



## Relationship between Cyber-Victimization, Coping Strategies and Resilience among Social Media Users

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### Abstract

The present study was conducted to explore the Relationship between Cybervictimization, Coping strategies, and Resilience among Social Media Users. This is a – sectional study comprised of social media users who have public profile (N=300) on online platforms and have 25 k plus followers on social media and their age was between 17-30 years . Research variables were measured by using The Cyber Victimization Scale. Findings show that cyber-victimization is significantly negatively correlated with coping strategies and positively correlated with resilience. The emotional focus coping and problem focus coping is a significantly positive relationship with resilience. The individuals who engage in catfishing behavior are more likely to experience both visual sexual victimization and cyber-victimization. There were significant differences seen in mean among sample groups across age and gender. This study can be utilized for future exploration and learning practice and can contribute to the development of media literacy programs and better online safety measures and awareness campaigns.

**Keyword:** *Cyber-victimization, coping strategies, Social media platforms, Resilience*

### Introduction

The internet and communication technologies have advanced significantly during the last few decades'. The use of the Internet with different online sites and modern digital technologies are the

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main platforms for social media users. The way things change so quickly is largely driven by devices like mobile phones, tablets, and computers. People are using these devices more and more, and they are using them for many different things (Chen, 2013). A lot of people around the world use the internet - about 4.8 billion in 2021 - and this number is expected to grow to 5.6 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2021). Similarly, many people use mobile phones and social media. In 2021, around 5.22 billion people used mobile phones, and about 4.20 billion people used social media (Kushlyk & Petryna, 2021). Facebook and Twitter were the first social media platforms to launch, going online in 2004 and 2006, respectively . In reality, TikTok (1 billion users), YouTube (2 billion), Instagram (1.5 billion), and Facebook (2.9 billion monthly active users) are the most widely used social media sites globally.

As social media becomes more and more ingrained in daily life, regulatory approaches are required to address the various challenges it presents to society, including privacy and the protection of sensitive data (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Younger people, especially teens and young adults, may be more susceptible to online exploitation, according to research. Increased internet usage, a lack of experience navigating online risks, and developmental variables could all be contributing factors; this shows how many people are involved in the online world (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

Due this, more social media users might face problems and become victims of online issues. Cyber-victimization is a significant worldwide social issue that impacts people who use the Internet or mobile networks, regardless of their age,

education, or financial situation (Karthikeyan, 2022). Increased use of social networking sites and mobile devices, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan, has become a significant antecedent to cyber-victimization (Saleem, Khan & Zafar, 2021). Numerous studies have shown how common it is for people to become victims of cyberbullying, online harassment, and cyberstalking. A study by Kowalski et al. (2014), approximately 40% of teenagers experienced cyberbullying, highlighting how pervasive the problem is. It is widely known how cyber-victimization affects mental health and general well-being .

According to researchers, cyber-victims are more likely to experience despair, anxiety, and suicide thoughts; coping strategies, such as emotion focused and problem focused have identified to manage the emotional distress caused by online victimization (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Due to the advancement of technology and the rising use of online platforms, researchers have begun examining resilience in the context of the digital age. The emphasis of the idea of digital resilience is on a person's ability to deal with risks and issues in the digital world, such as cyber-victimization, online harassment (Livingstone & Third, 2017). In the digital age cyber-victimization refers to the experience of being targeted, harassed, or harmed through various online platforms, including social media, emails, and instant messaging. The consequences of cyber-victimization can have profound effects on individuals' psychological and emotional well-being. To navigate these challenges, individuals often use coping strategies that play a critical role in influencing their resilience in the face of cyber-victimization. Many researches has shed light on

the coping strategies by adolescents who had experienced cyber victimization and how these strategies contributed to their overall resilience and well-being (Gianesini& Brighi, 2015). Research suggests that individuals with higher levels of resilience are better equipped to bounce back from the emotional distress caused by online victimization (Moore & Woodcock, 2017). Effective coping strategies can buffer the negative impact of victimization and contribute to individuals' ability to recover and maintain psychological stress (Gueta, 2022).

The aim of this study is to examine the skills people need to successfully navigate the digital environment and the study aims to explore how experiencing online victimization is associated to individuals' emotional-focused, problem-focused, and avoidant coping strategies and their overall resilience levels. The objective is to enhance our understanding of human interactions in the digital era by uncovering the complex dynamics that exist between cyber-victimization, resilience, and various coping strategies. Previous researches highlighted the negative effects of cyber-victimization on adolescents and the need to understand how individuals cope with and recover from such experiences. Investigating coping strategies and resilience can shed light on effective ways to combat the harmful impacts of cyberbully on social media (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). The present study also focused to identify the particular difficulties and trends that emerge in various age groups and gender.

This study has a wide range of implications. Understanding how these aspects interact becomes crucial in Pakistan, where digital contacts are quickly developing. The

present study figures out how being treated badly online (cyber-victimization) affects people who use social media. Through this research knowing how the ways to deal with it through (coping strategies) can help them feel better and stay strong (resilience). It can help people who use social media to know how to handle the tough times and stay positive.

### **Methodology**

This is correlational-based study among the sample of 300 social media users. All participants completed socio- demographic sheet, Cyber-victimization scale, Brief cope scale, and Brief resilience scale.

#### Objective

- To investigate the relationship between cyber victimization, coping strategies and resilience.
- To identify mean differences between cyber victimization, coping strategies and resilience across different socio-demographic variables.

#### Hypotheses

H1. Among social media users, there is a negative relationship between the emotion-focused coping strategies and cyber-victimization.

H2. Among social media users, there is a negative relationship between the problem-focused coping strategies and cyber-victimization.

H3. Among social media users, there is a negative relationship between the avoidant coping strategies and cyber-victimization.

H4. Among social media users, there is a positive relationship between the problemfocused coping strategies and resilience.

H5 Among social media users, there is a positive relationship between the emotionfocused coping strategies and resilience.

H6. Among social media users, there is a positive relationship between the avoidant coping strategies and resilience.

H7. Males exhibiting higher levels visual sexual victimization as compared to females.

H8. Younger users experience higher levels of victimization compared to older.

### **Instruments**

#### **Cyber Victimization Scale (CVS)**

The Cyber Victimization Scale (CVS) developed by (Riaz et al., 2018) was utilized to assess participants' experiences of cyber victimization specifically within the context of social networking sites. The scale comprises 28 items representing various forms of victimization. Responses are rated on a 5 - point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of victimization. It is consist of 5 sub scales Catfishing item 1-7 , Visual-Sexual item 8-13, Forgery items 14-18, Exclusion items 19-23, Written-Verbal item 24-28 . In this scale item no 12, 14, &27 have reverse scored items. The CVS showed excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha=.92$ ) with strong coefficient alphas on the factors ranging from .73 to .90. The greater score on the scale represents higher victimization on cyber space and vice versa.

#### **Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory (Brief-COPE)**

The Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory (Brief-COPE) designed by Carver (1997) was utilized to explore coping strategies employed by participants in response to stressful life events. The questionnaire includes 28 items

categorized into three subscales: Problem-Focused Coping, Emotional Focus Coping, and Avoidant Coping. Participants rate their engagement using a 4- point scale. with responses reflecting the frequency or intensity of engagement 1 = Rarely or not at all , 2 = To a small extent , 3 = To a moderate extent , 4 = Frequently or extensively .

**Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)**

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) developed by Smith et al. (2008) was employed to assess participants' ability to rebound from stressors and maintain a positive outlook. This self-report questionnaire consists of six items, with responses measured on a 5-point Liker scale. Reverse scoring is applied to items 2, 4, and 6. Add the responses varying from 1-5 for all six items giving a range from 6-30. Divide the total sum by the total number of questions answered. The value 4.31-5.00 shows High resilience, normal resilience on 3.00-4.30, low resilience on 1.00-2.99.

**Sample/ Participants**

A sample of 300 participants collected for this study through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The sample size is collected from different online platforms (facebook, instagram, tiktok, snapchat etc) used by social media users with more than 25k followers as inclusion criteria. All the participants with any physical or mental illnesses were excluded from the study. Social media users who were not having a public accounts and were not from Pakistani culture they were also excluded from the current study.

**Results**

The initial phase cover the identification of participants' demographic characteristics, accomplished through the

computation of frequencies and percentages. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were computed to offer a concise summary of the key variables, facilitating an understanding of central tendencies, variations, and distributions. To assess the internal consistency and reliability of measurement scales, the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha was executed. Moving further, the analysis extended to examining the relationships between variables, where Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to unveil potential relationships. The exploration of potential mean differences across demographic factors was conducted using independent t-tests.

The frequency and percentage of social media users with respect to age, gender, education, monthly income, marital status, and number of siblings. Higher numbers of users age range 17-24 years (n=272, 90.7%). Social media users who were graduates (n=192, 64%) had higher frequency and percentage. Users whose family income 1 lac & more (n=110, 36.7%) had higher frequency and percentage. Users who were single (n=268, 89.3%) had higher frequency and percentage. Users who had number of siblings 1-5 (n=264, 88%) had higher frequency and percentage.

The psychometric properties for the Scales used in present study were computed through Cronbach Alpha all the values were greater than .70 (.75 to .93); which shows the reliability coefficients are relatively good.

Relationship between Cyber-Victimization, Coping Strategies And Resilience

Table 1 (below) reports the Pearson correlation between study variables and their sub-scales. That are cyber-victimization



and its sub-scales cat-fishing, visual sex, forgery, written/verbal victimization; Coping strategies as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping; and resilience.

**Table 1:** *Correlation between Demographic Variables , and relationship between cyber-victimization, coping strategies and resilience (N = 300)*

| Variables | 1 | 2    | 3    | 4     | 5   | 6    | 7     | 8      | 9     | 10   |
|-----------|---|------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|--------|-------|------|
| 1 CF      | - | .12* | -.06 | .02   | .10 | .09  | .01   | -.09** | .50** | .08  |
| 2 VSCV    |   | -    | .22* | .03   | .04 | -.05 | -.11  | -.17** | .54** | -.04 |
| 3 FG      |   |      | -    | .18** | .08 | -.06 | -.06  | -.06   | .50** | .04  |
| 4 EC      |   |      |      | -     | .09 | -.01 | .01   | .00    | .50** | .07  |
| 5 WVCV    |   |      |      |       | -   | .01  | .06   | -.09   | .53** | .06  |
| 6 PFC     |   |      |      |       |     | -    | .65** | .28**  | -     | .14* |
|           |   |      |      |       |     |      |       |        | .70** |      |
| 7 EFC     |   |      |      |       |     |      | -     | .38**  | -.03  | .12* |
| 8 AC      |   |      |      |       |     |      |       | -      | -.16* | .08* |
| 9 CVS     |   |      |      |       |     |      |       |        | -     | .08* |
| 10 RBS    |   |      |      |       |     |      |       |        |       | -    |

Note. CF= Catfishing , VSCV= Visual sex, FG= Forgery, EC= Exclusion, WVCV= Written verbal victimization, , PFC= Problem focused coping, EFC= Emotional focused coping, AC= Avoidant coping ,CVS= Cyber-victimization, RBS= Resilience, \* p < 0.05 ,\*\* p < 0.01

**Mean Difference Among Demographic Groups**

To compute mean difference of gender groups and age groups (17-24 and 25-30), t-test was applied on study variables. Cohen’s d was also computed to comprehend the effect size of significant group differences.

Table 2 (below) shows the mean difference of sample categorized based on gender male and female. Significant

difference with regard to cyber-victimization and visual sexual cyber-victimization. Male social media users scored higher on cyber-victimization and visual sexual cyber-victimization. To see the effect size among mean differences, Cohen’s d was also calculated. Cohen’s d of all the significant variables showed small to moderate effect size calculated.

**Table 2:** Mean differences across Gender differences for the study  
Variables (N=300)

| Variables   | Male<br>(n=163) |              | Female<br>(n=137) |       | t    | p          | Cohen's d |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|------|------------|-----------|
|             | M               | SD           | M                 | SD    |      |            |           |
|             | <b>CVS</b>      | <b>87.30</b> | 8.44              | 85.32 |      |            |           |
| <b>VSCV</b> | <b>18.64</b>    | 3.13         | 17.57             | 3.24  | 2.90 | <b>.04</b> | .30       |
| <b>CF</b>   | 22.15           | 3.36         | 21.85             | 3.75  | .71  | .48        |           |
| <b>FG</b>   | 15.37           | 2.89         | 15.57             | 2.77  | 1.89 | .15        |           |
| <b>EC</b>   | 15.40           | 2.95         | 14.85             | 3.35  | .60  | .13        |           |
| <b>WVCV</b> | 15.67           | 3.33         | 15.48             | 3.43  | 1.49 | .63        |           |
| <b>PFC</b>  | 21.29           | 4.86         | 21.24             | 4.05  | .48  | .93        |           |
| <b>EFC</b>  | 29.40           | 5.52         | 30.31             | 5.08  | .09  | .14        |           |
| <b>AC</b>   | 16.01           | 3.84         | 16.65             | 3.50  | 1.50 | .13        |           |
| <b>RBS</b>  | 3.23            | .41          | 3.24              | .41   | 1.21 | .85        |           |

Note. CF= Catfishing , VSCV= Visual sex, FG= Forgery, EC= Exclusion, WVCV= Written verbal victimization, PFC= Problem focused coping, EFC= Emotional focused coping, AC= Avoidant coping ,CVS= Cyber-victimization, RBS= Resilience, \* p < 0.05.

Table 3 (below) shows the mean difference of sample categorized based on age group. Significant difference with regard to cyber-victimization, catfishing and resilience. Higher scores on 25-30 years of resilience and catfishing while cyber-victimization show a higher score on 17-24 years of social media users . Cohen’s d of all the significant variables showed moderate to high effect size.

Table 3: Mean differences across Age differences for the study Variables (N=300)

| Variables | 17-24 years<br>(n=272) |       | 25-30 years<br>(n=28) |      | t    | p          | Cohen's d |
|-----------|------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|------|------------|-----------|
|           | M                      | SD    | M                     | SD   |      |            |           |
| CVS       | <b>90.10</b>           | 10.47 | 86                    | 7.9  | 2.57 | <b>.01</b> | .40       |
| CF        | 21.98                  | 3.51  | <b>23.32</b>          | 3.61 | 2.06 | <b>.04</b> | .30       |
| RBS       | 17.20                  | 1.49  | <b>21.88</b>          | .52  | 2.21 | <b>.03</b> | 1.06      |
| VSCV      | 3.29                   | .19   | 3.46                  | .65  | .67  | .51        |           |
| FG        | 2.78                   | .17   | 3.33                  | .63  | 1.19 | .23        |           |
| EC        | 3.00                   | .18   | 4.25                  | .80  | 1.71 | .09        |           |
| WVCV      | 3.31                   | .20   | 3.92                  | .74  | .92  | .36        |           |
| PFC       | 4.45                   | .27   | 5.01                  | .94  | .92  | .65        |           |
| EFC       | 5.33                   | .32   | 5.46                  | 1.03 | .63  | .53        |           |
| AC        | 3.69                   | .22   | 3.77                  | .71  | .56  | .58        |           |

Note. CF= Catfishing , VSCV= Visual sex, FG= Forgery, EC= Exclusion, WVCV= Written verbal victimization, PFC= Problem focused coping, EFC= Emotional focused coping, AC= Avoidant coping ,CVS= Cyber-victimization, RBS= Resilience, \* p < 0.05.

### Discussion

The present study has been conducted with an aim to investigate the relationship between cyber-victimization, coping strategies, and resilience among social media users. The research expected to get deep-rooted knowledge about cyber-victimization in relation to coping strategies and with resilience in Pakistani collectivistic culture. In the present study it was ensured that the scales used were reliable and accurate. For this purpose Alpha coefficients were calculated that ranged from lowest 0.82, and highest 0.93. The skewness and kurtosis of all scales and sub-scales were also computed, indicating that the data normally distributed.

All the hypotheses were supported in the present study. It was hypothesized that there is a negative relation of all the coping strategies (i.e., emotion-focused, problem-focused coping and avoidant-focused coping strategies) with cyber-victimization among social media users, which means that when people are better equipped with effective ways to deal with online challenges, they are less likely to become victims of cyber-related issues. Coping strategies become vital resources that individuals utilize to navigate the emotional challenges arising from cyber-victimization. Among these strategies, those centered on managing emotions, such as reaching out for social support and participating in offline pursuits, are frequently adopted to mitigate the emotional upheaval that can result (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Problem-focused coping, including reporting and blocking, also play a role, especially when individuals perceive some control over the situation. Adolescents, who are particularly susceptible to online victimization, tend to utilize both emotional and problem-focused coping strategies (Perren et al., 2010). Avoidant coping and cyber-victimization also share a negative relationship due to the counterproductive nature of avoidant coping strategies. These strategies involve avoiding or suppressing stressors, which prevents individuals from directly addressing the emotional impact of cyber-victimization. Translational model in the context of cyber-victimization reports that, the individuals using avoidant strategies might be more cautious about their online interactions, potentially reducing their exposure to risky situations (Lazarus & Folkman 1984).

It was also hypothesized that there is a positive relation of all the coping strategies (i.e., emotion-focused, problem-focused coping and avoidant-focused coping strategies) with resilience among social media users; this means that individuals who adopt problem-focused coping strategies tend to possess higher levels of resilience, suggesting a strong connection between how we handle challenges and how well we bounce back from them. Problem-focused coping was found to be a strong relation with resilience and improved psychological adjustment when looked at coping responses in adults dealing with psychological issues (Compas et al., 2017).

Emotion-focused coping strategies also emphasize adaptive emotional processing and support-seeking, which tends to have a positive link with resilience. These strategies enable individuals to effectively manage and recover from challenges, including cyber-victimization. Some emotion-focused coping strategies that contribute to resilience include: Seeking Social Support, Positive Reappraisal etc (Smith & Alloy, 2009). In situations of extreme and immediate stress, individuals might use avoidant coping strategies as a temporary mechanism to gain some emotional relief. This initial relief could give the appearance of a positive correlation between avoidant coping and immediate well-being. However, this relief is often short-lived and may not contribute to long-term resilience (Brewin et al., 2000).

The present study has shed light on a gender-based divergence in the prevalence of visual sexual victimization, highlighting that males tend to experience higher levels of exposure compared to their female counterparts. This finding

underscores the significance of understanding how gender dynamics can influence individuals' experiences in the online realm. The empirical evidence resonates with previous research that has indicated varying online victimization patterns based on gender. In terms of demographics, males were more likely to be involved in conventional victimization than females (Arseneault et al., 2010).

Younger users experience higher levels of victimization compared to older users was also supported in present study. This discovery emphasizes that individuals in the younger age range are more vulnerable to various forms of victimization within the realm of cyberspace. Research suggests that adolescents and young adults, are more likely to experience cyber-victimization and online harassment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015)

### **Conclusion**

This study has made significant progress in understanding the relationship between cyber-victimization, coping strategies, resilience, and various demographic factors. The findings have offered valuable insights that contribute to our comprehension of the complexities within the online realm. The positive correlation between effective coping strategies and resilience underscores the importance of promoting healthy coping mechanisms, which can aid individuals in not only overcoming challenges but also thriving in the face of adversity. The negative correlation observed between coping strategies and cyber victimization aligns with existing psychological models and resilience theories, highlighting the need to equip individuals, especially the younger generation, with skills to navigate online threats confidently.

Additionally, the study's identification of gender-based differences, particularly in visual sexual victimization, emphasizes the significance of tailored interventions and prevention strategies that consider the unique experiences of different gender groups. Furthermore, the connection between catfishing behavior and heightened victimization risk underscores the importance of fostering a safe and ethical online environment through awareness campaigns and digital literacy programs.

In conclusion, those individuals who adopt coping strategies tend to possess higher levels of resilience, suggesting a strong connection between how they handle challenges and how well they bounce back from them. By examine the multifaceted influencers of social media how resilient they are when they face cyber-victimization, this study provides valuable insights for the development of coping strategies in stressful situations.

### **Limitations and Suggestion**

The study's use of a cross-sectional design could lead to retrospective bias, where participants recall experiences inaccurately. For a more robust approach, conducting longitudinal studies in the future can offer a deeper understanding of causal relationships and changes over time.

Relying on self-reported data introduces the potential for social desirability bias, where respondents may provide socially acceptable answers rather than accurate ones. To enhance comprehensiveness, future research could adopt a mixed-methods approach that combines selfreporting with objective measures, reducing the impact of social desirability bias.

The study may not fully account for the dynamic social context and evolving technology that impact cyber-victimization experiences. To address this, future research could delve into specific platforms, technologies, and emerging cyber threats, providing more nuanced insights given the rapidly changing digital landscape.

Although the study explores demographic differences, it might not fully consider the interplay between multiple demographic factors. To enhance findings' relevance, future research should strive for a diverse and representative sample, improving the generalizability of results across various demographics.

### **Implications**

The findings will pave the way for individuals to potentially bolster their psychological well-being and adeptly navigate life's intricate challenges through improved coping strategies.

Acknowledging the distinct encounters of males and females within the realm of visual sexual victimization will guide tailored interventions and preventive measures. This will empower platforms and organizations to deliver customized support, resources, and safeguards based on gender, thereby elevating online security.

With younger individuals often immersing themselves in digital domains, this research will aid in equipping them with the essential tools to safely traverse the online realm.

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