

Dynamics of the Relationship between Cyberbullying and Emotional Intelligence Competencies among Adolescents:

(A Critical Analysis in Light of Contemporary Psychological and Sociological Theories)

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Received: 22/09/2025

Accepted: 01/12/2025

Published: 30/12/2025

Abstract: This study offers a critical Field synthesis of the dynamic relationship between cyberbullying and emotional intelligence (EI) in adolescence. Framing cyberbullying as a socio-technical process embedded in ecological systems, we integrate Social Information Processing, the General Aggression Model, moral disengagement, online disinhibition, and multilevel ecological theories. We distinguish ability-EI from trait-EI and map component skills—emotion perception, understanding of mixed affect, regulation, and prosocial utilization—onto adolescent roles (perpetrator, victim, bystander/defender). Evidence indicates that stronger emotion regulation and perspective-taking reduce perpetration and retaliatory spirals, and increase defending, contingent on peer norms, platform affordances, and adult/parental mediation. We critique methodological limitations—construct heterogeneity, common-source bias, and limited ecological validity—and propose remedies: multi-method EI assessment, behaviorally anchored tasks, digital trace triangulation, longitudinal and preregistered designs, and equity-focused analyses. We conclude with a multilevel educational and policy agenda that couples EI-informed SEL with platform “friction-by-design” and restorative school climates.

Keywords: Cyberbullying. Emotional Intelligence. Adolescence. Social Information Processing, Online Disinhibition.

ملخص: تقدّم هذه الدراسة تركيباً تطبيقياً نقدياً عالي الصرامة، لديناميكية التفاعل بين التتمّر الإلكتروني والذكاء الوجداني في مرحلة المراهقة، ضمن منظور سوسبولوجي-تقني وإيكولوجي متعدد المستويات. تُميّز بين الذكاء الوجداني القدراتي (إدراك الانفعال، فهمه المركّب، تنظيمه) ونظيره السّماتي، وترتبط مكوّناته بمسارات الأدوار الرقمية (مُعتدّ، ضحية، منقَرَج/مدافع). وتُدمج نماذج معالجة المعلومات الاجتماعية والنموذج العام للسلوك العدواني وفك الارتباط الأخلاقي والتقلّت الإلكتروني ضمن إطار بيئي يُظهر أن فاعلية الذكاء الوجداني مشروطة بمعايير الأقران وبنى المنصات وسياسات المدرسة والأسرة. تنتقد الدراسة هشاشة الأدلة القائمة بسبب تغاير البنى وتحامل المصدر الواحد وضعف الصلاحية البيئية، وتُقدّم أجندة منهجية متقدمة: قياسات متعددة المناهج والمصادر، مهام سلوكية مُحاكاة للمنصات، تتبّعاً رقمياً أخلاقياً، تصاميم طولية مُسجّلة وتحليلات سببية دقيقة. وتختتم بإطار تدخلي وسياسي مُتعدّد المكونات يجمع بين تدريب ميكرو-مهارات وجدانية رقمية، وهندسة المعايير القرينية، ووساطة أُسرّية واعية، و”احتكاك-بالتصميم” على المنصات، بما يحوّل السلوك المؤازر إلى الخيار الأسهل والأكثر شرعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التتمّر الإلكتروني. الذكاء الوجداني. المراهقة. معالجة المعلومات الاجتماعية. التقلّت الإلكتروني.

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1-Introduction:

Adolescence increasingly unfolds within architectures of visibility that are always on, algorithmically curated, and commercially optimized for engagement. In these networked publics, a fleeting impulse can be rendered persistent; a private slight can be recast as a spectacle; and a single misreading of tone can trigger cascading cycles of retaliation. Cyberbullying, in this socio-technical milieu, is not a digitized replica of schoolyard aggression but a reconfigured phenomenon: asynchronous, scalable, searchable, and audience-dependent. Anonymity, ambient audiences, and quantifiable attention do not merely magnify harm; they alter social information processing, attenuate empathic feedback, and widen the aperture for moral disengagement. For adolescents—whose developmental profile couples heightened peer salience and reward reactivity with still-consolidating self-regulation—the resulting risk landscape is both alluring and treacherous.

Against this backdrop, emotional intelligence (EI) has been advanced as a protective factor. Yet the field's discourse has often been blunt where precision is required, treating EI as a monolith and presuming monotonic benefits divorced from context. This study proceeds from a different premise. First, EI is not a single trait but a set of interrelated competencies with distinct mechanisms: the ability to perceive nuanced affect (especially under cue sparsity), to interpret intent amid ambiguity, to regulate arousal and reappraise provocations, and to mobilize emotion in service of prosocial action. Second, these competencies do not operate in a vacuum. Whether EI inhibits aggression or enables defending is contingent on peer norms, classroom climates, parental mediation, and platform affordances—features that can either scaffold or short-circuit the translation of skill into action. Third, the same acuity that enables empathy can, untethered from moral identity and accountability, be weaponized—what some have termed “dark EI”—to manipulate, gaslight, or orchestrate reputational attacks. A mature account of the EI–cyberbullying nexus must therefore be component-specific, context-sensitive, and ethically bounded.

The present synthesis advances three contributions. Conceptually, it reframes cyberbullying as a process system rather than a unitary act: roles are fluid (perpetrator, victim, bystander/defender), power asymmetries are platform-contingent (status, anonymity, network reach), and harm paths are heterogeneous (emotional, social, reputational). Within this frame, we integrate social information processing models and the General Aggression Model with ecological systems perspectives and the online disinhibition effect to specify how EI competencies shape appraisal, affect, and action across digital contexts. Methodologically, we interrogate the construct architecture of EI, distinguishing performance-based ability EI from self-reported trait EI, and we call for measurement strategies that combine multi-method assessment with ecological validity: simulated feeds, latency-to-post tasks, and ethically governed digital traces that capture behavior rather than merely beliefs. Practically, we translate mechanisms into a multilevel intervention blueprint that couples cyber-specific EI micro-skills with norm engineering in peer ecologies, active family mediation, and safety-by-design features on platforms—moving from exhortation to environment redesign.

The stakes are pedagogical, developmental, and civic. Schools cannot rely on generic SEL to transfer seamlessly into cyber contexts characterized by context collapse and public metrics. Platforms, in turn, cannot outsource ethical conduct to individual virtue within systems calibrated to maximize arousal and virality. Policymakers face a parallel tension: punitive bans and zero-tolerance policies often displace problems without altering underlying mechanisms, while laissez-faire approaches leave adolescents unprotected in attention markets they did not design. What is required is a coherent, mechanism-based agenda that aligns skills, norms, and structures: teach adolescents to pause, reappraise, and perspective-take; engineer peer and classroom climates that reward defending and protect reporters; and

embed friction-by-design—send delays, toxicity warnings, empathic prompts—into the very substrates of communication.

Our argument unfolds in five movements. Chapter 1: builds the conceptual scaffold, differentiating cyberbullying's socio-technical properties from traditional aggression and specifying EI's component processes and measurement. Chapter 2: examines dynamics and mechanisms, mapping how perception, interpretation, regulation, and utilization of emotion shape role trajectories under varying platform and cultural conditions. Chapter 3 distills implications for practice and policy, evaluating what works (and what fails) in cyber-adapted SEL and bystander interventions, and articulating an equity lens that recognizes differential exposure and harm. Chapter 4, written from the researcher's stance, tightens epistemic and methodological standards: refined constructs, multi-method measurement architectures, and designs capable of adjudicating causality. Chapter 5 translates the synthesis into an advanced intervention and governance blueprint that binds school practice to platform co-regulation and regulatory oversight.

The thesis is deliberately stringent: EI is a proximal mechanism, not a panacea. Its protective force resides disproportionately in regulation and perspective-taking, and its efficacy is gated by the social and technical ecologies in which adolescents act. To pursue effect sizes without specifying mechanisms, to measure traits without observing behavior, or to train skills without redesigning environments is to settle for fragile gains. The alternative, advanced here, is to co-create ecosystems in which emotionally intelligent conduct is not merely aspirational but structurally enabled—where the prosocial choice is also the easy choice.

1.1– Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations:

- Cyberbullying as a Socio-Technical Phenomenon in Adolescent Ecologies:

Cyberbullying is commonly defined as intentional, repeated aggression enacted through electronic communication, characterized by power imbalances arising from anonymity, networked visibility, and technological affordances (Kowalski et al., 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is temporally persistent, spatially unbounded, and algorithmically amplified, allowing a single act to be recirculated, archived, and reframed across audiences (Suler, 2004; Slonje et al., 2013). Roles are fluid—perpetrators, victims, assistants, reinforcers, and defenders—often shift across platforms and time (Salmivalli, 2010). For adolescents, developmental sensitivities—heightened peer salience, reward reactivity, and ongoing maturation of cognitive control—exacerbate susceptibility both to perpetration and harm (Steinberg, 2014).

A socio-technical framing situates cyberbullying within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems—where microsystems (peers, family, school) interface with mesosystems (school–family bridges), exosystems (platform governance), and macrosystems (cultural norms) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Platform affordances (asynchronicity, quantifiable feedback, virality) alter social information flows, intensify evaluative threat, and shape the perceived costs of aggression and empathy expression (boyd, 2014). The “always-on” ambient audience collapses contexts, heightening reputational stakes and moral disengagement opportunities (Bandura, 1999).

Critically, operationalizations of cyberbullying vary (frequency thresholds; intent; repetition vs. single viral event), influencing prevalence estimates and effect sizes (Zych et al., 2015). This review treats cyberbullying as a dynamic process system, not a single behavior, foregrounding socio-cognitive appraisals and platform contingencies. The construct thus invites integrative theorizing that can connect emotion-related competencies with online aggression trajectories across roles and time.

- Emotional Intelligence in Adolescence:

Constructs, Development, and Measurement Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses abilities to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Ability-EI (performance-based, e.g., MSCEIT-YV) differs from trait-EI (self-report dispositions, e.g., TEIQue-ASF); both correlate moderately yet show distinct nomological networks (Petrides et al., 2007). In adolescence, advances in meta-representation and affective perspective-taking support gains in emotion understanding and regulation, while neurodevelopmental asynchrony (heightened socioemotional drive amid still-maturing control systems) can destabilize regulatory consistency (Steinberg, 2014; Casey, 2015).

EI components map onto cyber contexts as follows:

- Perception: decoding ambiguous text, emojis, and multimodal cues online.
- Understanding: inferring mixed emotions and complex intent in disinhibited spaces.
- Regulation: managing reactive anger/shame in rapid, asynchronous exchanges.
- Utilization: deploying emotion to guide prosocial influence and bystander action.

Measurement challenges include common-source bias in trait self-reports, cultural and linguistic invariance of items (especially for digital cues), and criterion contamination when EI scales include prosociality items that overlap with outcomes of interest (Zeidner et al., 2012). Ability-EI offers reduced bias but is resource-intensive and sometimes weakly related to behavior without supportive contexts. For rigorous inference, multi-method, multi-informant, and behaviorally anchored measures are preferable, with platform-ecological validity (e.g., simulated chats, trace data).

- Linking EI and Cyberbullying:

An Integrative Theoretical Lens Multiple theories illuminate EI-cyberbullying dynamics. Social Information Processing (Crick & Dodge, 1994) posits sequential stages—cue encoding, interpretation, goal selection, response generation, decision, enactment. Low EI compromises encoding (missing sarcasm), interpretation (hostile attribution bias), and response selection (poor regulation), raising aggression risk. The General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) specifies that affective arousal and appraisal processes, moderated by self-regulatory capacity, drive aggressive behavior; EI strengthens reappraisal and inhibits impulsive online retaliation.

Bandura's moral disengagement explains cognitive restructuring that justifies harm (e.g., “everyone does it,” dehumanization). EI may counter disengagement via empathic concern and anticipated guilt, though “Machiavellian EI” could facilitate strategic aggression if empathy is uncoupled from ethics (Austin et al., 2007). Suler's online disinhibition and Goffmanian audience collapse reduce empathic feedback; thus, EI's perspective-taking becomes both more difficult and more pivotal. Finally, ecological models (Espelage & Swearer, 2010) highlight multilevel moderators—peer norms, teacher climates, parental mediation, and platform policies—that gate whether EI translates into defending or silence.

Together, these frameworks predict role-differentiated effects: lower EI among perpetrators and victim–perpetrators, mixed or dampened EI among chronic victims (due to stress), and higher EI among defenders. Contextual affordances and norms moderate these paths, making EI necessary but not sufficient for cyber-ethical conduct.

1.2– Dynamics and Mechanisms:

- From EI Components to Roles:

Perpetration, Victimization, and Bystanding Meta-analytic and longitudinal evidence links lower emotion regulation and empathy to higher cyber-perpetration (Zych et al., 2019; Barlett & Gentile, 2012). Within SIP/GAM, poor reappraisal and heightened anger rumination

bias adolescents toward retaliatory posts. Ability-EI deficits in decoding tone escalate misinterpretations that initiate conflict spirals. Trait EI's self-efficacy in emotion management inversely predicts perpetration, especially when coupled with low moral disengagement (Paciello et al., 2008).

Victimization displays a curvilinear pattern: adolescents with low EI are vulnerable to provocative responding and social skill gaps; yet highly empathetic youth can also be targeted in hostile climates, with EI buffering internalizing outcomes more than exposure per se (Kowalski et al., 2014). Emotion regulation predicts post-victimization trajectories: dysregulation fuels cyber-aggression reciprocity (victim–perpetrator overlap), whereas reappraisal predicts problem-solving and help-seeking.

Bystanding hinges on empathic concern, emotion–action coupling, and efficacy. Higher EI forecasts defending behaviors, particularly when injunctive peer norms support intervention (Salmivalli, 2010). However, diffusion of responsibility online attenuates the empathy–action link; EI's effect strengthens when schools cultivate collective efficacy and platforms provide easy reporting/prosocial tools.

Crucially, “dark EI” nuances emerge: adolescents with adequate perception and regulation but low agreeableness/moral identity may deploy emotionally skilled manipulation (sharp trolling, reputational attacks). Hence, EI's protective influence is conditional on moral orientation and contextual accountability.

- Socio-Cultural and Platform Moderators of the EI–Cyberbullying Relationship:

Cultural display rules shape emotion expression and interpretation online; collectivist norms may intensify concern for group harmony, altering thresholds for labeling acts as bullying and willingness to defend publicly (Smith et al., 2016). Gendered socialization influences modalities (relational vs. direct aggression) and the salience of reputational threats; EI pathways may thus be sex-differentiated, with emotion understanding more protective for girls and regulation more protective for boys, though findings are mixed.

Platform architectures matter. Ephemerality (e.g., stories) reduces archival harm but can increase impulsive posts; anonymity increases disinhibition and moral disengagement; public metrics (likes/views) amplify audience incentives. Affordances moderate the translation of EI into behavior: when cues are sparse (text-only), perception deficits loom larger; when moderators are active and reporting is frictionless, even moderate EI can suffice to defend. Algorithmic curation can create echo chambers that normalize aggression, attenuating EI's empathic prompts.

Family and school climates act as mesosystem buffers. Parental mediation (active discussion vs. restrictive controls) interacts with EI: active mediation enhances the reflective use of EI; purely restrictive strategies may leave EI underutilized once constraints are bypassed. Teacher responsiveness and restorative discipline increase the perceived utility of regulation and help-seeking. Peer norms and social network position drive contagion: in dense networks, a few high-EI defenders can shift norms if endowed with status.

Finally, structural inequities and marginalization condition both exposure and coping. For marginalized adolescents, EI may mitigate internalizing symptoms but cannot fully offset systemic risks; interventions must thus be multilevel, not intrapsychic alone.

- Measurement, Design, and Causal Inference:

A Critical Appraisal The literature is limited by cross-sectional self-reports, shared method variance, and heterogeneous constructs. Distinguishing trait from ability EI is essential; conflating them obscures mechanisms. Many studies use composite “EI” scores, masking differential effects of perception vs. regulation. Cyberbullying operationalizations vary (single-item vs. validated multi-item scales; repetition criteria), inflating heterogeneity.

Causality remains underdetermined: low EI might predispose to aggression, but chronic cyber-conflict can erode regulation capacities via stress and sleep disruption. Longitudinal cross-lagged and randomized intervention studies provide stronger inference but remain scarce. Ecologically valid behavioral tasks (e.g., simulated feeds with ambiguous posts, latency-to-respond paradigms), coupled with digital trace data (reporting, deletion, blocking), can triangulate self-reports. Multi-informant designs (peers, teachers, parents) and network analyses can capture role fluidity and norm dynamics.

Causal schema (DAG) of mechanisms linking EI to cyber roles ASCII sketch
 [Ability-EI] → [Hostile Attribution ↓] → [Retaliation/Cyber-Perpetration] ↘ ↑ → [**Emotion Regulation** ↑] ⊥ [Trait-EI] → [**Perspective-Taking** ↑] → [**Defending**] [**Peer Norms**]
 —▶ (moderate arrows to Defending/Retaliation) [**Platform Affordances**] ⊥ (anonymity, virality) moderate disinhibition [**Moral Disengagement**] → (bends paths toward aggression) [**Dark EI**] → (strategic manipulation → reputational attacks).

(Figure: 01)

Cultural/linguistic validation of EI and cyberbullying measures is imperative; DIF analyses should precede cross-cultural claims. Ethical safeguards—consent, privacy, platform data governance—constrain designs but can be navigated via anonymized, opt-in methods and partnership with platforms/schools. Pre-registration and open materials improve credibility. Future work should prioritize mechanism-focused designs that test moderators (norms, affordances, moral identity) and mediators (hostile attribution, rumination), moving beyond bivariate correlations.

1.3- Implications, Interventions, and Research Agenda:

- *What Works? Evidence on EI-Informed and SEL Interventions for Cyber Contexts:*

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs consistently improve emotion knowledge and regulation and reduce conduct problems (Durlak et al., 2011). Adaptations targeting digital contexts show promise when they explicitly train: (a) online cue decoding (tone, sarcasm), (b) real-time regulation in asynchronous exchanges, and (c) empathic imagination for unseen audiences. School-based modules integrating cyber-specific scenarios reduce perpetration and increase defending, particularly when paired with bystander efficacy training and norm-setting (Salmivalli et al., KiVa adaptations; Williford et al., 2013).

Interventions are strongest when multicomponent: curriculum + teacher professional development + parental workshops + platform-supported tools (easy reporting, default friction for impulsive posting). Mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal training reduce anger rumination and retaliatory intent online (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016). However, generic SEL without cyber affordance content yields smaller cyberbullying effects; transfer is not automatic.

Caveats include variable fidelity, short follow-ups, and publication bias. Programs should report implementation metrics, moderator analyses (gender, baseline EI), and include behaviorally anchored outcomes (incident reports, digital traces). Ethically, interventions must avoid victim-blaming; the onus lies on systems to reduce harm opportunities while equipping youth with skills. Scalability improves through teacher-led delivery, microlearning modules, and integration into existing civics/ICT curricula.

- **A Multilevel Educational and Policy Framework:**

An integrated framework spans as following:

- Individual: teach ability-EI micro-skills (perception, mixed-emotion understanding, reappraisal, impulse delay) using platform-realistic simulations and feedback; include moral reasoning to bound “dark EI.”

- Classroom/school: establish injunctive norms via student-led charters; adopt restorative practices for incidents; protect defenders with adult backing; embed periodic “digital dilemmas” discussions.
- Family: promote active mediation (co-interpretation of posts, co-construction of response scripts); schedule tech-curfews that protect sleep; train parents to model regulated online conduct.
- Peer networks: identify and empower high-status prosocial influencers; create peer defender squads; leverage public recognition for defending.
- Platforms: advocate for friction-by-design (send-delay, emotion-check prompts), safety nudges, robust reporting with feedback loops, and algorithmic downranking of harassment.
- Policy: require school-platform data sharing for anonymized safety insights; ensure teacher training standards include cyber SEL; align with child online safety regulations and due process.

Monitoring and evaluation should be embedded: define theory of change linking EI skills to measurable proximal (reduced hostile attributions, delayed posting) and distal (incident reductions) outcomes; use mixed methods and equity lenses to detect differential impacts.

. Conclusion and Research Agenda:

From the researcher’s vantage point, the evidence converges on a decisive claim: emotional intelligence (EI)—particularly the abilities to perceive nuanced affect, construe intent under ambiguity, and regulate arousal—operates as a proximal mechanism shaping adolescents’ cyber roles, yet its expression is gated by socio-technical affordances and peer ecologies (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Suler, 2004). Put plainly, EI is necessary for ethical digital conduct but rarely sufficient on its own. This synthesis integrates Social Information Processing and the General Aggression Model to explain how hostile attributions and dysregulated affect catalyze online aggression, and how reappraisal and perspective-taking interrupt retaliatory spirals (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The researcher further cautions against a naïve “more EI is always better” premise: without moral identity and accountability, emotionally skilled adolescents can weaponize insight—what the literature terms “dark EI” (Austin et al., 2007; Bandura, 1999).

➤ The researcher advances five core propositions:

1. Component specificity: Regulation and perspective-taking are the pivotal EI levers against perpetration and revenge; perception deficits particularly matter in cue-sparse platforms.
2. Context contingency: Peer norms and platform design determine whether EI translates into defending or silence; environments must be engineered alongside individuals (boyd, 2014; Salmivalli, 2010).
3. Role fluidity: Adolescents traverse victim–perpetrator–defender roles; interventions must anticipate transitions, not treat roles as fixed.
4. Equity imperative: EI buffers harm but cannot neutralize structural risks; multilevel supports are non-negotiable.
5. Evidence discipline: Credible causal claims require designs that observe behavior in situ, not only self-reports (Pearl, 2009; VanderWeele, 2015).

➤ **Research agenda—designs that decide:**

1. Construct precision: The researcher calls for a bifactor EI model that separates ability and trait domains, plus platform-situated subcomponents (e.g., sarcasm decoding in text vs. video), tested for cross-cultural invariance.
2. Mechanism tests: Preregistered longitudinal studies using random-intercept cross-lagged and dynamic SEM should evaluate whether EI reduces aggression via hostile-attribution and rumination pathways, with sensitivity analyses for unmeasured confounding (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2015).
3. Behavioral ecology: Lab-in-the-field simulations and opt-in digital traces (latency-to-post, delete-after-compose, reporting) must triangulate self-reports to achieve ecological validity while preserving privacy.
4. Moderator mapping: Systematic tests of peer injunctive norms, anonymity, audience size, and moral identity as moderators of EI effects will shift the field from average effects to if–when–for whom.
5. Guardrails for “dark EI”: Experiments that pair EI micro-skills with moral reasoning and accountability cues should assess whether ethics-infused curricula prevent emotionally sophisticated manipulation.
6. Platform trials: In partnership with industry, stepped-wedge trials of friction-by-design (send-delay, toxicity warnings, empathy prompts) should be evaluated with independent audits and youth governance (Suler, 2004).

Translational mandate: The researcher endorses an intervention architecture that integrates cyber-specific EI training, norm engineering, family mediation, and platform co-regulation—evaluated via RE-AIM and cost-effectiveness to ensure scalable equity. In short, the path forward is not merely to make adolescents “emotionally smarter,” but to co-create socio-technical habitats in which the prosocial choice is also the easy choice.

1.4- Methodological Innovations and the Researcher’s Position:

.1. Epistemological Stance and Construct Refinement:

In the researcher’s view, rigorous progress on cyberbullying–EI dynamics requires a pluralist but disciplined epistemology: theory-led, mechanism-focused, and triangulated across data sources. The researcher supports an explanatory realist stance—seeking to identify generative mechanisms (e.g., hostile attribution, moral disengagement, emotion regulation) that operate differently across contexts—while rejecting purely correlational catalogues. Accordingly, constructs must be sharpened before measured.

The researcher contends that “cyberbullying” should be modeled as a process system with role fluidity and platform contingencies, not a unitary behavior. Operational definitions will specify:

- (a) aggression intent and target specificity.
- (b) power asymmetry sources (anonymity, status, network reach).
- (c) harm pathways (reputational, social exclusion, emotional). Frequency thresholds will be complemented by severity and virality indices.

On emotional intelligence, the researcher critiques the indiscriminate use of omnibus trait scales that blend prosociality and well-being, inflating associations via criterion contamination. The researcher endorses a bifactor approach: distinct latent factors for ability-EI (perception, understanding, regulation; performance-based) and trait-EI (self-efficacy in affect management; self-report), with a higher-order EI if warranted by fit. Cultural–linguistic

invariance will be tested through multi-group confirmatory factor analysis before any comparative claims.

Finally, the researcher argues for embedding contextual moderators directly into construct definitions. For example, “online emotion perception” is platform-situated (text-only vs. video-rich), and “defending” should be disaggregated (private support, public counter-speech, reporting). This refined construct map anchors all subsequent measurement and inference.

.2. Measurement Architecture and Analytic Strategy:

The researcher proposes a multi-method, multi-informant measurement battery that privileges ecological validity:

1. Ability-EI: performance tasks tailored to digital cues (tone inference in chats; sarcasm detection; mixed-emotion vignettes), scored via consensus/expert keys.
2. Trait-EI and moral variables: brief, validated scales for emotion regulation self-efficacy, empathy, moral identity, and moral disengagement, with careless-response indices.
3. Cyber roles: validated multi-item scales for perpetration, victimization, and defending, plus behaviorally anchored items (blocking, reporting, deletion).
4. Digital traces (ethics-cleared): opt-in platform metadata (rates of delete-after-compose, report actions, latency to respond), and simulated-feed tasks that log micro-behaviors.
5. Context: peer-norms sociometrics, classroom climate, parental mediation, and platform affordances checklist.
6. Analytically, the researcher favors a hierarchical modeling strategy:
7. Measurement: bifactor and multitrait–multimethod (MTMM) models to separate trait, ability, and method variance.
8. Causal modeling: longitudinal cross-lagged panel models with random intercepts to isolate within-person effects; propensity-score and inverse-probability weighting for time-varying confounding; targeted maximum likelihood for robustness.

Mechanisms: sequential mediation (e.g., EI → hostile attribution ↓ → reduced retaliation), with sensitivity analyses for unmeasured confounding.

- Networks and context: multilevel social network analysis to capture norm diffusion; cross-classified models for students nested in classes and platforms.
- Heterogeneity: Bayesian hierarchical models for subgroup effects (gender, culture, marginalization), with shrinkage to curb false positives.

The researcher critiques overreliance on p-values and endorses estimation with uncertainty intervals, preregistration, and registered reports when feasible.

.3. A Program of Research: Designs that Decide:

From the researcher’s perspective, field-shaping evidence requires a staged program:

➤ Stage 1—Construct and Task Development:

- 1) Co-design digital EI tasks with adolescents; validate against expert ratings and real-world behaviors (e.g., correlation with delete-after-compose).
- 2) Run multi-group invariance tests across languages/cultures; refine items showing differential item functioning.

➤ **Stage 2—Mechanism-Focused Longitudinal Cohorts:**

- 1) Sample diverse schools; quarterly waves over two academic years.
- 2) Outcomes: role transitions, retaliation spirals, defending frequency.
- 3) Mediators/moderators: hostile attribution, rumination, norms, platform affordances.
- 4) Analysis: random-intercept cross-lagged models, dynamic structural equation modeling for within-person variability.

➤ **Stage 3—Preregistered Experiments:**

- 1) Lab-in-the-field simulations: provocation–response paradigms with time pressure and safety nudges; manipulate anonymity and audience size.
- 2) Primary endpoints: retaliatory intent/behavior, delay-to-post, choice of prosocial responses.

➤ **Stage 4—Platform and School Trials:**

Stepped-wedge cluster randomized trials integrating:

(a) cyber-specific EI micro-skills, (b) bystander efficacy training, (c) platform friction-by-design (send-delay, toxicity warnings), and (d) restorative discipline.

- 1) Outcomes via mixed sources: incident reports, digital traces, and peer nominations.
- 2) Implementation science: RE-AIM and fidelity indices; moderation by baseline EI and norms.

The researcher supports open science: preregistration, de-identified data/code sharing with rigorous privacy safeguards, and stakeholder governance boards including youth.

1.5- Advanced Intervention Architecture and Policy Translation

.1. The Researcher’s Multilevel Intervention Blueprint:

The researcher proposes an intervention that binds intrapersonal skill, social norms, and platform design:

- Individual (ability-EI micro-skills): 8–10 micro-modules (15–20 minutes) on online tone decoding, mixed-emotion reasoning, reappraisal scripts (“pause–reframe–respond”), and impulse control under time pressure. From the researcher’s view, deliberate practice with feedback (AI-enabled tutors in sandboxed chats) is crucial.
- Peer/school (norm engineering): student-led charters; peer defender squads trained in safe counter-speech; teacher professional development on rapid incident containment and restorative conferencing. The researcher endorses public recognition systems for defending to shift status incentives.
- Family (active mediation): brief, app-delivered co-viewing prompts and response planners; sleep-protection routines; modeling regulated adult online conduct.
- Platform (friction-by-design): send-delay for flagged content; just-in-time empathy prompts showing likely recipient affect; easy, transparent reporting with feedback; algorithmic downranking of harassment and upranking of prosocial replies. The researcher supports A/B testing with safety oversight.
- Ethics/guardrails: protect targets and defenders; prohibit victim-blaming; ensure culturally responsive content and accessibility.

Proximal mechanisms: reduced hostile attributions, increased delay-to-post, higher reappraisal usage, and stronger perceived collective efficacy. Distal outcomes: lower perpetration and retaliation, higher defending, and improved climate.

.2. Implementation, Scaling, and Equity:

The researcher argues that “what works” must become “what scales with fidelity and equity.” Implementation will follow an improvement science cycle (plan–do–study–act), embedding:

- Fidelity architecture: teacher checklists, brief observational rubrics, dosage logs, and analytics from digital modules.
- Capacity building: train-the-trainer models; modular content aligned to existing curricula (civics/ICT), minimizing opportunity cost.
- Adaptation with integrity: core components protected (reappraisal practice, defender efficacy, friction-by-design), while surface features are culturally localized through co-creation with students and families.

Equity commitments: prioritize schools serving marginalized youth; provide offline equivalents; language localization; monitor differential effects and harms. Costing and cost-effectiveness analyses will guide district adoption.

The researcher critiques one-off assemblies and compliance-only policies; instead, proposes staged rollouts via stepped-wedge designs that create credible evidence while expanding reach. Data governance compacts will enable anonymized learning analytics and incident dashboards for schools, with strict privacy-by-design.

.3. Governance, Law, and Co-Regulation with Platforms:

From the researcher’s perspective, durable impact requires aligning educational practice with platform and policy levers:

- School policy: integrate cyber SEL into conduct codes; mandate restorative responses; protect reporting students; ensure due process and documentation.
- Platform co-regulation: formal MOUs for school–platform collaboration; transparency on safety nudges and moderation policies; APIs for aggregated, de-identified safety metrics back to schools.
- Regulatory alignment: child online safety standards that endorse friction features, impact assessments for new affordances, and independent audits. The researcher supports sandbox provisions that let platforms trial safety nudges with ethical oversight.

The researcher critiques purely punitive approaches (blanket device bans, zero tolerance) as displacement strategies that fail to alter mechanisms. Instead, co-regulation should incentivize safety-by-design and fund independent evaluations. A public–private research consortium can sustain longitudinal monitoring, with youth advisory councils ensuring relevance and legitimacy.

2-Applied Field Study: A Multi-method, Multilevel Examination of the EI–Cyberbullying Nexus in Adolescence :

Objectives and hypotheses This field study tests a mechanism-focused model specifying how discrete emotional intelligence (EI) competencies—assessed as ability EI and trait EI—shape adolescents’ cyberbullying role trajectories (perpetration, victimization, bystander/defending) under varying socio-technical conditions. We integrate social

information processing accounts and the General Aggression Model with ecological and platform-affordance perspectives. Primary hypotheses:

- **H1 (component specificity):** Ability EI in regulation/reappraisal and perspective-taking will predict reduced perpetration and increased defending, above and beyond trait EI and baseline conduct problems.
- **H2 (ecological moderation):** Peer norms favoring defending, supportive classroom climate, and active parental mediation will strengthen H1; high-virality affordances (public metrics, algorithmic amplification) and low-friction interfaces will attenuate H1.
- **H3 (process mediation):** Online hostile attribution bias and momentary anger/shame will mediate links between lower regulation ability and subsequent perpetration; empathic concern will mediate links between perspective-taking and defending.
- **H4 (dark EI interaction):** High affect-perception ability will predict selective aggression only among adolescents high in moral disengagement and low in perceived accountability; platform features that heighten identifiability will buffer this effect.

Design overview We adopt a concurrent multi-method, multilevel design across one academic year, combining:

1. Cohort-sequential longitudinal panel (T1, T2, T3, 4-month lags) across classrooms nested in schools.
2. Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) micro-bursts over three 10-day windows, capturing affect, exposure, and enacted behaviors in situ.
3. Lab-in-the-field experimental tasks employing simulated social feeds, toxicity warnings, and send-delay frictions (latency-to-post paradigm).
4. Ethically governed, opt-in digital trace data (e.g., platform-provided aggregated toxicity flags, private journaling of incidents) to triangulate behavior beyond self-report.

2.1-Participants and setting:

- **Sampling frame:** 12 secondary schools (urban and peri-urban), grades 8–11, diverse SES and cultural backgrounds. Target $N \approx 1,200$ adolescents (balanced by sex and grade), with 60–80 classrooms (average 20 students per class). Power analysis via Monte Carlo for multilevel SEM (anticipated small-to-moderate paths $\beta \approx .10-.20$) indicates $\geq 1,000$ participants with $ICC \approx .05$ affords $>.80$ power for cross-level interactions and mediation.
- **Inclusion:** regular users of at least one social platform ≥ 4 days/week; parental consent and adolescent assent.
- **Subsamples:** 300 participants enrolled in EMA; 400 in lab-in-the-field tasks; 600 consenting to de-identified platform metrics via data-sharing APIs or researcher-deployed school platforms.

2.2-Measures Emotional intelligence:

- **Ability EI:** (a) Performance-based emotion understanding/regulation using age-adapted vignettes with objectively keyed responses; (b) Digital Affect Decoding Task (DADT): recognition of affect in text, emojis, memes, and mixed-modality posts

under cue sparsity; (c) Regulation/Reappraisal Ability Task using scenario-based solutions scored by expert consensus.

- **Trait EI:** TEIQue-ASF short-form (validated), plus digital-specific subscales (perceived online emotion regulation, empathic engagement). To avoid criterion contamination, prosociality items overlapping with outcomes are removed in preregistration.

2.3-Cyberbullying roles and behaviors:

- Multi-informant self-reports using validated scales for perpetration, victimization, and defending/bystanding, anchored to the past 30 days, with frequency thresholds and intent probes.
- EMA items capturing exposure, affect, perceived intent, and immediate action (e.g., post, report, defend, scroll-away) within the last 3 hours.
- Digital traces: aggregated, de-identified counts of toxicity warnings received/overridden; latency-to-post in simulated tasks; proportion of times participants edit/revise posts after prompts.

2.4-Socio-technical moderators:

- Peer norms and classroom climate: peer-reported injunctive norms for defending; teacher-rated climate (psychological safety, norm clarity).
- Family mediation: active/restrictive mediation scales; co-use frequency.
- Platform affordances: indices of perceived audience size, anonymity, identifiability, and public metrics salience. In experimental tasks, affordances are manipulated (e.g., visibility of likes, anonymity toggle, 10-second delay, empathy prompt).

2.5-Mechanisms and covariates:

- Hostile attribution bias in online contexts (ambiguous posts).
- Moral disengagement (adapted for digital scenarios).
- Perceived accountability/identifiability.
- Momentary affect (anger, shame, fear) via EMA.
- Covariates: impulsivity/self-control, baseline aggression, depressive symptoms, social desirability, and platform use intensity.

2.6-Procedures:

- **T1 (baseline):** administration of EI batteries, covariates, and role measures; peer-norm sociometric indices collected within classrooms. Teachers complete climate scales.
- **EMA wave 1 (weeks 3–4):** prompts 4/day, random time sampling, with event-contingent items when participants report witnessing or engaging in conflict.
- **Lab-in-the-field session 1 (week 6):** participants interact with a simulated feed populated with age-appropriate contentious posts. Random assignment to a 2×2×2 between-subjects design: anonymity (on/off) × send-delay (0s vs 10s) × empathy prompt (present/absent). Outcomes: latency-to-post, editing, toxicity probability (NLP classifier + human coding), inclination to defend or report.
- **T2 (month 4):** repeat role measures and select EI tasks (short forms), update moderators.

- **EMA wave 2 (month 5):** as above; subset experiments include micro-encouragements (e.g., just-in-time reappraisal prompts).
- **Lab-in-the-field session 2 (month 6):** manipulation of public metrics salience and audience size cues.
- **T3 (month 8):** final panel measures; debrief; opt-in digital logs compiled.

2.7-Analytic strategy:

- **Measurement:** confirmatory factor analyses for EI components (bifactor models for ability vs trait EI); invariance testing by sex/grade/culture; alignment for partial invariance if needed.
- **Longitudinal dynamics:** random-intercept cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM) to separate between- from within-person effects linking EI components to role transitions across T1–T3.
- **Mediation:** multilevel SEM testing paths from EI → hostile attribution bias/affect (EMA aggregates and task indices) → perpetration/defending; indirect effects estimated via bias-corrected bootstraps.
- **Moderation:** cross-level interactions of classroom norms and climate; within-subject experimental moderation by affordance conditions; planned contrasts for friction-by-design effects.
- **Intensive time-series:** dynamic structural equation modeling (DSEM) on EMA data to estimate lagged affect → action couplings, and whether regulation ability dampens reactivity slopes.
- **Causal sensitivity:** robustness checks using inverse probability of treatment weighting for confounding in observational links; exploratory causal forests to probe heterogeneity (e.g., dark EI profiles).
- **Multiverse analyses:** specification curve across plausible operationalizations of cyberbullying (intent thresholds; repetition vs single viral event) to test result stability.
- **Missing data:** FIML with auxiliary variables; preregistered rules for outliers and attention checks.

2.8-Ethics and data governance:

- Institutional approval with adolescent-specific safeguards; layered consent/assent, with explicit opt-in for digital traces.
- Privacy-by-design: local encryption, differential privacy noise on aggregate platform flags, deletion-on-request, and no collection of private message content.
- Risk management: real-time risk alerts routed to school counselors for severe harm indicators (preregistered thresholds); debriefing and resource provision.
- Transparency: preregistration of hypotheses, analysis plans, and materials; de-identified data and code shared under controlled access after embargo.

2.9-Expected findings and falsifiable alternatives:

- **Anticipated support for H1:** regulation and perspective-taking ability, not merely trait EI, predict lower perpetration and higher defending. Failure to observe this, with trait EI dominating, would challenge the ability-centric account and suggest desirability or self-schema pathways.

- **Support for H2:** friction-by-design (send delay, empathy prompt) amplifies translation of EI into defending and reduces impulsive posting; null moderation would imply EI operates largely independent of affordances, contra the socio-technical thesis.
- **Support for H3:** within-person elevations in anger and hostile attributions will mediate EI-behavior links, evidenced in DSEM. If mediation is absent, alternative mechanisms (e.g., social identity threat) warrant testing.
- **Conditional H4:** perception ability predicts harm only under high moral disengagement and low accountability; if perception ability uniformly reduces harm, “dark EI” concerns may be overstated in adolescents or contingent on rarer motivational profiles.

2.10-Contributions and limitations:

- **Contributions:** (a) disentangles ability vs trait EI with digital-specific performance tasks; (b) integrates behavioral indicators (latency-to-post, edit rates) with EMA and panel data; (c) tests platform affordances as manipulable levers that gate EI effects; (d) advances multilevel causal inference with experimental and observational triangulation.
- **Limitations:** API-based traces may be incomplete; external validity varies across platforms and cultures; ethical constraints limit observation of private interactions; measurement invariance for digital cues across languages requires continual calibration. A replication in low-connectivity contexts and with non-Western platforms is planned.

Practical implications Findings will inform a precision SEL approach: micro-skills in reappraisal and ambiguity resolution embedded within classrooms where defending is normatively rewarded; family mediation that scaffolds accountability without surveillance; and platform co-regulation deploying friction-by-design features that differentially aid youths with lower regulation ability. By aligning skills, norms, and structures, the study operationalizes a mechanism-based blueprint in which emotionally intelligent conduct is not aspirational but enacted and enabled.

3- Conclusion

3.1. Integrative Findings and Theoretical–Practical Contributions:

Across five chapters, this study advances a mechanism-rich account of how emotional intelligence and cyberbullying interlock within adolescent ecologies.

- **Chapter 1:** reframed cyberbullying as a socio-technical process with role fluidity and platform-contingent power asymmetries, and differentiated ability- from trait-EI.
- **Chapter 2:** mapped component pathways: perception and understanding reduce misinterpretation; regulation dampens retaliation; empathy and efficacy enable defending—each contingent on norms, affordances, and identity.
- **Chapter 3** translated evidence into multilevel implications and a preliminary intervention agenda.
- **Chapters 4 and 5:** elevated the methodological and translational arc. The researcher argued for construct refinement (bifactor EI; processual cyberbullying), multi-method measurement with ecological validity, and causal identification via longitudinal and experimental designs, including platform trials. The proposed intervention blueprint integrates EI micro-skills, norm engineering, family mediation, and friction-by-design, guided by implementation science and equity principles. The governance model aligns school practices with platform co-regulation and regulatory standards.

3.2. Key results of this synthesis are conceptual rather than statistical, yet they are decision-relevant:

1. EI's protective force is component-specific and context-dependent; regulation and perspective-taking are pivotal levers against perpetration and retaliation.
2. “Dark EI” risks necessitate coupling EI training with moral identity and accountability structures.
3. Platform affordances and peer norms gate whether EI translates into prosocial action; environments must be engineered, not merely individuals trained.
4. Credible causal evidence demands multi-method assessments and designs that capture within-person dynamics and real behaviors, not only self-reports.
5. Scalable impact arises from multilevel, co-designed interventions with fidelity supports, privacy-preserving analytics, and policy alignment.

In the researcher's view, the educational imperative is to cultivate emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded digital citizens while restructuring socio-technical environments so that the prosocial choice becomes the easy choice. This agenda invites cross-sector partnerships to move from insight to implementation at population scale.

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How to cite this article by the APA style:

GHOBRINI, Zakaria (2025). Dynamics of the Cyberbullying–Emotional Intelligence Relationship in Adolescence. *Journal of Psychological and Educational Sciences*. 11 (4). Algeria: El-Oued University.. 235-251

