

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND CYBERBULLYING: EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SURAT THANI, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the relationship between social media usage patterns and cyberbullying, with a focus on experiences and coping strategies. A quantitative approach was employed using 1,095 anonymous questionnaires completed by secondary school students in Surat Thani, Thailand. A two-stage sampling design was used to select participants from both urban and rural areas. The results show that most participants are female, spend approximately six hours per day on Facebook, exhibit moderate social media addiction, and have high levels of social media literacy. Approximately 90% of the students reported experiencing cyberbullying, with the majority of bystanders primarily observing perpetrators targeting physical appearance and body shape. Personal factors and social media usage patterns were significantly associated with both cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies. Male students and those at higher education levels demonstrated a higher risk of engaging in cyberbullying. Urban students showed lower levels of social media addiction but higher levels of media literacy than those in rural areas. A lack of social media safety awareness was significantly correlated with all types of cyberbullying experiences. There was a positive association between perpetration behaviors and social media addiction. Students employed self-confrontation, technological coping, help-seeking, and avoidance strategies, with higher social media literacy levels linked to more effective technological coping. The findings suggest an urgent need for media safety and literacy education. Understanding cyberbullying in a regional context enhances the ability to provide effective interventions across different areas. This research contributes to the existing literature by applying Cultivation Theory in a new media context, addressing gaps in media and cyberbullying research in Thailand in particular.

Keywords: Social media; cyberbullying; coping strategies; adolescents; cultivation

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become the dominant platform for gathering information, learning, persuasion, and entertainment in today's digital communication landscape. Due to its widespread expansion, scholars in communication and media have raised critical concerns about various aspects of social media, particularly its

impacts. Social media noticeably influences users' daily lives. A study by NeVille and Sirasoothorn (2021) suggests that it affects users' sociocultural behavior and understanding. It offers several benefits, including maintaining relationships and long-distance connections (Allen, 2019) and fostering creative and dynamic academic performance (Ansari & Khan, 2020). However, negative consequences, such as social and psychological problems, social media addiction, fake news, and online violence, occur amongst adolescents across these platforms (Chan et al., 2019; Hammad & Alqarni, 2021).

Cyberbullying is typically considered an adverse outcome of social media use. It occurs in multiple forms, such as verbal abuse, abusive behaviors, and unauthorized sharing of personal or confidential information (Bauman, 2015). Cyberbullying primarily aims to humiliate others publicly (Sahasapath, 2018). Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is characterized by patterns of widespread availability and repetition, anytime and anywhere, leading to severe adverse effects on school life globally. Consequently, previous research has examined the characteristics of cyberbullying from the perspectives of both perpetrators and victims (Dhond et al., 2019; Yoo, 2021). Additionally, cyberbullying potentially leads to physical and psychological effects, especially mental health issues such as depression, suicidal tendencies, and reduced well-being (Carvalho et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Worsley et al., 2019). Unfortunately, despite cyberbullying occurring in all areas, studies focusing on geographic location as a predictive factor for this issue are lacking. For instance, Zhu et al. (2021) found that urban areas are associated with a higher risk of cyberbullying.

Thailand ranks among the top countries for cyberbullying incidents (Tantathipanich, 2020). Since bullying via cyberspace among Thai adolescents is a pressing issue, Thai academics have become increasingly concerned, particularly regarding its root causes and possible solutions. Previous studies have focused on the perception, characteristics, and effects of cyberbullying (Taled et al., 2019; Yoochareon, 2022). Additionally, cyberbullying behaviors, related factors, and coping mechanisms (Kaewseenual & Sittichai, 2021) have been investigated extensively. Nevertheless, research gaps regarding the motivation behind cyberbullying and the relationship between various factors, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies still persist. While most studies have focused on Bangkok and other major cities in Thailand, research on cyberbullying in smaller provinces, particularly comparing urban and rural areas, remains limited.

This study aims to fill gaps in existing research by investigating the relationship between media usage patterns, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies among secondary students in Surat Thani, Thailand. Accordingly, various variables from the literature review, including personal factors and social media usage, are considered the main factors associated with cyberbullying experiences. In addition, social media addiction and literacy are incorporated into this study. Furthermore, to better understand cyberbullying and coping strategies among adolescents in the local context, the researcher considers a range of categories related to cyberbullying experiences, explicitly focusing on perpetrators, victims, and bystanders.

Therefore, this study has the following objectives: 1) to explore social media usage patterns (including social media addiction and literacy levels) among secondary school students in Surat Thani, Thailand; 2) to investigate cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies in different forms of cyberbullying (as perpetrators, victims, and bystanders); 3) to analyze the relationships between social media usage patterns and cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies; and 4) to determine how the form of experience affects the selection of coping strategies. Moreover, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media affects cyberbullying and coping strategies, this study broadens the geographic scope by exploring the regional context, primarily focusing on Surat Thani province, Thailand. Thus, the findings contribute to local intervention efforts and inform the development of effective strategies for policymakers, schools, parents, and health professionals working to prevent cyberbullying in Thai society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultivation Theory and social media

Cultivation Theory, originally developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s, proposes that prolonged and heavy exposure to media influences viewers' perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1998). Researchers have generally applied this theory to describe how television contributes to viewers' perceptions of social reality (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). In the digital era, the theory has been adapted to social media contexts, where users engage with content more actively and personally. Unlike traditional one-way television communication, social media enables real-time two-way interaction, personalization, and unlimited accessibility, potentially producing more intensive cultivation effects than originally theorized.

The core of Cultivation Theory in the context of social media is similar to its original concept. It assumes that prolonged and heavy social media exposure cultivates users' perceptions and behaviors in a corresponding manner. Previous studies have affirmed the cultivation effects of social media. For instance, social media shapes perceptions of social reality (Sestir, 2020). Additionally, it has cognitive, social, and moral

effects on users (Khalid et al., 2020). This illustrates a significant shift in the theoretical approach, requiring more intensive and analytical study confirming the relationship between social media engagement and perceptions of social status, and affirming that social network functions significantly impact individuals' pursuit of virtual fame. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that frequent exposure to and prolonged engagement with perceived online violent content can normalize online aggressive behaviors (Chiang et al., 2021). This finding aligns with Cultivation Theory, which explains that viewers' perceptions of social reality are shaped by media exposure. In this case, social media usage may normalize cyberbullying, and this tendency can be intensified by social media addiction.

Several prior studies confirm that individuals addicted to social media tend to perceive the world as it is presented on social media platforms. Additionally, studies have revealed that users with uncontrolled and excessive time spent on social media are at risk of developing addiction (Rahman & Razak, 2019; Tutgun-Ünal, 2020). Interestingly, social media addiction has been linked to problems in daily life (Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). Many previous studies have emphasized the issues associated with social media addiction, such as physical and mental health problems, reduced work and academic performance, weakened social relationships, and online aggressive behavior, or cyberbullying (Haand & Shuwang, 2020; Hou et al., 2019; Yüvens & Üzer, 2018).

This study applies the theoretical framework and prior empirical studies to explore how social media usage patterns including frequency, duration, preferred platforms, addiction tendency, and literacy levels are related to cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies. To operationalize this concept, the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) (Andreassen et al., 2017) was employed to assess addictive behaviors. This evaluation tool consists of six components: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Additionally, the four-component media literacy model was used to evaluate users' ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages across a variety of contexts (Livingstone, 2004).

2.2 Cyberbullying: Definition, characteristics, and effects

Cyberbullying is a serious consequence of social media usage that has drawn the attention of scholars worldwide for more than a decade. It is generally defined as a form of repeated aggressive behavior carried out through digital platforms, where victims often cannot defend themselves (Smith et al., 2008). Donegan (2012) broadened the definition by highlighting that cyberbullying shares similarities with traditional bullying in its intent to cause shame and distress. However, a key distinction lies in the perpetrator's ability to remain anonymous, like wearing a mask and hiding behind a digital screen. This problematic issue can occur across various online platforms, particularly on social media, text messaging services, online games, and mobile applications. It primarily causes psychological distress, such as fear, anger, and depression (Englander et al., 2017; UNICEF, n.d.).

The characteristics of cyberbullying are portrayed in various forms, as identified by Li (2005), including flaming, harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, impersonation, tricking or outing, exclusion, and happy slapping. A study by Kopecký and Szotkowski (2017) on cyberbullying experienced by school teachers demonstrates differences from general cyberbullying characteristics: cyberbaiting, sharing degrading material depicting a teacher, creating fake websites and fake profiles, threats and intimidation, extortion, and unauthorized access to online accounts.

To comprehensively understand cyberbullying, researchers worldwide have explored its underlying factors in previous empirical studies. According to the existing literature, online bullying is associated with gender, age, personal traits, and psychological factors such as self-esteem (Tintori et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2021). In addition, social support from family, friends, and teachers plays a significant role (Yoo, 2021). Furthermore, cultivation effects may influence perpetrators of cyberbullying. As well as social media, smartphone usage, smartphone dependency, and internet exposure also increase the likelihood of cyberbullying (Craig et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2021), while repeated exposure to online violence fosters the normalization of cyberbullying behaviors, and reinforces their prevalence (Barlett et al., 2019).

Regarding the consequences of cyberbullying, all parties involved—perpetrators, victims, witnesses, or bystanders face difficult circumstances that emerge from cyberbullying. Victims typically experience short- or long-term psychological and social difficulties such as anxiety, depression, shame, academic decline, social isolation, and risk of suicide (Abaido, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Kumar & Goldstein, 2020). Perpetrators are at risk of behavioral disorders such as aggressive behavior and substance use (Marciano et al., 2020). Interestingly, Lizut (2019) revealed that witnesses or bystanders of this online aggressive phenomenon often experience guilt, dissatisfaction, and self-recrimination.

2.3 Cyberbullying coping strategies

Since cyberbullying has become a problematic social issue, scholars across various fields have sought to explore its factors, consequences, and coping strategies. In line with previous studies, this study adopts

standard coping strategies based on Machackova et al.'s (2013) framework, which includes technological coping, reframing, ignoring, dissociation, cognitive avoidance, behavioral avoidance, seeking support, confrontation, and retaliation. Furthermore, findings from a survey conducted among Thai youth regarding responses to cyberbullying were incorporated into this study. These responses include ignoring harassment; seeking assistance from parents, guardians, or teachers; modifying privacy settings; unfriending perpetrators; removing embarrassing content; retaliating; temporarily withdrawing from the internet; enduring the situation; and gathering evidence for reporting (Tantathipanich, 2020). Building on prior research, this study categorizes coping strategies into four main types: self-confrontation, technological coping, help-seeking, and avoidance.

Self-confrontation strategies refer to direct responses by victims, either in person or online. Alipan et al. (2021) found that confrontation emerges as a coping strategy when victims can approach perpetrators face-to-face or online. Previous studies have also shown that young male adolescents often consider confrontation, such as asking the perpetrator to stop or retaliating as a solution to cyberbullying (Heiman et al., 2019; Sittichai & Smith, 2018).

Technological coping strategies involve using digital tools to respond to cyberbullying. These include reporting incidents to administrators, blocking perpetrators, adjusting privacy settings, and changing email addresses (Chi et al., 2020; Wachs et al., 2020). Byrne (2021) emphasized that students who are victims frequently employ technological coping strategies, such as blocking and adjusting privacy settings, rather than seeking support from campus faculty and staff.

Help-seeking strategies involve seeking support from others when experiencing cyberbullying, including informing parents or teachers, reporting incidents to the police or authorities, or sharing the experience with peers. Several studies indicate that young people perceive confiding in friends as the most effective help-seeking strategy, rather than turning to adults (Lertratthamrongkul, 2021; Ngo et al., 2021). In contrast, a study by Sittichai and Smith (2018) found that older female adolescents are more likely to seek help from teachers. Furthermore, a study by Wright and Wachs (2020) suggested that parental and social support play a crucial role as protective factors against cyberbullying.

Avoidance and ignoring refer to disengagement from cyberbullying incidents. These strategies include temporary or permanent withdrawal from the online world, dissociation from the incident, and escaping the environment where the issues occur. Responses vary and depend on various factors, including gender, age, and prior experiences with cyberbullying. Navarro et al. (2018) distinguish between severe and less severe victims, arguing that less severe victims are more likely to avoid addressing problems and disregard the issues entirely. Although avoidance can be an effective coping strategy, it may also be associated with psychological distress and can affect individuals involved in cyberbullying, both as victims and perpetrators (Wick et al., 2020).

Theoretical frameworks and prior studies highlight gaps in understanding cyberbullying, particularly regarding social media usage patterns as key contributing factors. This study, therefore, focuses on a regional context beyond major urban areas. It attempts to bridge this gap by examining how Thai secondary school students experience and respond to cyberbullying. The findings provide new insights into regional variations and inform intervention strategies. Consequently, the conceptual research framework was designed to align with the study's objectives, as illustrated in Figure 1.

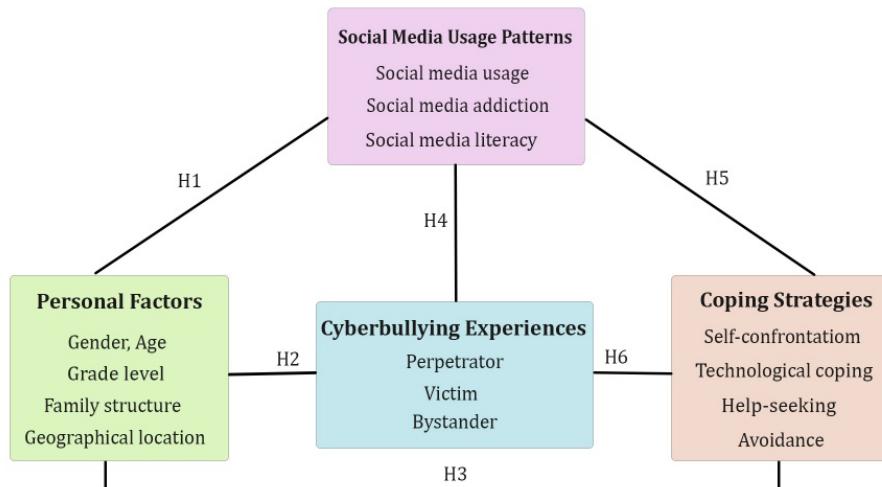


Figure 1: Research framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a quantitative research method using a one-shot descriptive survey to investigate social media usage patterns, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies among secondary school students in Surat Thani. Subsequently, the relationships among variables were analyzed. The findings provide insights for developing cyberbullying prevention interventions within a regional context.

3.1 Population and sampling

The data were collected from secondary school students (grades 7–12) in Surat Thani. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's formula with a 3% margin of error to ensure that it was appropriate and sufficient for complex statistical analysis. A total of 1,095 students were required, which was determined to provide high reliability. A two-stage sampling method was employed. First, schools from urban and rural areas in the province were selected using purposive sampling to ensure geographic representation. Second, a simple random sampling technique was used to select students from each school. The sample was proportionally divided into 689 lower-secondary students (62.92% of the total sample) and 406 upper-secondary students (37.08%). To ensure balanced representation, the participants from urban areas consisted of 547 students (344 from grades 7–9 and 203 from grades 10–12). Similarly, 548 students from 18 rural districts were randomly selected (345 from grades 7–9 and 203 from grades 10–12).

3.2 Research instrument development and validation

An anonymous self-administered questionnaire was designed based on the theoretical framework and a review of existing literature. Following this comprehensive review, the research instrument was structured into four sections:

1. Demographic characteristics: gender, age, grade level, academic performance, family status, and place of residence (6 items).

2. Social media usage patterns: frequency, duration, preferred platforms, purpose of use, social media addiction (adapted from BSMAS, including items such as "I use social media immediately after waking up" and "I spend more time on social media than I planned"), and literacy levels (adapted from the four-component media literacy model, including "I compare information from multiple sources before believing" and "I can evaluate whether online information is accurate") (10 main items and 16 sub-items).

3. Cyberbullying experiences: perceptions of cyberbullying and specific roles as perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. The frequency of each behavior over the past six months was measured using items adapted from Smith et al. (2008) and Li (2005). For perpetrators, behaviors included *posting offensive comments, sharing false information, and impersonating others online*. Victims reported experiences such as *receiving hurtful comments or messages about my photos or videos online and being gossiped about or talked behind my back online*. Bystanders indicated *seeing people insulting or verbally attacking others through social media or receiving forwarded messages that embarrass others via social media*. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Daily (8 main items and 20 sub-items).

4. Cyberbullying coping strategies: self-confrontational coping, technological coping, help-seeking, and avoidance/ignoring coping, based on Machackova et al.'s (2013) framework. These were measured using the same five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (4 main items and 25 sub-items). Self-confrontation includes actions such as *talking directly with the person bullying me and bullying back*. Technological coping involves *blocking the perpetrator, reporting to administrators*, and similar behaviors. Help-seeking includes *telling parents or teachers about the incident and telling friends*. Avoidance involves *ignoring the cyberbullying problem or letting the problem go because no one can solve it*.

A content validity assessment through a comprehensive review of all research instruments was conducted by five experts in communication and youth education. An Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) score between 0.8 and 1.00 for all items confirmed the instrument's validity. In addition, a pilot study was conducted with 50 students sharing characteristics similar to those of the target population to assess comprehension, practicality, and internal consistency. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.776$ to 0.960).

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected from urban and rural secondary schools through anonymous self-administered questionnaires. Before data collection, official permission was obtained from each school.

This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. Frequency distributions and percentages were used to analyze participants' demographic data, social media usage patterns, and general information about cyberbullying experiences. The mean and standard deviation were calculated to describe social media addiction, literacy levels, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies.

Several statistical analyses were employed to examine relationships among different variables. Chi-square tests were used to analyze the associations between personal factors and social media usage patterns. Additionally, ordinal logistic regression was used to examine causal relationships between independent variables (personal factors and social media usage patterns) and dependent variables (social media addiction, literacy levels, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies). The results were summarized, presenting the most essential statistical data while maintaining readability and rigor. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationships between social media addiction, literacy levels, cyberbullying experiences, and coping strategies. Finally, multiple regression was performed to examine the relationships between cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies.

Before conducting inferential statistical analyses, model assumption testing was performed to ensure validity and reliability. Normality of the data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values, which fell within acceptable ranges of -2.00 to +2.00 (skewness = -0.703 to 1.602, SE = 0.074; kurtosis = -1.432 to 1.493, SE = 0.148). The results support a normal distribution. Additionally, the multicollinearity test demonstrated acceptable levels across all variables, with Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranging from 1.815 to 4.052—below the common threshold of 5—and tolerance values above 0.20, suggesting no problematic multicollinearity. For the ordinal logistic regression analysis, the parallel lines assumption was tested. The chi-square statistics ranged from 0.518 to 8.946 with non-significant values ($p > .05$), supporting the appropriate use of ordinal logistic regression.

3.4 Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Suratthani Rajabhat University (Approval No. SRU2019_033) to ensure strict adherence to ethical research standards. The researcher clearly explained the objectives and benefits of the study, the potential impacts on participants, and their right to terminate participation at any time. Additionally, signed informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of participants between 12 and 18 years old to participate in the project. All participants were informed that data collected from the questionnaire would be treated with strict confidentiality. Furthermore, all data were presented in aggregate form without disclosing individual identities or sensitive responses. The researcher also informed all participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns

Among the 1,095 students, 55.25% were female, 39.82% were male, and 4.93% identified as other genders. Most participants were between 13 and 15 years old (61.92%), enrolled in lower secondary school levels, and demonstrated strong academic performance, with GPAs between 3.01 and 3.50 (27.40%). In addition, 50.05% of the participants lived in rural areas. A substantial portion (85.84%) reported intensive daily social media usage, with 42.92% spending more than six hours per day on online platforms, primarily via mobile phones (94.52%). The most frequently used social media applications were Facebook (24.09%) and YouTube (23.71%). While 52.15% of participants were unaware of social media security, 90.05% were knowledgeable about privacy settings. Notably, students exhibited a moderate level of social media addiction ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.72$), while their media literacy levels were high ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.69$).

4.2 Relationship between personal factors and social media usage patterns

The analysis of the relationship between personal factors and social media usage patterns is presented in Table 1. A Bonferroni correction was applied within each factor to control for Type I error due to multiple comparisons, resulting in an adjusted significance threshold of .01. Although the statistical relationships among the examined variables were not particularly strong, the findings confirm that social media usage patterns are associated with personal characteristics. Gender showed significant associations with frequency of use ($\chi^2 = 30.997$, $p < .001$), duration ($\chi^2 = 36.997$, $p < .001$), device ($\chi^2 = 49.998$, $p < .001$), social media safety awareness ($\chi^2 = 16.540$, $p < .01$), and privacy settings ($\chi^2 = 9.759$, $p < .01$). However, none of these associations remained significant after Bonferroni correction, as the p-values for all variables exceeded the adjusted threshold of .01. Education level was significantly related to frequency of use ($\chi^2 = 19.901$, $p < .01$). Notably, geographic location—urban versus rural—was significantly associated with frequency of use ($\chi^2 = 20.383$, $p < .001$).

Table 1: Relationships between personal factors and social media usage patterns

Social media usage	Gender		Family structure		School level		Geographic location	
	χ^2	p-value	χ^2	p-value	χ^2	p-value	χ^2	p-value
Frequency of use	30.997^{a1}	.000	3.610	.999	19.901^{c1}	.001	20.383^{d1}	.000
Duration	36.997^{a2}	.000	11.174	.025	12.892	.012	6.989	.136
Device	49.998^{a3}	.000	2.400	.663	2.997	.558	7.477	.113
Safety awareness	16.540^{a4}	.002	7.444	.490	6.638	.036	1.042	.594
Privacy settings	9.759^{a5}	.008	9.736	.045	3.023	.082	6.317	.012

Note: Bonferroni correction was applied to adjust for multiple comparisons ($\alpha = .01$). Cramér's V (or Phi) values represent effect sizes for significant associations. The effect size values are as follows: a1: Cramér's V = 0.119, a2: Cramér's V = 0.130, a3: Cramér's V = 0.151, a4: Cramér's V = 0.123, a5: Cramér's V = 0.094, b1: Cramér's V = 0.191, b2: Cramér's V = 0.046, c1: Cramér's V = 0.135, c2: Cramér's V = 0.109, c3: Cramér's V = 0.078; and d1: Cramér's V = 0.136, d2: Phi = 0.076. Values in bold indicate statistical significance at the adjusted level.

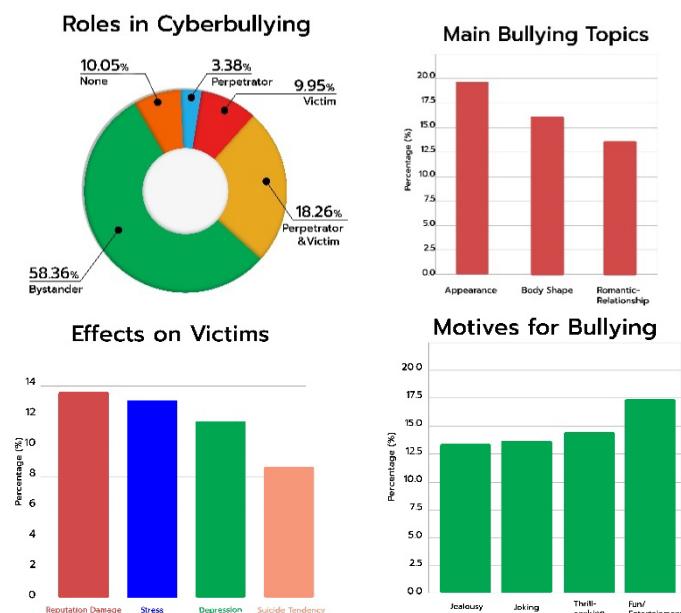
The study also analyzed the relationship between personal factors and the dual dependent variables: social media addiction and literacy level, as shown in Table 2. Only two personal factors demonstrated significant associations with these variables. The findings indicated that geographic location was significantly associated with both social media addiction ($\beta = -0.247$, $p < .05$) and literacy level ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < .01$). Specifically, students in urban areas were less likely to experience social media addiction than their rural counterparts ($Exp(\beta) = 0.782$), while they exhibited higher literacy levels ($Exp(\beta) = 1.445$). Gender was also a significant predictor of social media addiction ($\beta = -0.238$, $p < .05$), with male students showing lower levels of addiction ($Exp(\beta) = 0.754$) than females and other-gender students.

Table 2: Relationships between personal factors and social media addiction and social media literacy level

Personal factors	Social media addiction			Social media literacy		
	β	p-value	$Exp(\beta)$	β	p-value	$Exp(\beta)$
Threshold						
Level (1)	-1.287	.000	0.276	-2.546	.000	0.078
Level (2)	0.865	.000	2.347	-0.030	.834	0.970
Gender (male) ^a	-0.283	.017	0.754	-0.207	.087	0.813
Family structure (with parents) ^b	-0.144-	.227	0.866	-0.109	.378	0.897
School level (lower level) ^c	-0.050	.672	0.951	-0.237	.053	0.789
Geographic location (urban) ^d	-0.247	.031	0.782	0.368	.002	1.445

Note: Reference categories: Female (a), Without parents (b), Higher level (c), and Rural (d). Values in bold indicate statistical significance at $p < .05$.

4.3 Cyberbullying experiences

**Figure 2:** Cyberbullying experiences among secondary students in Surat Thani

As shown in Figure 2, the study found that 89.95% of participants experienced cyberbullying, primarily in the role of bystanders (58.36%), while 18.26% were involved as both perpetrators and victims. The most common bullying topics were physical aspects such as appearance (19.58%) and body shape (16.23%), followed by romantic relationships (13.53%). The primary method of bullying was posting content on social media (41.19%). Interestingly, the motives for bullying included fun or entertainment (17.42%), thrill-seeking (14.93%), joking (14.09%), and jealousy (13.87%). The study also revealed the severe effects of cyberbullying on victims: 13.68% suffered reputation damage, 13.44% experienced stress, and 11.77% experienced depression. Notably, 8.71% of the participants reported suicidal tendencies caused by the negative consequences of cyberbullying.

4.3.1 Relationship between personal factors and cyberbullying experiences

Ordinal logistic regression was conducted to determine the relationship between personal factors and cyberbullying experiences in three roles: perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. As presented in Table 3, personal factors were significantly associated with the likelihood of involvement in cyberbullying. Gender significantly predicted cyberbullying experiences, with male students demonstrating a substantially higher risk of being perpetrators ($\beta = 0.399$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.490$, $p < .05$) and victims ($\beta = 0.346$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.413$, $p < .05$) compared to female and other-gender students. Concerning school level, students in lower secondary grades (7–9) had a lower tendency to be involved in cyberbullying, whether as perpetrators ($\beta = -1.002$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 0.367$, $p < .001$), victims ($\beta = -0.713$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 0.409$, $p < .001$), or bystanders ($\beta = -0.437$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 0.646$, $p = .001$). These findings reveal that higher-level students, especially victims, were at greater risk of experiencing cyberbullying. In contrast, no significant differences were found for family structure and geographical location.

Table 3: Factors predicting cyberbullying experiences

Factors	Perpetrator			Victim			Bystander		
	β	p-value	$\text{Exp}(\beta)$	β	p-value	$\text{Exp}(\beta)$	β	p-value	$\text{Exp}(\beta)$
Threshold (personal factors)									
Level 1	1.450	.000	4.262	1.404	.000	4.072	0.646	.000	1.908
Level 2	2.974	.000	19.565	3.014	.000	20.359	2.167	.000	8.731
Gender (male) ^a	0.399	.016	1.490	0.346	.030	1.413	-0.013	.922	0.987
Family structure (with parents) ^b	0.294	.094	1.342	0.240	.155	1.271	-0.101	.463	0.904
School level (lower level) ^c	-1.002	.000	0.367	-0.713	.000	0.490	-0.437	.001	0.646
Geographic location (urban) ^d	0.168	.300	1.183	0.078	.617	1.081	0.199	.131	1.220
Threshold (social media usage)									
Level 1	1.376	.000	3.958	1.912	.000	6.769	1.654	.000	5.229
Level 2	2.894	.000	18.057	3.541	.000	34.513	3.206	.000	24.675
Frequency of use (medium frequency) ^e	-0.272	.515	0.762	0.337	.375	1.401	0.308	.365	1.360
Duration (light use) ^f	-0.003	.968	0.997	0.112	.107	1.118	0.178	.002	1.194
Device (mobile phone) ^g	-0.329	.352	0.719	-0.106	.767	0.900	-0.370	.222	0.690
Safety awareness (unaware) ^h	1.276	.000	3.583	1.329	.000	3.777	1.052	.000	2.863
Privacy settings (knowledgeable) ⁱ	-0.274	.265	0.761	-0.289	.219	0.742	0.390	.103	1.477

Note: Reference categories: Female (a), Without parents (b), Higher level (c), Rural (d), High frequency(e), Heavy use (f), Other devices (g), Uncertain (h), and Uninformed (i). Values in bold indicate statistical significance at $p < .05$.

4.3.2 Relationship between social media usage patterns and cyberbullying experiences

This study applied ordinal logistic regression to analyze the relationship between social media usage patterns including social media behaviors, addiction, and literacy level and cyberbullying experiences. Table 3 illustrates that higher threshold levels were significantly associated with involvement in cyberbullying. The frequency of social media usage related to cyberbullying was not significant. On the other hand, lighter usage duration was significantly associated with a higher risk of being a bystander ($\beta = 0.178$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 1.194$, $p < .01$). Notably, among the predicted variables, awareness of social media safety showed the strongest association, as students lacking awareness were at a higher risk of involvement in cyberbullying across all types, including perpetrators ($\beta = 1.276$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 3.583$, $p < .001$), victims ($\beta = 1.329$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 3.777$, $p < .001$), and bystanders ($\beta = 1.052$, $\text{Exp}(\beta) = 2.863$, $p < .001$), compared to those who were aware of the safety of social media. In contrast, device use and knowledge of privacy settings were not significantly associated with cyberbullying experiences.

To better understand the relationship between the dual predictors—social media addiction and social media literacy level—and cyberbullying experiences, Pearson correlations were conducted with 1,095 participants. As presented in Table 4, there was a positive relationship between social media addiction and involvement in cyberbullying, with the highest correlations found for perpetrators ($r = 0.283$, $p < .001$) and victims ($r = 0.235$, $p < .001$), followed by bystanders ($r = 0.238$, $p < .001$). These correlations represent small to medium effect sizes. Concerning social media literacy level, there was a significant association with cyberbullying experiences; however, the relationships were weaker compared to social media addiction. Literacy level showed weak but significant correlations with bystanders ($r = 0.154$, $p < .001$), followed by victims ($r = 0.091$, $p < .01$) and perpetrators ($r = 0.087$, $p < .01$). Given the large sample size ($n = 1,095$), it should be noted that correlations below 0.15 achieved statistical significance but have limited practical significance.

Table 4: Correlation between dual predictors and cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies

Cyberbullying	Social media addiction		Social media literacy	
	r	p-value	r	p-value
Cyberbullying experiences				
Perpetrators	0.283	.000	0.087	.000
Victims	0.235	.000	0.091	.000
Bystanders	0.238	.000	0.154	.000
Cyberbullying coping strategies				
Self-confrontational coping	0.221	.000	0.222	.000
Technological coping	0.174	.000	0.333	.000
Help-seeking	0.229	.000	0.290	.000
Avoidance	0.180	.000	0.127	.000

Note: Values in bold indicate statistical significance at $p < .01$.

4.4 Cyberbullying coping strategies

4.4.1 Relationship between personal factors and cyberbullying coping strategies

The study analyzed the relationships between personal factors and cyberbullying coping strategies. Gender showed a significant association, with male students more likely to adopt avoidance as a coping strategy ($\beta = 0.344$, $Exp(\beta) = 1.410$, $p < .01$), representing a small effect size. Remarkably, grade level showed strong statistical associations with three coping strategies, with lower-grade students less likely to engage in confrontational coping ($\beta = -0.572$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.564$, $p < .001$), help-seeking ($\beta = -0.540$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.583$, $p < .001$), and avoidance ($\beta = -0.689$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.498$, $p < .001$), each with moderate to large effect sizes, suggesting these associations may have practical implications for age-appropriate intervention design. Regarding geographic location, technological coping ($\beta = -0.382$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.146$, $p < .01$) was more commonly adopted by students in urban areas than those in rural areas. However, the small effect size may limit its practical significance for program development.

4.4.2 Relationship between social media usage patterns and cyberbullying coping strategies

Table 5 presents the ordinal logistic regression results indicating the associations between social media usage patterns and cyberbullying coping strategies. The frequency of social media use was significantly associated with all coping strategies. Students who reported medium-frequency social media usage, compared to those with high-frequency usage, were significantly less likely to engage in self-confrontational coping ($\beta = -0.649$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.522$, $p < .001$), technological coping ($\beta = -0.407$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.666$, $p < .001$), help-seeking ($\beta = -0.518$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.596$, $p < .001$), and avoidance ($\beta = -0.693$, $Exp(\beta) = 0.500$, $p < .001$). The moderate effect sizes ($\beta = -0.407$ to -0.693) suggest these associations may have practical implications for intervention design. Moreover, in terms of daily usage duration, light users showed a small but statistically significant association with help-seeking ($\beta = 0.162$, $Exp(\beta) = 1.176$, $p < .001$) compared to heavy users. Students lacking social media safety awareness showed a stronger association with self-confrontational coping than those who were aware ($\beta = 0.716$, $Exp(\beta) = 2.046$, $p < .01$). Students who had knowledge of social media privacy settings were more likely to engage in technological coping ($\beta = 0.547$, $Exp(\beta) = 1.776$, $p < .01$).

Regarding the dual predictors, sub-variables of social media patterns such as social media addiction and social media literacy level were tested for correlation with cyberbullying coping strategies. Table 4 indicates that social media addiction showed small to medium, significantly positive correlations with all coping strategies, with the strongest associations found for help-seeking ($r = 0.229$, $p < .001$), followed by self-confrontational coping ($r = 0.221$, $p < .001$). Social media literacy level was moderately and significantly associated with technological coping ($r = 0.337$, $p < .001$) and help-seeking ($r = 0.290$, $p < .001$). The relationship between social

media literacy and avoidance coping strategies reflected the weakest correlation ($r = 0.127$, $p < .001$), though it was still statistically significant. While all correlations were statistically significant, the effect sizes indicate that social media literacy has stronger practical associations with active coping strategies (technological and help-seeking) compared to avoidance strategies.

Table 5: Factors predicting cyberbullying coping strategies

Factors	Self-confrontational coping			Technological coping			Help-seeking			Avoidance		
	β	p-value	Exp(β)	β	p-value	Exp(β)	β	p-value	Exp(β)	β	p-value	Exp(β)
Threshold (personal factors)												
Level 1	0.231	.123	1.259	-0.663	.000	0.515	-0.467	.001	0.627	0.319	.035	1.376
Level 2	2.147	.000	8.569	0.864	.000	2.374	1.352	.000	3.865	1.919	.000	6.814
Gender (male) ^a	0.003	.984	1.003	-0.185	.108	0.831	-0.173	.144	0.841	0.344	.007	1.410
Family structure (with parents) ^b	0.081	.529	1.085	0.079	.499	1.082	0.069	.567	1.071	0.160	.224	1.173
School level (lower level) ^c	-0.572	.000	0.564	-0.224	.053	0.799	-0.540	.000	0.583	-0.698	.000	0.498
Geographic location (urban) ^d	0.134	.275	1.143	0.382	.001	1.465	0.169	.140	1.185	-0.111	.375	.0895
Threshold (social media usage)												
Level 1	0.381	.368	1.463	0.120	.754	1.128	0.624	.116	1.866	0.860	.044	2.362
Level 2	2.304	.000	10.018	1.648	.000	5.198	2.440	.000	11.474	2.445	.000	11.528
Frequency of use (medium frequency) ^e	-0.649	.007	0.522	-0.407	.042	0.666	-0.518	.014	0.596	-0.693	.006	0.500
Duration (light use) ^f	0.040	.461	1.040	0.058	.230	1.060	0.162	.001	1.176	0.079	.143	1.083
Device (mobile phone) ^g	-0.531	.068	0.558	0.108	.696	1.114	-0.179	.531	0.836	-0.233	.437	0.792
Safety awareness (unaware) ^h	0.716	.001	2.046	0.400	.059	1.492	0.402	.054	1.495	0.435	.056	1.545
Privacy settings (knowledgeable) ⁱ	0.136	.461	1.040	0.574	.003	1.776	0.381	.052	1.463	0.083	.696	1.086

Note: Reference categories: Female (a), Without parents (b), Higher level (c), Rural (d), High frequency (e), Heavy use (f), Other devices (g), Uncertain (h), Uninformed (i). Values in bold indicate statistical significance at $p < .05$.

4.4.3 Relationship between cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies

To comprehensively understand factors related to cyberbullying coping strategies, this study applied multiple regression analysis using cyberbullying experiences as predictors. As shown in Table 6, significant associations were found between different cyberbullying roles perpetrators (CBP), victims (CBV), bystanders (CBB) and various coping strategies. Notably, self-confrontational coping strategies (SLF) were significantly predicted by all three roles: CBP ($\beta = 0.130$, $SE = 0.047$, $t = 2.446$, $p = .015$), CBV ($\beta = 0.214$, $SE = 0.055$, $t = 3.533$, $p < .001$), and CBB ($\beta = 0.171$, $SE = 0.030$, $t = 4.728$, $p < .001$). The overall model explained 21.2% of the variance in self-confrontational coping strategies ($R^2 = 0.212$). Furthermore, only CBB was found to have a significant association with technological coping (TEC) ($\beta = 0.316$, $SE = 0.039$, $t = 8.144$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.095$), whereas neither CBP nor CBV demonstrated a significant relationship with TEC.

According to the analysis results, significant associations were found for help-seeking (HLP) with CBP ($\beta = 0.176$, $SE = 0.057$, $t = 3.117$, $p = .002$) and CBB ($\beta = 0.192$, $SE = 0.036$, $t = 5.012$, $p < .001$), accounting for 11.6% of the variance in this strategy ($R^2 = 0.116$). This suggests that there was no significant relationship between help-seeking and CBV. Similarly, avoidance coping strategies (AVD) were significantly related to CBP ($\beta = 0.287$, $SE = 0.056$, $t = 5.200$, $p < .001$) and CBB ($\beta = 0.101$, $SE = 0.036$, $t = 2.847$, $p = .004$), but not to CBV, accounting for 15.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.152$).

Table 6: Cyberbullying experiences predicting cyberbullying coping strategies

Variables	R^2	β	SE	t	p-value
CBP ---> SLF	0.212	0.130	0.047	2.446	.015
CBV ---> SLF		0.214	0.055	3.533	.000
CBB ---> SLF		0.171	0.030	4.728	.000
CBP ---> TEC	0.095	-0.073	0.061	-1.281	.200
CBV ---> TEC		0.041	0.072	0.631	.528
CBB ---> TEC		0.316	0.039	8.144	.000
CBP ---> HLP	0.116	0.176	0.057	3.117	.002
CBV ---> HLP		0.022	0.066	0.339	.735

Table 6: Cyberbullying experiences predicting cyberbullying coping strategies (continued)

Variables	R ²	β	SE	t	p-value
CBB ---> HLP		0.192	0.036	5.012	.000
CBP ---> AVD	0.152	0.287	0.056	5.200	.000
CBV ---> AVD		0.039	0.066	0.589	.556
CBB ---> AVD		0.101	0.036	2.847	.004

Note: CBP = cyberbullying perpetrator, CBV = cyberbullying victim, CBB = cyberbullying bystander, SLF = self-confrontational coping, TEC = technological coping, HLP = help-seeking coping, AVD = avoidance coping. Values in bold indicate statistical significance at $p < .05$.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to broaden the understanding of social media usage patterns and their relationship with cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies among secondary school students in Surat Thani, Thailand. The findings support the relevance of Cultivation Theory, extending its application from traditional media to digital environments. The results align with prior research on the roles of social media factors primarily duration of use, addiction, literacy level, and safety awareness in influencing cyberbullying dynamics within the regional context.

5.1 Social media usage patterns among secondary school students

The results show that the majority of students use social media daily, spending more than six hours on online platforms such as Facebook via their mobile phones. These usage patterns, characterized by high usage rates, align with previous studies on the dominant role of social media in Thai adolescents' daily lives (Dathpong & Mairieng, 2021; Sooksomsod & Pumpruek, 2021) and youths in other countries. These findings are also consistent with Diep et al. (2021), who reported high social media usage among Vietnamese students. Students knew how to adjust privacy settings, despite uncertainty regarding overall safety on social media. These findings contrast with those of Tantathipanich (2020), which indicated that Thai youth aged 12 to 18 recognized various risks and unsafe incidents online.

Remarkably, students reported the risk of social media addiction, even among those possessing higher levels of media literacy. The issue of social media addiction among Thai students is also addressed in studies showing that Thai teenagers face a risk of social media addiction, classified as infatuation (more than 50%) and full addiction (up to 30%). Personal factors, including gender, school level, and geographic location, were relevant factors related to social media usage, including social media addiction and literacy level. Female students and those living in rural areas were more likely to be associated with social media addiction than male students and those in urban areas. Importantly, the results were in line with Su et al.'s (2020) study, which found that female students were more likely to exhibit higher social media addiction. This study also reveals different social media usage behaviors, such as frequency of use, among students in urban and rural areas. While students in urban areas reported lower social media addiction, their literacy levels were higher than those of students in rural areas.

5.2 Social media usage and cyberbullying experiences through Cultivation Theory

The findings reveal that 89.95% of participants in Surat Thani experienced some form of cyberbullying, with 18.26% reporting being both perpetrators and victims. These findings echo Chi et al.'s (2020) study in Vietnam, where 45.1% of high school students in Hanoi reported experiencing at least one type of cyberbullying. Regarding the consequences of cyberbullying, all negative effects such as stress, damage to reputation, and depression were reported. Importantly, 8.71% of the participants indicated suicidal thoughts. These findings underscore the urgent need for effective intervention. The present study aligns with prior research in Thailand on the relationship between gender and cyberbullying experiences, which shows that males are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims than females (Sittichai & Smith, 2018). However, the results differ from those of Zhou (2021), who found that female teenagers showed a higher likelihood of victimization. This finding suggests cultural differences, despite Thai and Chinese students primarily sharing a common Asian culture. School level also demonstrated a significant relationship, with lower levels showing less association with cyberbullying than higher levels. Notably, while a prior study by Zhu et al. (2021) found higher risks of cyberbullying in urban areas than in rural environments, geographic location was not significantly associated with cyberbullying experiences in this study.

Intensive social media usage among students in this study is consistent with Cultivation Theory predictions described by Gerbner (1998). The results indicate that the frequency of use is not related to cyberbullying. In contrast, participants identified as heavy users who spent more time online and were addicted to social media were positively associated with cyberbullying roles. These findings align with previous studies, such as Barlett et al. (2019) and Tsay-Vogel et al. (2018), which suggest that individuals who spend

more time on the internet or are exposed to online violence through social media platforms showed associations with online harassment and risk perceptions. The study extends the core of Cultivation Theory by showing that heavy social media users who lack safety awareness have a strong relationship with cyberbullying across all roles, indicating more intensive cultivation effects than traditional media. Notably, although students reported high media literacy levels, the results suggest only a weak positive relationship between media literacy and cyberbullying experiences. The findings resemble those of Seçkin-Kapucu et al. (2021), where literacy showed a weak positive relationship with being a witness to cyberbullying. Finally, the findings on geographic location—with urban students showing lower addiction but higher literacy than rural students challenge cultivation studies that often focus on homogeneous audiences.

5.3 Social media usage and coping strategies

This study identified self-confrontation, technological coping, help-seeking, and avoidance as the four main coping strategies against cyberbullying. Regarding personal factors, gender was significantly associated with coping strategies, with males more likely to adopt avoidance strategies than other groups. These findings contradict Sittichai and Smith (2018), who found that boys preferred confrontation, while girls were more likely to seek help in response to cyberbullying. School level was also related to coping strategies, with lower-level students showing less engagement in several coping strategies than higher-level students. This finding suggests that older adolescents, having more prior experience in various situations than younger ones, may develop more effective coping skills. The study also found that students from urban areas were more likely to use technological coping strategies than those from rural areas. This reflects differences in technological or cyber education knowledge between urban and rural environments.

Social media usage patterns were significantly associated with coping strategies. The frequency of social media use was statistically linked to all coping strategies, with medium-frequency users engaging less than high-frequency users. Interestingly, light social media users showed a higher tendency to use help-seeking strategies than heavy users when facing cyberbullying. This suggests that less social media use may reduce negative online behaviors due to greater offline or social support. Regarding safety awareness and knowledge of privacy settings as significant predictors of coping with cyberbullying, students who lacked awareness of social media safety tended to use self-confrontational coping, while those who understood privacy settings were more likely to employ technological coping. Furthermore, although social media addiction showed a weak positive relationship with all coping strategies, media literacy had a stronger association with coping strategy selection.

In contrast to previous research that focuses on how victims cope with cyberbullying (Hu et al., 2018; Lertrathamrongkul, 2021), the current study contributes to bridging the gap by investigating coping strategies from the perspectives of all cyberbullying roles. Every role is significantly related to self-confrontation strategies. The results align with Alipan et al. (2021), who state that this approach is generally selected when perpetrators can be identified in person. Bystanders employed technological coping, a strategy commonly adopted by victims (Byrne, 2021; Chi et al., 2020). Also, help-seeking was significantly associated with both perpetrators and bystanders but, interestingly, not with victims. This challenges studies by McLoughlin (2021), Ngo et al. (2021), and Wright and Wachs (2020), who indicated that victims often seek social support, such as by sharing incidents with friends as well as telling parents, guardians, or teachers. This study suggests that students may think that asking for help from parents or school staff do not solve their problems, since adults probably regard cyberbullying as a minor issue. Finally, avoidance was significantly linked to perpetrators and bystanders.

The unexpected finding that victims were less likely to seek help from adults despite the high psychological impact of cyberbullying is possibly explained through the lens of Thai cultural norms and values. According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede, 2011), Thai society is characterized by a high power distance, which distinctly reflects hierarchical structures, particularly within Thai family systems. Children are socialized into subordinate roles in their families, where they are typically expected to be obedient, compliant, and emotionally reserved, especially in interactions with parents and grandparents. This may result in a communication barrier, whereby children experiencing problems or bullying often fail to express themselves or disclose these issues to family members or adult authorities. Hence, the value of saving face (Ho, 1976), both for oneself and for others, possibly leads students to avoid disclosing their experience of being bullied, as it may result in personal shame or bring dishonor to their family or school.

In conclusion, the current study extends the application of Cultivation Theory to a new media context. It confirms that the core cultivation effects still exist. The duration of social media use and social media addiction play significant roles in shaping perceived cyberbullying. Given social media's nature accessible 'anytime, anywhere' online aggression is more likely to be normalized and shaped, unlike with traditional media. Finally, the study highlights two key findings: social media safety awareness and media literacy as the main factors related to cyberbullying and coping strategies, with significant differences observed between urban and rural students. Therefore, these findings underscore the need for effective intervention strategies that account for different geographic contexts.

6. IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to the existing literature, reveals the factors influencing cyberbullying experiences and coping strategies, and provides several implications for cyberbullying prevention in Surat Thani, Thailand. The findings may also be applied by parents, schools, and policymakers in similar contexts worldwide.

6.1 Media safety and literacy educational programs in schools

The high rate of cyberbullying experiences, with victims reporting stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies, emphasizes the need for strong media literacy programs in schools. Schools or educational organizations should also develop media literacy and social media safety awareness programs, such as workshop training, as well as integrate these topics into their curricula.

6.2 Intervention support for high-risk groups

Schools can help their high-risk students by operating intervention programs that aim to increase knowledge and awareness of cyberbullying. Effective use of social media and information communication technology (ICT) should be promoted continuously. Parents and schools should create family and social support environments that are productive and free from fear of punishment or restriction. Moreover, schools should establish centers for coping with cyberbullying to reinforce effective technological coping strategies and support students.

6.3 Balancing social media usage

Since cyberbullying experiences are related to the duration of social media usage and addiction, parents and schools should provide various offline activities both in and outside of school to help students reduce time spent on social media usage and prevent addiction. Parents should help balance usage time and serve as good role models for their children.

6.4 Policymaking and digital regulation

Policymakers should create comprehensive guidelines for parents, schools, and students to increase awareness of cyberbullying. They should also develop workshop training to help recognize the signs of cyberbullying and generate guidelines for screen time and parental monitoring. Policymakers should expand social media literacy programs or curricula to rural schools, where students reported lower media literacy levels than those in urban areas. Students should be ensured equitable access to technological and cybersecurity education.

This study has limitations related to causal relationships, as self-reported data may contain bias. By focusing only on students in Surat Thani province, the study limits the generalizability of the findings to other areas. Also, the quantitative approach does not provide in-depth insights into social media and cyberbullying in terms of experiences and coping strategies, particularly regarding motivation, attitudes, psychological effects, and behaviors. Further studies should employ qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying and coping strategies in the social media context. A longitudinal approach is also needed to examine changes in perception and behaviors over time. Finally, further analysis, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), with additional predictors including interpersonal communication, family communication, psychological factors, and cultural factors is needed to strengthen the findings.

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