



Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Cyberbullying behaviors represent major social problem and cyberbullying victimization has strong association with emotional intelligence and self esteem among adolescents. **Aim:** The aim of this study was to assess cyberbullying victimization and its association with self esteem and emotional intelligence among adolescents. **Research design:** A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used. **Settings:** The study was conducted at the faculties of law and pharmacy at Zagazig university. **Tools of data collection:** A Self-administered Questionnaire including the following parts: Socio-demographic data sheet, a standardized cyberbullying victimization scale for adolescents, Wung and law scale for emotional intelligence and Rosenberg self esteem scale. **Results:** The results revealed that 20.9 % of adolescents had high cyberbullying victimization, 68.4% of the adolescents had average self esteem and 63.6% of them had low emotional intelligence. Additionally, there was statistically significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and cyberbullying victimization and between self esteem and cyber victimization. **Conclusion:** cyberbullying victimization affected negatively on self esteem and emotional intelligence among adolescents at the study sample. **Recommendations:** Training interventions to teach adolescents about the protective actions against cyberbullying victimization and follow up programs for those experienced cyberbullying victimization.

keywords: Cyberbullying Victimization, Emotional Intelligence, Self esteem, Adolescents

Introduction

Due to development in digitalism, a major psychosocial problem known as cyberbullying has been emerged. Cyberbullying is defined as hostile and intentional behaviors perpetrated by an individual or a group of people against peers or people who are unable to defend themselves by utilizing communication technologies (internet, mobile phones, chat or instant messaging, websites, online games, etc.) over time (Abaido, 2020).

Cyberbullying is characterized by the following elements: voluntary act, the behavior is intentional and not accidental; repeated act, the behavior is repeated over time and not reduced to a single event; perception of damage by the victim, the victim suffers the damage inflicted; use of electronic devices, cyberbullying is carried out through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic means (Ferrara et al., 2018).

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

Moreover, revealing personal information without permission, blackmailing and threatening, also include some ways through which cyberbullying could take place. Although both forms of bullying known to have a harmful impact on victims, cyberbullying is a growing issue of concern due to increased accessibility and extensive use of digital technology (**Alabdour et al., 2019**).

Adolescents make up almost one-third of Egypt's population. Enrollment in all levels of education has increased for both girls and boys in the last decade, but slightly fewer girls than boys attend school at every level. (**UNFPA , 2023**). Adolescence starts with puberty, setting off a cascade of hormonal changes signaling the start of biological maturation and is characterized by major physical, psychological, and social changes. Adolescents involved in cyberbullying are highly prone to develop negative mental health and psychosocial issues such as anxiety, stress and depressive symptoms among cyberbullying victims. Additionally, significant emotional problems (**Westhoff et al., 2020**).

Self-esteem is the product of a lifelong developmental process. It determines the overall assessment of a person's value and can be considered an essential component of well-being. From this perspective, self-esteem may acquire a fundamental motivational function that can either activate or inhibit certain aspects of a person's developmental trajectories, with high levels of self-esteem operating as protective factors and low levels increasing vulnerability to peer aggression and mental health problems (**Lei et al., 2020**).

With regard to the associations between self-esteem and victimization /cyber victimization behaviors, results showed that students classified in the self-derogation profiles seemed to be more at risk of being

involved in victimization/cyber victimization behaviors compared to those in the other profiles showing that lower levels of self-esteem are associated with higher risks of bullying and victimization (**Moriera et al., 2021**).

Emotion is fundamental to human experiences influencing our daily activities such as cognition, communication, learning, and decision making. For centuries, psychologists have tried to understand and define emotions. Recently, emotional intelligence has gained attention from scholars and practitioners (**Tuncdogan et al., 2017**).

Emotional intelligence, as an individual-level variable, means affective tendency to effectively use emotional information to achieve expected results. Members in an organization with high emotional intelligence can successfully affect the social environment at work and achieve high performance by regulating their emotions. Cyber bullying victimization is negatively correlated with, emotional intelligence. Low management and emotional control were associated with high levels of victimization, and that understanding the emotions of others was negatively related with participation in bullying. Therefore, those adolescents with better emotional abilities have fewer negative emotions related to the expression of aggression or anger (**Smith et al., 2019**).

Significance of the study:

The use of the internet for social media has steadily grown over time. As of January 2020, the estimated number of active social media users worldwide was 3.8 billion, reflecting an increase from the number of 3.4 billion in January 2019. Cyberbullying is more harmful than other types of violence because a negative post or comment can reach a limit-less number of social media users,

thereby increasing the opportunity of prolonged exposure and permanency. Furthermore, younger generations currently tend to embrace the use of social media (Oksenan et al., 2021).

A term related to “cyber bullying” is “cyber victimization”, which refers to the experience of being victimized through the use of electronic information on the internet. Cyber bullying is considered to be a form of violent behavior; therefore, it is expected that cyber bullying causes detrimental effects for both the victim and the perpetrator (Lan et al., 2021).

Since victims of cyber bullying are disrespected, ignored, threatened, or made fun of, they usually perceive negative emotions. These emotions threaten the victims' psychological well-being and result in maladjustments. Of these consequences low self esteem and poor emotional intelligence have been reported among adolescents. Such emotions were found to affect students' concentration, absenteeism and academic achievement (UNICEF, 2022). So the researchers suggested to study the association between cybervictimization, self esteem, and Emotional Intelligence among adolescents to be an evidence based data helping for establish a future program to manage this problem.

Aim of the study:

The aim of this study was to assess cyberbullying victimization and its association with self esteem and emotional intelligence among adolescents.

Research question

- 1- What is the prevalence of cyberbullying victimization among adolescents?
- 2-What is the association between cyberbullying victimization, self esteem and emotional intelligence among adolescents?

Subjects and Methods

The methodology of the current study was presented under four designs: I. Technical design, II. Operational design, III. Administrative design, and IV. Statistical design

I. Technical design: includes a description of the research design, study setting, subjects, sample and tools for data collection .

A. Research design: A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used to carry out the study.

B. Setting: The study was conducted at the faculties of law and pharmacy at Zagazig university. Zagazig university is governmental university located in Sharkia governance (in the east of Egypt). Zagazig university is the 7th Egyptian university in terms of history and its creation and consists of 27 colleges, these colleges are categorized into theoretical and practical colleges.

- **Subjects:** The study sample was 440 students from both law and pharmacy faculties distributed on the first and the second grade from each faculty.

- **Inclusion criteria:** age: 18-20 years, agree to participate in the study, Free from any kind of disability and free from chronic diseases altering psychological status.

Sample size calculation: The sample size was estimated to determine the prevalence of cyber bullying of 21.4% or more, with a 2% standard error and a 95% level of confidence. Using the single proportion sample size for dichotomous variables (Open-Epi software package), the estimated sample size is 406 adolescents. After adjustment for a non-response rate of about 10%, it was increased to 440 adolescents. The sample was large enough to assess their knowledge and misconceptions levels.

C. Sampling technique: Stratified multistage cluster sampling technique was used in the recruitment of the study subjects as follows

Stage 1 (colleges): this was stratified into practical and theoretical colleges. One college was selected from each stratum

Stage 2 (years):

- Each of two colleges have two clusters representing the first and second grade
- The total sample 440 was equally divided into 110 students in each cluster

Stage 3

This stage involved selection of students according to above mentioned criteria

D. Tools for data collection:

Tool I. A self-administered questionnaire sheet: consisted of the following parts;

Part I : Which included three parts;

A- Personal characteristics of students: included open ended questions about age and closed ended questions about sex, place of residence, faculty name and grade number.

B- Socio demographic data about the family: included marital status of parents, father's education and job , mother' s education and job and the family socioeconomic status and open ended questions about father and mother age , number of family members and number of rooms

C- Information about social media use: included the methods and purpose of the using social media.

Tool II: A standardized cyberbullying victimization scale for adolescents:

The scale is composed of 27 items categorized into three domains: verbal cyberbullying victimization, sexual cyber bullying victimization and social exclusion cyberbullying victimization. Verbal cyberbullying victimization domain consisted of 10 items, sexual cyberbullying

victimization domain consisted of 10 items and social exclusion cyberbullying victimization domain was 7 items. **Scoring system:** Participants responded to the items using a five point scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*very often*) the extent to which they had experienced the behavior described in the item over the last two months. Items were summed such that higher scores indicate greater cyberbullying victimization.

Tool III: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES):

A 10- item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using a 4point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. **Scoring system:** The responses from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” were scored respectively from 4 to 1. The scores were reversed for negative items. The scores of the statements of each type were summed-up. The level of self-esteem was considered high if the total score was higher than 25, moderate if between 15 and 25, and low if less than 15 according to the tool guidelines.

Tool IV: Wung and law scale for emotional intelligence:

This scale consisted of 16 statements that described the youth emotional intelligence. The responses were on a 5point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, null, agree and strongly agree. **Scoring system:** Each item had 5 levels of answers from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” These were respectively scored from 5 to 1. The scores of the items of each dimension and of the total scale were summed-up and the total divided by the numbers of corresponding items giving mean scores. These scores were converted into a percent scores, and means and standard deviations were computed with higher scores indicating greater emotional

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

intelligence. For the total scale was considered to be high if the percent score was 60% or more and low if less.

Reliability data

Scales	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-esteem	10	0.68
Emotional intelligence	16	0.95
Victimization	27	0.92

II. OPERATIONAL DESIGN

It included the preparatory phase, content validity, pilot study and ethical consideration

A- The preparatory phase

It included reviewing of related literature and theoretical knowledge of various aspects of the study books, articles internet periodicals and other magazines

B-Content validity

The tools content was reviewed for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness and understandability.

C-Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out on about 10% (44) students were selected randomly from both faculties to conduct pilot study of the study sample to test applicability of the tools, and then the necessary modifications were done according to the results of pilot study. This sample was excluded from the main study sample if the tools are modified. The pilot also helped in setting the time plan for the study.

Ethical considerations

The study protocol was approved by the pertinent committees. The participants gave their informed consent to participate after being informed of the study purpose and of their right to refuse or withdraw at any time. The confidentiality of any obtained information was ensured.

III- Administrative design:

Official permissions were obtained from the deans of faculties of law and pharmacy

based on letters issued from the Dean of the faculty of Nursing, Zagazig university explaining the aim and the objectives of the study. The researcher met the general manager of each faculty and gave him a copy of the tool and formal letters.

IV- Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to present data as frequencies and percentages for qualitative, and means, standard deviations and medians for quantitative variables. Analytic statistics included chi-squared tests for comparing categorical variables, and Spearman's rank correlation for the relations among quantitative and ranked variables.

Results

Table 1 reveals that 88.6% of them were below 20 years old with means \pm SD of 18.7 ± 0.7 . Additionally, 64.1% of them were females and 54.3% of the study sample belongs to theoretical faculty. Regarding students grade, 52.7% were at the first grade of the scholar year.

Table 2 clarifies that 60.9% of the study sample fathers age of the study sample ranged from 50 to less than 60 years with means \pm SD of 52.6 ± 5.4 . Moreover 41.6% of the fathers had secondary education and 12.3 % of them had no education. Concerning the fathers' job, 45.2% of them were freelance. Regarding to the mothers of the study sample, 68.4% age ranged from 45 to less than 55 years with means \pm SD of 47.4 ± 4.6 and 67.7% of them were employed. Moreover, 54.8% adolescents' parents were abroad, and 63.2% were not living together. Also, 79.3% of the parents had 2+ crowding index and 61.6% of family income was insufficient

Table 3: clarifies that 86.6 % of students in the study sample used social media and 65.5% of them used smart phones. Moreover, 77.3% of the study sample used social media for entertainment.

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

Table 4 shows that 20.9 % of the study sample had high cyber victimization. Also, 68.4% of the study sample had average self esteem. Meanwhile, 63.6% of the study sample had low Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 1 illustrates that there is statistically significant negative correlation between emotional intelligence and cyber victimization scores

Figure 2 illustrates that there is statistically significant negative correlation between self esteem and cyber victimization scores

Table 5 Presents Correlations between students' scores of cyber victimization, self-esteem and emotional intelligence and their characteristics. It indicates that statistically significant positive correlations were found between cyber bullying victimization and crowding index, no of media used and no of objectives of media use ($r = .102$, $r = .216$, $r = .393$) respectively.

On the other hand, there were statistically significant negative correlations between cyberbullying victimization and father age and mother age ($r = -.170$, $r = -.123$) respectively.

A statistically significant positive correlations was found between adolescents' self esteem and their mothers' age, mothers' educational level, and fathers' education level ($r = .099$, $r = .154$, $r = .111$) respectively.

On the other hand, there were statistically significant negative correlations adolescents self esteem and their age and educational year ($r = -.293$, $r = -.244$) respectively.

The same table clarifies that there was statistically significant positive correlations between adolescents' emotional intelligence and family income, mother age and mother educational level ($r = .096$, $r = .160$, $r = .174$) respectively.

On the other hand, there were statistically significant negative correlations between adolescents emotional intelligence and their

age, school year, no of media used and no of objectives of media used ($r = -.248$, $r = -.252$, $r = -.100$, $r = -.154$) respectively.

Discussion

The current study results indicated that the majority of the adolescents were using social media regularly, it might be due to the availability of easy and modern technologies of communication as face book, WhatsApp and Instagram and the current generation prefers to use it. Also, the present findings indicated that the reason for using the social media among the majority of adolescents was entertainment. At the same line, the study conducted by **Ngata, 2020 in the USA** in his study found that the majority targeted adolescents used discussion forums (68%) on social media. Most often, social media was included as part of daily activities (64%). On the contrary, the study conducted by **Tan et al. 2018** in Turkey found only 7% of the adolescents in their study used social media regularly, it might be due to heavy university duties.

Regarding the prevalence of cyberbullying victimization, The present study results revealed that more than twenty percent of the adolescents experiencing high cyberbullying victimization scores. This might be due to lack of information about electronic security, inability to protect themselves from electronic bullying, misuse of the Internet and behaviors such as publishing personal news, photos, family information that might lead to exploitation and refusal to tell about such sensitive topic. The present study results in accordance with the study conducted by **Arafa & Senosy (2017)** in Egypt who found almost half of the students (48.2%) in their study reported experiencing cyberbullying victimization in the past 6 months.

Concerning correlation of cyberbullying victimization and personal characteristics.

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

There were negative correlations between cybervictimization among adolescents and age of parents of adolescents. This might be due to increased life experiences of the parents which lead to better communication with adolescents. On the same vein, study conducted by **Chen et al, (2018) in China** which found high level of education among parents was associated with decreased level of cyberbullying victimization among adolescents.

Moreover, there was statistically significant positive correlation between crowding index and cyberbullying victimization. That would be due to poor interactions with parents and lack of familial ties. Similar results were found in a study conducted by **Bitar et al, 2023** in Lebanon indicated that higher household crowding index (lower socioeconomic status) were significantly associated with increased cyber victimization among adolescents in the study sample .

Regarding the prevalence of self esteem, the present study indicated that self esteem of 94.8% of adolescents ranged between below and average self esteem. This might be due to poor relations with family or lack of the sense of achievement after joining the university. On the same way, study conducted by **palemeriti et al (2022) in England** found the majority of adolescents in their study had low self -esteem.

Regarding correlations of self esteem and adolescents' personal characteristics, the current study results revealed that there were positive correlations between adolescents' self esteem and their parents' educational level. It might be due to that high parents' education is associated with good communication skills and positive family interaction.

On the other side, a study conducted by **Liu et al. (2022) in China** found no relation between parental educational level and self

esteem. This might be due to different study settings.

The study results indicated that there was statistically significant negative correlation between self esteem and age and school year of the adolescents. That might be due to limited awareness and life experiences. These results were in accordance with a study in Switzerland conducted by **Steiger et al. (2015)** which found that found increased risk of low self esteem and major depressive disorder among older adolescents in the study sample.

On the other hand, a study conducted by **Moscardino et al. (2020)** found positive correlation between adolescents' age and self esteem. That would be due to social experiences acquired during educational stage at the university.

Regarding the prevalence of emotional intelligence, the current study results indicated that nearly two thirds of the adolescents had low emotional intelligence scores. It might be due to cultural and familial factors. On the same vein, a study done by **Mendez et al. (2022)** in Italy indicated that the majority of students in the study sample had low emotional intelligence scores. Conversely, study published by **Martínez-Monteagudo et al. (2019)** in Spain found high emotional intelligence scores. This might be due to high standards of living and education.

Concerning correlations of emotional intelligence and adolescents' personal characteristics, the current study results revealed that there were positive correlations between adolescents mothers' age and educational level. That might be due to life experiences reflected on better social relationships. In agreement with the aforementioned result, **Alharbi (2018) in Saudi Arabia** study findings indicated correlation between mother educational level

and adolescents emotional intelligence. On the contrary, study conducted by **Sánchez-Núñez et al. (2020)** found positive relation between emotional intelligence and adolescents' age which might be due to different study settings..

Moreover, the study findings indicated positive correlation between family income and emotional intelligence of adolescents. That might be due to better social relations among family members. On the other side, a study conducted by **Matthew et al. (2023)** in USA found no correlation between adolescents' emotional intelligence and family income in higher salaries above 6.000 dollars.

The current study results revealed that there was positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self -esteem as high self- esteem positively reflected on improved emotional intelligence. On the same vein, a study conducted in India by **Mérida-López et al. (2017)** found positive relation between self esteem, emotional intelligence among their studied subjects.

On the other hand, the current study findings indicated that there was negative correlation between emotional intelligence and cyberbullying victimization and between self esteem and cyber bullying victimization and cyberbullying victimization. While the causal link is not clear, some authors suggest that victims of bullies who use the Internet to harass and mock may be more likely to

develop low self-esteem which, in turn, can have severe consequences for young people's well-being and psychological adjustment (**Palermi et al., 2017**),

In agreement with the aforementioned result, **Extremera et al. (2018)** study found negative relation between cyberbullying victimization and self esteem. Additionally, study conducted by **Mendez et al. (2019)** found negative relation between cyberbullying victimization and emotional intelligence. Moreover, study conducted by **Ak et al (2015)**. In Turkey shown that cyberbullying victimization was strongly associated with increased tension, anger and decreased self esteem among the study sample.

Conclusion:

cyberbullying victimization affected negatively on self esteem and emotional intelligence among adolescents

Recommendations:

Based on the results of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Training interventions to teach adolescents about the protective actions against the cyberbullying.
2. Follow up programs for adolescents experienced cyberbullying victimization.
3. Further research is suggested to determine the effects of cyberbullying victimization on adolescents' health

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of students in the study sample (n=440)

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age:		
▪ <20	390	88.6
▪ 20+	50	11.4
Mean±SD	18.7±0.7	
Gender:		
▪ Male	158	35.9
▪ Female	282	64.1
Residence:		
▪ Rural	239	54.3
▪ Urban	201	45.7
Faculty:		
▪ Practical	201	45.7
▪ Theoretical	239	54.3
Scholar year:		
▪ 1	232	52.7
▪ 2	208	47.3

Table 2: Parents' characteristics of students in the study sample (n=440)

Parents' characteristics of students domains	Frequency	Percent
Father age:		
<50	121	27.5
50-	268	60.9
60+	51	11.6
Mean±SD	52.6±5.4	
Father education:		
▪ None	54	12.3
▪ Basic	112	25.5
▪ Secondary	183	41.6
▪ University	91	20.7
Father job:		
▪ Employee	124	28.2
▪ Worker	117	26.6
▪ Freelance	199	45.2
Mother age:		
▪ <45	104	23.6
▪ 45-	301	68.4
▪ 55+	35	8.0
Mean±SD	47.4±4.6	
Mother education:		
▪ None	23	5.2
▪ Basic	126	28.6
▪ Secondary	150	34.1
▪ University	141	32.1

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

Mother job:		
▪ Employed	298	67.7
▪ Housewife	142	32.2

Table 2 continued

	Frequency	Percent
Parents:		
▪ Divorced	32	7.3
▪ Widow	5	1.1
▪ Abroad	241	54.8
▪ Married	162	36.8
Parents co-living:		
▪ No	278	63.2
▪ Yes	162	36.8
Crowding index:		
▪ <2	91	20.7
▪ 2+	349	79.3
Mean±SD	2.4±0.7	
Family income:		
▪ Sufficient	55	12.5
▪ Insufficient	271	61.6
▪ Saving	114	25.9

Table 3 : Use of social media among the study sample

Use of social media domains	Frequency	Percent
Use social media:		
No	59	13.4
Yes	381	86.6
Media used:		
Personal computer	59	13.4
Smartphone	288	65.5
Tablet	58	13.2
All	15	3.4
No. of media used:		
Range	0-2	
Mean±SD	1.0±0.5	
Median	1.0	
Purpose of use:		
Study	197	44.8
Entertainment	340	77.3
No. of purposes:		
Range	0-2	
Mean±SD	1.25±0.7	
Median	1.0	

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

Table 4: Prevalence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and cyber victimization among students in the study sample (n=440)

Prevalence of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and cyber victimization	Frequency	Percent
Victimization (High):		
Verbal	96	21.8
Visual/sexual	96	21.8
Social exclusion	111	25
Total victimization:		
High	92	20.9
Low	348	79.1
Self-esteem		
Below average	116	26.4
Average	302	68.4
High	22	5.0
Emotional intelligence (EI):		
High:		
Self-emotions appraisal	147	33.4
Others-emotions appraisal	145	33.0
Use of emotions	179	40.7
Regulation of emotions	220	50.0
Total EI:		
High	160	36.4
Low	280	63.6

Table 5: Correlations between students' scores of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and cyber victimization and their characteristics.

Personal characteristics	Spearman rank test		
	Cyber victimization	Self-esteem	Emotional intelligence
Age	.073	-.293**	-.248**
School year	.047	-.244**	-.252**
Father age	-.170**	.071	.077
Father education level	.031	.111*	.078
Mother age	-.123**	.099*	.160**
Mother education level	-.041	.154**	.174**
Crowding index	.102*	-.021	-.013
Family income	-.093	.046	.096*
No. of media used	.216**	-.023	-.100*
No. of objectives of media use	.393**	-.052	-.154**

Cyberbullying Victimization Among Adolescents at Zagazig University: Self esteem and Emotional intelligence

Section A -Research paper

(*) Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$

(**) Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$

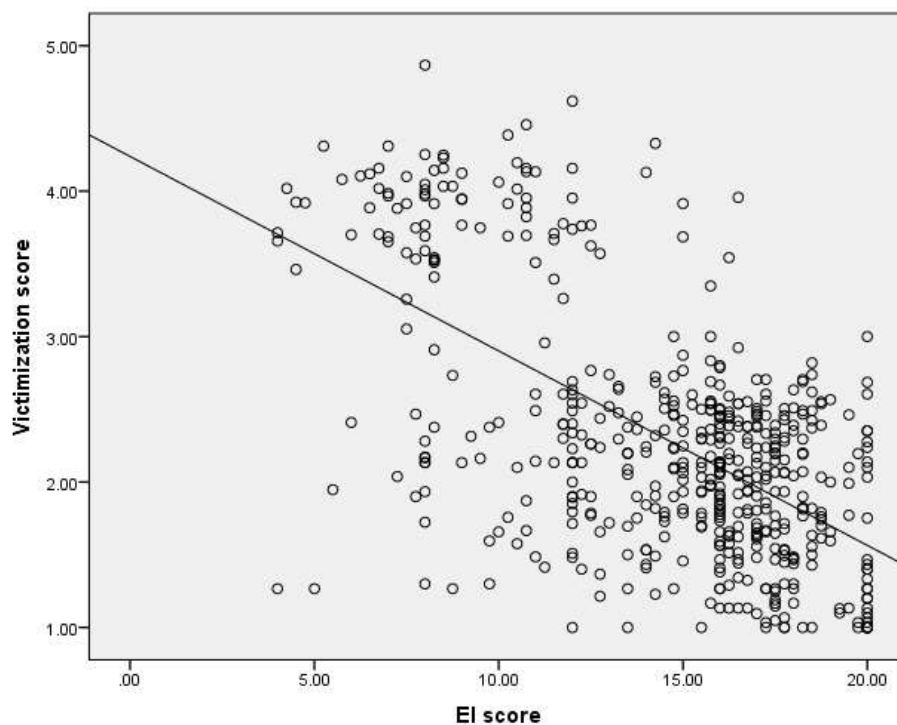


Figure 1: Correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and cyber victimization scores

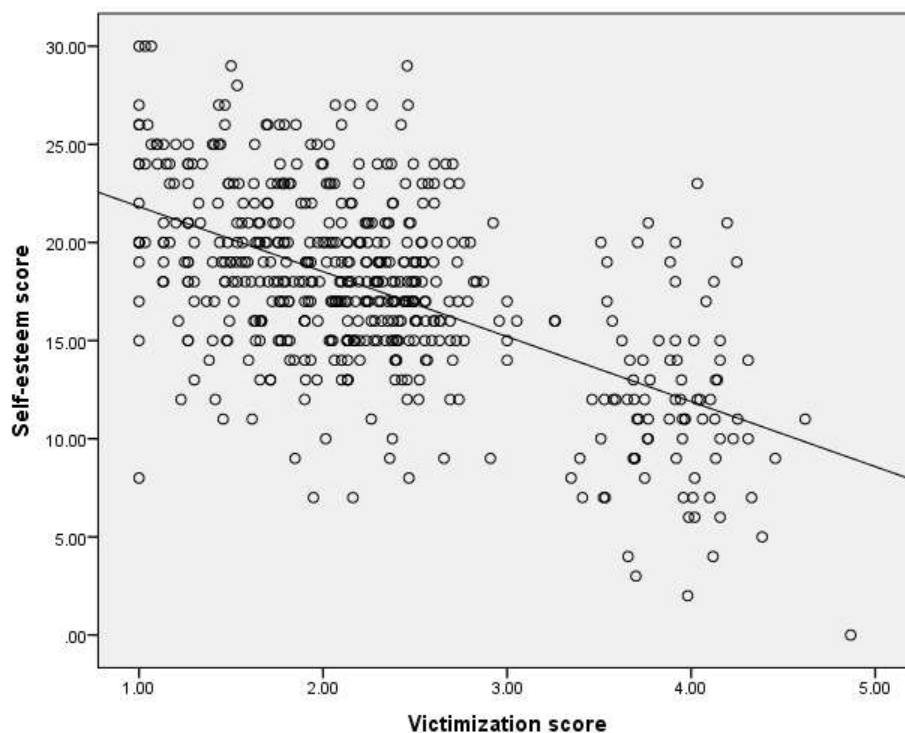


Figure 2: Correlation between self-esteem and cyber victimization scores

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