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We are All Potential Victims: How Personal Characteristics, Habits, and Lifestyle Affect the Risk of Victimization

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Abstract: Objective: In the Arab world, the lack of proactive victimology and screening tools for identifying susceptible populations to any victimization leaves many potential victims unprotected. This research aimed to address this gap by developing a comprehensive framework to identify personal and behavioral risk factors in everyday life that increase an individual's susceptibility to victimization, and by introducing Part 1 of the Potential Victim Screening Tool (PVST_Part_1) in the Arab world. **Methodology:** The PVST_Part_1 tool was conceived as a cross-sectional self-report survey. A multi-country convenience sample was obtained across four Arab countries, yielding a total of 440 participants. In addition to victimization-susceptibility scores based on behavioral vulnerabilities, quartile distribution was used to categorize victimization susceptibility (low to very high). **Results:** Reliability and validity metrics indicated that the tool is reliable and valid for helping individuals identify their behavioral weaknesses. The descriptive statistics provided valuable insights that warrant further exploration of the effects of gender, age, and country. Among the most notable findings, participants who did not have access to legal resources and services were more vulnerable than those who had this access in General Personal Habits and Lifestyle [$t(438) = 4.137$, $p < .001$], social network and close relationship dynamics [$t(438) = 4.916$, $p < .001$], and victim perception [$t(438) = 2.528$, $p < .02$]. Results highlighted the urgent need to guide individuals to adopt new protective habits and lifestyles, or adjust existing ones. **Conclusions:** Individuals often fail to give the necessary attention to their everyday interactions with people and situations, thereby compromising the development of adapted behaviors for positive relationship dynamics, balanced psychological and mental health, and strong self-awareness of potential risks. **Recommendations**: There is an urgent need in the Arab world for a Potential Victim Screening Tool and for the importance of adopting preventive and protective behaviors.

Keywords: Crime Prevention, Community Safety, Habits, Lifestyle, Proactive Victimology, Victimization.

كلنا ضحايا محتملون: كيف تؤثر الخصائص الشخصية والعادات وأسلوب الحياة على احتمالية التعرض للإيذاء؟

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الملخص: الهدف: في العالم العربي، يؤدي غياب علم الضحايا الاستباقي وأدوات الفحص لتحديد الفئات المعرضة لأي نوع من أنواع الإيذاء إلى ترك العديد من الضحايا المحتملين دون حماية. هدف هذا البحث إلى سدّ هذه الفجوة من خلال تطوير إطار عمل شامل لتحديد عوامل الخطر الشخصية والسلوكية في الحياة اليومية التي تزيد من احتمالية وقوع الفرد ضحية، ومن خلال تقديم الجزء الأول من أداة فحص الضحايا المحتملين (PVST_Part_1) في العالم العربي. **المنهجية**: تم تصميم PVST_Part_1 كاستبيان مقطعي مبني على التقرير الذاتي. تم الحصول على عينة ملائمة متعددة البلدان من أربع دول عربية، متكونة من إجمالي 440 مشاركًا. بالإضافة إلى درجات قابلية الوقوع ضحية بناءً على نقاط الضعف السلوكية، تم استخدام توزيع الأرباع لتصنيف هذه القابلية (من منخفضة إلى مرتفعة جدا). **النتائج**: أشارت قياسات الصدق والصلاحية إلى أن الأداة موثوقة وصالحة لمساعدة الأفراد على تحديد نقاط ضعفهم السلوكية. وقدمت الإحصاءات الوصفية رؤى قيّمة تستدعي مزيدًا من البحث في تأثيرات الجنس والعمر والبلد. ومن أبرز النتائج، كان المشاركون الذين لم يتمكنوا من الوصول إلى الموارد والخدمات القانونية أكثر عرضة للخطر من أولئك الذين أتيحت لهم هذه الخدمات على مستوى العادات الشخصية العامة ونمط الحياة [$t(438) = 4.137$، $p < 0.001$]، وديناميكيات الشبكة الاجتماعية والعلاقات الوثيقة [$t(438) = 4.916$، $p < 0.001$]، وإدراك الضحية [$t(438) = 2.528$، $p < 0.02$]. وأبرزت النتائج الحاجة الملحة لتوجيه الأفراد إلى تبني عادات وأنماط حياة وقائية جديدة، أو تعديل العادات وأنماط الحياة الحالية. **الاستنتاجات**: غالبًا ما يغفل الأفراد عن الاهتمام اللازم بتفاعلاتهم اليومية مع الناس والمواقف، مما يُعيق تطوير سلوكيات مُكيفة تُعزز ديناميكية العلاقات الإيجابية، والصحة النفسية والعقلية المتوازنة، والوعي بالمواقف، والوعي الذاتي القوي بالمخاطر المحتملة. **التوصيات**: هناك حاجة ملحة في العالم العربي إلى أداة فحص الضحايا المحتملين وإلى أهمية تبني سلوكيات وقائية وحمائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الوقاية من الجريمة، السلامة المجتمعية، العادات، نمط الحياة، علم الضحايا الاستباقي، قابلية التعرض للإيذاء.

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Research Framework and Methodological Overview

Problem Statement

This study examined the critical gap in designing Arabic screening and identifying tools for potential victims based on a framework that includes the personal and behavioral characteristics that shape vulnerability to victimization. While criminological research has explored offender traits, there is limited focus on how factors such as psychological, social, and lifestyle behavioral characteristics predispose individuals to victimization in Arab societies. Some works involve validating Arabic versions or utilizing existing tools rather than developing new ones (e.g., Alhalal *et al*., 2019; El Missiry *et al*., 2019). The lack of screening tools for identifying susceptible populations leaves many potential victims unprotected. This research aimed to address these gaps by developing a framework to identify personal and behavioral risk factors that increase an individual's susceptibility to victimization.

Research Questions

1. What are the reliability and validity metrics of the PVST_Part_1, and how does it help identify potential victimization through behavioral vulnerabilities?
2. How can demographic and geographic determinants affect the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization?
3. How can work, economic status, and health status determinants affect the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization?
4. How can access to legal resources affect the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization?
5. How can criminal record and victimization history affect behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization?

Research Objectives

1. To design a reliable tool that systematically identifies and analyzes potential victimization through behavioral vulnerabilities.
2. To explore behavioral patterns (e.g., lifestyle choices, social dynamics, engagement in risky behaviors) that make individuals more vulnerable to crime.
3. To examine the determinants of the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization.
4. To propose preventive initiatives based on the findings, enhancing a proactive victimology approach that protects populations at all levels of victimization susceptibility.

Study Significance

This study helps develop a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of potential victimization by shifting the focus toward the potential victim rather than just focusing on the actual victim after the crime occurs. Identifying specific behavioral weaknesses enhances crime-prevention efforts, enabling law enforcement, social services, and policymakers to proactively protect individuals across varying levels of vulnerability. Identifying potential victimization is essential in primary (i.e., proactively before vulnerability indicators are unveiled), secondary (i.e., when vulnerabilities are detected), and tertiary (i.e., after victimization occurs) crime prevention (Andresen & Jenion, 2008; Grove & Pease, 2014; Van Dijk, 1989; Van Dijk & De Waard, 1991.) The findings of this research will also contribute to the development of educational and awareness programs to reduce the risk of victimization and foster safer communities.

Study Boundaries

This research included participants from four countries, representing diverse ages, genders, and backgrounds. However, it was limited to a convenience sample. Additionally, the study examined personal and behavioral characteristics, as well as potential risk factors, including environmental, cultural, and economic influences, that may contribute to victimization. The research is limited to data collected through a "behavioral" self-reported survey, which excludes experimental data and direct observation of behaviors.

Literature Review

Victimization spectrum: an urgent problem

The "Victimization Spectrum" refers to the range of experiences and impacts faced by the often-significant number of individuals affected, directly or indirectly, by a single crime. This spectrum includes, among others, immediate physical harm, psychological trauma, and social consequences. Recognizing the victimization spectrum is crucial to developing comprehensive support systems and preventive measures that better protect potential victims, which requires an assessment approach to potential victimization (see also Álvarez Marín *et al*., 2022; Grote *et al*., 2024; Haahr-Pedersen *et al*., 2020; Mao *et al*., 2023; van Doorn & Koster, 2019).

The victim between responsibility and vulnerability

Within the "explain-intervene-prevent" cycle, many theories have examined and demonstrated the relationship between the motivated offender and the unprotected victim, who exhibit behaviors that render them vulnerable to potential victimization (Cheung & Zhong, 2023; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Kranenbarg *et al*., 2019). Nevertheless, in the first phase of victimology, called positivist victimology (Landau & Freeman-Longo, 2016; Miers, 1989), attention was primarily focused on the victim's responsibility.

Explanatory Theories of Victimization

Three main theories formed the pivotal theoretical explanatory framework for the concept of potential victimization and its dimensions. These theories include the *Lifestyle Exposure Theory (LET)*, the *Routine Activity Theory (RAT)*, and the *Structural Choice Model of Victimization (SCMV).* In addition, the *CEM model* (Cognition-Emotion-Motivation) was adopted as the conceptual framework of the tool (Masmoudi, 2012; Masmoudi *et al*., 2012; Masmoudi & Naceur, 2009; Pessoa, 2013; Pierce & Hawthorne, 2012).

LET defines individual lifestyles as the main cause of the different victimization rates. "Dangerous times" and "dangerous places" (and nowadays, dangerous virtual places) are not uniformly targeted by crime because of the behavioral exposure of potentially vulnerable victims (Hindelang *et al*., 1978). A person's lifestyle can be defined as a global way of living in various times and places, characterized by a certain rhythm and pace. Since social roles shape lifestyles, demographic groups experience varying levels of victimization due to differing exposure to risk (Berg & Schreck, 2022; Lauritsen *et al*., 1991). First published by Cohen & Felson (1979), Routines are repeated behaviors that may provoke or attract potential offenders (see Aizenkot, 2022; Akgül, 2023; Arenas *et al*., 2024; Guerra & Ingram, 2022; Hayes & Maher, 2024; Johnson & Nikolovska, 2024; Mikkola *et al*., 2024; Özaşçılar *et al*., 2024; Zhu & Wang, 2021).

The foundational work of SCMV (Miethe & Meier, 1990) integrated elements of routine activity and social structure theories to explain patterns of victimization, advocating a nuanced understanding of victimization as a product of

both individual choices (emphasized in routine activity theory) and structural conditions (highlighted in social disorganization theory).

Recent studies supported this theory. Rorie *et al*. (2022) showed that the victimization of adolescents rises because of their weak awareness of the riskiness of environmental conditions. Likewise, Kwak & Kim (2022) offered a nuanced blended understanding of the factors influencing victimization risk by exploring how low self-control and engagement in risky lifestyles contributed to victimization.

First proposed as a consolidated model by Masmoudi (2010), the CEM model has been adopted by many scientists to explain human behavior (Alexander, 2023; Crocker *et al*., 2013; Ebbes *et al*., 2024; Baddeley, 2010; Masmoudi, 2012a; Masmoudi *et al*., 2012; Masmoudi & Naceur, 2009; Murayama, 2023; Naceur & Masmoudi, 2008; Doering & Baier, 2016; Gannon & Ward, 2017). The CEM model explains how cognition (knowledge about oneself and the world, information processing, and cognitive biases), emotion (emotional states and coping and regulation strategies), and motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motives, goals, interests, and needs) are integrated to explain behaviors, notably the risky ones (Figure 1). Unsafe or weak behaviors are grounded in cognitive, emotional, or motivational vulnerabilities (Masmoudi, 2025).

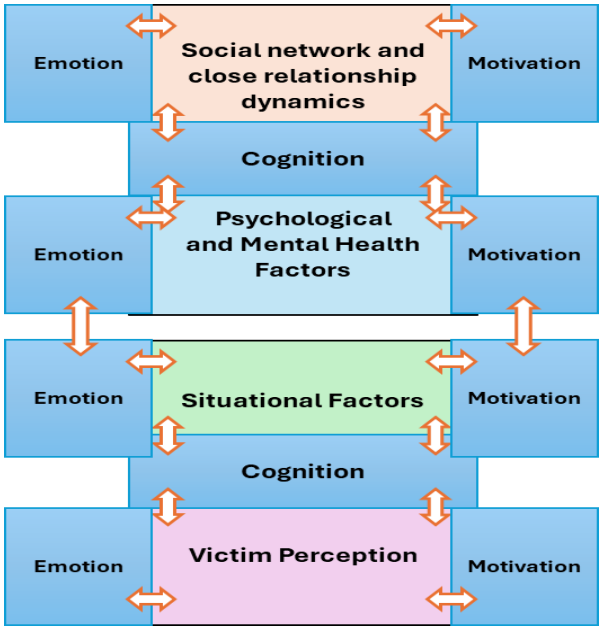


Figure (1): The CEM model as a framework for the PVST_part_1.

Demographic Characteristics and Victimization

The study of Allison *et al*. (2005) aimed to discover the predominant demographic characteristics of victims and offenders associated with identity theft. They showed that most victims of identity theft were male (54%), and the victims' average age was much higher than the offender's average age.

Geographic Factors

Living in an urban environment increases the risk of victimization by a quarter to a third compared to a non-urban population across all countries (Carrington *et al*., 2014; Harris, 2020). Many studies have also shown diversity across countries (Chester *et al*., 2015; Craig *et al*., 2009; Gonzalez-Izquierdo *et al*., 2013; Labella *et al*., 2024; Van Canegem *et al*., 2024; Zark *et al*., 2024).

Work and Economic Status

Previous research has provided evidence of the impact of work-related variables on the likelihood of victimization. For example, Wohlfarth *et al*. (2001) found that victimization was significantly higher among persons who were unemployed and had higher educational attainment.

Night workers seem to be more vulnerable to victimization than day workers. In five American areas, including a sample of teenagers aged 14-17, Runyan *et al*. (2005) showed that retail workers are more vulnerable to workplace violence than other workers, mostly during robberies. Night workers and those who work alone are at higher risk for violent victimization.

Health Status

Health difficulties are supposed to create vulnerabilities and breaches that can lead to victimization. Ran *et al*. (2023) showed that the occurrence of serious harm and bullying victimization observed in vulnerable adolescents aged 12–15 years was significantly associated with health status, social indicators of national wealth, gender inequality, and income.

Access to Legal Resources

Weak legal awareness and representation are considered sources of vulnerability to victimization (Carroll, 2022; Gezinski & Gonzalez-Pons, 2022). Combined perceived re-victimization (e.g., fear of retaliation) and reduced awareness about one's rights lead to low disclosure rates and recurrent harmful acts.

Criminal Record

Numerous studies have provided evidence that being suspected or incarcerated increases the likelihood of becoming a victim (e.g., Stolzenberg *et al*., 2021; Vik *et al*., 2020).

Victimization history

It includes having experienced victimization related to a type of crime, such as theft, assault, harassment, rape, sexual assault, kidnapping, physical or emotional abuse, cyberbullying, fraud, domestic violence, hate crime, discriminatory offenses, and many others. Violent crimes can increase vulnerability and lead to unsafe and riskier behaviors, causing fear and anger. We also suppose that not having a prior victimization history may lead to self-overconfidence and increase the likelihood of unsafe behaviors. Bucerius *et al*. (2020) conducted a study with a sample composed of 266 men and women in two prisons in Western Canada. They showed that they had experienced violent, sexual, or property re/-victimization throughout their life course.

Personal Habits and Lifestyle (General)

The study by Lemieux & Felson (2012) provided significant insights into Americans' exposure to violent crime through their daily routines, which were used to quantify exposure per 10 million person-hours spent in different activities. Results showed that the greatest risk of violent crime occurred during moves between activities (see also Lee & Hilinski-Rosick, 2012).

Social network and close relationship dynamics (SNCRD)

Local family and friendship networks can help reduce crime victimization when they are sources of resilience, insight, and inspiration. Wide networks are often associated with low victimization rates, as they provide informal social control within communities. Nonetheless, this relationship can be complex; tightly threaded social networks, characterized by deviant peers' influence, may also increase victimization rates if they involve individuals with criminal or deviant activities (Soto *et al*., 2021).

Psychological and Mental Health Factors (PMHF)

These factors (PMHF) are also supposed to be sources of vulnerabilities when they are weak. Adolescents may have significant psychological vulnerabilities and mental health issues. The study of Calvete *et al*. (2022) aimed to test the effects of a resilience-building intervention on adolescents who had experienced online peer victimization and its psychological effects. Online peer

victimization targets the more vulnerable adolescents.

Situational Factors (SF)

Mikkola *et al*. (2024) conducted a cross-national web-based survey among participants aged 15 to 25 years from South Korea, the U.S., Spain, and Finland. They showed that, although results varied between countries, situational factors related to RAT were associated with increased victimization in all four countries. A low level of awareness among victims of these factors and related threats can explain this increase (see also Li & Zheng, 2022; Maimon *et al*., 2022; Woods *et al*., 2022).

Victim Perception (VP)

The study by Aquino & Bradfield (2000) aimed to investigate self-perceived workplace victimization and to highlight the role of the victim in workplace aggression. Their empirical study examined harmful workplace behavior by adding to the situational variables at work the characteristics of aggressiveness and negative affectivity of victims as determining self-perceived victimization. Results showed that self-perceived victimization and workplace aggression were positively related. Other studies confirmed the significant effect of perceived victimization on being harmed (Caliso *et al*., 2020; Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; Keel *et al*., 2024; Khan *et al*., 2020; Ozturk & Simsek, 2019; Voltas *et al*., 2023).

Methodology

Participants

A multi-country convenience sample was obtained across four Arab countries (Libya, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen), yielding a total of 440 participants (227 men, 213 women) aged 18-60 (M = 34.6, SD = 9.2). The raw number of participants was 580. Inclusion criteria required participants to be native Arabic speakers, 18 years of age or older, and with no history of mental illness. Exclusion criteria included providing incomplete or incongruent information or extreme or incomplete data. Most participants are in the 25–34 age group (44.1%), the largest. The smallest representation comes from participants "45 – 60" (13.0%). Combining the 18–24 and 25–34 age groups, we observe a strong representation of younger participants (58.1%). Participants aged 35 and older represent 41.9% of the sample (Table 1).

Finally, to ensure the research met scientific and ethical guidelines, the study received ethical approval from the Standing Committee for Scientific Research Ethics at Naif University for Security Sciences, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Table (1): Sample Characteristics (*N = 440*).

Variable	Sample Count	Sample Percentage (%)
Age		
18–24	62	14.1
25–34	194	44.1
35–44	127	28.9
45–60	57	13.0
Gender		
Male	227	52
Female	213	48
Country		
Saudi Arabia	126	28.6
Yemen	84	19.1
Tunisia	126	28.6
Libya	104	23.6
Employment Status		
Public Sector	240	54.5
Private Sector	105	23.9
Student	56	12.7
Unemployed	39	8.9
Nature of Work		
Office Work	231	67.0
Fieldwork	114	33.0
Work Shift		
Day Shift	311	90.1
Night Shift	34	9.9
Income Level		
High	16	4.6
Medium	267	77.4
Low	62	18.0
Behavioral and Risk Characteristics		
Previous Detainment (Yes)	44	10.0
Victim of Past Crime (Yes)	129	29.3
Feeling Safe in Life (Yes)	365	83.0

Variable	Sample Count	Sample Percentage (%)
Criminal Tendencies in Neighborhood (Yes)	142	32.3
History of Drug Use (Yes)	12	2.7
Addicted to Smoking (Yes)	102	23.2
Involved in Risky Behaviors (Yes)	13	3.0
Engages in High-Risk Activities (Yes)	21	4.8

Measures

The present study presents results corresponding to the first part of the "Potential Victim Screening Tool (PVST)." This first part comprises 71 items. It focused on the “General Personal Habits and Lifestyle” and included two dimensions: (1) Potential Victimization-Related Personal Characteristics and (2) Potential Victimization–General Personal Habits and Lifestyle (Table 2).

The development process of the PVST_part_1

Defining Risk Factors: For PVST_part_1, risk factors were categorized into two dimensions: personal characteristics (victimization-general indicator) and general personal habit and lifestyle (victimization-general behavioral indicator). The first one is a set of personal characteristics, including demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status), geographic factors, economic status, health status, access to legal resources, criminal record, victimization history, personal habits, and general lifestyle. The second one is a set of Victimization-General Behaviors that are associated with increased vulnerability to victimization in general, including social network and close relationship dynamics, psychological and mental health factors, situational factors, and victim perception (Table 2).

Building items: Items were developed based on a literature review of empirical research, systematic reviews, and risk-assessment tools related to victimization, such as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Items were written in Literary Arabic and submitted for expert Arabic-native proofreading. They were subsequently submitted to three judges, all of whom specialized in victimology. The Fleiss’ Kappa interrater reliability coefficient was calculated for the judges before the items’ adjustments (0.83) and after adjustments (0.92). Finally, it was submitted to a pool of 50 tester students. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's Alpha, allowed for the removal of less reliable items. PVST is culture-free for the Arab world.

Response and scoring system

The PVST_Part_1 is composed of three types of questions: (1) questions based on semantic categories (e.g., Work status: No work, Student, Private sector, Public sector); (2) Yes/No questions for which “Yes” was coded “1” (indicating increased vulnerability/likelihood of victimization) and “No” was coded “2” (indicating decreased vulnerability/likelihood of victimization), and (3) Likert scale questions (e.g., Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always), coded respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, with “1” corresponding to low vulnerability/likelihood of victimization and “5” to high vulnerability/likelihood of victimization.

Data Collection

The study followed a cross-sectional design. Data were collected face-to-face and recorded via a SurveyMonkey web form during the Spring of 2024, using a secure survey platform, from four countries: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia. Participants received standardized instructions and were informed that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. Participation was fully anonymized, and participants were required to complete and accept a consent form. PVST_part_1 was a 10-minute survey.

Participants are completely free to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 27.0. Data cleaning was achieved before thoroughly analyzing the validated data. Outlier detection was achieved using both z-scores and interquartile range (IQR). After applying the outlier criteria, the valid sample of participants decreased from 580 to 440.

Using Cronbach's alpha, items that affected the scale's reliability or showed weak item–total correlations were removed (Table 2).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, as it is a theory-driven statistical method that tests the structure of latent variables and validates their relationships with observed indicators. It was used to determine the PVST_part_1 factor structure using IBM AMOS Version 28.0, and model fit was evaluated using the CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices in LISREL 8.72. Reliability and validity are two key musts in developing self-report instruments (Mohajan, 2017).

Thresholds, categories, and transformation of raw scores: For the 1-5 Likert scale items, it was useful to transform the raw scores of each factor to a 0–100-point scale (technically a 101-point scale), as they result, respectively, from the addition of a set of items. The transformation (Figure 2) rescales the scores to the 0–100 range, facilitating easier interpretation and comparison across different scales (Hamza *et al*., 2023; Harwell & Gatti, 2001; Horley, 2000; Sumin *et al*., 2022).

$$\text{Transformed Scale} = \left(\frac{\text{Actual raw score} - \text{Lowest possible raw score}}{\text{Possible raw score range}}\right) \times 100$$

Figure (2): Transformation formula of the raw scores(1).

Thresholds or categories that determine levels of susceptibility to victimization (based on behaviors) were established. The total scores for the four "Potential Victimization – General Personal Habits and Lifestyle" factors (Table 2) were categorized into four quartiles (Table 8). We used the quartile distribution of the total 0–100 score to create four susceptibility levels: Low (0–25), Moderate (26–50), High (51–75), and Very High (76–100).

Results and discussion

Reliability

The overall reliability of the Personal Habits and Lifestyle General Behavior dimension, as evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, was excellent at 0.985. As shown in Table 3, the reliability of the different factors ranged from good (0.819) to excellent (0.906). The "Psychological and Mental Health Factors (Positive Behaviors2)" factor showed the lowest good reliability ($\alpha = 0.819$, N = 6 items). The most reliable factor was the "Victim Perception" (positive behaviors), with a reliability coefficient of 0.906.

Table (2): PVST_Part_1's dimensions and factors.

Potential Victimization-Related Personal Characteristics	Number of Items	Potential Victimization – General Personal Habits and Lifestyle	Initial Number of Items	Final Number of Items*
1. Demographic Information	10	1. Social network and close relationship dynamics	6	5
2. Geographic Factors	5	2. Psychological and Mental Health Factors	10	6
3. Economic Status	9	3. Situational Factors	10	9
4. Health Status	2	4. Victim Perception	6	6
5. Access to Legal Resources	2			
6. Criminal Record	1			

(1) Actual raw score: The observed score for a particular item or scale. Lowest possible raw score: The minimum value that can be obtained on the scale. Possible raw score range: The difference between the highest possible raw score and the lowest possible raw score.

(2) Formulated positively.

Potential Victimization-Related Personal Characteristics	Number of Items	Potential Victimization – General Personal Habits and Lifestyle	Initial Number of Items	Final Number of Items*
7. Victimization history	12			
8. Personal Habits and Lifestyle (General)	4			
8	**45**	**4**	**32**	**26**

** After applying reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha.*

Cronbach's alpha for the PVST_part_1 factors, calculated by country, ranged from acceptable to excellent reliability (Table 4).

Table (3): Reliability Statistics for the PVST_part_1 factors

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Goodness of Cronbach's Alpha
Victimization-related general behavior scales	.985	26	Excellent
GF1: Social network and close relationship dynamics	.872	5	Good
GF2: Psychological and Mental Health Factors (Positive Behaviors)	.819	6	Good
GF3: Situational Factors (Positive Behaviors)	.883	9	Good
GF4: Victim Perception (Positive Behaviors)	.906	6	Excellent

Validity

As seen in Table 5, all factor loadings for GF1 are above 0.49, indicating that each item has a moderate to strong relationship with the underlying factor GF1.

Table (4): Cronbach's Alpha of the PVST_part_1 factors by country.

Dimension	Saudi Arabia	Yemen	Tunisia	Libya
Victimization-related general behavior factors	**0.935**	**.825**	**.838**	**.832**
GF1: Social network and close relationship dynamics	0.810	.801	.800	.757
GF2: Psychological and Mental Health Factors (Positive Behaviors)	0.798	.750	.814	.774
GF3: Situational Factors (Positive Behaviors)	0.894	.838	.824	.834
GF4: Victim Perception (Positive Behaviors)	0.919	.810	.780	.838

Table (5): CFA - Factor Loadings and t-values for the four factors.

Factor/Item	Factor Loading	t-value	R^2
GF1: Social network and close relationship dynamics			
i1r - Communication and Trust1	0.49	8.62	0.22
i2r - Communication and Trust2	0.62	10.57	0.33
i4r - Conflict Resolution1	0.53	8.23	0.2
i5r - Support and Safety1	0.76	12.5	0.46
i6r - Support and Safety2	0.63	9.75	0.28
GF2: Psychological and Mental Health Factors			
j4r - Emotional Regulation	0.35	5.8	0.093
j6r - Social Isolation	0.39	6.69	0.12
j7r - Risk Recognition1	0.66	10.9	0.29
j8r - Risk Recognition2	0.88	15.63	0.54
j9r - Access to Support1	0.88	15.32	0.53
j10r - Access to Support2	0.76	13.37	0.42
GF3: Situational Factors			
k1r - Awareness of Surroundings	0.61	11.73	0.32
k3r - Risk Assessment1	0.57	10.63	0.27
k4r - Risk Assessment2	0.89	16.87	0.57
k5r - Personal Boundaries1	0.71	14.77	0.47
k6r - Personal Boundaries2	0.71	12.1	0.34
k7r - Risk Avoidance1	0.62	8.96	0.2
k8r - Risk Avoidance2	0.58	9.77	0.23
k9r - Emergency Preparedness1	0.53	8.22	0.17
k10r - Emergency Preparedness2	0.5	7.86	0.16

GF4: Victim Perception			
l1r - Awareness of Vulnerability1	0.49	9.21	0.21
l2r - Awareness of Vulnerability2	0.76	14.54	0.45
l3r - Self-Efficacy and Empowerment1	0.65	14.37	0.44
l4r - Self-Efficacy and Empowerment2	0.81	17.64	0.61
l5r - Risk Perception1	0.68	14.49	0.45
l6r - Risk Perception2	0.61	12.83	0.37

For GF2, the factor loadings range from 0.35 to 0.88. Results showed that risk recognition and access to support seem to be critical mental health factors in potential victimization. The two factors, j4r and j6r, were excluded in the final version of the tool because they were below the acceptable threshold (0.40-0.50).

For GF3, the factor loadings range from 0.50 to 0.89, indicating varying levels of relationship with the latent factor GF3. Results converged toward considering risk assessment as the core situational awareness for potential victimization.

For GF4, the factor loadings range from 0.49 to 0.81, indicating varying levels of relationship with the latent factor GF4. Results converged toward considering l4r the most central victim perception factor in potential victimization, which is exactly "taking proactive steps to empower oneself and build self-confidence to reduce the risk of abuse."

Based on Table 6, Table 7, and the above factor loadings, the strong goodness-of-fit indices for the overall CFA model and its components provide empirical support for the theoretical structure underlying the measurement model.

Table (6): Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the CFA Model's four factors.

Fit Measure	Value	Recommended Cutoff	Decision
GF1: Social network and close relationship dynamics			
χ^2/df	2.68	≤ 2.00 (Good), ≤ 3.00 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.08 (Acceptable)	Good
SRMR	0.04	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.10 (Acceptable)	Good
NFI	0.95	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
NNFI (TLI)	0.96	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
CFI	0.97	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
GFI	0.98	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
AGFI	0.95	≥ 0.90 (Good), ≥ 0.85 (Acceptable)	Good
PGFI	0.33	Higher values indicate better parsimony	Moderate Parsimony
GF2: Psychological and Mental Health Factors			
χ^2/df	2.79	≤ 2.00 (Good), ≤ 3.00 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.08 (Acceptable)	Good
SRMR	0.03	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.10 (Acceptable)	Good
NFI	0.96	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
NNFI (TLI)	0.96	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
CFI	0.98	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
GFI	0.98	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
AGFI	0.95	≥ 0.90 (Good), ≥ 0.85 (Acceptable)	Good
PGFI	0.42	Higher values indicate better parsimony	Moderate Parsimony
GF3: Situational Factors			
χ^2/df	2.48	≤ 2.00 (Good), ≤ 3.00 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.04	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.08 (Acceptable)	Good
SRMR	0.07	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.10 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
NFI	0.9	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
NNFI (TLI)	0.97	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
CFI	0.97	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
GFI	0.9	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
AGFI	0.85	≥ 0.90 (Good), ≥ 0.85 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
PGFI	0.54	Higher values indicate better parsimony	Moderate Parsimony
GF4: Victim Perception			

Fit Measure	Value	Recommended Cutoff	Decision
χ^2/df	0.42	≤ 2.00 (Good), ≤ 3.00 (Acceptable)	Good
RMSEA	0.01	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.08 (Acceptable)	Good
SRMR	0.0094	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.10 (Acceptable)	Good
NFI	1.00	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
NNFI (TLI)	1.01	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
CFI	1.00	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
GFI	1.00	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
AGFI	1.00	≥ 0.90 (Good), ≥ 0.85 (Acceptable)	Good
PGFI	0.4	Higher values indicate better parsimony	Moderate Parsimony

Table (7): Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the overall CFA Model.

Fit Measure	Value	Recommended Cutoff	Decision
χ^2/df	2.68	≤ 2.00 (Good), ≤ 3.00 (Acceptable)	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.01	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.08 (Acceptable)	Good
SRMR	0.03	≤ 0.05 (Good), ≤ 0.10 (Acceptable)	Good
NFI	0.98	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
NNFI (TLI)	0.99	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
CFI	1.00	≥ 0.97 (Good), ≥ 0.95 (Acceptable)	Good
GFI	0.98	≥ 0.95 (Good), ≥ 0.90 (Acceptable)	Good
AGFI	0.95	≥ 0.90 (Good), ≥ 0.85 (Acceptable)	Good
PGFI	0.60	Higher = better parsimony	Good Parsimony

The diagram (Figure 3) represents a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model that assesses the relationships between the four latent constructs discussed above. The factor loadings (path coefficients) for each latent construct indicate strong relationships between the latent variable and its corresponding indicators.

Based on the covariance paths among the latent constructs, the strong correlation between "Victim Perception" and "Situational Factors" (r = 0.341) suggests substantial overlap in their underlying dimensions. Awareness is the link that explains their interrelation. Nevertheless, victim perception is oriented toward one's internal victimization risk factors, and situational factors are oriented toward one's environmental victimization risk factors.

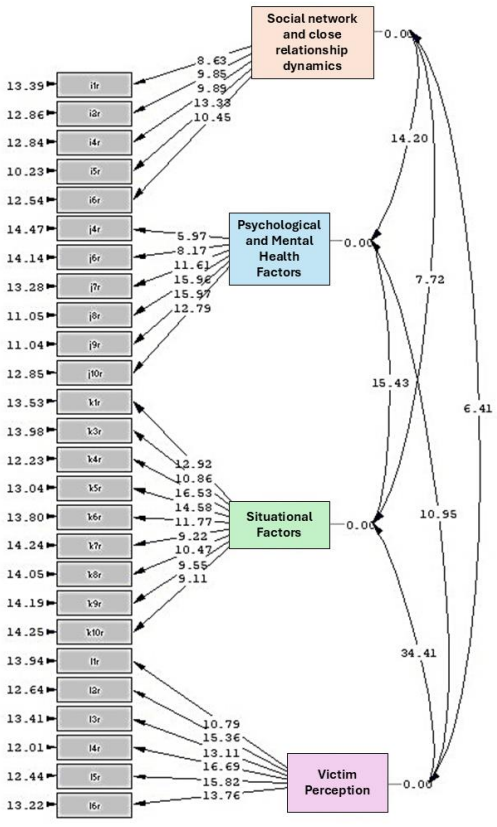


Figure (3): CFA of the PVST_part_1.

This four-factor model corroborated and put together the various results of previous studies for each factor: Social network and close relationship dynamics (Soto *et al*., 2021), Psychological and Mental Health Factors (Calvete *et al*., 2022; Voltas *et al*., 2023), Situational factors (Li & Zheng, 2022; Maimon

et al., 2022; Mikkola *et al*., 2024; Woods *et al*., 2022), Victim perception (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Caliso *et al*., 2020; Gupta & Bakhshi, 2018; Keel *et al*., 2024; Khan *et al*., 2020; Ozturk & Simsek, 2019; Voltas *et al*., 2023).

How the PVST_Part_1 helped identify potential victimization

The PVST_Part_1 helped assess the sample's susceptibility to victimization. Based on the 0-100 score transformation, four levels were specified: low (0-25), moderate (26-50), high (51-75), and very high (76-100). Table 8 and Figure 4 summarize the distribution of participants across these levels for the four factors and the total potential victimization score.

In terms of crime prevention levels, primary prevention is adequate for low-level, secondary prevention for moderate-level, and tertiary prevention for high and very high levels (Andresen & Jenion, 2008; Grove & Pease, 2014; Van Dijk, 1989; Van Dijk & De Waard, 1991.)

Demographic and geographic determinants of the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization

Results did not show significant differences between age groups. Table 9 shows slight differences between countries, but descriptive results do not allow a reliable conclusion about the country effect and require further work. Some works showed the country effect (Chester *et al*., 2015; Craig *et al*., 2009; Gonzalez-Izquierdo *et al*., 2013; Labella *et al*., 2024; Van Canegem *et al*., 2024; Zark *et al*., 2024). Countries are considered structural conditions (Miethe & Meier, 1990; Rorie *et al*., 2022).

Participants' behaviors and lifestyles differ significantly according to their living place $F(10, 429) = 2.663$, $p < .004$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Tukey HSD Post Hoc analysis showed that participants from Urban areas were less prone to victimization than those from Countryside ($p<.01$), Low-income or economically disadvantaged areas ($p<.04$), Transit-oriented development areas ($p<.05$). This result can be seen as partially incongruent with some results from other studies such as of Carrington *et al*., (2014) or Harris (2020) indicating that crime rates and victimization are generally higher in urban areas.

Participants from Low-income or economically disadvantaged areas were more prone to victimization than those from university and college cities ($p<.04$). Likewise, participants from Transit-oriented development areas showed more behavioral vulnerability than those from university or college cities ($p<.05$). Vulnerability to victimization in rural areas, low-income or economically disadvantaged areas, can be explained by reduced youth areas and means (e.g., sports, culture), geographic isolation, restricted social networks, as well as the quality of the neighborhood.

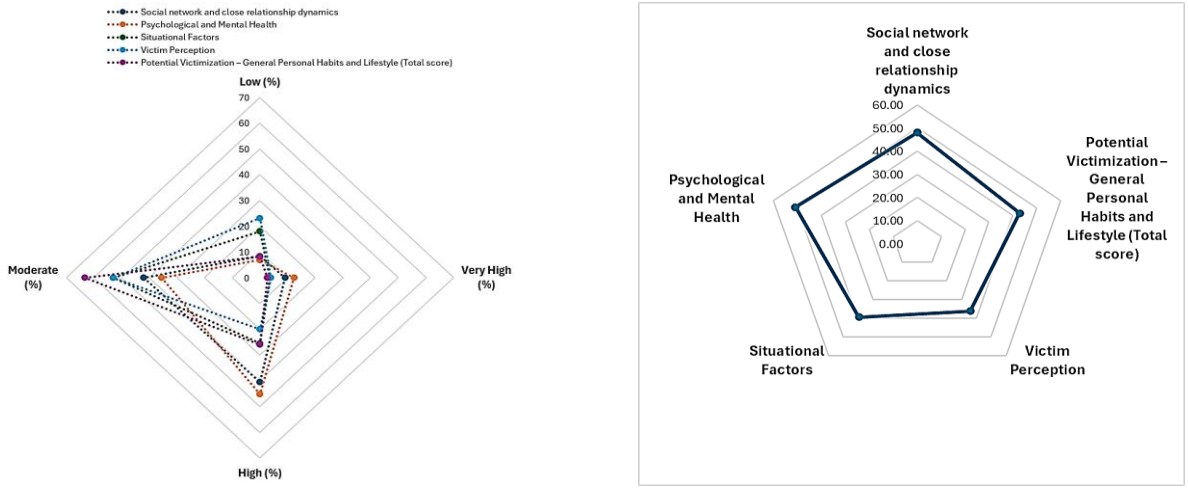
Work, economic status, and health status as determinants of the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization

For all *t-test* significant results reported in the following sections, 95% *CI*s did not include 0, and Cohen's d values ranged from 0.50 to 0.80. Work status did not show any effect on potential victimization, given the small number of participants who were students or had no work. Nevertheless, participants who were in fieldwork showed more potential victimization on social networks and close relationship dynamics than those who were in office work $t(343) = 2.129$, $p < .04$. This can be explained by being exposed to many pull factors (such as disagreement, bullying, conflict, tension, anger, disrespect, power use) provoking unsafe social behaviors when working in the field. Likewise, the income level (low, middle, high, n.a.) affected potential victimization $F(3, 436)$

= 2.715, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. According to the Scheffe Post Hoc test, participants with low income showed more potential victimization than middle income ($p<.05$). This result is congruent with the study of Wohlfarth *et al*. (2001) who found that being victimized was significantly higher among unemployed people (with low income).

Table (8): Distribution of respondents across the four general victimization factors, by susceptibility to victimization quartile.

Factor	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)	Very High (%)
Social network and close relationship dynamics	8.4	42.0	40.5	9.1
	Positive communication and trust, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts. Strong, supportive relationships; minimal exposure to risky behaviors and persons; sustainable and available social resources.	Some supportive relationships, occasional exposure to risky behaviors or individuals, moderate availability of social resources, and moderate ability to resolve conflicts.	Involvement in conflictual relationships, abuse, or coercion; limited supportive networks.	Isolation; heavy dependence on high-risk relationships; association with criminal or abusive networks.
Psychological and Mental Health	7.0	35.5	45.2	12.3
	High self-esteem and self-worth; excellent emotional regulation; low social isolation; strong risk recognition; robust access to support systems.	Moderate self-esteem and emotional regulation; occasional feelings of isolation; fair risk recognition; access to some support systems.	Low self-esteem and self-worth, poor emotional regulation, significant social isolation, limited risk recognition, and minimal access to support systems.	Extremely low self-esteem; inability to regulate emotions; chronic social isolation; little to no risk recognition; no access to support.
Situational Factors	18.0	53.0	25.5	3.6
	Strong awareness of surroundings; excellent or good risk assessment skills; clear personal boundaries; consistent risk avoidance; well-prepared for emergencies.	Moderate awareness of surroundings and risk assessment; occasional lapses in personal boundaries; some effort in risk avoidance and emergency preparation.	Limited awareness of surroundings and weak risk assessment; frequent boundary violations; irregular risk avoidance; inadequate emergency preparedness.	Minimal awareness of surroundings; poor risk assessment; no personal boundaries; no risk avoidance strategies; completely unprepared for emergencies.
Victim Perception	23.2	53.0	20.0	3.9
	Strong awareness of self-vulnerability; high self-efficacy and empowerment; excellent or good risk perception.	Moderate awareness of self-vulnerability; fair self-efficacy and empowerment; occasional lapses in risk perception.	Limited awareness of self-vulnerability, low self-efficacy, and poor risk perception.	Minimal awareness of self-vulnerability; no self-efficacy; inability to perceive risks effectively.
Potential Victimization – General Personal Habits and Lifestyle (Total score)	8.2	63.2	25.9	2.7



Distribution by level Mean distribution

Figure (4): Distribution of the sample's potential victimization according to the PVST_part_1.

Table (9): Country's descriptive statistics.

Factor	Country	N	Mean	SD
General Personal Habits and Lifestyle (Total score)				
	A	126	43.25	11.317
	B	84	42.35	8.307
	C	126	38.83	8.482
	D	104	47.53	12.207
Social network and close relationship dynamics				
	A	126	46.27	11.193
	B	84	45.12	10.215
	C	126	46.87	11.592
	D	104	53.75	12.404
Psychological and Mental Health				
	A	126	23.99	7.109
	B	84	25.20	6.688
	C	126	23.92	6.571
	D	104	29.75	8.311
Situational Factors				
	A	126	41.71	11.559
	B	84	38.89	9.510
	C	126	33.49	8.644
	D	104	43.08	12.046
Victim Perception				
	A	126	37.80	10.855
	B	84	37.30	6.589
	C	126	30.59	7.117
	D	104	39.42	11.634

* To maintain confidentiality and anonymity while reducing geographic bias, the four countries are designated as Country A, B, C, and D. This procedure allows the analysis to focus on behavioral dynamics along with structural variables rather than on specific political or cultural reputations of the countries examined.

Examining the effect of the nature of work interactions (interaction with familiar persons, interaction with unfamiliar persons) on potential victimization revealed that those who interacted with familiar persons were more likely to be victimized than those who interacted with unfamiliar persons ($t(343) = 2.524$, $p < .02$), due to their victim perception vulnerability (inadequate evaluation of personal risk factors). Overconfidence in familiar people, underestimating personal risk factors, and weak personal boundaries with others can explain this result.

Additionally, facing financial difficulties made participants more vulnerable to potential victimization at the level of General Personal Habits and Lifestyle [$t(438) = 1.972$, $p < .05$], social network and close relationship dynamics [$t(438) = 3.161$, $p < .002$], and mental health-related habits [$t(438) = 2.349$, $p < .02$]. Likewise, participants who had experienced recent changes in their financial situation, such as a loss of income, showed greater vulnerability to potential victimization related to social network and close relationship dynamics than those who had not [$t(438) = 1.982$, $p < .05$]. Financial difficulties may be a strong factor leading to destabilizing social relationships and dynamics, as well as mental health issues. These difficulties associated with potential victimization may stem from an association between unemployment and being a graduate (Wohlfarth *et al*., 2001).

Although no effect of the health status on potential victimization was observed, unavailability of healthcare services led to maladaptive habits related to social network and close relationship dynamics [$t(438) = 3.262$, $p < .001$], mental health [$t(438) = 3.253$, $p < .001$], and General Personal Habits and Lifestyle [$t(438) = 3.047$, $p < .002$]. Previous research confirmed that health problems and

the unavailability of healthcare services were associated with victimization.

Access to legal resources as a determinant of the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization

Participants who did not have access to legal resources and services were more vulnerable than those who had this access in General Personal Habits and Lifestyle [$t(438) = 4.137$, $p < .001$], social network and close relationship dynamics [$t(438) = 4.916$, $p < .001$], mental health [$t(438) = 2.127$, $p < .04$], situational factors [$t(438) = 3.566$, $p < .001$], and victim perception [$t(438) = 2.528$, $p < .02$]. Previous studies had shown a significant association between weak legal awareness or access to legal resources and victimization (Carroll, 2022; Gezinski & Gonzalez-Pons, 2022). Without access to legal resources and services, individuals are less informed about their rights and obligations, unaware of their potential vulnerability and the environmental risk factors, leading them to engage in unsafe behaviors.

Criminal record and victimization history as determinants of the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization

Due to the low number of participants (44 out of 440) with a criminal record, no effect on potential victimization was observed. Nonetheless, victimization history (examples given in the question were theft, assault, and harassment) significantly affected the potential victimization. Indeed, participants who did not have a victimization history showed higher potential victimization regarding General Personal Habits and Lifestyle [$t(438) = 3.422$, $p < .001$], mental health [$t(438) = 2.714$, $p < .007$], situational factors [$t(438) = 3.042$, $p < .002$], and victim perception [$t(438) = 3.068$, $p < .002$]. Individuals without a prior history of victimization may unexpectedly exhibit a higher potential for victimization in specific contexts due to several psychological, behavioral, and situational factors. They may underestimate the risks of harmful situations because they lack the necessary life experience or knowledge of the vulnerabilities associated with certain behaviors (e.g., a lack of precautionary behavior).

A cognitive bias that leads to the belief "bad things won't happen to me" may result in false satisfaction and increased exposure to potential threats (optimistic bias). Also, lack of prior victimization leads to limited emotional preparedness and reduced vigilance (mental health), weak situational awareness, particularly in novel risky environments, and inadequate evaluation of self-vulnerabilities and risk factors (victim perception). Conversely, prior victimization serves as an alerting system that prompts the adoption of precautionary behaviors.

In the same vein, when participants were asked whether they felt safe in their lives, those who responded “No” showed less potential victimization habits and lifestyle than those who responded “Yes” (situational factors: $t(438) = 2.380$, $p < .02$; victim perception: $t(438) = 2.213$, $p < .03$). Some common characteristics can explain the joint result of a lack of prior victimization history and feelings of safety; (1) inexperience with risk, according to which individuals lack a "protective schema"—the mental framework built from past experiences that helps identify threats and enact self-protection strategies; (2) overgeneralized sense of safety, according to which individuals have a false sense of security and are less prepared to handle the dynamics of victimization in unfamiliar or high-risk settings; (3) offender targeting, according to which individuals who appear unprepared or oblivious to risks are easy targets; (4) lack of coping mechanisms, as victimization history often builds resilience and fosters problem-solving skills for recognizing and addressing

threats; (5) relaxed behavioral patterns, according to which a strong sense of safety can lead to overconfidence in decision-making and unsafe habits; (6) reduced situational awareness, according to which feeling consistently safe often reduces the ability to perceive and respond to potential threats.

General Discussion

This paper suggested the first part of the PVST tool. It looked to answer five main questions. First, what are the reliability and validity metrics of the PVST_Part_1, and how does it help identify potential victimization through behavioral vulnerabilities? Second, how can demographic and geographic determinants affect the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization? Third, how can work, economic, and health status determinants affect behavioral vulnerabilities and the risk of potential victimization? Fourth, how can access to legal resources affect the behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization? Fifth, how can criminal record and victimization history affect behavioral vulnerabilities and potential victimization?

To answer these questions, this study started with a general assumption: we are all potential victims. This means that individuals have various behavioral vulnerabilities at different levels, making them potential victims. Habits and lifestyle are the core systems that include these vulnerabilities. Developing a tool to preventively identify habits and vulnerabilities in the Arab world bridges a significant gap in such resources.

Lifestyle exposure theory, Routine Activity Theory, the Structural Choice Model of Victimization, and the CEM model were the pivotal theoretical and conceptual explanatory frameworks. These frameworks illustrate how daily activities and habits influence the relationships between individuals and their environment, and determine the risks they may face due to their behavioral vulnerabilities (Berg & Schreck, 2022; Kwak & Kim, 2022; Lauritsen *et al*., 1991; Miethe & Meier, 1990; Rorie *et al*., 2022). They also show how cognitive, emotional, and motivational vulnerabilities define how social networks and close relationship dynamics, psychological and mental health factors, behaviors toward situational factors, and victim perception lead to victimization and increase its likelihood (Alexander, 2023; Crocker *et al*., 2013; Ebbes *et al*., 2024; Masmoudi, 2012b; Masmoudi *et al*., 2012; Masmoudi, 2025; Murayama, 2023).

This study validated PVST_Part_1, a tool designed to identify individuals' behavioral vulnerabilities through their habits and lifestyle. Validity metrics (Cronbach's alpha and CFA) demonstrated good internal reliability and structural validity, indicating that PVST_Part_1 is a reliable tool for helping individuals identify behavioral vulnerabilities in their habits and lifestyles. The model's factors were grounded in studies providing evidence of their effects on victimization (Allison *et al*., 2005; Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Calvete *et al*., 2022; Harris, 2020; Lemieux & Felson, 2012; Ran *et al*., 2023). The distribution of respondents across levels of the four general victimization factors showed that most participants had moderate to high potential susceptibility to victimization, which is a significant alert that underscores the urgent need to guide individuals to adopt new preventive/protective habits and lifestyles, or adjust existing ones.

Results also emphasized an undeniable fact: individuals do not give the necessary attention to their micro-behaviors (i.e., small and subtle actions, expressions, or patterns of behavior that occur in everyday interactions with persons and situations; while they may seem insignificant on their own, they can together

have a significant impact on communication, relationships, and social dynamics).

Potential victimization seems to be influenced by some demographic attributes. Structural conditions seem to negatively affect potential victimization through the financial difficulties of people, unemployment, the unavailability of healthcare services, and the lack of access to legal resources and services. The absence of "framing" structures and conditions in the environment increases the likelihood of individual victimization.

The study also highlighted a counterintuitive fact: when the situation becomes familiar, individuals interacting with familiar people, who have no history of victimization and feel safe, are more likely to be victimized, based on their behavioral vulnerabilities. This finding is explained by overconfidence, optimistic bias, failure to adopt precautionary measures, limited emotional preparedness, reduced vigilance, and weak situational awareness.

Preventive measures and protective behaviors must be adopted in everyday life and incorporated into habits and lifestyles. Such measures include communication and trust, conflict resolution, support and safety, emotional regulation, social connection, risk recognition, and access to support. They also involve awareness of vulnerability, self-efficacy, empowerment, and risk perception.

Limitations and future directions

As a first limitation, this study did not allow comparison with similar tools because finding tools with a similar structure and focus was difficult. Regarding the lack of reliable effects of age, gender, and country, the study was limited by small sample sizes in some age groups, the within-group variability, and unequal group sizes. To show the effect of these variables on the susceptibility to victimization through unsafe behaviors, future work will address these issues. In the same vein, the study will enhance its generalizability by using random sampling and expanding the sample to include additional participants. Moreover, conducting the study with representative victim samples of different kinds of victimization will serve as behavioral key references.

Conclusion

Preventing potential victims from being victimized is a key action in both victimology and crime prevention. The Potential Victim Screening Tool (PVST_Part_1) is a set of personal characteristics and behavioral indicators that can be used to identify individuals at specific levels of victimization susceptibility (low, medium, high, and very high) for becoming crime victims. With good reliability and strong structural validity, this tool can be used for self-assessment. It identifies habits that are vulnerable, unsafe, and in need of improvement. It can also help individuals, decision-makers, law enforcement agencies, social service organizations, and community groups identify, prevent, and reduce victimization. The two major findings of this study were: (1) individuals do not give the necessary attention to their vulnerable behaviors and micro-behaviors, and constructive behaviors that should be maintained in everyday life to guarantee positive social networks and relationship dynamics, balanced psychological and mental health, some alertness about situational factors, and upholding a strong self-awareness and perception of self-potential risks, particularly in familiar situations and when they are not victimized in the past; (2) some personal characteristics, such as access to legal services, are significant determinants of potential victimization in terms of adopting unsafe behaviors. As we are all potential victims, we all need some guidance. PVST_Part_2 results are under analysis and scheduled for publication by the end of 2026.

Disclosure Statement

- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** This research received ethical approval under the reference number NAUSS-REC-24-15 from the Standing Committee for Scientific Research Ethics of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences. Participants received standardized instructions and were informed that their responses would remain confidential. Participation was fully anonymized, and participants were required to complete and accept a consent form.
- **Availability of Data and Materials:** The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.
- **Authors' Contributions:** All authors listed have contributed to the work and approved it for publication. The authors worked collaboratively in an organized manner. Slim Masmoudi designed the tool, wrote the paper, analyzed the data, and discussed the results. Wadhah Alheni participated in designing the tool and writing the paper, distributing the survey, recruiting researchers/investigators, and collecting data. Qazi Emad Ul Haq was responsible for proofreading and preparing the manuscript for publication.
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