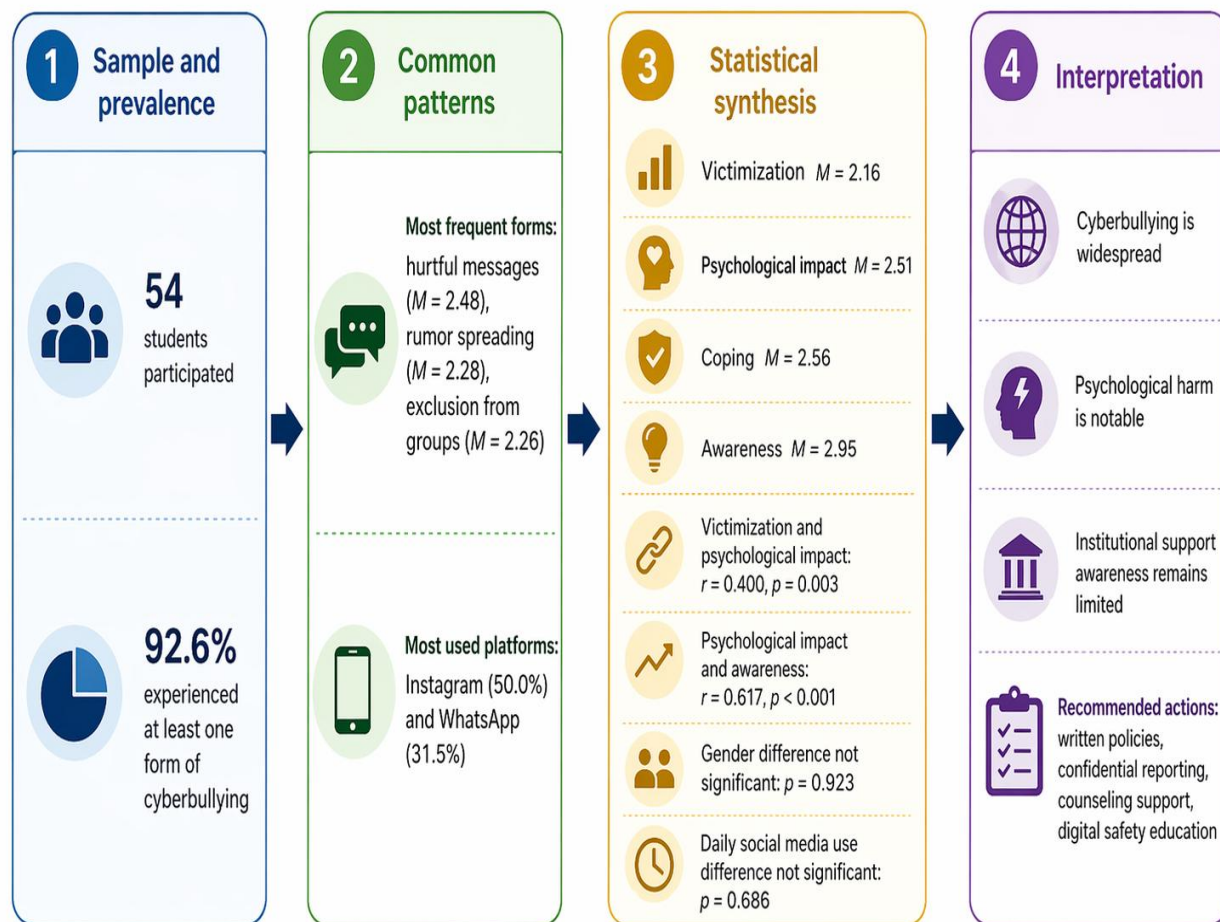


Figure 4. *Synthesis of data analysis*

4.8 Synthesis of findings from the Data Analysis

When the results are taken together, a cohesive narrative begins to take shape. In this case, cyberbullying seems to be a normal experience for students using technology. It does not happen sporadically or randomly; it is part of the way students interact harmfully in their daily online lives.

In addition, it is important to consider that the severity of cyberbullying should not be limited to the volume of unpleasant comments. In cases where exposure is seemingly moderate based on averages, students report having had some impact on their emotions and unclear options for institutional help.

4.8.1 Demographic Analysis

The people in the study were mostly third year students. There were more male students than female students. Most of the students were between 21 and 23 years old. This is what you would expect from university students. It is good to know this because the results are mainly about what these students think and do when they use platforms.

4.8.2 Platform Use Analysis

The students used Instagram and WhatsApp the most. This means that people should not just talk about internet safety. They should also talk about how to be safe on the platforms that students use every day. This includes talking about how to be safe when sharing pictures talking to friends and discussing things in groups.

4.8.3 Reliability Analysis

The results show that the questions in the study were consistent. This means that the questions measured what they were supposed to measure. So the results are good which can be used to learn more.

4.8.4 Victimization and Prevalence Analysis

The study found that students were bullied online in ways. They got messages people spread false rumors about them and they were excluded from online groups. This shows that cyberbullying is a problem and it is not just about people being mean. It is about people being hurt and left out.

4.8.5 Psychological Impact and Coping Analysis

The study found that students were moderately stressed and they tried to cope with the stress. This means that students are not just bullied online they also feel bad about it. They try to deal with it by blocking people talking to friends saving evidence or staying away, from spaces.. They do not do enough to make the problem go away.

4.8.6 Inferential Analysis

The study found that when students were bullied online they felt bad. This supports the idea that the study was looking at.. The study did not find that boys and girls felt differently about being bullied. The study also did not find that using media more made students more likely to be bullied.. It did find that students who used social media more were a little more likely to be bullied.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

One of the strongest conclusions that can be drawn from this research is the fact that cyberbullying is an intrinsic component of digital interactions among the survey respondents. The high rate of exposure to such behavior implies that bullying via the Internet has become an integral part of everyday communication between students, with Instagram and WhatsApp holding a special position within this trend. Another important conclusion that can be made based on the results is the fact that cyberbullying does not only have a negative impact on the quality of one's life but is also psychologically harmful to students.

These results also reveal the fact that cyberbullying goes beyond being unpleasant to being emotionally hurtful too. Individuals that have been victimized more often have admitted to experiencing more strain and disturbance in their daily activities. These results further support the claim that cyberbullying needs to be viewed as a health problem and not as a mere issue of etiquette. A third important area was institutional awareness. Many students did not seem to know what type of help they could receive, and this problem seemed especially prevalent with regard to those students that were already emotionally stressed. Thus, it would appear that students become aware of their resources only after problems arise, which makes clear the need for improved communication on campus. The lack of gender differences in this case must be cautiously understood. In this scenario, cyberbullying seems to have an impact on students regardless of their gender in much the same manner. Instead of thinking that the responsibility falls upon a particular set of students, it is essential for institutions to consider that the effects of cyberbullying may extend to other students as well.

5.2 Comparative Study with Previous Studies

The results of the current study are largely consistent with previous studies carried out in Pakistan and at other higher educational institutes where cyberbullying is prevalent, detrimental to emotional wellbeing, and highly associated with the process of using social networking platforms. However, unlike previous research, the current paper provides insights into an institution-level scenario involving all four aspects together. The pattern identified in this case is indicative of the manner in which the online social life of students is organized. Applications that enable extensive interaction facilitate rapid and easily noticeable communication. This explains why phenomena such as image exchange, rumor-mongering, and message abuse constitute crucial elements within the accounts provided by students about cyber bullying.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Overall, the results confirm the validity of the Online Disinhibition Effect, the General Aggression Model, and the social support theory. Specifically, cyberbullying in the university context could be explained through the prism of diminished inhibitions in cyberspace, social/emotional stimuli that facilitate aggressive behavior, and unequal availability of social support following aggression.

6. Implications of the Study

1. There is one clear practical recommendation that can be derived from the research findings. It is important for universities to concentrate on addressing those types of cyberbullying behavior reported by students as most common, particularly threatening messages, rumor spreading, and ostracism via popular channels like Instagram and WhatsApp. The university counseling departments should be ready to address such problems as serious wellbeing issues.

2. Another critical issue is institutional transparency. The youth require clear-cut guidelines, a transparent reporting mechanism, and an understanding that any complaints made will be treated in a fair and discreet manner. Hence, awareness programs must clearly define cyberbullying, reporting avenues, and post-reporting student support systems.

3. The study also holds merit for academic research since it highlights the need to consider online victimization from a holistic perspective that encompasses all four factors of exposure,

psychological effects, coping strategies, and the awareness of available support resources. When digital interaction is tightly interwoven into the fabric of students' lives, such factors tend to overlap extensively.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to determine how cyberbullying occurred amongst the students studying in Air University Multan Campus. According to the findings of this study, cyberbullying is quite common amongst the surveyed students and it mainly occurs in social communication media like Instagram and WhatsApp. Mean messages, rumors, and ostracism are the common acts of cyberbullying. In addition, this study demonstrates the existence of an emotional toll of cyberbullying as well as the confusion felt by the majority of the students regarding the help offered by the institution in addressing the problem. Thus, the problem does not only lie in exposure to cyberbullying but also on the level of preparedness of the institution to address it. Through the presentation of original evidence collected from an actual Pakistani university campus, the current research makes an important contribution to a developing discourse regarding student security in online settings. Through such results, it is clear that a comprehensive framework needs to be developed involving the creation of policies, reporting systems, counseling and cyber security education.

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Appendix A**Survey Instrument**

Note: The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. The following represents the structured items used for quantitative analysis.

Section A: Demographic Information

- A1. Age group: 18 to 20 / 21 to 23 / 24 to 26 / 27 or above
- A2. Gender: Male / Female / Prefer not to say
- A3. Program of Study: BS / MS/MPhil / Other
- A4. Year of Study: 1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th/Final Year
- A5. Primary social media platform: Instagram / WhatsApp / Facebook / TikTok / Other
- A6. Average daily social media usage: Less than 1 hr / 1 to 2 hrs / 3 to 4 hrs / More than 4 hrs

Section B: Experiences of Cyberbullying (1 = Never to 5 = Very Often)

- Part B1: I received nasty or insulting messages via social media or instant messaging applications.
- Part B2: False rumors were posted about me on the internet.
- Part B3: I was deliberately excluded or ignored by others in online forums or discussion threads.
- Part B4: Embarrassing photos and videos of me have been uploaded online without my consent.
- Part B5: I experienced being threatened or intimidated online.
- Part B6: My personal data was released on the internet without my consent.
- Part B7: I had been impersonated online to tarnish my reputation.
- Part B8: I received constant negative remarks on my postings/profile.

Section C: Cyberbullying Perpetration (1 = Never to 5 = Very Often)

- C1. I have used harmful or abusive language towards someone on the internet.
- C2. I have spread malicious gossip about someone using internet mediums.
- C3. I have deliberately excluded someone from participating in an online discussion.
- C4. I have circulated embarrassing pictures/videoclips of someone without their permission.
- C5. I have threatened or intimidated someone on the internet.
- C6. I have verbally abused someone by mocking them online.

Section D: Psychological Impact (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

- D1: The experience of being a victim of cyberbullying has had an adverse effect on my self-esteem.
- D2: Being online, I am stressed or anxious for whatever reason.
- D3: As a consequence of cyberbullying, I have felt depressed.
- D4: Because of being bullied on the internet, I have been unable to sleep properly.
- D5: While using social media networks, I have not felt safe and secure.
- D6: As a result of being harassed online, I have felt helpless.
- D7: As a result of being cyberbullied, my grades have deteriorated.

Section E: Coping Strategies (1 = Never to 5 = Very Often)

- E1. I block or unfriend people who cyberbully me.
- E2. I inform the website or authorities when an act of cyberbullying happens.
- E3. I seek help from my friends or relatives when I am being cyberbullied.
- E4. I log off from the Internet to deal with the problem.
- E5. I seek counseling services at the university to address my problem.
- E6. I save the evidence of cyberbullying (screenshot).
- E7. I confront the cyberbully online.

Section F: Institutional Awareness (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

- F1. I am familiar with what cyberbullying entails.
- F2. My college has a strong policy against cyberbullying.
- F3. I know how to make a cyberbullying complaint against my college officials.
- F4. The victim of cyberbullying is properly supported in my college.
- F5. I am sure that my institution considers cyberbullying a serious issue.
- F6. I have been trained on how to avoid cyberbullying.
- F7. I am assured that cyberbullying complaints will be handled effectively at my college.

