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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Cyber Harassment, Digital Safety Awareness, Online Crime Reporting, Women, Cybercrime, Criminology	Cyber harassment had become a growing criminological concern as women increasingly experienced abuse, threats, stalking, blackmail, and unwanted sexual communication through the digital platforms. Such incidents often remained underreported due to the fear of social stigma, the limited legal awareness, distrust in authorities, and uncertainty about online complaint mechanisms. This study examined that how cyber harassment exposure and digital safety awareness shaped women's intentions to report online crimes. A quantitative research design was used, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire from women who actively used social media and digital communication platforms. In this regard, the findings indicated that cyber harassment exposure significantly influenced women's online crime reporting intentions, while the digital safety awareness strengthened their confidence in using the formal reporting channels. The study contributed to the criminological understanding of cyber victimization, gendered online insecurity, and reporting behavior in diverse circumstances. It also offered recommendations and practical implications for digital safety education, cybercrime awareness campaigns, as well as gender-sensitive online crime reporting systems.
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INTRODUCTION

The issue of cyber harassment has become an important topic of criminology due to the fact that women face threats, stalking, sexualized abuse, blackmailing, impersonation and unwanted contact on digital platforms. Such victimization is not only related to the problem of online discomfort since it can lead to psychological consequences, defamation, fear, leaving online space, and concerns

related to possibilities for seeking justice. According to recent global studies, women tend to feel that online harassment affects them more strongly than men, especially in cases of sexualized and image-based offenses (Im, Schoenebeck, Grill, Batool, Alharbi, Funwie & Naseem, 2022). Thus, reporting of cyber harassment is influenced not only by women's exposure to problems mentioned above but their knowledge of digital threats, ability to preserve evidence & trust official channels for reporting them. In Pakistan, the phenomenon of cyber harassment is determined by gendered social environment as such factors as stigmatization, victim blaming, pressure on family members, fear for reputation, lack of legal knowledge, and distrust in authorities can prevent women from reporting digital crimes.

Women who are active in digital sphere, including journalists, activists, students, and social media users, usually suffer from misogynistic attacks, sexual threats, intimidation & reputational damage (Iqbal, Chinnasamy & Faizal, 2024). Such negative experiences can result in the self-censorship, limited digital engagement, psychological distress, and unwillingness to reach out to institutions for help. Thus, the intentions of women to report crimes online cannot be determined solely on the basis of whether or not they have been harassed. They need to be analyzed in terms of awareness regarding laws related to cyber-crime, reporting channels, safeguarding of evidence & confidence in the complaints process (Gul & Anjary, 2022). This study analyzes the effect of cyber harassment experience and digital safety awareness on crime reporting intentions of women. The exposure to cyber harassment means experience of women of harmful, repetitive, threatening cyber behaviors performed through social media, messaging apps, emails, online forums, and other communication channels existing in internet environment. The idea covers cyberstalking, abusive communications, sexualized insults, impersonations, doxxing, extortion, illegal distribution of private information, and coordinated attacks.

Taking into account gendered criminology considerations, it should be noted that besides the technical misuse of technology, it is a case of online abuse that reproduces misogyny, intimidation, reputation control, and exclusion of women from participating publicly in digital spaces (Watson, 2024). From the standpoint of victimization studies, exposure demonstrates how everyday online practices of women may result in higher chances for encountering the offender and falling victims to cybercrime incidents (Marttila, Koivula & Räsänen, 2021). The digital safety awareness implies women's awareness and understanding of protective measures to ensure their safety in the digital environments. Such protective actions include knowledge about privacy settings, strong passwords, two-factor authentication, collection of evidence, blocking and reporting tools, cybercrime laws, and formal complaints. The cybercrime awareness is tightly linked to the recognition of risky online behaviors and preventive measures implementation (Ahmead, Sharif & Abuiram, 2024). Crime reporting intentions among women is individual intent to report online harassment through formal or semi-formal means such as cybercrime sites, the police, platform where harassment happens, or an institution in charge.

This intention depends on factors such as seriousness perception, trust in the authorities, awareness of reporting mechanisms, and expectation of consequences (Kimpe, Walrave, Snaphaan, Pauwels & Ponnet, 2021). Though access to digital media has provided number of possibilities for education,

profession, and society to women, the increase in cyber harassment through threats, stalking, sexual abuse, blackmailing, impersonation, and reputation attacks is another reality. The core problem lies beyond the prevalence of harassment and lies in lack of movement from being a victim to making an official complaint. In general, technology-facilitated abuse tends to be a product of gender power dynamics and could silence women, limit their participation, and extend control from offline to online environments (Boxall, Lawler & Morgan, 2025). The problem is even severe for Pakistani women due to cultural stigma, fear of dishonor within families, victim blaming, mental pressure, and the lack of awareness about legal remedies. It is vital to explore if exposure to cyber harassment and digital security awareness impact willingness of women to make complaints about online crimes (Gul & Anjary, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, there have been more efforts towards explaining cyber harassment in the context of technology facilitated gender-based violence, online victimization and digital abuse approaches. However, most of this literature has concentrated on prevalence, types, impacts and gendered aspects of cyber harassment but not that how these incidences affect the women's willingness to report online crimes. The review in Asian LMICs has revealed the extent to which technology facilitated gender-based violence takes place, while at the same time there has been little focus on the reporting aspect (Bansal, Rezwan, Iyer, Leasure, Roth, Pal & Hinson, 2024). In addition, gender-specific studies on the technology facilitated digital abuse have found out that women face different patterns of digital harm, however, few researchers have linked these patterns with awareness related reporting behaviors. In practice, many cybercrime reporting mechanisms tend to fall short due to the ambiguity in victims' minds regarding their experience being an actual crime, how and where they should make a report, the reaction they will receive, and how evidence needs to be collected.

Studies in the area of cybercrime policing have demonstrated that victims do not report instances of cybercrimes because of the uncertainty, low trust, and lack of preparation of the police force to deal with the cyber-crime (Curtis & Oxburgh, 2023). It becomes even more relevant for a setting like Pakistan, where women be encountering even more challenges such as fear of stigma, social backlash, and lack of knowledge of cyberlaws. The research in the field of digital crime reporting has shown that the technology acceptance, trust in e-governance, and the intention to report affect citizens' intentions (Gurinskaya & Nalla, 2025). This study is relevant in terms of its contribution to the field in terms of rising issue of cyber harassment among women and how such issue affects their likelihood to formally report online crimes. Through the study of cyber harassment experience and digital security awareness, research adds to criminology literature on online victimization, digital insecurity in a gender context, and reporting process. It is vital from a practical perspective in light of fact that many women do not formally report incidents of crime as of stigma, lack of knowledge about laws, fears of damage to reputation, and lack of knowledge about how to make complaints about such offenses.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of cyber harassment exposure on the women's online crime reporting Intentions.

2. To assess the influence of digital safety awareness on the women's online crime reporting intentions.
3. To examine effect of cyber harassment exposure on reporting self-efficacy in the particular context.
4. To determine role of reporting self-efficacy in shaping the women's online crime reporting intentions.
5. To examine the mediating role of RSE between the cyber harassment exposure and women's OCRI.
6. To assess the moderating effect of DSA on the relationship between CHE as well as women's OCRI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cyber Harassment Exposure

Exposure to Cyber Harassment means women's experience of negative, unwanted or intimidating behavior through electronic forms of communication, including social media, instant messaging apps, emails, web forums, and other internet spaces. It can come in forms of cyberstalking, sexually explicit messages, verbal abuses, image-based threats, impersonations, doxing, blackmails, insult, and continuous intimidations (Benítez, Henares, Ruiz & Moreno, 2025). The recent studies indicate that cyberbullying of women is a process that is much more complicated than an isolated act of harassment; it represents gendered cyber hostility that is affected by structure of a certain platform, offender anonymity & inadequate response of institutions (Gallegos, Ampudia, Morales, Londoño, Mendoza & Valencia, 2026). For criminology, the exposure to cyber harassment is significant as it implies both victimization and social control: women can conceal themselves, limit public activity or interactions in order to avoid becoming a target of cyber offenses. Thus, technology-facilitated sexual violence also leads towards emotional problems, embarrassment, fear, reputation losses and safety consequences.

Digital Safety Awareness

Digital safety awareness means women's level of knowledge, confidence and ability to recognize, avoid and react to potential risks in the online environment. It encompasses awareness of privacy controls, passwords security, two-factor authentication, suspicious links, phishing threats, blocking and reporting mechanisms, available reports to be submitted on particular platforms, preserving evidence, and procedure for filing complaints to cybercrime authorities. The research involving university students and working graduates indicates that education, experience, knowledge, and attitude affect cybersecurity awareness and safe online behavior (Hong, Chi, Liu, Zhang, Lei & Xu, 2023). In case of women's online safety, such awareness is particularly important since the cyber harassment often involves immediate recognition of the harassing behavior and decision-making concerning ignoring, blocking, reporting, documenting or formally complaining about it. Digital safety awareness is not merely a knowledge but also behavioral readiness. In addition, the recent research has revealed that knowledge of cybersecurity, user's perceived skills as well as attitude contribute to management of online threats in the digital age (Ahamed, Polas, Kabir, Zaman, Fahad & Dey, 2024).

Online Crime Reporting Intentions

The intentions for Online Crime Reporting involve women's willingness, readiness, or likelihood to submit reports about cyber harassment to formal and semi-formal authorities such as cybercrimes units, law enforcement agencies, online complaint portals, platform reporting mechanisms, women-related resources and universities. In this connection, the online crime reporting intention is an important criminology concept since many victims suffer from crimes but do not turn to authorities. The large-scale survey of victims of crime indicates that victims' reporting behavior & satisfaction from police work depends on the channel chosen, response and seriousness perception of institutions (Jansen, Ruiter & Steden, 2024). These elements are even more important in online crime reporting due to concerns about taking reports seriously, understanding evidence, and protecting the victims from additional abuse. Therefore, trust, relational cues, fairness, and high-quality communication thus form the basis of the confidence in the online crime-reporting portals (Jackson, Bradford, Chan & Lee, 2025).

Cyber Harassment Exposure and Online Crime Reporting Intentions

Women's exposure to cyber harassment may influence their online crime reporting intentions as their victimization may enhance their perception of danger, threat of escalation, and the necessity of protection. However, this exposure does not guarantee reporting. There are many reasons why many women do not report such events to law enforcement bodies: they may be uncertain whether their experiences fall under the definition of cybercrime, fear social sanctions, have no sufficient evidence, anticipate a poor reaction of the police, or think that reporting might result in additional reputational damage. The research on technology-facilitated intimate partner violence indicates that delays in reporting are linked with victim blaming, uncertainty, and institutional credibility (Chatzisyneonidis & Pina, 2024). It is possible to conclude that the reporting intentions of women are not determined by exposure to cyber harassment alone but depend on its seriousness, repetition, threat, and personal impact. There are several key factors that influence the decision to contact law enforcement agencies, namely urgency, seriousness, risk, trust & expected intervention effectiveness (Buil & Huey, 2025).

Digital Safety Awareness and Online Crime Reporting Intentions

The women's digital safety awareness may enhance their intention to report online crimes as it increases their skills related to recognizing cyber harassment as an offense, making screenshots of it, securing their accounts, and knowing how to file a report and channel to choose. It also eliminates any uncertainty because those who understand how system of cybercrime works tend to report it with much more confidence (Yaqoob & Sheikh, 2025). In this connection, digital safety awareness implies women's awareness and protective measures to ensure their safety in digital environments. There is much evidence that cybersecurity awareness training enhances people ability to recognize cyber-threats & act appropriately in response to them, especially when it comes to phishing (Back & Guerette, 2021). In cases of women's cyber harassment, digital safety awareness acts as mediator between the victimization and willingness to report. Public confidence in online crime-reporting system has been also extensively researched (Bradford, Kyprianides, Andrews, Aston, Clayton & Wells, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research design, which was grounded on the positivist research philosophy, was employed in this study. This research paradigm was applicable as aim of this study was to quantify certain variables, establish statistical relationships between these variables and come up with objective results based upon numbers. In this connection, cross-sectional survey design was utilized because data was collected once at particular point in time from respondents who had used digital platforms before. This type of research design was suitable for analyzing the relationship between cyber harassment exposure, digital safety awareness and women online crime reporting intentions. Quantitative research is ideal when aim of research is to measure variables and make observations (Slater, 2024). Therefore, in this study deductive approach was applied because the theoretical framework led to formulation of hypotheses. The target population of the study included females who are studying at universities under the public sector in Pakistan. The female university students were chosen since they regularly use social media, apps, online learning platforms, and other forms of digital media.

Thus, female university students made an appropriate population of the study regarding cyber harassment and their intentions to report online crimes. It was important to choose participants who were using digital media regularly and who could comprehend all questions in the questionnaire. Thus, survey methodology was applied for collecting data. It was conducted using the structured questionnaire. The final sample included 402 female students. Such a number of participants was deemed appropriate for further statistical analysis because the quantitative research necessitates clear measurement, proper sampling, and enough cases (Slater & Hasson, 2025). The survey was split into different parts that included demographic questions, cyber harassment, digital safety, and intent of the reporting crimes online. All-important constructs were measured using close-ended questions in Likert scale form respondents had to show how they agreed with statements. Before conducting the final analysis, the data set was checked for any missing data, incomplete and wrong answers. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS-4 since study used latent constructs and relationships among variables.

Measurement and structural model assessments were done on data. Reliability and validity were tested using factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity. Structural model was assessed using path coefficients, t-value, p-value, confidence intervals, R^2 , effect size, and bootstrapping. Ethics have been strictly adhered to during this study. Participants were volunteers, who were well-informed on nature of study before filling in the questionnaire. Informed consent was sought from all participants, and it was made clear to them that they could opt out at any time without any form of punishment. Personal information like name, contact number, email address, or student number was not collected since it was confidential process meant for academic purposes. Cyber harassment is sensitive issue; thus, questionnaire has been framed in a way that would avoid making respondents feel judged in case of sharing incidents. It is essential to conduct ethical survey since participants need to be fully aware of objectives, risks involved, confidentiality limitations, & voluntariness of the research process before giving consent (Grant et al., 2025).

RESULTS OF STUDY

Table 1 Reliability Analysis

	CA	RHO_A	CR	AVE
Cyber Harassment	0.877744	0.887999	0.901295	0.50356
Digital Safety Awareness	0.838523	0.872216	0.873485	0.505603
Online Crime Reporting Intentions	0.789234	0.817897	0.835598	0.508214
Reporting Self-Efficacy	0.708588	0.750203	0.786289	0.500693

All constructs in reliability and validity test turned out to be characterized by acceptable internal consistency and convergent validity. Specifically, in case of CH, reliability was quite high since the Cronbach's alpha is equal to .878, RHO_A is .888, composite reliability is .901; at that, convergent validity can be considered acceptable based on the AVE = .504. In turn, Digital Safety Awareness turned out to be quite reliable as well since alpha = .839, RHO_A = .872, CR = .873, and AVE = .506. In the same manner, the OCRI have proven themselves to be reliable enough as the alpha = .789, RHO_A = .818, and CR = .836 are higher than the recommended one; also, AVE = .508 confirms good convergent validity.

Figure 1 Reliability Analysis

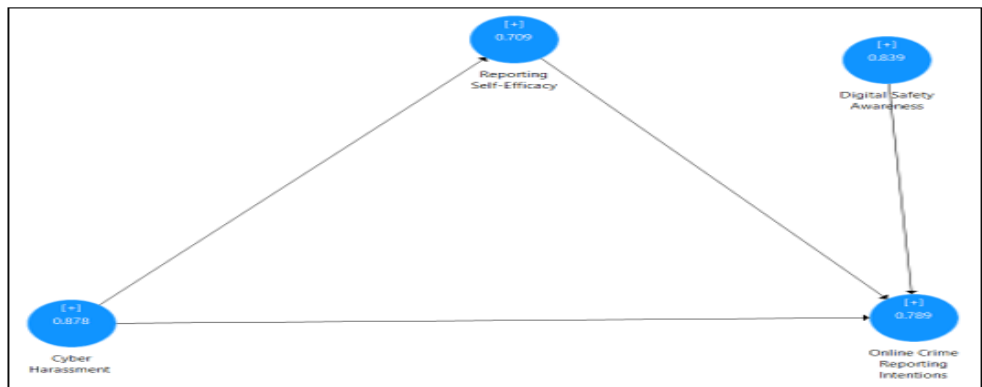


Table 2 Discriminant Validity

	[1]	[1]	[1]
Cyber Harassment [1]			
Digital Safety Awareness [2]	0.40728		
Online Crime Reporting Intentions [3]	0.478082	0.783477	
Reporting Self-Efficacy	0.402833	0.27962	0.50036

Discriminant validity of constructs was evaluated on the basis of inter-construct values shown in Table 4.2. It was found that all values were lower than suggested threshold of .85. This meant that each of the constructs measured unique conceptual dimension. Cyber Harassment was moderately related to Digital Safety Awareness (0.407), Online Crime Reporting Intentions (0.478), Reporting Self-Efficacy (0.403). It was found that digital safety awareness was highly correlated with Online Crime Reporting Intentions (0.783). This finding was theoretically consistent because awareness

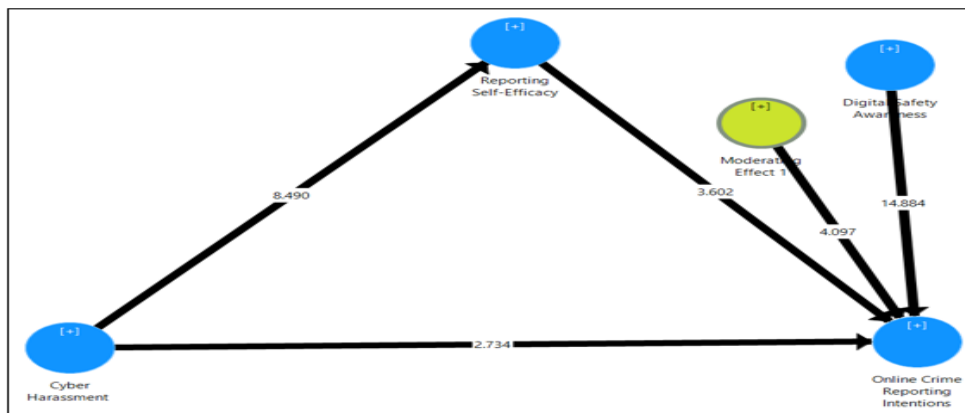
could help people develop intentions to report online crime. Nevertheless, this value was also lower than the critical value, so discriminant validity criterion was not violated. Reporting Self-Efficacy was associated with other constructs (Digital Safety Awareness, 0.280; Online Crime Reporting Intentions, 0.500).

Table 3 Structural Model Results

	OS	SM	SD	TS	PV
Cyber Harassment → OCRI	0.072107	0.07621	0.026371	2.734289	0.021038
Cyber Harassment → RSE	0.346854	0.348517	0.040853	8.490326	6.97E-06
Digital Safety Awareness → OCRI	0.608094	0.604699	0.040855	14.88413	4E-08
Reporting Self-Efficacy → OCRI	0.145293	0.141197	0.04034	3.601751	0.004834
Cyber Harassment → RSE → OCRI	0.050395	0.050178	0.018303	2.753453	0.020357
Moderating Effect → OCRI	-0.05873	-0.06224	0.014334	4.097417	0.002154

From the output of the structural model, it can be seen that Cyber Harassment had a positive and significant impact on Online Crime Reporting Intentions ($\beta = .072$, $t = 2.734$, $p = .021$). This means that those women who have experienced cyber harassment had higher intentions of reporting the crime committed online. Cyber Harassment had positive and significant impact on Reporting Self-Efficacy ($\beta = .347$, $t = 8.490$, $p < .001$), which can mean that experiencing cyber harassment might actually lead to increased self-efficacy in area. Digital Safety Awareness had the highest impact on Online Crime Reporting Intentions ($\beta = .608$, $t = 14.884$, $p < .001$), thus proving its status as the best predictor within model. Reporting Self-Efficacy had a positive and significant effect on intentions of reporting ($\beta = .145$, $t = 3.602$, $p = .005$). The indirect effect of Cyber Harassment through Reporting Self-Efficacy was significant ($\beta = .050$, $p = .020$), and the moderating effect was also significant ($\beta = -.059$, $p = .002$).

Figure 2 SEM Model



DISCUSSION

The results have found that there is an interplay between the two variables of cyber harassment exposure and digital safety awareness, influencing women's intentions of online crime reporting. It

implies that the process of women's willingness to report cybercrime does not depend on one factor but rather on the interconnection between the two factors: victimization and understanding of the problem. Cyber harassment exposure seems to influence the gravity of the respondents' perceptions of online abuse, whereas digital safety awareness influences the confidence of women in the process of reporting. The result is similar to other studies on gender-based online harassment, where online abuse silences women, controls their speech, and makes them perceive harms in a more severe way (Nadim & Fladmoe, 2021). The result is also related to the fact that technology-facilitated sexual violence against the women is international and causes many negative consequences socially and psychologically (Benítez, Henares, Ruiz & Moreno, 2025). In this linking, the positive association between exposure to cyber harassment and reporting intentions concerning online crime implies that women experiencing higher rates of cyber harassment would feel compelled to report on such crimes formally.

This could be due to the fact that higher exposure to cyber abuse makes the victim realize gravity of the situation, leading to an increased fear of escalation of the situation and realization that the situation needs to be reported. The relationship amid female university students and cybercrime has been found to result in several negative implications including psychological, emotional, social, and educational impacts, which make protection measures and cyber literacy essential (Yaqoob & Sheikh, 2025). Also, similar research on digital violence and women within higher education sector has been carried out revealing the importance of barriers to reporting, help seeking preferences, and confidentiality in complaints systems (Mohamed, 2026). Awareness regarding digital safety has been shown to play an important positive role in the formation of intentions for reporting crimes committed online. It suggests that women who were aware of issues of privacy protection, evidential preservation, legislation regarding cybercrimes, reporting features of social platforms & complaint process felt comfortable approaching formal institutions. Thus, awareness most probably reduces the uncertainty since reporting cyberharassment involves understanding what can be regarded as evidence, where complaints need to be filed, and how to safeguard one's account after becoming a victim of cybercrimes.

According to criminology studies dedicated to cyber-routines, cybersecurity awareness is a factor contributing to efficient cyber guardianship and proper decision-making in cyberspace (Gan, Lee & Liew, 2024). Besides, recent criminology research into technology-facilitated abuse emphasizes that successful responses depend upon user awareness of the peculiarities of the digital abuse along with lawyers' and law enforcement agencies' awareness (Sugiura, Button, Nurse, Tapley, Saglam, Hawkins, Frederick & Blackburn, 2024). The implications arising from the results are that digital safety awareness be more practical than cyber harassment exposure. Although cyber harassment exposure might cause distress and increased perception of its seriousness, the victims may still avoid reporting it due to fear of the stigmatization, possible retaliation, condemnation by the family, and indifference of relevant institution. Digital safety awareness, on the other hand, will help enhance the women's ability to use the complaint system effectively. In the recent study concerning platform reporting, authors concluded that online abuse reporting is still poor, and it is associated with bad

interface design, unclear reporting procedures & mistrust (Cover, Beckett, Brevini, Lumby, Simcock & Thompson, 2026).

The survey carried out in Denmark and Norway revealed that cyber harassment could influence the social trust, especially in vulnerable groups for the online abuse (Fladmoe & Nadim, 2025). Generally, the research makes significant contributions to criminology through the revelation that the intentions of women to report cybercrime online are influenced by exposure to harm and their digital capability. Cyberharassment not only constitutes an individual inconvenience, but also gender-based victimization that could inhibit the women from accessing the internet since the perpetrators use anonymity, vulnerabilities of the platforms, and stigmatization in committing the crimes. In this connection, the recent literature review identifies technology-enabled abuse as the improper and wrongful use of the technological tools to harass, control, monitor, or cause harm to people, thus proving that the phenomenon must be addressed through criminology (Koukopoulos, Janickyj & Tanczer, 2026). Furthermore, studies involving politically motivated women reveal that victims adopt various coping mechanisms that include blocking, muting, documentation, and reporting. However, the reporting still occurs less frequently compared to informal measures (Koch, Riva & Steinert, 2025).

CONCLUSION

From the results obtained from this research, it can be seen that cyber harassment and digital safety awareness were key variables in the formation of women's intentions to report cybercrimes. It was evident from the findings that women who had suffered cyber harassment had high levels of the awareness of importance of reporting online victimization while women with higher digital safety awareness were better placed to identify, document and report cybercrimes. It is, consequently, important to note that reporting intentions are not influenced by whether there is victimization alone but how much women are aware about cybercrimes laws, platforms of complaint, methods of preservation of evidence and other protective practices online. In this connection, from a practical perspective, it is important to provide women with the cyber safety education in the universities, the gender sensitive complaint processes, anonymous reporting as well as institutional support for female students.

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