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A Study on Cyber-Vitimization Among College Students in Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT

Cyber-victimization has emerged as a significant concern in the digital era, particularly among college students who actively engage with online platforms. This study investigates the prevalence of both direct and indirect cyber-victimization and assesses their psychological, academic, and behavioural impacts on students. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected from 210 students enrolled in various colleges in Coimbatore city through a structured questionnaire utilising a four-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistical analyses, including frequency and percentage calculations, were used for data analysis. The results reveal that a substantial proportion of students experienced direct forms of cyber-victimization, such as receiving harmful messages, impersonation, unauthorised account access, and exposure to threatening communications. Indirect forms, including exposure to disrespectful online content and unwanted interactions, were also frequently reported. These experiences were associated with adverse effects on students' well-being, including heightened stress and anxiety, diminished self-esteem, sleep disturbances, and impaired concentration. Additionally, academic performance was negatively affected, accompanied by behavioural changes such as avoidance of certain online platforms and increased feelings of insecurity while using social media. The findings underscore the necessity for institutional support, digital literacy programs, and preventive measures to foster safer online environments for students.

Keywords: Cyber-victimization, Direct victimization, Indirect victimization, Impact

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCATION

Over the past six years, the digital landscape has drastically changed. Human interaction has become "digitally default" since the 2020 global pandemic, with people spending almost two-thirds of their lives online by early 2026. A "criminal evolution" has resulted from this quick digital growth, especially in high-growth areas like India, where over 2.44 million cyber incidents were reported in 2024 alone. Although there are many advantages to information and communication technologies (ICTs), they have also created new avenues for aggressive behaviour to flourish in an unregulated, global setting.

1.1 Role of AI in Cyber-Victimization

In 2026, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has radically transformed the realm of cyber-victimization, acting as both a significant catalyst for advanced abuse and a vital protective tool. The "industrialization of cybercrime" has been propelled by generative AI, enabling attackers to automate and escalate harassment

through AI-generated identities and "dogpiling" bots that can inundate a victim's digital existence within moments. A significant issue of victimization in 2026 consists of Non-Consensual Synthetic Intimate Imagery (deepfakes); a recent study indicated that 98% of deepfakes are pornographic, with instances of AI-generated sexual abuse material involving minors skyrocketing from 4,700 in 2023 to 440,000 in the first half of 2025 alone (Martin, 2025). Social engineering has also reached unprecedented levels of effectiveness; by early 2026, AI-driven social engineering including deepfake voice scams and highly personalized phishing has become the predominant reason for successful breaches, with an estimated annual rise of 63% in AI-assisted messaging initiatives. Yet, AI also functions as a protective "shield" via real-time detection and automatic resolution. Sophisticated machine learning models can now recognize subtle behavioural irregularities, such as atypical login behaviours or the unauthorized transfer of sensitive data, enabling immediate isolation of compromised devices.

Recently, in a scenario-based trial with 597 participants, indicated that "emotional" AI responses (offering soothing/empathetic feedback) dramatically relieved emotional tiredness in victims of workplace bullying (Deng, 2025).

1.2 Conceptualizing Cyber-Victimization

The term "cyber-victimization" describes the experience of being the object of destructive, hostile, or abusive behaviours via digital or online technologies such social media, texting, gaming platforms, email, or messaging applications. Because the injury is mediated by technology, which can make it chronic, widespread, and publicly apparent, it transcends ordinary face-to-face victimization.

Definitions by researchers:

- Cyber-victimization as peer victimization received via information and communication technologies (ICT) for example, hurtful comments, threats, or exclusion online (Bauman et al., 2013).
- Cyber-victimization as being the object of online aggression or harassment including insults, threats, defamatory posts, and social exclusion through digital platforms. (Ybarra et al., 2012).
- Some contemporary research frames cyber-victimization more broadly for adolescents, it may include harassment, stalking, exclusion, and impersonation via digital media.

In short, cyber-victimization is when people experience emotionally painful or harmful acts through online channels even if no physical contact occurs.

1.3 Difference between traditional and online victimization

Unlike traditional victimization (e.g., bullying in school hallways), cyber-victimization can happen anytime, anywhere even where victims once felt safe (like at home). The audience size, permanence of digital content, and anonymity of perpetrators often amplify emotional harm.

Young people, in particular, often feel that online attacks are "everywhere" and inescapable, which can contribute to anxiety, shame, and social withdrawal (Nair et al., 2025).

1.4 Prevalence

Research shows that cyber-victimization is common globally, but the exact rate varies depending on how it's defined and measured. Among adolescents:

- A broad review reported that about 30% of youth experienced cyberbullying victimization, one common form of cyber-victimization (Machimbarrena et al., 2018).
- Another systematic review found global cyberbullying victimization estimates between ~14 % and ~57.5 % across studies (Zhu et al., 2021)
- A recent cross-sectional study in Nepal found that 42.2 % of adolescents experienced cyber-victimization over their lifetime (Kunwar et al., 2024).

- An Indian school sample showed 14.5 % of teenagers were victims of cyberbullying (a form of cyber-victimization) (Ranjith et al., 2023).

Adults and broader populations:

- Adults are also affected by broader forms of cyber-victimization, such as fraud, theft, and harassment; according to a community sample, over 75% of respondents had at least one form of cyber victimization incident (Hamby et al., 2021).

1.5 Types of cyber-victimization in India

In today's digitally connected India, the internet has become an inseparable part of young people's social lives. While online spaces offer opportunities for learning, connection, and self-expression, they also expose users to various forms of harm. Cyber-victimization captures these harmful experiences moments when individuals feel attacked, excluded, or violated through digital platforms. Recent Indian research shows that cyber-victimization is not a single experience but a range of interconnected behaviours, each affecting victims in deeply personal ways.

A. Written-Verbal Cyber-Victimization

One of the most commonly reported forms of cyber-victimization in India is written-verbal abuse. This includes receiving insulting messages, hurtful comments, or threatening texts on social media, messaging apps, or online forums. For many victims, these messages are not isolated incidents; they accumulate over time, slowly eroding self-confidence and emotional well-being.

A recent Indian study on adolescents found that written-verbal cyber-victimization was strongly associated with heightened stress levels, suggesting that repeated exposure to hostile online language can feel overwhelming and emotionally exhausting (Frontiers in Psychology, 2025). Victims often describe feeling "constantly judged" or "unable to escape" the negativity, as the abuse follows them wherever their phone goes (Tamarana et al., 2025).

B. Impersonation

Impersonation represents a particularly disturbing form of cyber-victimization because it involves losing control over one's digital identity. In this form, perpetrators create fake profiles or misuse someone's name, photographs, or accounts to post inappropriate content or send messages on their behalf.

Indian research shows that impersonation significantly predicts anxiety among adolescent victims, likely because it threatens their social reputation and sense of personal safety. Victims often report feelings of helplessness, fearing that others will believe the false representation of them online. In a culture where social image and peer perception carry significant weight, impersonation can be deeply damaging (Tamarana et al., 2025).

C. Online Exclusion

Cyber-victimization is not always loud or aggressive. Sometimes, it is silent and invisible, as seen in cases of online exclusion. This occurs when individuals are deliberately left out of online groups, blocked from conversations, or ignored in digital social spaces.

Recent Indian studies highlight online exclusion as a meaningful form of cyber-victimization linked to increased anxiety and feelings of social rejection. For adolescents, whose social belonging increasingly depends on digital interaction, being excluded online can feel just as painful as being rejected face-to-face (Tamarana et al., 2025).

D. Cyberbullying-Related Victimization

Cyberbullying remains one of the most visible expressions of cyber-victimization in India. It includes behaviours such as spreading rumours, posting humiliating content, trolling, and persistent harassment. A

recent narrative review of Indian studies found that these behaviours are especially common among school-aged adolescents and are linked to emotional distress, fear, and social withdrawal (Balkrishnan et al., 2024).

a) Hurtful Comments / Cyber-harassment

Victims receive abusive or harassing messages or comments on social media, messaging apps, or games. Narrative reviews of cyberbullying research in Indian adolescents list hurtful comments, online harassment, and public humiliation as typical patterns of victimization.

b) Rumour Spreading and Trolling

Perpetrators may spread false rumours, gossip, or obscene content that reinforces social stigma, often causing social and emotional harm.

In studies focused on Indian youth, rumour spreading is frequently reported alongside other bullying behaviours.

c) Stalking and Threatening Behaviour

Online stalking which can include persistent contact or tracking victim activity online and threatening messages are identified as serious forms of victimization impacting feelings of safety.

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur publicly and permanently, with harmful content being shared widely and remaining online indefinitely. This public exposure often intensifies victims' feelings of shame and vulnerability.

5. Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Content

Another emerging and deeply traumatic form of cyber-victimization in India is the non-consensual sharing of private or intimate images. Victims often experience not only emotional pain but also fear of social stigma and reputational damage.

A recent study among youth in Tamil Nadu highlights the lack of awareness about revenge porn and notes its victimizing impact when intimate content is shared without permission (Marzuk et al., 2025).

6. Financial and Sexual Cyber-Victimization

While often categorized under cybercrime, experiences such as online fraud, sextortion, and sexual harassment also represent significant forms of cyber-victimization. Victims not only suffer financial loss but also experience fear, embarrassment, and emotional trauma.

1.6 Theoretical framework of Cyber-Victimization

Routine Activity Theory (RAT)

At its core, Routine Activity Theory argues that victimization occurs when three elements converge:

- A motivated offender
- A suitable target
- The absence of capable guardianship

In the digital world, this convergence happens more often than we realize. Motivated offenders are individuals who exploit anonymity and low accountability online. Suitable targets include users who are highly visible online those who post frequently, share personal information, or engage openly on social platforms. Lack of guardianship appears as weak privacy settings, absent moderation, or limited parental/school supervision (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Lifestyle-Exposure Theory

Closely related to RAT, Lifestyle-Exposure Theory suggests that people's daily behaviours and social choices influence their likelihood of victimization. In online spaces, lifestyle translates into:

- Time spent on social media
- Participation in online gaming or forums
- Interaction with strangers
- Self-disclosure of personal information

Victims often do not engage in "risky behaviour" intentionally. Instead, their digital lifestyle driven by social connection, curiosity, or self-expression places them in environments where victimization is more likely (Hindelang et al., 1978).

General Strain Theory

Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory (GST), introduced in 1992 and expanded in 2001, argues that negative social relationships produce strains that lead to criminal behaviour as a coping mechanism. Unlike earlier models, GST identifies three broad types of stressors: failure to achieve positively valued goals, the removal of positive stimuli (like a breakup), and the presentation of negative stimuli (like bullying). These strains generate negative emotions, most critically anger, which create pressure for corrective action, potentially through illegitimate means. Whether an individual turns to crime depends on "conditioning factors" such as their social support, coping skills, and level of social control. Strains are most likely to result in crime when they are perceived as severe, unjust, and associated with low social control (Agnew, 2001).

Social Learning Theory

In order to explain how criminal behaviour is acquired and maintained, Ronald Aker's Social Learning Theory (1998) identifies four key ideas. The term "differential association" describes how interactions with primary groups, such as family and peers, expose people to deviant or conforming patterns and set the stage for learning. People form definitions about personal views, moral judgments, and justifications that categorize a behaviour as either acceptable or unacceptable—through these associations. The theory also suggests that behaviour is sustained by differential reinforcement, in which the ratio of expected or real rewards (such money gain or social standing) to penalties determines whether an act will be repeated. Finally, imitation happens when someone first engages in a behaviour after seeing others do it, especially if the model is someone they respect or if the observed behaviour produced a favourable consequence. When taken as a whole, these components imply that crime is a learnt reaction to social settings that define deviance more favourably and promote it more than conformity (Akers, 2017).

Online Disinhibition Theory

The phenomenon known as the "Online Disinhibition Effect," which was first proposed by psychologist John Suler in 2004, describes how people feel less or completely free from social constraints and inhibitions when interacting online as opposed to in person. Dissociative anonymity (the belief that one's actions cannot be connected to their true identity), invisibility (the absence of physical presence or social cues like eye contact), asynchronicity, solipsistic introjection (the internalization of digital voices as if they are occurring in one's own head), dissociative imagination (seeing the online world as a "game" separate from reality), and the minimization of status and authority are the six main psychological factors that contribute to this effect. Together, these factors explain why people often behave more intensely, whether through kindness or hostility, in digital spaces than they would in person (Suler, 2004).

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transition from traditional social circles to digital ecosystems has fundamentally altered the landscape

of student interactions. Cyber-victimization is no longer just a "digital version" of schoolyard bullying; it is a distinct, pervasive phenomenon. Cyber-victimization is defined as a wilful and repeated harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja, 2024). Unlike physical bullying, which often ends when a student leaves the campus, cyber-victimization follows the individual into their private sanctuary their home via the very devices they use for learning and relaxation.

Recent literature highlights that the "anonymity" of the internet acts as a catalyst. As noted by (Umarhathab et al., 2009) in the Indian context, the lack of physical encounter emboldens perpetrators, creating a "disinhibition effect." Students in Coimbatore, much like their global counterparts, find themselves in a paradox where the tools meant for their empowerment smartphones and high-speed internet become the primary conduits for harassment, exclusion, and emotional distress.

Recent empirical work examining **cyberbullying among Vietnamese secondary school students** highlighted the pervasive nature of cyber-victimization in digital learning environments. The cross-sectional study of 518 participants reported that 75.67% experienced at least one form of cyber-victimization within six months, with hurtful online messages identified as the most frequent type. The research also demonstrated that cyber-victimization rates exceeded cyber-aggression involvement, emphasizing the asymmetry between victim and perpetrator experiences. These findings underline the widespread prevalence of digital harassment and the importance of assessing its nature and forms among students, which is directly relevant to measuring victimization levels in institutional contexts (Van et al., 2026).

Sood and Lata (2025) conducted a **comparative study exploring cyberbullying and cyber-victimization among school and college students in Jammu, India.** Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 450 respondents to assess perceived exposure to online harassment. The study focused on determining differences in victimization across educational levels and revealed measurable exposure among both cohorts, thereby reinforcing the need to empirically assess the extent and patterns of victimization within specific student populations. This study supports the methodological relevance of measuring cyber-victimization prevalence among college students in regional contexts such as Coimbatore.

A mixed-methods investigation into **cybercrimes targeting female university students in Kashmir** emphasized gendered vulnerability in digital victimization patterns. The study conceptualized cyber-victimization as repeated harmful digital behaviour intensified by power imbalance and platform reach. It reported that cyber offences resulted in psychological, social, sexual, and economic harm, highlighting the multidimensional consequences of online victimization. This research demonstrates the significance of identifying victimization types and their impacts, especially within higher-education settings, thereby informing criminological analyses of student cyber exposure (Yaqoob & Sheik, 2025).

A study conducted on **"Cybercrime practices and Cyber victimization among criminology students: Basis for Cyber defense Enhancement program"** in the Philippines. Surveying 100 randomly selected students, the study examined the relationship between digital safety behaviour and exposure to victimization. Findings emphasized that inadequate cybersecurity practices heighten susceptibility to cybercrime victimization, suggesting that behavioural and awareness variables significantly shape victim risk levels. This work is relevant for criminological inquiry as it situates victimization within routine activity and situational exposure frameworks, highlighting factors influencing student vulnerability in digital environments (Cañete et al., 2025).

A study examined **cyberbullying and victimization among university students** in Türkiye, focusing on

psychosocial predictors influencing online harassment exposure. The study surveyed 520 students using standardized instruments including the Cyberbullying Inventory and Quality of Life Scale. Findings revealed that 51.3% of respondents experienced cyber-victimization at least once within six months, indicating substantial exposure among higher-education populations. Psychological, social, and professional quality-of-life dimensions significantly predicted victimization outcomes, while collectivist values and psychological needs such as belongingness also influenced vulnerability patterns (Demir et al., 2025).

A study investigated **cyber-victimization patterns among female college students**, focusing on behavioural and personality factors contributing to vulnerability. Using Latent Class Analysis, the study found that victims displayed higher levels of social media engagement, frequent use of unsecured public Wi-Fi, and involvement in risky online practices compared to non-victims. The research demonstrated that cyber-victimization is closely linked to digital lifestyle patterns, including unsafe browsing behaviours and online deviance. It further emphasized the necessity of targeted digital literacy and prevention programs within academic institutions. These findings are criminologically significant because they support routine activity theory perspectives, highlighting exposure and online lifestyle as risk determinants in cyber victimization among student populations (Sreerag et al., 2025).

A study examined the **predictive role of cyberbullying and victimization on psychological distress among doctoral students in India**. The study highlighted the relationship between online victimization experiences and mental health outcomes in higher-education populations, demonstrating that exposure to cyberbullying behaviours contributes to measurable distress indicators. By focusing on university-level participants, the research provides evidence that cyber-victimization extends beyond adolescents into advanced academic environments. It supports the relevance of measuring victimization levels among college students and suggests that victimization severity can be evaluated through psychosocial indicators alongside prevalence assessment (Vishwakarma et al., 2025).

A study conducted a meta-analysis synthesizing empirical findings on **cyberbullying prevalence among Indian adolescents**. Reviewing studies drawn from multiple academic databases, the authors identified an overall pooled prevalence rate of 19%, while noting substantial heterogeneity across contexts and populations. This variation indicates that cyber-victimization levels differ significantly based on demographic and institutional environments. The study contributes to victimological understanding by establishing baseline prevalence estimates within India and reinforces the necessity of localized empirical assessment, such as the measurement of victimization levels among students in Coimbatore (Mondal et al., 2025).

A study investigated **cyberbullying prevalence among university students in India,** focusing on behavioural patterns and coping responses. The researchers used structured questionnaires distributed to undergraduate students and applied statistical analysis to identify relationships between internet usage frequency and victimization experiences. Results showed that students with higher daily internet usage were more vulnerable to cyber harassment. Additionally, the study observed gender differences in victimization patterns and coping strategies, with many students choosing to ignore incidents rather than report them. The research contributes to understanding cyber victimization in the Indian context and supports the inclusion of preventive education in higher institutions (Gupta et al., 2023).

A study conducted research among college students in South India to explore **awareness and experiences of cyber harassment.** Using a descriptive survey design, data were gathered from students across several arts and science colleges. The study found moderate levels of awareness regarding cyber safety but limited

knowledge about legal remedies. A noticeable portion of respondents reported exposure to online abuse, particularly through messaging applications and social media platforms. The research stressed the need for digital literacy and institutional support systems, making it highly relevant to studies examining cyber victimization among college populations in similar socio-cultural settings (Kant & Ravi, 2023).

An exploratory study on **patterns of cyber victimization and digital behaviour among college students in Coimbatore district.** The research employed survey methodology and analysed responses through basic statistical tools. The results indicated that a considerable proportion of students encountered online harassment, often linked to prolonged internet usage and social media interaction. It also found that awareness of cyber laws remained low among participants. The study recommended awareness workshops and curriculum integration of cyber safety education. This research directly informs studies focusing on cyber victimization among students in the Coimbatore region (Nithyasri & Nithyasumati, 2022).

A study examined **cyberbullying susceptibility among Indian students before and during the COVID-19 lockdown** through surveys of 256 student's pre-pandemic and 118 during lockdown. The study identified major predictors of victimization including prior offline bullying experiences, sensitivity to peer opinion, and frequency of social media engagement. It further revealed that interaction with strangers online, relationship formation via digital platforms, and hours spent on social media were significant risk factors before lockdown, while public opinion expression, platform preference, gaming engagement, and demographic variables became relevant during lockdown conditions. The research demonstrates that cyber-victimization risk is shaped by digital lifestyle exposure and social behaviour, aligning closely with routine activity and lifestyle-exposure theoretical perspectives in criminology (Javin et al., 2020).

A large-scale study examining **cyber victimization among adolescents and college-age youth.** The research aimed to understand patterns of online harassment, emotional consequences, and reporting behaviours. Using survey methodology across multiple educational institutions, the authors collected responses related to social media usage, exposure to online bullying, and psychological outcomes. Their findings indicated that a significant proportion of students experienced cyber victimization, often through social networking platforms, and many victims reported feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. The study highlighted that lack of institutional reporting mechanisms prevented students from seeking support (Hinduja & Patchin 2010).

A public health study **examining cyberbullying among late adolescents highlighted regional evidence from Chennai** indicating a 5.51% prevalence of cyberbullying victimization, reflecting early documentation of online victimization in Tamil Nadu. The broader cross-sectional research emphasized that cyberbullying is becoming increasingly common in developing countries due to expanding internet access and social networking usage. It also found that risky behaviours such as accepting friend requests from strangers and posting sensitive material were associated with victimization, while most victims preferred seeking help from peers rather than institutional authorities (Mukherjee et al., 2019).

A **comparative study of cyberbullying among 360 undergraduate students in Gujarat,** employing a factorial research design and standardized measurement scale developed by Hinduja and Patchin. The research assessed victimization and offending dimensions through structured survey instruments containing multiple behavioural indicators. By operationalizing cyberbullying victimization through scale-based measurement, the study demonstrated methodological rigor in quantifying student experiences. This research provides useful guidance for instrument selection and conceptualization of cyber-victimization constructs when measuring prevalence and typologies within higher-education settings such as those targeted in the present study (Chauhan, 2019).

A regional study carried out examining **cyberbullying experiences among college students in Tamil Nadu**. The objective was to measure prevalence, identify commonly used platforms for harassment, and analyse emotional outcomes. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that social networking sites were the most common environment for cyber victimization, and many students experienced stress and academic distraction due to online harassment. The study concluded that educational institutions in Tamil Nadu must implement counselling and reporting mechanisms (Goswamee, 2019).

Recent publications have been increasingly focusing on **platform-specific analyses**. One of the many ways in which WhatsApp is used to traverse misinformation, exclusion and smear campaigns in India is through the formation of "college groups" and "hostel groups." As opposed to other open social media platforms, the encrypted nature of WhatsApp has made it a perfect place for "secret bullying", where people take screenshots of private conversations and share them to ridicule the person (Chandra et al., 2018).

At the same time, Instagram promotes victimization in a visually expressive way. One study of South Indian youth has found that heavier use of Instagram would be linked with body image dissatisfaction which may cause "appearance-related cyber-victimization". According to the literature, the reason most anti-bullying programs that are not specifically designed to be either WhatsApp-type or Instagram-type fail is that they do not reflect the architectural differences between platforms such as WhatsApp (private/group, based) and Instagram (public/image, based) (Fardouly et al., 2015).

A study conducted in Coimbatore points out that the formal criminal justice system is judged as being incapable of dealing with "micro-level" cyber harassment, thereby leading to a large portion of such cases being unreported (Hinduja, 2010).

Attributes of the Indian context of criminology entail the cumbersome procedure of lodging a First Information Report (FIR) under the IT Act. Victims more than once accuse the police of indifference or a lack of technical knowledge among the police officials, which is considered as a form of secondary victimization. Besides that, the "private justice" phenomenon, i.e. victims opting to get even through social pressure or offline retaliation instead of taking the offenders to court, is widespread (Navarro et al., 2012).

Identifying research gaps

A review of existing literature shows some important gaps in the study of cyber-victimization. Many studies have examined the prevalence and psychological effects of cyber-victimization, but very few focus specifically on college students in Southern parts of India, especially cities like Coimbatore. Most research looks at general populations and does not consider local factors that may influence student's experiences. In addition, earlier studies often study only one aspect, such as prevalence or mental health, rather than combining different aspects together. There is also limited research that clearly differentiates between direct and indirect forms of cyber-victimization. Further, not much attention has been given to identifying the most common types of online victimization faced by students. Therefore, there is a need for a simple and focused study that examines the level, types, and psychological impact of cyber-victimization among college students in Coimbatore to provide useful insights for prevention and policy.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology adopted to carry out the study on cyber-victimization among students in Coimbatore. Research methodology refers to the systematic plan used to conduct research in

an organized and reliable manner. This chapter outlines the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research design, universe of the study, sample and sampling technique, variables examined, sources of data, tool used for data collection, method of data collection, and method of data analysis. A clear explanation of the methodology helps in understanding how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived.

3.1 Statement of Problem

The widespread availability of digital communication tools has essentially changed how students interact with each other face to face and has also led to an increase in their exposure to cyber-victimization. Although online harassment is generally considered to be a very common phenomenon nowadays, the studies have so far given a rather confusing picture of the issues leading to such harassment and how students reacted to it. More importantly, there is still a big gap in well-conducted research that would explain in detail what are the subtle ways in which engagement in different online activities can increase the risk of encountering one or another form of victimization. Therefore, the area of study is still without an overarching model that would adequately represent the complex character of these issues and thus, the most at, risk students remain unprotected.

There is a heavy reliance on cross-sectional designs or localized convenience samples in previous research which has resulted in limited generalizability of findings and no consideration of how the frequency and intensity of online interactions change over time. Besides that, self-report measures tend to be erratic, thus there might be differences between the level of victimization as perceived and the actual exposure to the victimization. This lack of methodological rigor points to the need for a powerful analytical technique that would not only be able to pinpoint the exact factors making students vulnerable but also it would take into account the confounding factors involved in digital behaviour.

The importance of remedying these shortcomings cannot be overstated if we are to have a solid evidence base for designing intervention strategies and policies that truly fit the digital ecosystem of student demographic. Hence, the main goal of this research is to use a rigorous methodology that can produce detailed data on the extent, types, and psychological effects of cyber-victimization. This study goes beyond merely reporting incidents, to deeply analysing the mechanisms of harassment in order to offer a dependable empirical ground. Understanding theoretical models of online aggression is crucial through this method and the development of future help systems should be based on the actual knowledge of the student experience.

3.2 Aim of the Study

This research mainly aims to analyse the level and characteristics of cyber-victimization among college students in Coimbatore. In particular, it intends to measure the overall degree of cyber-victimization experienced by students and to figure out the most frequent types of online victimization (e.g., Direct and indirect victimization) amongst this group, and also their psychological impact on the students, thus providing an empirical evidence base for crime prevention and policy in the digital sphere, which is geographically relevant.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

The present study is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To measure the level and extent of cyber-victimization among male and female college students in Coimbatore.
2. To measure the level of forms and impact of cyber-victimization among college students.

3.4 Hypothesis for the study

A research hypothesis is a tentative statement that is used to test the relationship between two or more variables. Hypotheses of the present study are as follows:

- H_{01} - There is no significant difference between gender and the level of cyber-victimization.
- H_{02} – There is no significant relationship between the level of education of respondents and the level of cyber-victimization.
- H_{03} – There is no significant difference between direct and indirect forms of cyber-victimization.

3.4 Research Design

The present study uses a descriptive survey design. Such a design is suitable for the research as the objectives are to find out the current level of cyber-victimization and the common types experienced by college students in Coimbatore at a single point in time. Thus, it does not involve tracking changes over time or establishing causal relationships.

A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data from a sample of college students. The students' self-reports will provide information on the prevalence and patterns of cyber-victimization.

3.11 Method for data analysis

Quantitative survey data from questionnaires would be interpreted in a systematic manner with the help of statistical software like SPSS. At first, descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and measures of central tendency would be used to fulfil the major objectives of the study. These derivations will represent the total level of cyber-victimization of the university students and will order different types of victimization according to the number of cases, thus providing an empirical answer to the magnitude of the problem through the study sample.

After that, inferential statistical techniques such as t tests and ANOVA will be used for studying the relationships between variables and testing the hypotheses of the study. Such a more detailed investigation will reveal which demographic and behavioural factors are significantly associated with victimization scores and thus identify the specific risk factors while also confirming the research framework.

3.8 Scope of the Study

This research is geographically limited to the Coimbatore district and canters on the population of college students attending different higher educational institutions in that area. To get a true picture of the student community, the study covers a wide range of academic disciplines and different types of institutions, government, aided, and private colleges. Also, the research is limited to those students who are regular internet users and who are at least eighteen years old. This means that minors and non-internet users are left out of the main survey group.

In terms of subject matter, the focus of the study is on the empirical assessment of the occurrence, level, and detailed types of cyber, victimization, including online harassment, stalking, and privacy breaches. Victimization experiences reported by oneself within the digital sphere are the only focus of this research; it does not delve into legal rulings, law enforcement opinions, or forensic examination of cyber-crime cases. This research is a snapshot study, i.e., it takes data at only one point in time, so it looks at the present condition of victimization rather than victimization patterns or cause-effect relations over long durations.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and discusses the findings of the study conducted to examine cyber-victimization among college students in Coimbatore. The analysis is based on data

collected from 210 respondents. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distributions and graphical representations were employed to summarize demographic characteristics, levels of cyber victimization, types of victimization experienced, and the impact of cyber victimization on students.
The results are presented in accordance with the objectives of the study.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

4.1.1 Gender

Table 4.1 Gender-wise distribution of the respondents (n= 210)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	101	48.09
Female	99	47.14
Non-binary	10	4.76
Total	210	100

The frequency distribution of gender indicates that the sample consists of an almost equal number of male and female students, with a small proportion of respondents identifying as non-binary.

Interpretation:

This balanced gender distribution provides an appropriate basis for understanding cyber-victimization across genders. The presence of cyber victimization across all gender categories suggests that online harassment is not limited to a specific gender group.

4.1.2 Age

Table 4.2 Age-wise distribution of the respondents (n=210)

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
18	71	33.8
19	61	29.1
20	78	37.1
Total	210	100

Interpretation:

The table shows that respondents are fairly evenly distributed across age groups, with a slightly higher proportion belonging to the highest age category (20 years old). This indicates that cyber victimization is experienced across different age groups among college students.

4.1.3 Category

Table 4.3 Category-wise distribution of the respondents

Category (Year)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1st Year	65	31.0
2nd Year	63	30.0
3rd Year	82	39.0
Total	210	100.0

Interpretation:

Third-year students constitute the largest proportion of the sample, followed by first- and second-year students. The near-equal distribution suggests that cyber victimization is prevalent across all years of study.

4.1.4 Parental education

Table 4.4 Parental education of the respondents

Parental Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	120	57.1
2	62	29.5
3	28	13.3
Total	**210**	**100.0**

Interpretation:

More than half of the respondents reported that their parents fall under the lowest education category. This may influence students' awareness and guidance regarding online safety and cyber-related risks.

4.1.5 Area of Residence

Table 4.5 Area of Residence of the respondents

Code	Frequency	Percentage %
Rural	69	32.85
Urban	81	38.57
Semi-urban	60	28.57
Total	210	100

Interpretation:

The data shows representation from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas, with a slightly higher proportion of students from urban and semi-urban backgrounds.

Students from all residential backgrounds reported cyber victimization experiences, suggesting that increased internet penetration has minimized rural–urban differences in exposure to online risks.

4.1.6 Main Device Used

Table 4.6 Main device used by the respondents

Main device	Frequency	Percentage %
Smartphone	**106**	**50.47**
Laptop	**36**	**17.14**
Computer	**24**	**11.42**
Multiple device	**30**	**14.28**
Tablet	**14**	**6.66**
Total	**210**	**100**

Interpretation:

The frequency distribution of the main device used by the respondents indicates that smartphones are the most commonly used device, with 106 students (50.5%) reporting smartphone usage. This is followed by laptops, used by 36 students (17.1%), and multiple devices, reported by 30 students (14.3%). A smaller proportion of respondents use computers (11.4%) and tablets (6.7%) as their primary devices.

The predominance of smartphone usage suggests that students primarily access the internet and social media through mobile devices, which are highly accessible and frequently used throughout the day. This increased and continuous connectivity may elevate student's exposure to online interactions and consequently, to cyber-victimization. The use of multiple devices by a notable proportion of students

further indicates extensive digital engagement, potentially increasing vulnerability to both direct and indirect forms of cyber victimization. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of focusing cyber safety awareness and preventive strategies on mobile-based platforms.

4.1.7 Primary Platform Used

Table 4.7 Primary platform used by the respondents

Primary platform	Frequency	Percentage %
Instagram	**76**	**36.19**
You tube	**53**	**25.23**
Facebook	**29**	**13.80**
WhatsApp	**35**	**16.66**
Gaming platform	**17**	**8.09**
Total	**210**	**100**

Interpretation:

The frequency distribution of the primary social media platforms used by the respondents shows that Instagram is the most commonly used platform, with 76 students (36.19%) reporting it as their primary platform. This is followed by YouTube, used by 53 students (25.23%), and WhatsApp, reported by 35 students (16.66%). A smaller proportion of respondents primarily use Facebook (13.80%), while gaming platforms are used by 17 students (8.09%).

The dominance of Instagram indicates that visually driven and interaction-intensive platforms are the most popular among college students. Such platforms often involve frequent social interaction, content sharing, and public visibility, which may increase exposure to cyber victimization such as harassment, unwanted messages, or impersonation. The substantial use of YouTube and WhatsApp also suggests prolonged online engagement, both for entertainment and communication purposes. Although fewer students reported gaming platforms as their primary platform, these environments can also present risks such as verbal abuse and online harassment. Overall, the findings highlight that cyber victimization prevention efforts should particularly focus on widely used social media platforms, especially Instagram and messaging applications.

4.18 Daily average time internet usage

Table 4.8 Daily Average time internet usage by the respondents

Average Daily Internet Usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	**41**	**19.5%**
1–3 hours	**56**	**26.7%**
3–5 hours	**47**	**22.4%**
More than 5 hours	**66**	**31.4%**
Total	**210**	**100.0%**

Interpretation:

The table indicates that the largest proportion of students (31.4%) spend more than 5 hours daily on the internet, followed by 26.7% who spend 1–3 hours per day. About 22.4% of students use the internet for 3–5 hours daily, while 19.5% spend less than 1 hour per day online.

These findings suggest that a significant number of students engage in prolonged internet usage, which may increase their exposure to online interactions and consequently raise the risk of cyber-victimization. The high percentage of students spending more than five hours online highlights the importance of digital awareness and cyber safety interventions.

4.2 Direct Online Harassment

Table 4.9 Direct Online Harassment experienced by the respondents

Direct Online Harassment	0	1	2	3
Deliberately and repeatedly targeted with hurtful, insulting, or humiliating online messages	19 (9.0%)	46 (21.8%)	82 (38.9%)	63 (29.9%)
Unwanted sexual messages, comments, images, or requests online that caused discomfort, fear, or embarrassment	46 (21.8%)	54 (25.6%)	54 (25.6%)	56 (26.5%)
Experiencing unauthorized access to your online accounts or misuse of your personal or financial information	27 (12.8%)	52 (24.6%)	85 (40.3%)	46 (21.8%)
Persistently monitored, followed, or contacted online by someone despite expressing that you wanted the contact to stop	61 (28.9%)	58 (27.5%)	62 (29.4%)	29 (13.7%)
Experiencing someone creating a fake profile or impersonation, online, using person's name, photos, or personal details.	17 (8.1%)	39 (18.5%)	100 (47.4%)	54 (25.6%)
Receiving online messages that threatened harm to person, their reputation, or their family and made them feel unsafe	20 (9.5%)	47 (22.3%)	79 (37.4%)	64 (30.3%)
n =210				

Note: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Strongly agree; values in the () refers percentage.

Interpretation:

With a total of **210 respondents,** the frequency distribution indicates generally moderate levels of agreement about experiencing direct online harassment.

The largest proportion of respondents (38.9%) agree and (29.9%) respondents strongly agree that they receive deliberately and repeatedly targeted with hurtful, insulting, or humiliating online messages. This indicates that the majority of respondents have experienced a moderate to high level of cyber related harassment or denigration, while only a small proportion (9.0%) reported that they don't experience any forms of humiliating, harassing or any disrespectful messages. Majority of the respondents, (25.6%) agree and (26.5%) strongly agree that they came across unwanted sexual messages, comments, images, or requests online that caused them discomfort, fear, or embarrassment, Responses were relatively evenly distributed, such that, the respondents (25.6%) disagree and (21.8%) strongly disagree that they don't experience any kind of cyber sexual harassment. This balanced distribution suggests mixed perceptions

about comfort levels, indicating that respondents do not share a strongly unified view on this aspect.
Most of the respondents (40.3%) agree, and (21.8%) strongly agree that they have experienced unauthorized access to their online accounts or misuse of their personal or financial information. This pattern suggests that majority of the respondents had experienced identity theft or account takeover, while with fewer respondents expressing very low experience (12.8%).
Respondents (29.4%) agree and with fewer respondents (13.7%) strongly agree that they are being persistently monitored, followed, or contacted online by someone despite expressing that they wanted the contact to stop, while the respondents (28.9%) strongly disagree and (27.5%) disagree that they did not experience any kind of cyber stalking.
Nearly half of the respondents (47.4%) agreed, (25.6%) strongly agreed that they experienced someone creating a fake profile or impersonation, online, using their name, photos, or personal details. A very few respondents (8.1%) only disagreed, more than half of the respondents experienced impersonation, or being victims of profile cloning or catfishing.
Similarly, majority of the respondents (37.4%) agree and (30.3%) strongly agree that they received online messages that threatened harm to them, their reputation, or their family and made them feel unsafe. The majority of respondents selected category, suggesting relatively strong confidence in identifying cyber stalking or harassing attempts. Only 9.5% reported the lowest category, further suggests that fewer respondents did not came across any kinds of cyber stalking or harassment.
Overall, the findings indicate that respondents tend to cluster around moderate response categories, with relatively fewer individuals reporting very low levels in experiencing direct online harassment. This suggests a generally moderate to high levels victimization experienced by majority of the respondents, only a few with low level.

4.3 Indirect online victimization

Table 4.10 Indirect Online victimization experienced by the respondents

Indirect Online victimization	0	1	2	3
online interactions where messages directed, felt intentionally hurtful, insulting, or disrespectful.	16 (7.6%)	35 (16.7%)	90 (42.9%)	69 (32.9%)
Online messages, comments, or content that crossed personal boundaries and made feel uncomfortable.	17 (8.1%)	52 (24.8%)	74 (35.2%)	67 (31.9%)
Repeated online contact from an individual that felt intrusive or difficult to avoid.	48 (22.9%)	58 (27.6%)	56 (26.7%)	48 (22.9%)
Becoming aware of someone misusing identity, name, or images on online platforms.	52 (24.8%)	55 (26.2%)	58 (27.6%)	45 (21.4%)
Receiving online communications that created fear, pressure, or concern for safety or reputation.	53 (25.2%)	42 (20.0%)	54 (25.7%)	61 (29.0%)
Being added to unwanted groups or pages without consent.	50 (23.8%)	52 (24.8%)	63 (30.0%)	45 (21.4%)
n =210				

Note: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Strongly agree; values in the () refers percentage

Interpretation:
The frequency distribution shows varying levels of agreement regarding experiences of indirect cyber-vic

timization.

The majority of respondents agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (32.9%), that they came across online interactions where messages directed, felt intentionally hurtful, insulting, or disrespectful, indicating that a substantial proportion of participants have experienced indirect forms of online hostility. Only 7.6% strongly disagreed, suggesting relatively high exposure. Similarly, most respondents agreed (35.2%) or strongly agreed (31.9%) that they came across online messages, comments, or content that crossed personal boundaries and made them feel uncomfortable. This indicates that exposure to negative online content is common among participants.

While 26.7% agreed and 22.9% strongly agreed that they received repeated online contact from an individual that felt intrusive or difficult to avoid, while, a comparable proportion disagreed (27.6%) and strongly disagreed (22.9%). This suggests mixed experiences regarding persistent online harassment.

Responses were fairly balanced, with slightly more respondents agreeing (27.6%) than strongly agreeing (21.4%) that they became aware of someone misusing identity, name, or images on online platforms. However, majority of the respondents (51.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that this form of victimization may be less prevalent compared to others.

Responses leaned slightly toward agreement (25.7% agree; 29.0% strongly agree) that the respondents receiving online communications that created fear, pressure, or concern for safety or reputation, suggesting that a notable proportion of participants have faced such experiences. Finally, 30.0% agreed and 21.4% strongly agreed that they are being added to unwanted groups or pages without consent, indicating that more than half of respondents have encountered this issue, though a considerable proportion reported disagreement.

Overall, the data suggest that experiences of cyber victimization are present among a significant portion of respondents, particularly in relation to direct negative messages and harmful comments. However, certain forms of victimization, such as repeated contact and misuse of personal information, show more divided responses, indicating variability in participants' experiences.

4.4 Impact of Cyber-victimization

Table 4.11 Impact of Cyber-victimization experienced by the respondents

Impact of Cyber-victimization	0	1	2	3
Felt socially withdrawn after online harassment.	51 (24.3%)	55 (26.2%)	62 (29.5%)	42 (20.0%)
Academic performance was negatively impacted.	44 (21.0%)	51 (24.3%)	58 (27.6%)	57 (27.1%)
Cybercrime incidents made you feel stressed or anxious.	52 (24.8%)	53 (25.2%)	58 (27.6%)	47 (22.4%)
Difficulty concentrating on academic work due to online harassment.	48 (22.9%)	51 (24.3%)	51 (24.3%)	60 (28.6%)
Self-esteem was affected by negative online behaviour.	51 (24.3%)	44 (21.0%)	58 (27.6%)	57 (27.1%)
Avoiding certain apps because of prior incidents.	50 (23.8%)	47 (22.4%)	56 (26.7%)	57 (27.1%)
Felt unsafe or insecure while using social media.	43 (20.5%)	61 (29.0%)	54 (25.7%)	52 (24.8%)

Sleep patterns were affected by cyber experiences.	53 (25.2%)	46 (21.9%)	58 (27.6%)	53 (25.2%)

Note: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Strongly agree; values in the () refers percentage.

Interpretation:

The data indicates that cyber-victimization has a substantial negative impact across multiple dimensions of the victims' lives, with approximately half or more of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with every negative outcome measured.

The most significant impacts are observed in academic performance and self-esteem, where 54.7% and 54.7% of respondents, respectively, reported agreement (Agree or Strongly Agree) that their academic performance had a significant negative impact with lowered self-esteem. This suggests that the consequences of online harassment extend far beyond the digital space and directly interfere with the educational and personal growth of individuals.

A high percentage of respondents reported difficulty concentrating (52.9%) and disrupted sleep patterns (52.8%). These physiological and cognitive disturbances are commonly associated with prolonged psychological distress, further highlighting the severity of cyber-victimization.

Exactly 50% of the participants reported feeling stressed or anxious as a result of their experiences. Furthermore, nearly half (49.5%) felt socially withdrawn, indicating a tendency for victims to isolate themselves as a coping mechanism or a direct consequence of the harassment.

Cyber-victimization also dictates behavioural shifts; 53.8% of respondents reported avoiding specific apps to escape harassment, and 50.5% expressed feeling unsafe on social media platforms. This reflects a significant loss of digital freedom and a decline in perceived security within online environments.

Overall, the findings underscore that cyber-victimization is not merely a virtual issue but a pervasive problem that significantly degrades the mental health, academic success, and social well-being of those targeted.

4.2 Level of Cyber-victimization

Table 4.12 Level of victimization and its impact on the respondents

Cyber-victimization	N	Mean	SD
Direct victimization	**210**	**18.57**	**8.499**
Indirect victimization	**210**	**35.57**	**16.241**
Impact	**210**	**72.71**	**33.227**

Interpretation:

Descriptive analysis revealed that indirect victimization (M = 35.57, SD = 16.24) was more prevalent than direct victimization (M = 18.57, SD = 8.50). The overall impact of cyber-victimization was also considerable (M = 72.71, SD = 33.23), indicating notable psychological and academic effects among students.

The findings suggest that indirect forms of cyber-victimization occur more frequently than direct forms, reinforcing the pattern observed in prior analyses. The higher variability in impact scores further indicates that while cyber-victimization is common, its consequences differ significantly across individuals. Some students may experience mild effects, whereas others may face severe psychological and academic disruptions.

4.3 Difference between socio-demographic characteristics and the respondent's level of overall cyber-victimization

To establish whether any significant difference between gender, current level of education of the respondents and the level of cyber-victimisation, t-test(gender) and One-way ANOVA (for current level of education) methods were applied. The output of the analysis is presented in this section.

4.31 Gender vs Overall cyber-victimization

Table 4.13 Gender vs level of cyber-victimization

Variable	Gender	Frequency (%)	Mean	t value	p value
Cyber-victimization	Male	101(48.09)	129.33	.407	.323
	Female	99 (47.14)	125.93	.407	.323

Interpretation:

An independent samples *t*-test revealed no significant difference in overall cyber-victimization between male students (M = 129.33) and female students (M = 125.93), $t = 0.41$, $p = .323$. The results indicated that male students (M = 129.33, $n = 101$) reported slightly higher levels of overall cyber-victimization compared to female students (M = 125.93, $n = 99$). However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t = 0.41$, $p = .323$.

Since the p value (.323) is greater than the conventional significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is retained. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in overall cyber-victimization between male and female students in the present study. The findings suggest that cyber-victimization is experienced similarly across gender groups, making both male and female students equally vulnerable to online harassment.

4.32 Current Education vs. Overall Cyber-victimization

Table 4.14 Current education vs level of cyber-victimization

Current education	Frequency (%)	Mean	f value	p value
1st year UG	65 (31)	131.02		
2nd year UG	63 (30)	122.67	.391	.677
3rd year UG	82 (39)	127.98		

Interpretation:

A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference in overall cyber-victimization across current education levels (1st year UG, 2nd year UG, 3rd year UG), $F = 0.39$, $p = .677$. The mean scores indicated that 1st year students (M = 131.02, $n = 65$) reported slightly higher levels of cyber-victimization compared to 3rd year students (M = 127.98, $n = 82$) and 2nd year students (M = 122.67, $n = 63$). However, the difference among the three groups was not statistically significant, $F = 0.39$, $p = .677$.

Since the p value (.677) is greater than the significance level of .05, the null hypothesis is retained. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in overall cyber-victimization across different years of undergraduate education. The findings suggest that cyber-victimization is experienced relatively uniformly across different stages of undergraduate education. Although first-year students showed slightly higher mean scores, the differences were not statistically meaningful. This indicates that exposure to cyber-victimization does not significantly vary based on academic progression within college.

4.4 Difference between forms of cyber-victimization

To establish whether any significant difference between direct and indirect forms of cyber-victimisation, using paired sample t-test. The output of the analysis is presented in this section.

Table 4.15 Direct vs Indirect forms of Cyber-victimization

Variables	N	Mean	t value	p value
Direct victimization	210	18.57	-31.718	<0.01
Indirect victimization	210	35.57		

Interpretation:

A paired samples *t*-test indicated that indirect cyber-victimization (M = 35.57) was significantly higher than direct cyber-victimization (M = 18.57), $t = -31.72$, $p < .01$. The results revealed that the mean score for indirect victimization (M = 35.57) was substantially higher than the mean score for direct victimization (M = 18.57). The difference between the two forms of victimization was statistically significant, $t = -31.72$, $p < .01$.

Since the *p* value is less than the .01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between direct and indirect forms of cyber-victimization, with indirect victimization being more prevalent among students. This suggests that online aggression may manifest more frequently through subtle, covert, or socially embedded behaviours rather than overt, direct attacks. Indirect victimization, such as exclusion, rumour spreading, or exposure to harmful content, may be normalized within digital environments, making it more pervasive.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Study

This chapter provides the summary of the study; major findings of the study and the conclusion obtained from the findings of this study.

Cyber-victimization has emerged as a significant social and psychological concern in the digital era, particularly among young adults who are highly engaged in online platforms. The increasing accessibility of smartphones, social media applications, and internet connectivity has transformed communication patterns, while simultaneously exposing individuals to new forms of harassment, abuse, and exploitation. Recognizing the growing prevalence and potential consequences of cyber-victimization, the present study was undertaken to examine the extent of direct and indirect online victimization among college students and to assess its psychological, academic, and behavioural impacts. The study aimed to provide empirical insight into the patterns of cyber harassment and its influence on students' well-being in the contemporary digital environment.

The second chapter reviewed relevant literature pertaining to cyber-victimization, its conceptual definitions, theoretical foundations, forms, prevalence, and consequences. Previous empirical studies were examined to understand global and national trends in online harassment, including direct forms such as explicit threats, impersonation, and sexual harassment, as well as indirect forms such as boundary violations, intrusive contact, and social exclusion. The review also explored the psychological, emotional, and academic impacts associated with cyber-victimization, including stress, anxiety, social withdrawal,

reduced self-esteem, and academic decline. In addition, the literature identified research gaps, particularly in the context of college populations, thereby establishing the need for systematic investigation into both the prevalence and impact of cyber-victimization within this demographic.

The third chapter described the research methodology adopted for the study. A descriptive research design was employed to systematically examine the experiences and impacts of cyber-victimization among college students. The study was conducted on a sample of 210 respondents selected through an appropriate sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection, comprising sections on demographic characteristics, direct online harassment, indirect online victimization, and the impact of cyber-victimization. The response format followed a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Data collection procedures were carried out with due consideration to ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality. The collected data were coded and entered into statistical software for systematic analysis.

The fourth chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. The data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency and percentage distribution, to understand the prevalence and patterns of cyber-victimization and its associated impacts. The analysis was organized into sections covering demographic profile, direct online harassment, indirect online victimization, and the impact of cyber-victimization. Tables were constructed to display the distribution of responses across the four-point Likert scale categories, enabling clear interpretation of agreement and disagreement trends. The discussion was structured to interpret patterns in the data in relation to the objectives of the study and existing literature, thereby providing a coherent understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

5.2 Major conclusion and findings of the study

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data presented in Chapter Four, the following conclusions are drawn from the study:

1. Among the respondents, a substantial proportion of respondents reported experiencing various forms of direct and indirect online harassment, demonstrates that cyber-victimization is not an isolated phenomenon but a common experience among students.
2. A majority of respondents reported being deliberately targeted with hurtful or humiliating messages, receiving threatening communications, and encountering impersonation or fake profiles. Particularly high agreement levels were observed in cases of impersonation (73%) and threatening messages (67.7%), suggesting that these forms of harassment are highly prevalent.
3. Responses regarding unwanted sexual messages were relatively evenly distributed; however, more than half of the respondents (52.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had experienced such incidents. This indicates that cyber sexual harassment is a significant issue among the student population.
4. A considerable majority (62.1%) of the respondents reported experiencing unauthorized access to online accounts or misuse of personal or financial information. This reflects the vulnerability of students to digital security breaches and identity-related crimes.
5. While a notable proportion (43.1%) of students reported persistent monitoring or unwanted contact, responses were relatively balanced across agreement and disagreement categories. This suggests that although cyber-stalking is present, it is not uniformly experienced by all students.
6. A significant percentage (67.1%) of respondents reported encountering indirect hostility such as boundary violations, and uncomfortable content. Over 75% reported exposure to disrespectful or hurtful online interactions, indicating widespread exposure to hostile digital environments.

7. While identity misuse and repeated intrusive contact were reported by many, the distribution of responses suggests variability in individual experiences. This indicates that certain forms of victimization may affect specific groups more intensely than others.
8. More than half of the respondents (54.7%) agreed that their academic performance was negatively impacted. This demonstrates that cyber-victimization extends beyond emotional distress and directly interferes with educational outcomes.
9. An equal proportion (54.7%) reported that their self-esteem was affected due to negative online behaviour. Additionally, 50% reported experiencing stress or anxiety. These findings highlight the psychological toll associated with cyber-victimization.
10. Over half of the respondents (52.9%) indicated difficulty concentrating on academic work, and 52.8% reported disrupted sleep patterns. These findings suggest that cyber-victimization contributes to cognitive and physiological disturbances linked to psychological distress.
11. A majority (53.8%) reported avoiding certain apps due to prior negative experiences, and 50.5% felt unsafe while using social media. This indicates that cyber-victimization influences digital behaviour and reduces students' sense of security in online spaces.
12. With 31.4% of respondents spending more than five hours daily online and smartphones being the primary device for over half of the participants, increased digital exposure may heighten the risk of encountering cyber-victimization.
13. The nearly equal gender distribution and representation across age groups, academic years, and residential backgrounds indicate that cyber-victimization is not restricted to a specific subgroup but is experienced broadly across the student population.
14. The findings demonstrate that cyber-victimization affects emotional well-being, academic functioning, social behaviour, digital engagement, and overall sense of safety. It is therefore not merely an online issue but a significant psychosocial concern.
15. A majority of the students reported experiencing emotional distress, difficulty concentrating, reduced academic performance, and behavioural changes as a result of cyber-victimization. This highlights that online victimization extends beyond virtual interactions and affects students' real-life functioning.
16. A substantial proportion of respondents reported experiencing various forms of cyber-victimization, indicating that online harassment is a common issue within the student population.
17. The findings clearly show that a higher percentage of students reported experiencing indirect forms of cyber-victimization compared to direct forms. This suggests that subtle and less overt forms of online aggression are more prevalent than direct attacks such as threatening messages or explicit harassment.
18. The percentage distribution of cyber-victimization among male and female students was nearly equal, indicating that both genders are similarly exposed to online victimization.
19. The percentage distribution across first-year, second-year, and third-year undergraduate students shows that cyber-victimization is experienced consistently across academic stages.
20. While a large percentage of students reported experiencing cyber-victimization, the degree of its psychological and academic consequences differed across individuals, indicating that vulnerability and coping capacity may influence the severity of impact.
21. The overall findings suggest that cyber-victimization is not confined to a specific demographic group but is a widespread phenomenon associated with active engagement in digital environments.
22. The study concludes that cyber-victimization is a prevalent and impactful phenomenon among college students. It manifests in both direct and indirect forms, with indirect forms are more prevalent among

college students, and produces measurable negative consequences on academic performance, psychological health, and behavioural patterns. The findings emphasize the urgent need for preventive strategies, awareness programs, digital literacy initiatives, and institutional support systems to mitigate the growing effects of cyber-victimization in higher education settings.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, several important recommendations are proposed to address the growing concern of cyber-victimization among college students. The results clearly demonstrate that cyber-victimization is both prevalent and impactful, affecting students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and online behaviour. Therefore, a multidimensional approach is necessary to mitigate its consequences.

First, educational institutions should take proactive steps to implement structured cyber safety awareness programs. Regular workshops, seminars, and training sessions should be organized to educate students about various forms of cyber-victimization, methods of prevention, and safe digital practices. Awareness initiatives should emphasize recognizing warning signs, understand reporting procedures, and utilize privacy and security features effectively. Since a significant proportion of students reported experiencing impersonation, threatening messages, and unauthorized access to accounts, practical guidance on digital security measures is essential.

Second, colleges and universities should strengthen institutional support systems to address cyber-victimization more effectively. Establishing dedicated grievance redressal mechanisms or cyber support cells would provide students with a safe and confidential platform to report incidents. Clear institutional policies outlining disciplinary procedures and protective measures must be developed and strictly enforced. A transparent and responsive system would encourage reporting and reduce the stigma often associated with victimization.

Third, the integration of digital literacy education into the academic curriculum is highly recommended. Given that prolonged internet usage and heavy reliance on smartphones were prominent among respondents, students should be equipped with comprehensive knowledge regarding online privacy management, password protection, phishing detection, and responsible social media engagement. Enhancing digital competence can serve as a preventive strategy against cyber threats.

Furthermore, considering the significant psychological and academic impacts identified in the study, institutions should prioritize mental health support services. The findings revealed that many students experienced stress, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbances as consequences of cyber-victimization. Accessible counselling services and psychological support programs can assist affected students in coping with emotional distress and restoring their academic and social functioning.

Additionally, fostering a culture of responsible digital behaviour is crucial. Campaigns promoting empathy, respect, and ethical online communication should be encouraged within campus communities. Peer-led initiatives and student organizations can play a vital role in creating a supportive and inclusive digital environment.

Finally, collaboration between educational institutions, parents, and social media platforms should be strengthened. Since students engage extensively with social networking sites, preventive strategies must extend beyond institutional boundaries. Awareness efforts involving parents and guardians may also

enhance guidance and monitoring practices, particularly in contexts where parental educational levels may influence awareness of digital risks.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

While the present study contributes valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of cyber-victimization among college students, it also highlights several avenues for further investigation.

Future research may adopt comparative approaches to examine differences in cyber-victimization across institutions, regions, or socio-cultural contexts. Such comparative analyses would help determine whether patterns observed in this study are consistent across diverse populations or influenced by contextual factors.

Moreover, subsequent studies could employ inferential statistical techniques to explore relationships between demographic variables and levels of victimization. Examining correlations or predictive relationships may provide deeper understanding of risk factors associated with cyber-victimization and its impacts.

Longitudinal research designs are also recommended to assess the long-term effects of cyber-victimization. Since the present study utilized a cross-sectional design, future investigations could track students over time to examine how repeated exposure influences psychological health, academic outcomes, and social relationships.

Additionally, qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions could be incorporated to capture the lived experiences of victims. Such approaches would provide richer insights into coping mechanisms, emotional responses, and perceived support systems that cannot be fully captured through structured questionnaires.

Future studies may also explore gender-based differences and other subgroup variations in the experience and impact of cyber-victimization. Although the present study included a balanced gender distribution, deeper analytical comparisons could reveal nuanced differences in patterns of harassment and coping strategies.

Finally, research evaluating the effectiveness of intervention programs, awareness campaigns, and institutional policies would be valuable. Assessing whether preventive measures lead to measurable reductions in cyber-victimization would contribute significantly to evidence-based policy development.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study underscores that cyber-victimization is a pervasive and multifaceted issue affecting college students in significant ways. The findings demonstrate that students are exposed to both direct and indirect forms of online harassment, including threatening messages, impersonation, boundary violations, and intrusive contact. Beyond mere exposure, the study reveals substantial academic, psychological, and behavioural consequences, including reduced academic performance, heightened stress and anxiety, diminished self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, disrupted sleep patterns, and altered digital engagement. These outcomes highlight that cyber-victimization is not confined to virtual spaces but extends into students' personal, social, and educational lives. Therefore, addressing cyber-victimization requires coordinated efforts involving educational institutions, policymakers, families, and digital platforms to foster safer online environments. By generating empirical evidence on the prevalence and impact of cyber-victimization among college students, this study contributes to the growing body of

knowledge in this field and emphasizes the urgent need for preventive strategies, supportive interventions, and continued scholarly inquiry.

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