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	Cyberbullying and Life Satisfaction Among University Students
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Abstract

This study approached the issue of cyberbullying in two phases. The first was a small-scale, exploratory study involving 100 students. Its purpose was fairly technical: to test the psychometric properties of two instruments—El-Shenawy's (2014) Cyberbullying Scale and El-Dessouky's (1996) Life Satisfaction Scale. In the main phase, a broader sample was targeted—500 students, both male and female, from Oran 1 and Oran 2 Universities. The results yielded a negative correlation: as experiences of cyberbullying increased, reported satisfaction with life decreased. The university is a key educational institution in any society. It provides training, education, and human resource development. It is attended after secondary education and may be referred to as a college, institute, or academy. It offers academic degrees and conducts research. Its role extends beyond the transmission of knowledge; it also contributes to the development of leadership and creativity. University students occupy a central position in the educational process throughout their academic formation. They constitute the majority of the university population and embody a key human capital that reflects the future capacities of any nation. Consequently, universities tend to prioritize the conditions that support student achievement. It is important to note that the university experience marks a transition. Most students entering university come directly from secondary school, which means a fairly abrupt shift in how they live and interact. The new environment—socially and academically—is unfamiliar and building new social connections can be uneven, more so for students in dormitories. Within these new social dynamics, some students may find themselves exposed to problematic peer groups. Such exposure can contribute to the misuse of digital communication tools, especially social media. In certain cases, this misuse creates conditions for the emergence of cyberbullying.

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1. Introduction:

Cyberbullying is a recent and widespread social issue among university students. It is defined as a deliberate, repeated, and hostile digital attack that reflects poor social adjustment in online environments (Masoudi, 2024). Several studies indicate that cyberbullying often occurs between students themselves. This is supported by the findings of Ben Dada and Fariha (2021), who examined manifestations of cyberbullying among student victims at Chadli Bendjedid University in El Tarf. Based on a purposive sample, the study identified five forms of cyberbullying present in the university context. The most common and frequent were exclusion and sexual harassment, compared to other forms.

Similarly, Balahji and Ben Amour (2022) conducted a study at Hassiba Ben Bouali University in Chlef with a sample of 120 students, aiming to assess cyberbullying levels in light of selected personal variables. Results demonstrated that the overall level of cyberbullying was low across the total score and all sub-dimensions of the scale. However, statistically significant differences were observed based on academic specialization. No significant differences were found in relation to gender or academic level. Another study by Ziad (2022) explored the relationship between cyberbullying and negative emotional states—specifically depression, anxiety, and psychological stress—and examined the prevalence of cyberbullying among 175 students at Tebessa University. The study revealed that both segments—those who bully and those targeted—were present at moderate levels. There were gender-based differences as well, with male students appearing more often in both categories. In other research, cyberbullying has been linked to a sense of alienation, difference, or not measuring up. Some students, facing these feelings, engage more heavily with social media. They might be looking for connection, or maybe just distraction. But in many cases, that same space ends up exposing them to more harm. Fadel and Boudkara (2023), working with 158 students at Mascara University, reported a high rate of cyberbullying incidents. At the same time, students in that sample described low levels of psychological safety. Their results indicated that cyberbullying had a measurable impact on students' sense of psychological security. In the same vein, Yazid and Alounas (2023) identified a correlation between cyberbullying and suicidal ideation. Their findings suggested that cyberbullying may serve as a predictive factor for such thoughts. Given the pattern that emerged across these studies, a question follows naturally: is there a link between cyberbullying and life satisfaction among university students?

2. Research Significance and Objectives

This study draws its significance from its focus on problems university students commonly face—issues that can, in different ways, shape how they experience their lives. Chief among these is cyberbullying which has become more visible in recent years. Its spread seems to parallel the growing role of technology in everyday interactions. Based on this, the study aims to investigate whether there exists a link between cyberbullying and students' life satisfaction.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Cyberbullying: El-Shenawy (2014) defines cyberbullying as the deliberate, repeated, and hostile act of harming others through digital means—whether by email, text messages, internet platforms, electronic games, or social media networks (Lahoul, 2022).

Cyberbullying might materialize in varied forms. Among the most reported are:

- Electronic rage: it denotes sending angry messages, often mistakenly or intentionally copied to a group, or directed at the victim personally, using emails, texts, or public comments.
- Electronic harassment: it is the repetitive sending of offensive or abusive messages, often with sexual content, to another individual via digital platforms.
- Online confrontation: it involves threatening or degrading speech during digital conversations, often marked by excessive insults or verbal attacks.
- Defamation: it is distributing false or harmful content about the victim—whether through private messages or public posts with the intention to damage reputation.
- Impersonation: the perpetrator pretends to be someone else; they might use a fake identity to send messages or posts that end up tarnishing the victim's reputation.
- Exposure and invasion of privacy: In some cases, private materials get shared. This could be messages, photos, or personal information.

- **Exclusion:** deliberately removing or blocking the victim from a group or social platform, or encouraging others to do so, not for justified reasons but as a form of control or social punishment (Hassi, 2020, p. 70).

Operational Definition: Cyberbullying is defined, for the purposes of this study, by the score obtained by the student on the Cyberbullying Scale developed by Amina Ibrahim El-Shenawy (2014).

3.2. Life Satisfaction: Tuffaha (2009) defines life satisfaction as the individual's acceptance of their lifestyle within their immediate social environment. It involves a sense of self-worth, emotional balance, and the ability to adapt to the challenges that influence one's happiness. Badra (2014, p. 65) views it as the extent to which personal needs and motivations are fulfilled thus curbing psychological tension.

According to Shaarawi, life satisfaction is tied to how individuals evaluate their own actions, life events, and emotional tendencies—factors that contribute to their overall sense of happiness. For university students specifically, this includes how they experience and respond to their academic, social, and emotional environments, as well as how they relate to themselves (Hawassi, 2018, p. 24).

Operational Definition: Life satisfaction is defined for the purpose of this study as the score obtained by the student on the Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Magdy El-Dessouky (1996).

3.3. University Student : A university student, in this study, refers to any student enrolled on a regular basis at Oran 1 or Oran 2 University during the academic year 2024–2025.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Adopted Approach : The descriptive approach was adopted in this study, as it was deemed the most suitable for addressing the research objectives.

4.2 Research Instruments: Two main instruments were employed:

4.2.1 Cyberbullying Scale

(a) Description of the Scale: The study employed the Cyberbullying Scale developed by Amina Ibrahim El-Shenawy (2014). The scale comprises 26 items and adopts a five-point Likert-type response format: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, scored respectively from 0 to 4. The instrument covers five dimensions:

- Ridicule and defamation (8 items)
- Exclusion (5 items)
- Disturbance and privacy violation (5 items)
- Insults and threats (3 items)
- Sexualharassment (5 items)

The responses are scored using Likert's method. Therefore, the maximum possible score on the scale is 104, and the minimum is 0. The assumed mean score is 52 (Mokrani, 2018, p. 52).

(b) Psychometric Properties:

- **Validity:** The scale's validity was assessed using the extreme group comparison method. Results are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Extreme group comparison for the Cyberbullying Scale

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	df	T-value	p-value
High group	79.53	3.61	52	21.19	0.01
Low group	25.48	4.29			

The table reveals statistically significant differences between the upper and lower groups in terms of cyberbullying scores. This indicates the scale's discriminatory power and acceptable level of construct validity.

- **Reliability:** To check reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and the split-half method were applied. The results came out reasonably strong—0.75 and 0.79, which suggests the scale holds together well across items.

4.2.2 Life Satisfaction Scale

(a) Description of the Scale: The scale was developed by Magdy El-Dessouky in 1996. It contains 29 statements covering several dimensions:

- Happiness (7 items)
- Social connectedness (5 items)
- Innerpeace (6 items)
- Psychological stability (3 items)
- Social appreciation (6 items)
- Contentment (3 items) (Khamissa, 2013, p. 139)

The scale uses a five-point response format, with answers scored from 1 to 5. Depending on how participants respond, overall scores can range anywhere between 30 and 145.

(b) Psychometric Properties:

- **Validity:** The scale's validity was confirmed using the extreme group comparison method. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Extreme group comparison for the Life Satisfaction Scale

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	df	T-value	p-value
High group	96.36	4.99	52	2.45	0.01
Low group	12.03	4.17			

As noticed in the table, statistically significant differences were found between the upper and lower groups, indicating that the scale has a strong discriminatory capacity and acceptable construct validity.

- **Reliability:** The scale's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and split-half methods. The resulting coefficients were 0.82 and 0.94 respectively, which confirm the scale's internal consistency and reliability.

4.3 Research Sample: The study was conducted on a sample of 500 university students selected randomly from Oran 1 and Oran 2 Universities. Data collection took place between February and April 2024. The characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample Characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	176	35.5%
	Female	324	64.8%
Field of Study	Scientific	123	24.6%
	Literary	204	40.8%
	Technical	173	34.6%
Academic Level	Bachelor (Licence)	229	45.8%
	Master	271	54.2%
Total		500	100%

As presented in the table, female participants outnumbered male participants. Regarding academic specialization, literary students made up the largest share, followed by technical and scientific fields. In terms of academic level, Master's students slightly exceeded Bachelor's students.

5. Results and Discussion

The central research question investigated whether a relationship exists between cyberbullying and life satisfaction among university students. To examine this, both empirical and theoretical means were calculated, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 6. Correlation between Cyberbullying and Life Satisfaction among University Students

Variables	ObservedMean	TheoreticalMean	Pearson Correlation
Cyberbullying	54.44	52	-0.47 **
Life Satisfaction	82.04	58	

(** $p < 0.01$)

The table demonstrates that the observed means are close to the theoretical averages. This pattern of results points toward moderate levels of cyberbullying among the population. These findings are not out of step with prior studies—Boudraa and Aghmin (2024), for instance, reported similar results at Guelma University. Boudoui and Dabbar (2023) also documented mid-range scores when they investigated personal variables related to cyberbullying. And Ziad (2022), working in another Algerian context, came to a comparable conclusion.

One way to understand this is by looking at how students perceive these behaviors. Many of them are likely aware of how harmful digital aggression can be. It is a form of hostility that does not always stay online—it often leaves psychological effects. These range from emotional discomfort to more serious disturbances. The frustration-aggression theory helps explain part of this. When individuals feel blocked or undermined, they sometimes turn to aggression, and the digital environment just makes that easier to carry out anonymously. Moreover, as a relatively educated demographic, university students are often more exposed to legal and psychological education around digital safety, which may contribute to a moderate overall prevalence.

In terms of life satisfaction, the data indicate relatively high levels, with the observed mean exceeding the theoretical benchmark. These findings are corroborated by earlier research, including Al-Esh (2002), who explored life satisfaction in relation to attachment styles in early adulthood; Kaufman, Donna et al. (2003), who

examined the roles of social support, stress, and self-confidence; and Jorgensen (2011), who studied links between life satisfaction and academic success in the United States.

The elevated life satisfaction observed may reflect students' ability to assess their own life conditions, set realistic goals, and engage in adaptive behavior. It also suggests a degree of acceptance regarding their living conditions, as well as a willingness to navigate challenges constructively.

The analysis also points to a moderate negative correlation between cyberbullying and life satisfaction ($r = -0.47$). In practical terms, this signifies that higher levels of exposure to cyberbullying are associated with lower reported satisfaction with life—and conversely, students reporting greater life satisfaction appear less affected by online hostility.

These findings are in line with Ben Haif (2021), who observed a positive correlation between cyberbullying and extremism; Fadel and Boudkara (2023), who noted a strong association between digital harassment and reduced psychological safety; and Yazid and Alounas (2023), who identified cyberbullying as a predictive factor for suicidal ideation among students. Similar conclusions were reached by Safia and Rachad (2023), whose study revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem among female students at Taif University.

That said, not all studies point in the same direction. Saleh and Hussein (2021), for example, reported no meaningful connection between cyberbullying and either self-esteem or motivation in academic settings. And Dahmani (2023), working with final-year students at the École Normale Supérieure in Bouzaréah, reported no significant correlation between cyberbullying and self-perception either.

Still, the current data suggest that many students affected by cyberbullying struggle with self-confidence. Some of them hesitate to speak up or avoid social interaction altogether. Over time, that silence accumulates. Emotional strain—be it anxiety, guilt, or something harder to describe—can set in gradually. Eventually, it becomes harder for them to maintain a balanced view of themselves. Life satisfaction, in such cases, tends to decline. Victims might start over-focusing on their faults, retreat socially, or internalize blame for what they experience.

For those who go through repeated episodes, the psychological consequences often run deeper. The experience of exclusion or social rejection does not always fade with time—it can leave a lasting impression. Some describe an underlying sense of fear, or a vague but persistent sense of disconnection. Motivation drops. In more serious cases, these experiences result in suicidal thoughts, or a pervasive sense of non-belongingness—not just in their immediate surroundings, but more broadly. That isolation shapes how they see themselves and the world around them, and gradually chips away at their satisfaction with life.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore whether there's a link between cyberbullying and life satisfaction among university students. Based on the fieldwork carried out at Oran 1 and Oran 2 Universities, the results point to a moderate level of cyberbullying across the sample, while levels of life satisfaction came out relatively high. A clear inverse relationship emerged: the more students experienced cyberbullying, the less satisfied they tended to feel with their lives. A few suggestions follow from these findings—most of them grounded in prevention, awareness, and better student support:

- Set up regular awareness sessions for students that focus on what cyberbullying looks like and how it harms others.
- Encourage more in-depth research that explores the roots of this behavior in different parts of society.
- Launch campaigns—not just posters, but things students will actually engage with—promoting healthier, more respectful use of social media.
- Strengthen the role of university counseling and support units, so that students facing distress have somewhere to turn.
- Reinforce student clubs and campus activities that offer positive outlets and help reduce passive time online, where students can feel isolated or targeted.

Ethical Considerations

All sources utilized are publicly available historical documents and published scholarly works. The study maintains academic neutrality and respects cultural sensitivity in interpreting both Western and Algerian perspectives. No human or animal subjects were involved in this research.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article.

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