

6-30-2025

Cyberbullying and Its Relationship to Pessimism and Optimism Among Female Students

Nazik Subhi Matar

University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences for Women,
nazik@copew.uobaghda.edu.iq

Liqaa Abdul Zahra Obeid

University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences for Women,
liqaa.abdulzahra@copew.uobaghda.edu.iq

Areej Alaa Abbas

University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences for Women,
areej.alaa2300m@copew.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Follow this and additional works at: <https://jcopew.researchcommons.org/journal>

Recommended Citation

Matar, Nazik Subhi; Obeid, Liqaa Abdul Zahra; and Abbas, Areej Alaa (2025) "Cyberbullying and Its Relationship to Pessimism and Optimism Among Female Students," *Modern Sport*: Vol. 24: Iss. 2, Article 7.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54702/2708-3454.2063>

This Original Study is brought to you for free and open access by Modern Sport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern Sport by an authorized editor of Modern Sport.



ORIGINAL STUDY

Cyberbullying and Its Relationship to Pessimism and Optimism Among Female Students

Nazik Subhi Mutar^{1b}*, Liqaa Abdulzahra Obaid^{1b}, Areej Alaa Abbas

University of Baghdad, College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences for Women

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between cyberbullying and levels of pessimism and optimism among female university students, emphasizing the significance of these variables in students' psychological well-being. The research problem was identified in the increasing rates of cyberbullying among female students and its negative impact on optimism and pessimism, alongside the lack of effective counseling programs addressing this issue. The study sample consisted of 30 third-year students from the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences for Women during the academic year 2023–2024. The participants were deliberately selected through a lottery method. The researchers employed the descriptive survey method as it suited the nature of the study's problem. Field procedures included the use of standardized scales to measure cyberbullying, optimism, and pessimism. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, employing Pearson's correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, means, and standard deviations for statistical processing. The results showed a significant positive correlation between cyberbullying and pessimism, and a negative correlation between cyberbullying and optimism. Additionally, students who experienced high levels of cyberbullying tended to have lower levels of optimism. The study recommends developing counseling programs aimed at reducing cyberbullying and enhancing optimism among female students. It also suggests conducting future studies with larger samples and in diverse geographic areas to deepen the understanding of the relationship between these variables, and this achieves one of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations in Iraq which is (Quality Education)

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Pessimism, Female university students, Optimism

1. Introduction

Cyberbullying is a relatively recent phenomenon that has emerged with the widespread use of social media and digital technologies. It is characterized by its ability to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries, making it more prevalent and impactful on the mental health of female students. This form of bullying has had significant effects on individual lives and behavior, particularly among students who attempt to dominate peers by ridiculing or harassing those perceived as weaker, whether verbally, socially, or through other forms of mistreatment. These behaviors, aimed at exerting control and dominance, can result in negative consequences for the overall learning environment and hinder

the cognitive, emotional, and social development of students.

According to the theory of the interaction between environment, behavior, and personal factors—as outlined by Smriti and Nahar (2019)—each of these elements serves as a determinant of the others. Khalaf and Hussein (2024) defines it as a systematic form of electronic aggression carried out through modern technological means. It is a deliberate, premeditated, repetitive, and indirect behavior that involves an imbalance of power, enacted by an individual or group repeatedly against a victim who finds it difficult to defend themselves.

Mohammed and Sayed (2020) described cyberbullying as the intentional and repeated use of electronic communication methods, such as social

Received 23 May 2025; revised 15 June 2025; accepted 25 June 2025.
Available online 30 June 2025

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: nazik@copew.uobaghdad.edu.iq (N. S. Mutar), liqaa.abdulzahra@copew.uobaghdad.edu.iq (L. Abdulzahra Obaid), areej.alaa2300m@copew.uobaghdad.edu.iq (A. A. Abbas).

<https://doi.org/10.54702/2708-3454.2063>

2708-3454/© 2025 The Author(s). Modern Sport. This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

media platforms and mobile applications, to harass, mock, or harm a person’s reputation by electronically excluding them, demeaning or defaming them, violating their privacy, or sending hostile messages. Hussein (2016) also highlighted these aspects of cyberbullying in his definition.

On the other hand, optimism and pessimism play important roles in shaping students personalities and behaviors, which affect their engagement in various activities and their mental resilience (Eid, 2019). Several psychological health studies have emphasized the significance of optimism in protecting individuals from mental and physical risks. Optimistic individuals seem to adjust more effectively to life transitions than their pessimistic counterparts (Jassim & Jassim, 2024).

The importance of this study lies in shedding light on the growing impact of cyberbullying in the digital environment on the psychological well-being of female students. It also seeks to explore the psychological and social relevance of the relationship between cyberbullying, pessimism, and optimism. This understanding aims to contribute to developing practical solutions to reduce cyberbullying, enhance optimism, and limit pessimism among female university students.

With the increasing prevalence of cyberbullying among female university students, the lack of effective counseling programs addressing this issue, and its negative impact on students’ levels of optimism and pessimism—ultimately influencing their behavior—the researchers were motivated to conduct this study to gain a deeper understanding of the problem, particularly given the dominance of technology and life behind digital screens. These concerns justify the rationale for the study.

To answer the research questions:

- What is the level of cyberbullying among female students?
- What are the levels of optimism and pessimism among them?
- Is there a statistically significant correlation between cyberbullying and optimism and pessimism?

Against the backdrop that cyberbullying is a form of repeated aggressive behavior targeted at weaker individuals, often taking forms such as digital or social cyberbullying, optimism and pessimism are psychological traits that influence how individuals respond to everyday events.

This study aimed to determine the extent of cyberbullying among female students and assess their levels of optimism and pessimism. Moreover, it sought to investigate the relationship between cyber-

bullying and optimism and pessimism among the students.

The hypotheses of the study were as follows:

- There is a statistically significant correlation between the degree of cyberbullying and the level of pessimism among female students.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between the degree of cyberbullying and the level of optimism among female students.

The study included a sample of 30 third-year female university students regularly enrolled in the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences for Women during the academic year 2023–2024. The sample was selected randomly. The assessments and data collection took place in the classrooms and sports fields of the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences for Women during the period from October 1, 2023, to March 1, 2024.

2. Methodology and procedures

The researchers employed the descriptive survey method, as it was appropriate for the nature of the study’s problem. The study population consisted of female students from the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences for Women. The study sample included 30 third-year students for the academic year 2023–2024, selected randomly, representing 37% of the population.

The researchers used the scale developed by Hussein (2016) to measure cyberbullying (Appendices 1). For optimism and pessimism, they used the scale developed by Shaheed (2012), which was suitable for the study’s objectives. Some modifications were made to the items to better align with the specific variables and characteristics of the sample.

The researchers used various statistical tools appropriate for the study variables, including means, standard deviations, Pearson’s correlation coefficients, t-tests, and Cronbach’s alpha. Data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

For the field procedures, the researchers selected Hussein’s (2016) Cyberbullying Scale, which consists of 34 items distributed across four dimensions, as summarized in the following table as shown below in Tables 1 to 7:

Table 1. Dimensions of the Cyberbullying Scale.

No.	Dimensions	Items
1	Digital Disguise	Items 1, 5, 7, 11, 14, 15, 18, 29, 30, 32
2	Cyber Harassment	Items 2, 9, 12, 16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 33
3	Online Defamation	Items 3, 4, 6, 10, 17, 19, 28, 31, 34
4	Cyberstalking	Items 8, 13, 21, 24, 26

Table 2. Construct Validity of the Cyberbullying Scale.

Dimensions	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Dimension One: Digital Disguise	**3.915	3.332
Dimension Two: Cyber Harassment	**3.854	3.332
Dimension Three: Online Defamation	**3.847	3.332
Dimension Four: Cyberstalking	**3.822	3.332

To ensure the validity of the survey items, they were reviewed by experts, who approved their appropriateness and, consequently, the overall survey. Construct validity was tested by measuring the correlation between each item and the total score of the scale.

Responses were recorded using a Likert scale (Never, Sometimes, Often) to assess the frequency of exposure to each behavior. The results are presented in Table 2:

The table shows that the total item scores are statistically significant at a significance level of 3.332, which is less than 3.35. This indicates a strong correlation between the dimensions and the overall scale, confirming that the defined dimensions are valid and consistent with what they are intended to measure.

To assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha test was used. The results are presented in Table 3:

The table shows that the overall reliability coefficient for all items on the scale is very high, exceeding 873.3, which corresponds to a reliability rate of 87%. This indicates that the scale has a high degree of reliability and can be confidently applied in the study.

A pilot study was conducted on 10 female students to identify any difficulties faced by the researchers, assess the sample's understanding of the scale items and the test, determine the time required to administer the scale, and calculate the reliability coefficient.

For the main study, the survey was administered to the 30 students in the study sample according to the scheduled timeframe.

The same field and statistical procedures were applied to the Optimism and Pessimism Scale, which the researchers adopted from [Shaheed \(2012\)](#). Details of

Table 3. Scale reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha.

Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Itemy No.	Value
23	3.571	Dimension One
23	3.686	Dimension Two
9	3.607	Dimension Three
5	3.556	Dimension Four
24	2.232	All Scale Items

Table 4. Reliability and validity of the Optimism and Pessimism Scale.

Indicator	Expected Value
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	.93680
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.75

the reliability and validity of this scale are shown in Table 4.

3. Results

The results were derived according to Tables 5 to 7, with the details explained as follows:

Table 5 shows that the mean score of the Cyberbullying Scale for the study sample was 11.90, with a standard deviation of 14.80. The hypothetical mean was (90), with a degree of freedom (29), and the calculated t-value was (11.48), which is greater than the tabulated t-value of (3.26). This indicates the presence of statistically significant differences between the calculated and hypothetical means for the study sample.

From Table 6, the mean score for the Optimism and Pessimism Scale was 87.00, with a standard deviation of 11.65. The hypothetical mean was (75), and with a degree of freedom (29), the calculated t-value was (21.38), exceeding the tabulated t-value of (2.26). This also indicates statistically significant differences between the calculated and hypothetical means for the study sample.

According to Table 7, the correlation coefficient value reached 0.24, and the calculated R-value was 16.56, which is greater than the tabulated R-value of 2.30. This indicates a statistically significant correlation between the Cyberbullying Scale and the Optimism and Pessimism Scale.

4. Discussion

In light of the obtained results, the researchers conclude that cyberbullying is a repetitive, aggressive behavior aimed at harming another person and can occur in both virtual and real-life environments. Cyberbullying is characterized by three main elements: aggressive behavior, repetition, and an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim ([Eid, 2019](#)). The type examined in this study—cyberbullying—has several sources, including social media platforms used to spread abuse ([Deflawi, 2023](#)).

Cyberbullying negatively impacts the psychological and social well-being of victims, potentially leading to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem ([Raqa, 2021](#)). The causes include low self-esteem and insecurity, and may also stem from academic competition or a hostile environment ([Abdel Qader et al., 2023](#)).

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations, Hypothetical Mean, and T-Value for the Cyberbullying Scale.

Variable	Sample	Arithmetic mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Degree of Freedom	T value		Significance Level
						Calculated	Tabulated	
Cyberbullying	30	90,11	14,80	90	29	11,48	3,26	Significant

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations, Hypothetical Mean, and T-Value for the Optimism and Pessimism Scale.

Variable	Sample	Arithmetic mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Degree of Freedom	T value		Significance Level
						Calculated	Tabulated	
Optimism and Pessimism	30	87,00	11,65	75	29	21,38	2,26	Significant

Table 7. Correlation coefficients between the two scales.

Variables	Sample	correlation coefficient	Calculated r value	Tabulated r value	Significance Level
Cyberbullying Optimism and Pessimism	30	0,24	16,56	2,30	Significant

Regarding optimism and pessimism, individuals need an appropriate amount of vital energy to achieve their goals. This energy manifests in various forms—physical, mental, emotional, and social. Optimism plays a crucial role in directing this energy toward success (Shaheed, 2012). Optimism is associated with increased chances of academic achievement and success. Studies suggest that optimistic individuals maintain a positive outlook on life, which enhances their self-confidence and belief in their ability to reach their goals (Shaheed, 2012).

The findings revealed a significant relationship between the cyberbullying disorder scale and the optimism and pessimism scale. The students showed a strong drive to achieve high accomplishments while also displaying a sense of belonging and self-worth. Therefore, a strong correlation appeared between the two variables. When individuals have goals and achievements they strive for, this leads to enhanced self-esteem and high self-confidence, which in turn reinforces their social identity (Abdel Barr, 2019).

5. Conclusions

The results indicate that cyberbullying is a tangible phenomenon within the university environment and has a direct impact on the psychological and emotional well-being of female students. The presence of a statistically significant correlation between cyberbullying and both pessimism and optimism highlight the importance of psychological and counseling interventions to mitigate the effects of this phenomenon. The findings reflect a pressing need to strengthen awareness programs and psychological support services in universities to reduce the prevalence of cyberbullying and to promote optimism and mental well-being among female students.

6. Recommendations

Based on the study's conclusions, we recommend the following:

1. Adopting the findings of this study and applying the study's scales and procedures to different population groups.
2. Utilizing the study's scales as objective tools in future research and academic studies.
3. Encouraging trainers and counselors to use the study's scales to assess the levels of cyberbullying, optimism, and pessimism among female students.
4. Conducting similar studies with a focus on adapting the scale items for different samples in various Iraqi institutions.

Conflicts of interest

None declared.

Tables and Figures: We confirm that all tables and figures included in this article were created by the authors themselves.

Ethics statement

This manuscript was approved by the Scientific Council of the Individual Sports Department and was included in the research plan for 2024–2025 in April.

Author's contributions

All contributions to this study were made by the authors (Nazik Subhi, Liqaa Abdul Zahra, and Areej Alaa), who developed the main idea, conducted the research, and wrote the manuscript. Additional support was provided by experts including Dr. Sahira

Razaq and Dr. Baidaa Tariq (Statistics), and Dr. Warda Ali Abbas (Manuscript Revision). Each author actively contributed to the writing, data collection, analysis, and final review of the manuscript.

Funding

This study did not receive any external support or funding.

Data availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

References

- Abdel Barr, A. M. M. (2019). Pessimism and its relationship to intellectual immunity and manifestations of positive behavior among secondary school students. *Journal of Psychological Counseling*, 5(8), 89–122.
- Abdel Qader, A. M., Mohamed, N. A. A., & Al-Kilani, S. A. M. (2023). Psychometric characteristics of the efficiency scale of confronting cyberbullying for students of the Faculty of Education, Matrouh University. *Matrouh University Journal for Educational and Psychological Sciences*, 3(5, Pt. 3), 159–182.
- Deflawi, H. (2023). Cyberbullying in the university environment: A field study at the Department of Media, Communication and Library Science - University of May 8, 5491 - Guelma. Algeria.
- Eid, M. O. (2019). The reality of cyberbullying on social media networks among university students: A case study of Fayoum University. *Educational Journal, Sohag University - Faculty of Education*, 65, 553–604.
- Hussein, R. A. (2016). The factorial structure of the cyberbullying scale as perceived by the victim in a sample of adolescents. *Arab Journal for Studies and Research of Educational Sciences and Humanities*, 4, 40–48.
- Jassim, A. A., & Jassim, R. S. (2024). Emotional deprivation and its relationship to electronic blackmail among middle school students. *Journal of the College of Basic Education*, 1(Special Issue), 70–83. <https://doi.org/10.35950/cbej.v1i.11610>.
- Khalaf, H. A., & Hussein, Q. S. (2024). Obsessive ideas and their relationship to electronic blackmail among university students. *Journal of the College of Basic Education. Al-Mustansiriya University*, 1(Special Issue), 100–116. <https://doi.org/10.35950/cbej.v1i.11611>.
- Mohammed, N. A., & Sayed, D. S. (2020). The relative contribution of emotional regulation and habits of mind in predicting cyberbullying for university students. *Journal of the Faculty of Education, Beni Suef University*, 7(Pt. 2), 168–233.
- Raqas, K. H. K. (2021). Cyberbullying and its relationship to the trend towards extremism among a sample of university students [Master's thesis, King Abdulaziz University].
- Shaheed, S. A. (2012). Measuring the optimism trait - pessimism among students of the College of Administration and Economics at Al-Mustansiriya University. *Journal of Al-Rafidain University College of Science*, 30, 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.55562/jrucs.v30i2.369>.
- Smriti, A., & Nahar, N. (2019). Cyberbullying and preventive measures: Bangladesh in context. *BILD Law Journal*, 4(1), 123–136.

Appendices 1: Scale Items with Answer Keys

No.	Dimension	Item	Three-Point Likert Scale
1	Electronic Concealment	Someone is impersonating another person online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
2	Electronic Concealment	Someone is using fake accounts to communicate with others.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
3	Electronic Concealment	Someone is hiding their real identity while harassing me online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
4	Electronic Concealment	Someone is stealing my personal information online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
5	Electronic Concealment	I receive messages from anonymous or fake accounts.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
6	Electronic Concealment	Someone is creating pages or accounts in another person's name without their permission.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
7	Electronic Concealment	Someone is hiding their identity when posting offensive content against me.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
8	Electronic Concealment	I am being contacted through a fake digital identity with the intent to harm me.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
9	Electronic Harassment	I receive threatening or harassing messages through social media.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
10	Electronic Harassment	I am repeatedly sent annoying messages online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
11	Electronic Harassment	I am harassed with hurtful words or mockery online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
12	Electronic Harassment	I receive offensive comments on my posts or photos.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
13	Electronic Harassment	I am repeatedly contacted against my will through messages or calls.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
14	Electronic Harassment	My private information is shared without my consent.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
15	Electronic Harassment	I am deliberately interrupted or ignored through digital communication platforms.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
16	Electronic Defimnation	False rumors are being spread about me online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
17	Electronic Defimnation	Offensive photos or videos of me are being shared without my permission.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
18	Electronic Defimnation	My reputation is being damaged on social media.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
19	Electronic Defimnation	Abusive or obscene language is being used against me in online groups.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
20	Electronic Defimnation	Others are being incited to harm or insult me online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
21	Electronic Defimnation	False or misleading news about me is being deliberately spread.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
22	Electronic Defimnation	I am being targeted with defamation on forums or social media platforms.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
23	Electronic Staking	Someone is constantly tracking my online activity.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
24	Electronic Staking	I receive repeated messages or calls from someone I don't want to communicate with.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
25	Electronic Staking	I am being annoyingly tracked through social media or apps.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
26	Electronic Staking	I feel afraid because someone is following me online.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
27	Electronic Staking	I constantly receive threatening or warning messages.	Disagree -Natural - Agree

(Continued)

No.	Dimension	Item	Three-Point Likert Scale
28	Electronic Staking	I am being monitored or tracked online in a way that causes me anxiety.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
29	Electronic Staking	Someone is trying to obtain my personal information online without my permission.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
30	Electronic Staking	I feel that someone is stalking or watching me through digital means.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
31	Electronic Staking	I have received comments or messages containing harassment or inappropriate innuendos via apps or social media.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
32	Electronic Staking	Someone posted photos or videos of me without my permission on social media.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
33	Electronic Staking	Someone spread rumors or lies about me online with the intent to harm me.	Disagree -Natural - Agree
34	Electronic Staking	I received repeated messages from someone threatening or trying to scare me through email or social media.	Disagree -Natural - Agree