

# **The Role of Reference Groups on the Awareness of University Youth of the Dangers of Cyberbullying**

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**Abstract:**

The current study aims to determine the role of reference groups on the awareness of university youth of the dangers of cyberbullying, by applying an electronic questionnaire to a random sample of students from the Faculty of Social Work at Helwan University who are enrolled in the fourth year. The sample size reached (407) individuals. The study sought to determine the role of reference groups on the awareness of university youth of the educational, psychological, and social risks of cyberbullying. The results of the study indicated that the role of reference groups in the awareness of university youth of the dangers of cyberbullying is high and its hypotheses are confirmed. The study concluded that reference groups play an important role in influencing their members, either positively or negatively.

**Key words:**

Reference groups - cyberbullying

**First: The problem of the study:**

University youth are the pillars of society. They are future leaders, bearers of the banner of progress, and drivers of the pace of development. They are an integral part of the development of society and the stability and continuity of any country. In this context, we find that university youth are a distinct group in any society, and even more so in active and productive communities. This category is also characterized by production and giving, and they are a source of change and creativity in all fields. They are qualified to assume the responsibilities of building society, given that they represent a large base of the world's population in general and the Egyptian community in particular. We find that the number of youth worldwide represents 16% of the population, reaching about 1.2 billion young men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 years. The number of young people is expected to increase by 7% by 2030, reaching about 1.3 billion young men and women (United Nations, 2019).

Youth in the Arab world constitute 32% of the population, meaning about 100 million young men and women in the Arab world (Lancaster, 2017, p. 34). In Egyptian society, the number of young people has reached about 20 million, which represents 21.3% of the total population in the age group of 18-29 years, and the number of students enrolled in university education has reached about 3 million students (the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2019).

Youth in general, and university youth in particular, are greatly affected by the transformations that society is going through at the global and local levels, as the world is now experiencing a huge revolution in communications technology, which is an integral part of the contemporary and current technology revolution that has helped spread the use of social media networks and has become an integral part of the life of societies. Indeed, individuals have become accustomed to using these sites to a degree that may sometimes lead to addiction. These sites have come to play an important role in the lives of families and youth, and even in the lives of entire peoples and nations, both negatively and positively (Alamuddin, 2005, p. 133).

Official statistics have confirmed the increasing number of university youth who use the Internet and social media, reaching about 3 million university students, representing 98.3% of youth (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2019).

Young people in all societies are usually exposed to many risks as a result of frequent use of the Internet, such as exposure to irrational thoughts from unknown people, as well as cyber phobia, electronic spying, and cyberbullying, whether from known or unknown people. This is confirmed by a study by the Council of Ministers. (2005).

The study aimed to identify the extent of the use and spread of the Internet in Egypt and the Arab world, and the extent of the spread of electronic crime and ways to confront it. The study confirmed that the Internet has many positives and negatives. Additionally, it stressed the need to intensify Arab websites in the scientific and cultural fields to change the pattern of young people's use of the Internet and prepare the necessary courses and programs to educate young people about the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet.

Hence, we find that technology, especially the use of social networking sites, despite its importance in satisfying the psychological, social, educational and cultural needs of university youth, may sometimes be a source of problems and multiple risks that young people may face as a result of incorrect use of it, such as exposure to cyberbullying, which is one of the forms of bullying. It depends on technological means and occurs through sending unwanted text messages, pictures or video clips to the recipient, which causes psychological and social harm to them. Therefore, cyberbullying affects its victims, as they suffer from psychological loneliness, poor psychological and social adjustment, scarcity of friends, and deficiency in social relationships. They may also

experience social withdrawal, poor academic achievement, low self-concept, domestic abuse, family abandonment, and conduct disorder (Attiya, 2019, pp. 159-160).

Many well-informed studies confirm that exposure of young people to continuous cyberbullying causes them many risks, whether psychological, social, or educational, including the Carrie & Li study (2016), which sought to identify the reasons for the use of cyberbullying and its psychological impact on students. The study emphasized the need to pay attention to how to deal with this phenomenon. Nasr's study (2017) also found that there is a correlation between the degree of severity of the abuse to which female respondents are exposed online and their level of depression, anxiety, and psychological stress.

The study by Shamroukh et al. (2019) added that the use of the Internet leads to a weakening of social relationships between individuals and emphasized the importance of being aware of the harms and risks caused by the Internet. The study by Darwish and Al-Laithi (2017) also concluded that cyberbullying affects the psychological and social aspects of students' lives and weakens relationships and social bonds, reduces their social interactions among themselves, and contributes to their academic distraction.

The study of Al-Sayed et al. (2019) added that cyberbullying negatively affects achievement motivation. The study of Williams, L (2013) also confirmed that cyberbullying leads to a loss of motivation for achievement and negatively affects academic achievement.

Perhaps what distinguishes societies from each other is the extent of the social awareness of their individuals, which is a positive trend that is formed by ideas that define the individual's concept of the issues of his society and push him to carry out his duties towards society. Accordingly, the absence of awareness will deprive the individual of understanding the issues of his country and will keep him away from effective participation in building and developing society (Al-Sayed et al., 2015, p. 105).

Social work believes that youth care represents an approach to working with youth and not for them. Society, for its part, provides institutions, budgets, programs, and technicians and gives youth the opportunity to participate in identifying their needs. Youth care, from the social work point of view, trains youth to practice good citizenship and prepare good citizens. To build his country and provide them with

growth in their knowledge and skills that qualify them to confront and solve its problems (Al-Alam, 2010, p. 35).

The method of working with groups is one of the methods of social work that uses the group as a means to develop the personality and achieve social harmony for the individual during the process of interaction. This method exploits the mutual relationships provided by the group to achieve individual and group goals, and the individual acquires his personality as a result of his participation in the life of the group and then learns the pattern of behavior during the social interaction and what this interaction includes in terms of reward or punishment imposed by society (Attiya et al., 2012, p. 5).

Reference groups, such as family and friends, are considered one of the most important types of groups that contribute to influencing the behavior of individuals, as human beings live in a changing environment and are therefore affected and influenced by it. Human beings are social beings whose lives are based on interaction and communication with others (Abu Rayeh et al., 2018, p. 202).

The reference group is the group with which a person identifies and feels that he is psychologically connected to it and works to gain its acceptance or hopes to be associated with its values, principles, goals and standards without being a direct member of it, and sometimes even having no connection to it. The individual may be a member of a reference group, such as being a son or daughter of a family or a member of a union or something else, and his loyalty to this group should be evident. One of the functions of reference groups is that they act as standards for a person that he does not deviate from when he makes a judgment or expresses his views on a subject. They also act as standards through which individuals compare their behavior with the behavior of others.

There are positive and negative reference groups, and the positive reference group is the one whose standards the individual accepts and participates in to gain membership within it. As for the negative reference group, it is the one whose standards the individual participates without accepting them (Abdel Fattah et al., 2011, p.76).

Therefore, reference groups are considered to have a strong influence on the behavior of individuals, and from here we find that the family as a reference group occupies a great position and importance in building society and its cohesion. It is the basis for the existence of society, the source of morals, the first pillar for controlling behavior, and it is the framework in which a person

receives the first lessons of social life. Despite the small size of the family, it is the strongest system of society, and through it children acquire their humanity (Abu Al-Saud, 2015, p. 49).

The study of Hassan et al. (2021) concluded that the family plays an effective role in developing some aspects of positive education through the guidance it provides during the proper socialization of its children. The study of Ahmed (2022) also found that the family climate of cyber bullies is different from that of non-bullies.

Al-Hawari (2021) added that the preoccupation of some families with monitoring their children's behavior, the spread of domestic and societal violence, and the school's weak communication with the family to monitor and evaluate children's behaviors are among the reasons for the spread of the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Hence, we find that the family may have a negative or positive impact on the phenomenon of cyberbullying, as it may contribute to the occurrence of the problem or confront it. Therefore, we find that reference groups have a positive role in confronting the dangers of cyberbullying as one of the problems that young people face as a result of the use of social media, and this is confirmed.

Many studies have indicated the importance of the psychological and moral support that young people receive from the reference group to which they belong, such as family and friends, and how it contributes to their acquisition of positive behaviors. This is consistent with the results of Othman's (2019) study, which confirmed that a group of peers or friends has the ability to influence the behaviors of its members and help them acquire normal behaviors. Hussein's (2018) study added that peers, as one of the types of reference groups, contribute to modifying the attitudes and behaviors of young people, as well as developing their values. It is also a guiding element of human behavior and the decisions that young people must take. The study by Cowie, H et al. (2008) indicated the importance of the support provided by parents and friends to students who are victims of bullying, which in turn helps to alleviate the effects of bullying. It also showed that victims who receive support from their friends and families have the ability to report any undesirable behavior that occurs towards them more than those who did not receive support from their friends.

The study of Georgiou, S (2008) also indicated that the family has an important role in reducing bullying behavior, through the use of parental treatment methods that help achieve social harmony for children with their society. This in turn helped them confront bullies and increase their academic achievement.

Hence, we realize the importance of reference groups in providing assistance to their members by developing their awareness of how to deal with the multiple problems they encounter throughout their lives.

**Second: The importance of the study.**

- 1- The importance of the university youth sector in the world, especially in Egyptian society, as it is the real force and agent of change in society.
- 2- The risks posed by young people's dependence on electronic communication in all aspects of social life, including electronic bullying.
- 3- The seriousness of the phenomenon of bullying, especially electronic bullying, because of its negative effects on the personality of university youth.
- 4- The enrichment of the theoretical and cognitive aspect of the method of working with groups regarding emerging issues in society, such as the phenomenon of electronic bullying.
- 5- The strength of the influence of reference groups on developing the awareness of their members, as it is one of the most important types of groups in the specialty of working with groups.

**Third: Objectives of the study.**

The main goal of the current study is to determine the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying.

Several sub-objectives emerge from the main objective:

- 1- Determining the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the educational dangers of cyberbullying.
- 2- Determining the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the psychological dangers of cyberbullying.
- 3- Determining the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the social dangers of cyberbullying.



- 4- Identifying the difficulties that limit the effectiveness of reference groups in raising awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying.
- 5- Coming up with proposals to activate the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying.

**Fourth: Study hypotheses.**

1. It is expected that the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying will be high.
2. There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their identification of the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying according to gender.
3. There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their identification of the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying according to age.
4. There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their identification of the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying according to place of residence.

**Fifth: Concepts of the study.**

**Reference group:** It is the group of individuals that positively or negatively influences the individual in his attitudes, behaviors, and evaluative judgment (Ladwein, 1999, p. 259). It is the group from which the individual derives his beliefs and values, through which he regulates his attitudes and behavior, and feels a kind of identification with it., It is usually created between people who share common goals, values, trends, or inclinations that they seek to achieve, and whoever belongs to it becomes part of it through his thought and behavior and strives to be in harmony with it by comparing himself with the rest of its members. It is the standard by which he measures and evaluates his social behavior, and it is an object of respect, recognition, and attraction to him. If he achieves his integration into it and his harmony with its values and trends, it is rare for him to do anything that conflicts with them, hence the strength of the influence of the reference group on its members. The reference group may be an aspiration in which the individual seeks to join, and it usually has conditions and laws that may not be met by the individual who desires its membership. It may also be negative, and its standards and

activities represent a reference for the individual regarding what he will oppose or reject (Badawi, 1982, p. 349).

**The reference group in the current study means:** They are the family members, friends, and colleagues who are close to the student and who serve as a reference for him when making his decisions or dealing with the various problems and situations that the university student is exposed to in his life in general and in his personal life, such as the problem of electronic bullying, which is the source of his information, role model, values, and standards, and has a significant and great influence on shaping his behaviors and attitudes regarding exposure to cyberbullying through social networking sites.

**The concept of the dangers of cyberbullying:**

**Risks in social work mean** exposing individuals to health, psychological, social and environmental problems (Darwish, 1998, p. 12).

**Cyberbullying:** is intentional behavior preceded by negative intent directed by a bully to a group of people to cause harm, threat, embarrassment, or humiliation to another individual or other individuals, directly or indirectly, using computers, mobile phones, or any means of electronic communication (Muhammad, 2018, p. 7). It is intentional and repeated harm through computers, mobile phones, or through other electronic devices (Abdul Rahim, 2021, p. 177).

**Cyberbullying in the current study means:** a group of intentional, harmful, and aggressive behaviors that university youth repeatedly practice via the Internet and means of communication, resulting in a group of educational, psychological, and social risks.

The risks of cyberbullying in the current study are the educational, psychological, and social risks that university youth face as a result of others bullying and abusing them through the use of social media, such as offensive posts, videos, or inappropriate comments.

**Awareness:** achieving a broader understanding of the surroundings and social experiences, and transforming the individual's mind and thought to them, through sharing the individual's personal experiences with the experiences of others (Badawi, 1993, p. 323).

**In the current study, awareness means** knowing the extent to which university youth are aware of the role of reference groups in providing them with the correct information and practices to avoid the educational, psychological, and social risks of cyberbullying.

**Sixth: The theoretical directions of the study.**

The theoretical direction of the current study is determined in the symbolic interactionism theory. Symbolic interactionism believes that social reality is a mental reality based on imagination and visualization. It focuses on the human ability to communicate through symbols and to imbue them with meanings, ideas, and information that can be conveyed to others (Fahmy, 2006, p. 63).

This theory also views the process of socialization as continuous throughout the person's life, through the individual's interaction with others and their actions and responses to his behavior, such as respect and appreciation (Abu Jado, 1998, p. 61). This happens through the groups to which the individual belongs, as these groups have a distinct impact on the process of socialization, such as the family, school, and group of comrades. Each of these groups with which the individual constantly interacts has its own values, standards, and trends. Therefore, symbolic interactionism emphasizes that there are special roles for males and different roles for females, in order to control the interaction between the individual, his family, and his city (Mahjoub et al., 2005, p. 45).

From the above, it is possible to explain young people's use of social media in light of symbolic influence. Social life is based on social interactions and relationships between people and groups, and the virtual society in which young people are more active users of social media has its own motives and influences on other people and groups in society, through the role and behavior of each individual during interactions with others. Young people use language symbols to convey their feelings, inclinations, and trends to the society in which they live through social media. The wrong use of them may result in some social problems, such as the problem of electronic bullying, which is based on negative interactions between young people for the purpose of causing harm and psychological and social abuse toward each other. Some people thus have a negative impact on their various social roles, such as studying, working, and effective positive social interaction with the outside community.

**Seventh: Methodological procedures for the current study.**

**Type of study:** This study is a descriptive analytical study that is concerned with describing reality and providing information and data that express it. Therefore, the current study aims to identify the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of electronic bullying.

**Study Methodology:** The current study used the social survey method with a sample of fourth-year students from the Faculty of Social Work, Helwan University, for the academic year 2023-2024.

**Study sample:** A regular random sample with an equal distribution of fourth-year regular students from the Faculty of Social Work, Helwan University, from a sampling frame of (6325) individuals. By applying the law of optimal sample size (Stephen Thompson's equation), the sample size became (362) individuals, and the research sample reached (407) individuals.

**Study tools:** An electronic questionnaire was used and applied to fourth-year students at the Faculty of Social Work, Helwan University, Regularity Division.

**Study instrument design:**

An electronic questionnaire was applied to fourth-year regular students, and it was designed according to the following steps: Scientific references and previous studies on cyberbullying were consulted; the questionnaire contains primary data and three dimensions of cyberbullying, which are educational, psychological, and social risks, difficulties facing reference groups, and proposals for overcoming them. The questionnaire was presented to three arbitrators from the faculty members of the college, and an agreement rate of no less than (75%) was obtained. The questionnaire questions were answered through the following items: (Yes = 3, to some extent = 2, no = 1).

Table (1) shows the level of arithmetic averages.

If the average value of the statement or dimension ranges between 1 and 1.67,	low level
If the average value of the statement or dimension ranges between more than 1.67: 2.34	average level
If the average value of a statement or dimension ranges between more than 2.34: 3	high level

The data was processed by computer using the program (SPSS.V. 24.0), the statistical package for the social sciences, and the following statistical methods were applied: frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, range, and ANOVA test.

**study results:**

Table (2). Description of the study population (n=407)

S	Gender	N	%
1	Male	85	20,9
2	Female	322	79,1
S	Age	N	%
1	From 18 to under 21	22	5.4
2	From 21 to under 23	185	45.5
3	23 or more	200	49.1
S	Residence	N	%
1	the countryside	63	15,5
2	Urban	344	84,5

**The table above shows that:**

- Regarding the type of students, females came in first place with a percentage of 79.1%, followed in second place by males with a percentage of 20.9%.
- Regarding age, the age group (23 and over) ranked first with a rate of (49.1%), followed by the age group of 21 to less than 23 with a rate of 45.5%, while the age group of 18 to less than 21 came in the last place with a rate of (5.4%.
- As for the place of residence, urban came in first place with a rate of 84.5%, followed by rural with a rate of 15.5%.

Table (3). The level of the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying (n = 407)

S	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
1	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the educational dangers of cyberbullying	2.52	0.504	high
2	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the psychological dangers of cyberbullying	2.60	0.470	high
3	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the social dangers of cyberbullying	2.64	0.428	high
The average role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying as a whole		2.59	0.432	high

**The table above shows that:**

The level of the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying reached 2.59, which is a high level with a standard deviation of 0.432.

This supports the first hypothesis of the study: It is expected that the role of reference groups in raising the awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying will be high.

This is consistent with the results of Abdel Razek’s study (2020), which indicated the importance of the cognitive, skill, and value roles played by the social worker to reduce the educational risks resulting from cyberbullying. The study of Cowie, H et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of the support provided by parents and friends to students who are victims of bullying, which in turn helps to mitigate the effects of bullying. It also explained that victims who receive support from friends and families now have the ability to report any undesirable behavior that occurs towards them more than those who do not receive the support of their friends. The study by Slee, P. & Mohyla, J. (2007) indicated the effectiveness of a program based on teaching students’ positive behaviors in reducing bullying behavior.

This confirms the first hypothesis of the study, which states: The role of reference groups in raising awareness of the educational dangers of cyberbullying among university youth is high.

Table (4). Variance analysis of university youth’s responses on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying by gender. (n = 407)

s.	Variable	source of contrast	sum of squares	degree freedom	Mean squares	)F(	Sig.
1	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the educational dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.255	1	.255	.999	.318
		within groups	103.2	405	.255		
		the total	103.4	406	-		
2	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the psychological dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.144	1	.144	.650	.421
		within groups	89.56	405	.221		
		the total	89.71	406	-		

3	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the social dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.163	1	.163	.886	.347
		within groups	74.38	405	.184		
		the total	74.55	406	-		
The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying as a whole		between groups	.184	1	.184	985.	.322
		within groups	75.67	405	.187		
		the total	75.85	406	-		

**The table above shows that:**

There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by gender on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.985$ , not significant). The indicators for this are as follows:

- There are no statistically significant differences between students' responses by gender on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the educational dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.999$ ), not significant).
- There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by gender on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the psychological dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.650$ ), not significant.
- There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by gender on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the social dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.886$ ), not significant.

Based on these table results, we reject the second hypothesis of the study, which states: There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their determination of the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying by gender.

Table (5). Variance analysis of university youth's responses on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying by age. (n= 407)

S	Variable	source of contrast	sum of squares	degree freedom	Mean squares	)F(	Sig.
1	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the educational dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	0.264	2	.132	.516	.597
		within groups	103.1	404	.255		
		the total	103.4	406	-		
2	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the psychological dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	0.090	2	.045	.203	.817
		within groups	89.62	404	.222		
		the total	89.71	406	-		
3	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the social dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	0.147	2	.073	.398	.672
		within groups	74.40	404	.184		
		the total	74.55	406	-		
	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying as a whole	between groups	0.110	2	-	.294	.745
		within groups	75.74	404	.055		
		the total	75.85	406	.187		

The table above shows that:

there are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by age on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was (F=.294, not significant). The indicators for this are as follows:

-There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by age on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the educational dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was (F=.516, not significant).

-There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by age on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the psychological dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was (F=.203, not significant).



-There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by age on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the social dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.398$ , not significant).

Based on these table results, we reject the third hypothesis of the study, which states: There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their determination of the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying by age.

Table (6) shows variance analysis of university youth's responses on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying according to place of residence. ( $n = 407$ )

S	Variable	source of contrast	sum of squares	degree freedom	Mean squares	(F)	Sig.
1	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the educational dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.005	1	.005	.018	.893
		within groups	103.4	405	.255		
		the total	103.5	406	-		
2	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the psychological dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.032	1	.032	.144	.704
		within groups	89.67	405	.221		
		the total	89.71	406	-		
3	The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the social dangers of cyberbullying	between groups	.340	1	.340	1.856	.174
		within groups	74.21	405	.183		
		the total	74.55	406	-		
	<b>The role of reference groups in Awareness of university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying as a whole</b>	between groups	.053	1	.053	.286	.593
		within groups	75.80	405	.187		
		the total	75.85	406	-		

**The table above shows that:**

there are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by place of residence on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.286$ , not significant). The indicators for this are as follows:

- There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by place of residence on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the educational dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.018$ , not significant).
- There are no statistically significant differences between the students' responses by place of residence on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the psychological dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=.144$ , not significant).
- There are no statistically significant differences between students' responses by place of residence on the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the social dangers of cyberbullying, as the test result was ( $F=1.856$ , not significant).

Based on these table results, we reject the fourth hypothesis of the study, which states: There is a statistically significant difference among university youth in their determination of the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying by place of residence.

**Discussion**

The results of the study confirmed the importance of reference groups and their effectiveness in providing support to their members. This is consistent with the theoretical literature and the results of previous studies that were reviewed in the research. The current study also emphasized the role of reference groups in raising awareness of the educational, psychological and social dangers of cyberbullying. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study was proven to be correct. It is expected that the role of reference groups in educating university youth about the dangers of cyberbullying will be high. The results of the study also confirmed that qualitative or demographic variables (gender, age, place of residence) have no effect on the degree of youth awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying. This demonstrates that students are aware of the role and importance of reference groups in their lives, whether they are male or female. In addition, they are close in age because they are at the same university level and the vast majority live in urban areas. All of this reflects the extent of their awareness of the risks of cyberbullying, which leads us to reject the second, third and fourth hypothesis.

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