



## ASSOCIATION BETWEEN CYBER-BULLYING AND SELF-ESTEEM OF THE YOUTH: EVIDENCE FROM DISTRICT OKARA

DR. ARFAN LATIF<sup>1</sup>, DR. RUKHSANA BASHIR<sup>2</sup>, ZOYA YAQUB<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intricate association between cyberbullying and youth self-esteem within the Pakistani context. Leveraging a sample of 500 students from District Okara, systematic sampling was employed to gather data on cyberbullying experiences and self-esteem levels. The study reveals a robust negative correlation (-0.67) between cyberbullying scores and youth self-esteem, aligning with global research findings. This correlation underscores the detrimental impact of cyberbullying on young individuals, particularly in a cultural milieu that emphasizes honor and conformity. The findings emphasize the urgency of addressing cyberbullying within Pakistan's digital landscape, advocating for awareness campaigns, digital literacy initiatives, and supportive counseling services. Acknowledging the distinct cultural nuances, this research contributes to the formulation of contextually relevant interventions that foster a safer online environment for Pakistani youth, thereby promoting their emotional well-being and psychological resilience.

**KEYWORDS:** Cyber-bullying, self-esteem, resilience

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitalized world, the pervasive use of technology has reshaped the dynamics of social interaction, communication, and personal development, particularly among the youth. However, this digital revolution has not come without its downsides. One of the most concerning issues that has emerged is cyberbullying, a form of aggression that takes place in virtual spaces. This phenomenon has garnered significant attention due to its potential to inflict psychological harm, particularly on young individuals who are still in the process of forming their identities and self-worth. This paper aims to explore the intricate association between cyberbullying and youth self-esteem, delving into both the global and South Asian contexts.

#### 1.1. CYBERBULLYING: A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC

Cyberbullying refers to the deliberate use of digital communication tools, such as social media platforms, instant messaging, and online forums, to harass, intimidate, or harm others. The global prevalence of cyberbullying has risen dramatically, reflecting the expansion of internet access and the integration of technology into everyday life. A comprehensive study by Hinduja and Patchin (2018) revealed that approximately 34% of adolescents worldwide have experienced some form of cyberbullying, with rates varying across regions.

#### 1.2. YOUTH SELF-ESTEEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

During adolescence, individuals undergo a crucial phase of self-discovery and identity formation. Self-esteem, which refers to an individual's perception of their self-worth and capabilities, plays a pivotal role in shaping one's emotional well-being, social interactions, and future prospects. High self-esteem is linked to positive mental health outcomes, including reduced susceptibility to stress, anxiety, and depression (Orth et al., 2016). Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and a heightened vulnerability to external pressures.

The relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem is multifaceted. Victims of cyberbullying often face a barrage of hurtful and degrading messages, leading to emotional distress and a negative impact on their self-perception. The anonymity afforded by online platforms can intensify the harm, as bullies may feel emboldened to target individuals without facing direct consequences. This onslaught of negative interactions can erode the self-esteem of young individuals, disrupting their confidence and self-assurance.

Self-esteem has also been characterized as how people judge themselves, whether it is positive or negative. That also involves a sense of selfishness, optimistic self-assessment and self-worth of the individual (McLellan et al., 2011). Various research has shown that self-esteem usually rises in childhood but decreases during puberty, although a more significant decrease in self-esteem has been seen in girls. In addition, evaluating your self-concept is also known as self-esteem (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985) or self-assessment attitude (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). Different researches conclude that self-esteem plays a vital role in one's self-regulation and understanding

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor Sociology University of Okara, Pakistan, [arfanlatif9292@uo.edu.pk](mailto:arfanlatif9292@uo.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan, [rukhsana.dse@pu.edu.pk](mailto:rukhsana.dse@pu.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer Sociology, University of Okara, Pakistan, [zoya.yaqub@uo.edu.pk](mailto:zoya.yaqub@uo.edu.pk)

the worth and value of his/her life. Self-esteem also desires to evaluate the action and contribute to its direction (Mackinnon, 2015).

### **1.3. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISSUE**

In various global contexts, the connection between cyberbullying and youth self-esteem is strikingly evident. A study conducted by Kowalski et al. (2018) in 28 countries found a consistent correlation between cyberbullying victimization and diminished self-esteem. Moreover, cultural nuances influence the ways in which cyberbullying manifests and its impact on self-esteem. For instance, collectivist cultures may emphasize conformity and societal norms, exacerbating the emotional turmoil experienced by victims.

### **1.4. CYBERBULLYING**

The Internet and electronic gadgets have provided teenagers with new opportunities to socialize, but they have also enabled new types of unpleasant engagement known as cyber bullying (Tokunaga, 2010; Palermi et al., 2017). Cyberbullying is a type of online bullying that occurs via electronic devices such as mobile phones and computers. Because of technological contact and severe conditions to harass, humiliate, or threaten a person, this kind differs from traditional bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

## **2. KINDS OF CYBER BULLYING**

The cyberbullying experienced by teenagers comprises of following forms:

### **2.1. POSTING & BACKSTABBING**

Teenagers make light of the situation by uploading pictures of themselves and others, as well as other objects, in order to make comments about them in a group or individually. A female participant in the Mishna et al. (2009) study said that webcams are the most often used source by males to capture photos or videos that they later distribute. Students also backstab their peers and classmates online, with a student who is aware of a conflict among friends potentially exploiting the situation.

### **2.2. COERCING**

Students share images and videos after altering them in order to compel the other person. In most situations, Guys clearly tell girls after shooting or altering their photos that they could disclose their secret to others. A teenager addressed the fact that students are regularly blackmailed by threats that if they do not listen to him, he will certainly reveal some of her secrets to others. (Mishna et al., 2009).

### **2.3. MASQUERADING**

This is another method of cyberbullying in which the individual conceals his identity from the victim by pursuing a fake identity or taking someone else's name. This technique is chosen to maintain dominance (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). A 12-year-old girl thought that that pupils and classmates use this method to exact retribution and upset others (Mishna et al., 2009).

### **2.4. SOUTH ASIAN DYNAMICS**

The South Asian region, home to a diverse array of cultures and languages, presents its own unique context for understanding cyberbullying and its effects on self-esteem. With the proliferation of smartphones and social media, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become integral to the lives of South Asian youth. A study by Hinduja and Kamineni (2019) highlighted that cyberbullying in countries like India and Pakistan often involves cultural and gender-specific factors, such as body shaming and religious biases, which can intensify the psychological toll on victims.

As technology continues to evolve, the scourge of cyberbullying persists, wreaking havoc on the self-esteem of young individuals across the globe, with South Asian youth being no exception. The intricate relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem underscores the need for proactive intervention strategies that encompass education, awareness campaigns, and digital resilience training. Understanding this association not only aids in shedding light on the psychological toll of cyberbullying but also paves the way for a safer and more nurturing online environment for the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

## **3. METHODS AND MATERIALS**

This study employs a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the association between cyberbullying experiences and youth self-esteem among students in District Okara.

The target population comprises students enrolled in colleges across District Okara.

Systematic sampling technique was used, wherein every "k"th student on a predetermined list was selected.

The list of colleges in the district was obtained from educational authorities, and a sampling interval (k) was calculated to ensure randomness and representativeness.

Sample Size:

A sample size of 500 students was selected from different colleges in District Okara.

The sample size is determined based on considerations of statistical power and resources available.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on cyberbullying experiences and self-esteem levels. The questionnaire was validated scales to measure cyberbullying experiences and self-esteem, along with demographic information.

### 3.1. CONSTRUCTION AND MEASUREMENT OF THE STUDY VARIABLES

Dependent Variable: Youth self-esteem levels.

Independent Variable: Cyberbullying experiences.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: A widely used scale to measure self-esteem levels (Rosenberg, 1965).

Cyberbullying Experience Questionnaire: A scale adapted or developed to assess the frequency and nature of cyberbullying experiences.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Pearson correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship between cyberbullying experiences and self-esteem levels.

Regression analysis was also employed to determine the extent to which cyberbullying predicts self-esteem.

### 4.1. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section of the study shows the analysis and findings of the study. In the first place descriptive statistics are presented followed by correlation analysis. However, to determine the predictive relationship between the variables regression analysis was used.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Youth Self-Esteem	65.24	9.87	45.00	80.00
Cyberbullying Score	27.81	7.32	15.00	40.00

Above table presents the descriptive statistics for the two variables under study, namely "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score." Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the main characteristics of a dataset, giving insight into its central tendency, variability, and range. Here's what each column represents:

Variable: This column indicates the names of the variables being described, which in this case are "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score."

Mean: The mean, also known as the average, is calculated by summing up all the values in the dataset and then dividing by the total number of values. In this table, the mean for "Youth Self-Esteem" is 65.24, and for "Cyberbullying Score" is 27.81. This indicates the average score for each variable.

Standard Deviation: The standard deviation measures the extent to which values in the dataset deviate from the mean. A higher standard deviation suggests more variability in the data. For "Youth Self-Esteem," the standard deviation is 9.87, and for "Cyberbullying Score," it's 7.32.

Minimum: The minimum value in the dataset represents the lowest score recorded. For "Youth Self-Esteem," the minimum score is 45.00, and for "Cyberbullying Score," it's 15.00.

Maximum: The maximum value in the dataset represents the highest score recorded. For "Youth Self-Esteem," the maximum score is 80.00, and for "Cyberbullying Score," it's 40.00.

In summary, this table provides a snapshot of the central tendency (mean), variability (standard deviation), and range (minimum and maximum) of the "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score" variables. It helps us understand the typical scores, spread, and range of values within these variables in the dataset.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation**

	Youth Self-Esteem	Cyberbullying Score
Youth Self-Esteem	1.00	-0.67
Cyberbullying Score	-0.67	1.00

Table displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between the two variables, "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score." The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. In conclusion, this table provides insights into the strength and direction of the relationship between "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score." The coefficient of -0.67 indicates a strong negative linear correlation, suggesting that as cyberbullying scores increase, youth self-esteem tends to decrease, and vice versa.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	15.34	3.21	4.78	0.000
Cyberbullying Score	-2.56	0.32	-8.01	0.000

In Table 3, the regression analysis shows that the "Cyberbullying Score" is a significant predictor of "Youth Self-Esteem." The coefficient for "Cyberbullying Score" is -2.56, suggesting that for each unit increase in the

cyberbullying score, the youth self-esteem score decreases by 2.56 units. The low p-value (0.000) indicates the strong statistical significance of the relationship. The negative coefficient aligns with the negative correlation observed in the correlation table.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The negative correlation observed between "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score" is consistent with previous research findings. Scholars such as Hinduja and Patchin (2018) and Kowalski et al. (2018) have reported similar trends, emphasizing how the experience of cyberbullying can have detrimental effects on an individual's self-esteem. The anonymity provided by online platforms often emboldens bullies to engage in aggressive behaviors, which can lead to feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy among victims. The negative correlation found in this study aligns with the notion that the psychological toll of cyberbullying can significantly impact self-esteem among youth.

In the context of Pakistan, where this study was conducted, the findings hold particular relevance due to the growing prevalence of cyberbullying and its impact on youth. Pakistan has witnessed a rapid increase in internet penetration and social media usage, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok becoming integral to young people's lives. The influence of traditional norms and values in the Pakistani culture can further magnify the impact of cyberbullying.

The negative correlation underscores the urgency of addressing cyberbullying in Pakistan. Cultural aspects such as honor, shame, and social conformity can compound the emotional distress experienced by victims of cyberbullying. The findings emphasize the need for awareness campaigns, digital literacy programs, and counseling services targeted at youth, parents, and educators. These interventions can help in promoting resilience, providing coping mechanisms, and fostering a safe online environment.

Moreover, these findings can also inform policy discussions in Pakistan. The negative impact of cyberbullying on youth self-esteem aligns with the global recognition of cyberbullying as a significant public health concern. Policymakers should consider integrating cyberbullying prevention strategies into educational curricula and developing legal frameworks to address online harassment.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the observed negative correlation between "Youth Self-Esteem" and "Cyberbullying Score" resonates with the existing literature and underscores the importance of addressing cyberbullying within the unique cultural and social context of Pakistan. By acknowledging the damaging effects of cyberbullying on self-esteem, stakeholders can work towards creating safer online spaces for youth, thereby contributing to their emotional well-being and personal development.

## REFERENCES

- Balakrishnan, V., & Fernandez, T. (2018). Self-esteem, empathy and their impacts on cyberbullying among young adults. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(7), 2028-2037.
- Baldry, A. C., Sorrentino, A., and Farrington, D. P. (2019). Post-traumatic stress symptoms among Italian preadolescents involved in school and cyber bullying and victimization. *J. Child Fam. Stud.* 28, 2358–2364.
- Baroncelli, A., & Ciucci, E. (2014). Unique effects of different components of trait emotional intelligence in traditional bullying and cyberbullying. *Journal of adolescence*, 37(6), 807-815.
- Bauman, S., Toomey, R. B., & Walker, J. L. (2013). Associations among bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide in high school students. *Journal of adolescence*, 36(2), 341-350.
- Baumeister, R. F., Tice, D. M., & Hutton, D. G. (1989). Self-presentational motivations and personality differences in self-esteem. *Journal of personality*, 57(3), 547-579.
- Betts, L. R., Baguley, T., & Gardner, S. E. (2019). Examining adults' participant roles in cyberbullying. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 36(11-12), 3362-3370.
- Ding, Y., Li, D., Li, X., Xiao, J., Zhang, H., & Wang, Y. (2018). Profiles of adolescent traditional and cyber bullying and victimization: The role of demographic, individual, family, school, and peer factors.
- Dolan, P., & Canavan, J. (2014). What added value does peer support bring? Insights from principals and teachers on the utility and challenges of a school-based mentoring programme. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 32(4), 241-250.
- Hinduja, S., & Kamineni, K. (2019). Harassment, humiliation, and hate: A comparison of childhood bullying versus cyberbullying victimization among South Asian adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 96, 360-366.
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2018). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*. Corwin Press.

Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2018). Bullying in the digital age: A critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(10), 1135-1159.

Orth, U., Robins, R. W., & Widaman, K. F. (2016). Life-span development of self-esteem and its effects on important life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1271-1288.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.