



Analyzing the Impact of Cyber Harassment, Cyber Stalking Victimization, and Cyber Gender Hate Speech on Social Wellbeing of Female University Students in Sialkot Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO

Received:

July 09, 2026

Revision Received:

July 26, 2026

Accepted:

August 13, 2026

Available Online:

August 29, 2026

Keywords:

cyber stalking victimization, cyber harassment, cyber gender hate speech, social wellbeing

ABSTRACT

This study's main objective is to examine how cyber stalking victimization, cyber harassment, and cyber gender hate speech affect female university students' social wellbeing. The goal of this study is to determine how response to these types of online harassment has a negative effect on female students' sense of safety, social interactions, and general well-being in digital contexts. The researcher gathered the data using a survey questionnaire and the quantitative research approach. In this study, a systematic/random sampling strategy was used to calculate the sample size of (373). The study's target demographic was the female University students. Regression analysis was used to verify the impact of cyber stalking victimization, cyber harassment, and cyber gender hate speech on female university students' social wellbeing. The study's findings show that cyber harassment, cyberstalking victimization, and cybergender hate speech are all strongly correlated with social well-being. Based on the objectives and findings, this study concluded that increased exposure to gender-based hate speech and cyber harassment in online environments has a detrimental effect on the social wellbeing of female university students, potentially lowering their sense of security, confidence, and social participation. The study's practical implications demonstrate that in order to protect female students from online harassment and establish a safer digital environment that promotes their social wellbeing, educational institutions and decision-makers must develop awareness campaigns, support systems, and effective policies.

1. Introduction

The idea of social wellbeing has changed throughout time, moving from emphasizing the absence of disease to acknowledging general social, mental, and physical welfare (WHO, 1948). Corey Keyes (1998) distinguished five key dimensions: actualization, coherence, social integration, acceptance, and contribution. The ability of students to form supportive relationships, feel safe and connected, and engage in university life is referred to in this study as social wellbeing. Due to social disengagement, decreased engagement, and isolation, online harms can have a detrimental impact on these domains (UN, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2018).

Unwanted sexual communications, non-consensual image sharing, ongoing surveillance, and hate speech based on identification are examples of online harassment. According to Franceschi et al. (2024) social media features like messaging, commenting, and sharing might make it harder for victims to avoid or regulate these damaging interactions, which exacerbates

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their psychological and emotional anguish. Globally, the number of people utilizing social media has increased dramatically; 4.76 billion people use these platforms every day. But rising social media use also poses security and privacy issues. Online anonymity and the speedy dissemination of content can make people more hostile and enable abuse to spread swiftly to a larger audience. Additionally, privacy violations raise the possibility of gender-based online harm by turning private conversations into public humiliation. . [Chaffey \(2023\)](#)

A 2025 student survey found that 58% had experienced cyberbullying, while 33% experienced it within the past 30 days. Common forms included removal from group chats (32.5%), hurtful online comments (31.6%), online humiliation (31.3%), and spreading rumors (29.2%). The anonymity and wide reach of online platforms can make cyber harassment more harmful. According to the Digital Rights Foundation, 40% of women reported experiencing cyber harassment, with Facebook accounting for 45% of complaints. (Edberg & Krieger, 2020). Our efforts must extend beyond simply stopping online abuse; we need to focus on restoring victims' social well-being. That means helping them regain self-assurance, rebuild trust, and reconnect with supportive communities. Without these safeguards, the long-term effects of cyber harassment will continue to undermine equity and social cohesion. (Edberg & Krieger, 2020).

2. Literature review

Cyber gender discrimination, according to [Powell and Henry \(2018\)](#) is a digital extension of offline sexism, where harassment can become more pervasive and evident online. Women who are frequently exposed to hate speech based on their gender may experience worry, fear, and emotional discomfort, which may force them to cut back on their online activity or stop using social media. The United Nations (2022) also identifies gender-based hatred on the internet as a hindrance to women's social involvement and digital participation. [Powell and Henry \(2018\)](#)

The relationship between cyberstalking and university students' feelings of loneliness, rumination, resilience, and life satisfaction is examined in [\(Lokman Koçak's, 2024\)](#) study. This Turkish study of 465 university students, 68% of whom are female, looks at the relationship between cyberstalking and loneliness, rumination, resilience, and life satisfaction all of which are connected to social welfare. Cyberstalking was found to be positively correlated with loneliness and rumination and negatively correlated with resilience and life satisfaction. Provides convincing current worldwide data on the socioeconomic well-being of female students. [Lokman Koçak's 2024](#) being a victim of cyberstalking can have a detrimental impact on students' wellness by raising stress, anxiety, despair, and interpersonal conflict. Additionally, people may become more susceptible to harassment and cyberstalking as a result of technology-mediated communication. Being a victim of cyberstalking can have a detrimental impact on students' wellness by raising stress, anxiety, despair, and interpersonal conflict. Additionally, communication mediated by technology may lead to more miscommunications and make people more susceptible to harassment and cyberstalking. According to additional research, having poor self-control may make one more vulnerable to cyberstalking [Reyns et al. \(2018\)](#).

Strong prevalence figures from throughout the world show how serious the issue is. For instance, over 80% of respondents to a cross-sectional poll of 2,350 female students at Beni-Suef University in Upper Egypt said they had been the victim of cyber harassment in the previous six months, with many of them being exposed more than once. They highlighted the emotional and social toll that harassment takes by reporting emotional reactions like anger (65%) and fear (20.1%) and hatred (18.5%). In the same way, [\(Hassan, 2020\)](#) discovered that 41.6% of 356 female adults in Egypt (not all of whom were university students) had been victims of cyber violence at least once in the previous year, and 41.2% had received images or symbols containing sexual content. The victims also reported psychological and social effects. This global research demonstrates that CH is quite common among female undergraduate and young adult populations and indicates a significant risk of social disturbance. [\(Hassan, 2020\)](#).

Women in Pakistan, including university students and young professionals, frequently experience gender-based online harassment such as sexualized threats, insults, image-based shaming, and doxxing). Such experiences can lead victims to reduce online participation, avoid social or academic spaces, and withdraw socially due to fear of embarrassment and reputational harm. Research also shows that under-reporting and social stigma can increase isolation and negatively affect women's social wellbeing [\(H. Khan's, 2023\)](#). Female university students in Pakistan are frequently affected by online harassment, including stalking, impersonation, doxxing, and threats Many victims do not report these incidents due to fear of embarrassment, family concerns, and lack of trust in institutions. [\(Digital Rights Foundation, 2021\)](#). As a result, they may reduce their online and social participation, negatively affecting their social. Cultural stigma can further increase feelings of isolation and reduce trust in social relationships [\(Ayub & Malik, 2009; Tanveer, 2019\)](#).

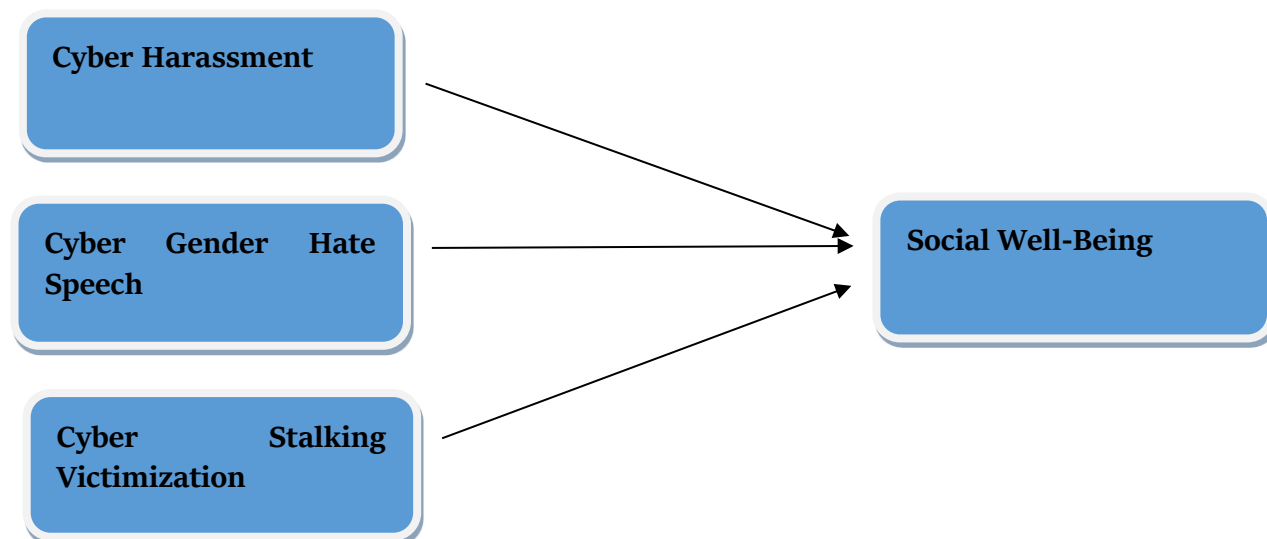
2.1. Hypothesis

Overall three hypotheses were proposed in this study, because other related hypothesis already tested in previous studies so the list of all hypotheses is given Below:

- **H1:** there is significant relationship between Cyber harassment and social wellbeing of female university students.
- **H2:** there is significant relationship between Cyber gender hate speech and social wellbeing of female university students.
- **H3:** there is significant relationship between cyber sexual stalking victimization and female university student's social wellbeing.

2.2. Theoretical framework

The independent variable, dependent variable, and moderator have been chosen for the current study, which is introduced in the research framework, based on previous research. Cyber feminism Theory is used as an underpinning theory and applied in the institutional environment to determine how cyber harassment, cybergender hate speech, and cyberstalking victimisation affect the social wellbeing of female students among university students the essence of Cyber feminism Theory is that both positive and negative events occur at universities. In order to ascertain how cyber sexual harassment, cybergender hate speech, and cyberstalking victimisation affect the social wellbeing of female students among universities this study used cyber feminism theory as an underpinning theory and applied it in an institutional setting. The core of cyber feminism theory is that both positive and negative events occur at universities. Both good and negative events have a significant impact on students' performance. Good events are viewed as encouraging and lead to positive outcomes, whereas negative events are viewed as inconvenient and lead to bad consequences. With the help of social cognitive Theory, we proposed three hypotheses which is not previously tested which is direct relationship of cyber harassment and social wellbeing of student, cyber gender hate speech and social wellbeing and cyber stalking victimization and social wellbeing .The mediating role of social wellbeing, which was also an additional variable in the association between cyberbullying and student performance, was examined in this study.



3. Materials and Methods

The current study's sample consisted of female students from a private institution in Sialkot, Pakistan, who were between the ages of 18 and 25. Because women are more vulnerable than men to online threat such cyber harassment, cyberstalking victimization, and cybergender hate speech in societies like Pakistan, female students were especially chosen (Rafi, 2020). To gather the information, a self-administered survey was given out.

Future research may examine if similar patterns occur among male students or people from other parts of Pakistan, as the current study is both geographically and gender-specific. In order to investigate the effects of cyber harassment, cyberstalking victimization, and cyber gender hate speech on the social well-being of female university students in Sialkot, Pakistan, the study used a survey research approach. Additionally, it evaluated participants' attitudes, convictions, reactions, and behavioral characteristics concerning different types of cyber victimization.

A 20-item comprehensive scale was adapted to evaluate various aspects of cyber victimization. Questions also examined the coping mechanisms and reactions that people used after similar incidents. With a reliability coefficient of .859, the scale's reliability was deemed satisfactory, and all items' internal consistency was also deemed acceptable. These results show that the scale is a valid and consistent tool for evaluating cyber bullying and how it affects female university students' social wellbeing.

3.1. Cyberstalking Victimization Scale

Cyberstalking victimization among female university students was measured using the Cyberstalking Victimization Scale, which was created by [Reyns et al. \(2012\)](#). The scale assesses a variety of unwanted and repeated online behaviors, including harassment, threats, impersonation, and unwanted online interaction. A 5-point frequency scale, with 1 representing "never" and 5 representing "most of the time," was used to ask respondents how often they had encountered these behaviors.

3.2. Cyber Gender Hate Speech Scale

Items adapted from the study by [Schmid, Kümpel, and Rieger \(2024\)](#). Were used to measure the Cyber Gender Hate Speech variable. Their study measured the frequency with which participants came across negative information online and looked at people's exposure to hate speech on social media. The study also included questions about people's opinions and reactions to hate speech on social media.

3.3. Cyber harassment Scale

Five items from the Cyber Harassment Experience Scale (CHES), created by [Ayub and Malik \(2024\)](#), were used to measure cyber harassment. The chosen items evaluated participants' experiences with inappropriate online behaviors and cyber harassment. A five-point frequency scale, from 1 (never) to 5 (most of the time), was used to record the responses.

3.4. Social wellbeing Scale

Five questions that were modified from [Keyes' \(1998\)](#) notion of social wellbeing were used to measure social wellbeing. Participants' sense of belonging, social support, perceived respect and concern from others, and safety in expressing their feelings were all evaluated by the items. A five-point frequency scale, with 1 representing "never" and 5 representing "most of the time," was used to record responses.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cranach's' Alpha	No of items
Cyber harassment	.860	5
Cyber stalking victimization	.871	5
Cyber gender hate speech	.820	5
Social well being	.854	5

4. Data Analysis

Table 2: Description of the Demographic Portion

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	373	100.0
Type of Family	Extended	24	6.4
	Joint	43	11.5
	Nuclear	306	82.0
Living Status	Rural	118	31.6
	Urban	237	63.5
Semester	1-2	18	4.8
	3-4	47	12.6
	5-6	74	19.8
	7-8	234	62.7
Platform	Instagram	201	53.9
	TikTok	105	28.2
	Snap chat	51	13.7
	Facebook	16	4.3
Average Time Spent	Less than 1 hour	5	1.3
	1-2 hours	55	14.7

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	2-3 hours	105	28.2
	More than 4 hours	205	55.0

The table 2 shows that all 373 respondents were female (100%). Most belonged to nuclear families (82.0%) and lived in urban areas (63.5%). The majority were studying in the 7th-8th semester (62.7%). Instagram (53.9%) was the most commonly used platform, and 55.0% of respondents reported spending more than four hours daily on social media.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cyber stalking victimization	373	2.2555	.80722
Cyber harassment	373	2.9236	.85593
Cyber gender hate speech	373	2.9047	.84873
Social well being	373	3.3901	.79408

Table 3 descriptive statistics show that cyber harassment had a mean of 2.92 (SD = 0.855), cyber gender hate speech had a mean of 2.90 (SD = 0.848), cyberstalking victimization had a mean of 2.26 (SD = 0.807), and social wellbeing had a mean of 3.39 (SD = 0.794). Overall, the results indicate moderate agreement with the study items, with cyber harassment showing the highest standard deviation.

Table 4:

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Cyber stalking victimization	.135	.058	.138	2.349	.000
Cyber harassment	.131	.059	.141	2.231	.026
Cyber gender hate speech	.275	.053	.294	5.185	.000

Table 4 shows that independent variables cyber stalking victimization had standard error were .058 , beta values were .135, T value 2.34 & significant value .000 were supported our hypothesis, and cyber harassment had standard error were .059, beta value were .141, T value were 2.23 & significant value is .026 which is not supported by our hypothesis & lastly cyber gender hate speech had standard error were .053, beta value were .294 , T value were 5.18 & significant value were .000 which is also supported our hypothesis.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The results of this study show that among female university students, cyberstalking victimization, cyber harassment, and cyber gender hate speech were all significant predictors of social wellbeing. These findings imply that unfavorable online encounters can have a significant effect on women's social wellbeing and may have an impact on their confidence, social interactions, and general social health. The results align with earlier studies emphasizing the negative impacts of gender-based cyber bullying and online harassment. By demonstrating how gender-related online encounters might affect women's welfare, the study also supports the Cyber Feminism Theory. Overall, the noteworthy results for each of the three factors emphasize the necessity for colleges to create awareness campaigns, efficient reporting mechanisms, and helpful policies to shield students from cyberbullying and foster a secure online environment.

6. Theoretical Implication

The results of this study demonstrate that among female university students, cyber harassment was a major predictor of social welfare. This implies that students' social relationships, self-esteem, and general social health may suffer as a result of experiencing cyberbullying. The results corroborate earlier studies demonstrating the negative social and psychological impacts of online abuse. This study emphasizes the significance of comprehending gender-related online experiences and their effects on women using Cyber Feminism Theory. In order to help students deal with cyber harassment and foster a respectful and safe atmosphere, the findings also recommend that institutions offer awareness training, reporting systems, and support services.

6.1. Practical Implications

Universities, governments, mental health practitioners, and regulators of digital platforms can all benefit greatly from this research. To safeguard female students from cyberbullying, universities can use these data to create awareness campaigns, offer digital safety courses, and set up reliable reporting systems.

6.2. Methodological Implications

This study makes a significant contribution to the research design of upcoming academic studies on internet activity and social wellbeing. By examining three different forms of cyber victimization rather than combining them, we have demonstrated the need of multi-dimensional measurement. This offers a solid basis for future research that examines social wellbeing in conjunction with online violence using quantitative or mixed-method approaches. To guaranty accuracy and dependability in these studies, we advise using reliable psychological and cyber-victimization measures.

6.3. Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, due to limited time and financial resources, a cross-sectional research design was used. Second, the sampling method was selected for convenience and faster data collection. Third, the sample size of 373 students may not fully represent the entire population of Sialkot, Pakistan. Fourth, some students had limited awareness of cyberbullying and social wellbeing, which may have affected their responses. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful directions for future research in this area.

7. Recommendations

Future research should examine cyberbullying and its effects on social wellbeing across different populations, including high school students. Researchers can also include new variables in the research model to provide different perspectives and strengthen existing literature. Awareness programs about cyberbullying should be introduced to help prevent such behavior among young people. Finally, future studies should include both male and female participants to obtain more comprehensive and reliable results.

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