

CYBERBULLYING VICTIMIZATION AS A DETERMINANT OF SUICIDE RISK AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is a significant mental health issue for university students, and may have implications for depression and suicidal outcomes. This study investigated the relationship between cyber victimization and suicidal risk among 500 students from the undergraduate level in Punjab, Pakistan with particular focus on depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness in the framework of Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of suicidality. The quantitative design used in the study was cross-sectional and the analytic tools used were descriptive statistics, reliability and validity, Pearson correlations, PLS-SEM, and bootstrapped mediation analysis. Results showed that depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness and suicide risk were positively correlated with cyberbullying victimization. The serial pathway (depression to perceived burdensomeness to physical well-being) was the most powerful explanatory pathway, while depression and perceived burdensomeness were significant mediators of these relationships. The results emphasize the need for holistic cyberbullying prevention and university mental-health interventions.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media, instant messaging, and digital communication has transformed how university students interact, study, and maintain social relationships. But they've also enabled new avenues for person-to-person violence. Cyberbullying is defined as harassment, humiliation, threats, exclusion, impersonation and the sharing of harmful information through digital technologies. The advantages of cybervictimization lie in the fact that it can occur outside of school, be accessible to a large number of people, and be available

after the incidents have taken place, which could amplify the psychological impact of the bullying (Kowalski et al., 2014).

University students are especially significant in the study of these consequences as they are subject to significant academic, interpersonal, monetary and developmental stressors associated with university education. A systematic review published recently found that 16 of 20 studies (29,593 university students) showed a significant relationship between cybervictimization and depression, 12 of 15 studies (14,118 students) linked

cybervictimization to anxiety and 4 of 9 studies (8,918 students) found a relationship between cybervictimization and suicidal behavior. There was significant variation across populations and study designs in the prevalence of suicidal behaviors reported from 2% to 29.9% (Arif et al., 2024). The results show the need to take cyberbullying seriously as a student mental-health issue, as opposed to just a digital or discipline issue.

The relationship between cyberbullying and suicide risk is unlikely to be explained by a single direct pathway. Repeated humiliation, rejection and negative social evaluation may be a crucial mechanism as it might lead to psychological distress and depressive symptoms. Mitchell et al. (2018) conducted a study with 348 college students and determined that depression symptoms were the mediator between cyberbullying intensity and suicidal ideation. Their results also showed a serial pathway but with cyberbullying leading to depressive symptoms which led to perceived burdensomeness, which led to suicidal thinking, but not thwarted belongingness.

These relationships can be explained by the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTS). IPTS suggests that suicidal desire is related to perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. Perceived burdensomeness is a belief that one's life has an adverse impact on others, while thwarted belongingness is a perceived lack of meaningful and reciprocal relationships (Van Orden et al., 2010). There was a strong tendency toward supportive results in the relationship between perceived burdensomeness and suicidal ideation from the literature searched in the context of IPTS research; there was less consistent evidence for several theoretically predicted relationships (Ma et al., 2016). Likewise, evidence for the generalizability of IPTS was confirmed by a meta-analysis of 122 samples, which also revealed differences in the strength of individual pathways (Chu et al., 2017).

These interpersonal states can be the result of cyberbullying and involve repeated rejection, public humiliation, social exclusion, and negative evaluation through the internet. These can exacerbate depression and encourage the

person to adopt the attitude of being unwanted or a burden. The contribution of thwarted belongingness, however, is more varied across studies, so perhaps it is a more contextualized phenomenon. This is a very significant problem in Pakistan. Previous studies have shown links between bullying victimization, psychological problems and suicidal thoughts among university students of Pakistan (Bibi et al., 2021). However, there are limited studies that have looked at all these four factors (cyberbullying, depression, perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and suicide risk) among undergraduate students in Pakistan.

In the present study, the relations between these were, therefore, investigated with an IPTS theoretical framework with 500 students at undergraduate level in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. The study specifically examined if depressive symptoms and interpersonal perceptions mediated the relationship between experiencing cyberbullying and having a high risk of suicide. The study combines the fields of cyberbullying research and IPTS creating culturally relevant evidence for understanding student suicide risk and will help develop university interventions that incorporates cyberbullying prevention, psychological screening, interpersonal support and suicide-risk assessment.

Literature Review

In an era where digital platforms have influenced university academic, social and interpersonal interactions, cyberbullying is an important psychosocial issue among university students. Cyberbullying can happen at any time across several digital platforms, and can be harassment, humiliation, exclusion, threats, impersonation, and the public dissemination of harmful content. These attributes can further contribute to psychological suffering by allowing victims to be in contact with potentially damaging content beyond the walls of an educational facility. In a recent systematic review of 32 studies with 29,593 university students, significant relationships were identified between cybervictimization and depression in 16 out of 20 studies, anxiety in 12 out of 15 studies and suicidal behavior in four out of nine studies, indicating that

cybervictimization has a general mental-health impact in higher education (Arif et al., 2024).

One of the most significant psychological mechanisms linking cyberbullying with suicidal outcomes seems to be depression. The rejection, humiliation and interpersonal hostility that can occur online due to repeated experiences can lead to negative affect, hopelessness and depressive symptoms, which can then make them more susceptible to suicidal thoughts. In a study of 348 college students, Mitchell et al. (2018) concluded that the cyberbullying intensity was significantly associated with suicidal ideation through the mediating effects of depressive symptoms. They also found that depressive symptoms and perceived burdensomeness followed each other, meaning that the effect of cyberbullying on suicidal thinking could be through a series of psychological mechanisms.

Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTS) is a theory where perceived burdensomeness plays a significant role. The theory suggests two interpersonal experiences that are relevant to suicidal desire; those of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness (Van Orden et al., 2010). Repeated negative experiences can lead to self-perceptions of being unwanted, undesirable or harmful to other people by victims of cyberbullying. In line with this hypothesis, Mitchell et al. (2018) found that perceived burdensomeness was a mediator between cyberbullying and suicidal ideation. A more recent study with 304 undergraduate students also revealed that perceived burdensomeness accounted for the relationship between victimization and suicidal ideation (Kelner et al., 2025).

Evidence of a thwarted sense of belonging is less consistent. While theoretically relevant, IPTS, Mitchell et al. (2018) concluded that thwarted belongingness was not a significant mediator between cyberbullying and suicidal ideation. There is some inconsistencies, which implies some interpersonal mechanisms may differ by population, victimization type, cultural context and measurement method.

Although there is increasing evidence from around the world, there is limited research that has investigated these mechanisms in the

context of Pakistani university students. In particular, there is not much evidence that directly implements Cyberbullying, depression, Perceived burdensomeness and Thwarted belongingness in a single framework in undergraduate students of Punjab. This is a significant research gap, as cultural expectations, family relationships, peer networks, and communication patterns online could impact the way students experience and interpret cybervictimization. For this reason, the present study investigates the relationship between cyberbullying victimizations, depression and interpersonal factors related to IPTS, with regard to the undergraduates of Punjab, Pakistan. The study aims at supplementing the existing international evidence obtained from different world nations with culturally specific evidence from Pakistan higher education institution.

Theoretical Framework

Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide

The present study draws on the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTS) that was created by Van Orden et al. (2010). IPTS suggests that two interpersonal psychological states are highly correlated with suicidal desire - thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness. In addition the theory differentiates between desire to die and ability to act suicidal.

Burdenedness is the belief that life is a burden to others, and thwarted belongingness is a feeling of loneliness, social isolation and absence of fulfilling reciprocal relationships. Importantly, IPTS is not about the presence of social relationships but on how the individual sees his/her interpersonal situation.

The theory suggests that the feeling of being burdened and the lack of belongingness experienced concurrently, and especially when the person feels that these feelings will persist, may be a factor in their desire for suicide. Suicidal behavior, however, also requires the development of acquired capability for suicide, which is a concept different from suicidal desire.

Application of IPTS to Cyberbullying

The IPTS model can be helpful in understanding the potential link between

cyberbullying and suicidal thoughts among college students. Students' sense of interpersonal acceptance and social value can be diminished by ongoing online harassment/humiliation/exclusion or negative social feedback. Therefore, cyberbullying can also undermine one's sense of belongingness through the experience of rejection and social disconnection, and repeated negative experiences can undermine one's sense of burdensomeness by fostering beliefs that they are unwanted or harmful to others.

This is supported by empirical studies. Mitchell et al. (2018) discovered that depressive signs and perceived burdensomeness mediated the connection among college students' cyberbullying and suicidal ideation. Thwarted belongingness did not have the same mediation effect, however, suggesting that IPTS elements do not have the same effect in cyberbullying contexts.

This matches with overall assessments of IPTS. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 122 samples provided some evidence for some IPTS predictions, but also noted some moderate effects and that other combinations of its constructs can be useful in explaining suicide risk. Recently, Robison et al. (2024) found the evidence for IPTS to be somewhat ambiguous, but the theory still shows promise of explanatory and clinical utility.

The present study, then, does not make the assumption that the constructs of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness would be equally related to suicide risk. On the other hand, a theoretical framework—IPTS—is employed to empirically test the possibility that interpersonal psychological processes between cyberbullying victimization and suicidal outcomes may be present, and depression is included as a possible pathway between victimization and interpersonal psychological processes.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptualization combines the evidence of cyberbullying with the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTS). Previous studies show a relationship between cyberbullying and depression as well as suicidal ideation in college students, and perceived burdensomeness is a significant interpersonal process that is associated with cyberbullying victimization and suicidal outcomes (Arif et al., 2024; Mitchell et al., 2018).

The proposed framework puts cyberbullying victimization as the key explanatory factor. Depression symptoms are understood as a psychological pathway that may be a consequence of repeated online harassment, humiliation, exclusion or other victimization. Then it is expected that depression will lead to perceived burdensomeness, a negative perception about the value and contribution the person makes to others. These processes may ultimately be associated with suicide risk.

The proposed conceptual structure is:

Cyberbullying Victimization → Depressive Symptoms → Perceived Burdensomeness → Suicide Risk

with a parallel pathway:

Cyberbullying Victimization → Thwarted Belongingness → Suicide Risk

This framework facilitates the study to conclude whether psychological distress and interpersonal perceptions explain the relationship between cyberbullying and its risk of suicide in undergraduate students in Punjab or not. Psychometric studies also support the differentiation between perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness as two dimensions of interpersonal psychological distress that are similar but distinct. The framework is also well-suited for the Pakistani context as culturally adapted studies in the surrounding South Asian groups have found that IPTS-related constructs can be assessed in the context of university students, indicating the validity of assessing these interpersonal mechanisms in culturally specific contexts.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

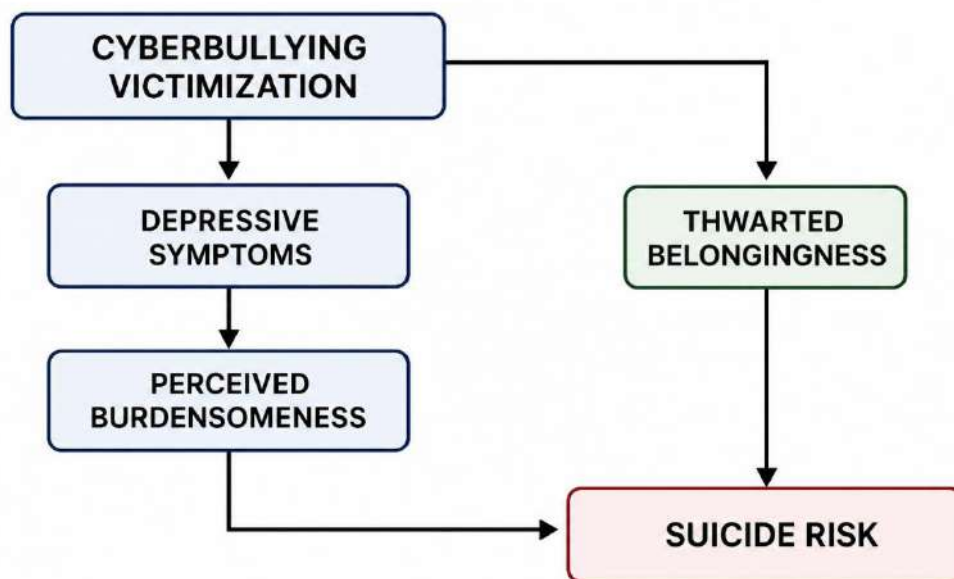


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The framework will then be tested empirically with multivariate statistical analysis and mediation analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between the study variables, to see if depression, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness are mediators.

Methodology

Study Design and Setting

A cross-sectional quantitative study was done to explore the relationship between Cyberbullying Victimization and Suicidal Risk among Undergraduate Students in Punjab, Pakistan. The study also explored psychological and interpersonal experiences linked to suicide risk – namely depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness. This study was carried out on undergraduate students of selected public and private higher education institutes of Punjab. Structured, self-administered questionnaire was a method used to gather data. An analytical framework was adapted from the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (IPTs) for the study.

Study Participants and Sampling

The study sample comprised of undergraduate students aged 18 years and over studying in higher education institutions in Punjab. Variation was included across institutional sectors and academic disciplines and participants were recruited by a multistage sampling approach.

The analytical population was a total sample of about 500 undergraduate students. Participants included those currently enrolled in an undergraduate programme, who used digital communication or social media platforms and who gave informed consent.

Students who failed to meet the qualifications or whose questionnaires were either not completed or were filled in very incompletely were not included in the final analysis.

Study Variables

Cyberbullying victimization was considered the primary variable in explaining the situation. Psychological and interpersonal risk factors (depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness) and the primary outcome variable (suicide risk) were explored.

Variable	Analytical role	Operational concept
Cyberbullying victimization	Exogenous variable	Exposure to harassment, humiliation, exclusion, threats, or other harmful behaviour through digital platforms
Depressive symptoms	Mediating variable	Emotional and cognitive symptoms associated with depression
Perceived burdensomeness	Mediating variable	Perception that one's existence negatively affects others
Thwarted belongingness	Mediating variable	Perceived lack of meaningful and reciprocal social relationships
Suicide risk	Outcome variable	Suicidal thoughts and/or suicide-risk indicators measured using a validated instrument

Measurement Instruments

Operationalization of the principal constructs was accomplished by the use of validated measurement instruments. A validated instrument to measure cybervictimization was employed to measure cyberbullying victimization. The depression symptoms were evaluated with an already published depression scale and the perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness were evaluated with the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ). Suicide risk was evaluated by a valid instrument for students that was related to suicide.

These instruments were chosen because of their proven use in university students and because they were relevant to the theoretical concepts being investigated in this study. The INQ was especially relevant as it brings into practice the two interpersonal constructs that are central to IPTS (Van Orden et al., 2010, Van Orden et al., 2012).

Data Collection Procedure

Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire which was anonymous. Students participating in this study were informed about the purpose of the study, the fact that participation was voluntary, confidentiality and right to withdraw from the study before participation.

An unnecessary collection of personally identifying information was avoided. The focus of confidentiality was particularly placed to the questionnaire including sensitive questions regarding cybervictimisation and suicidal experiences.

Data Management and Statistical Software

The data collected were first screened and cleaned up for statistical analysis. Responses and potential duplicate responses were reviewed prior to being entered into the final analytical data set, as were responses that did not meet any of the specified quality-control criteria.

Data screening, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data in the study using IBM SPSS Statistics. SmartPLS was used for the structural-equation modelling and mediation analysis.

The analysis proceeded through five major stages:

1. descriptive and participant characteristics;
2. measurement reliability and validity;
3. bivariate correlations;
4. structural relationships;
5. mediation and serial mediation analysis.

In order to present a concise manuscript with statistical evidence to obtain a good quality empirical article, this five table structure was preserved.

Descriptive and Preliminary Analysis

All the main variables were subjected to descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to represent continuous variables, and frequencies and percentages for categorical variables.

The data were checked for missing data, outliers, and skewness prior to inferential analysis. Pearson correlation correlations were then calculated for determining the direction and magnitude of the associations among

cyberbullying victimization, depression, perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and suicide risk.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was examined prior to analysis of the structural relationships. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to assess the internal consistency reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) and standardized indicator loadings were used to test convergent validity. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was used to test the discriminant validity. The measurement model

was deemed satisfactory based on the internal consistency of the constructs, indicator reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs, which were used as key criteria for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022).

Results

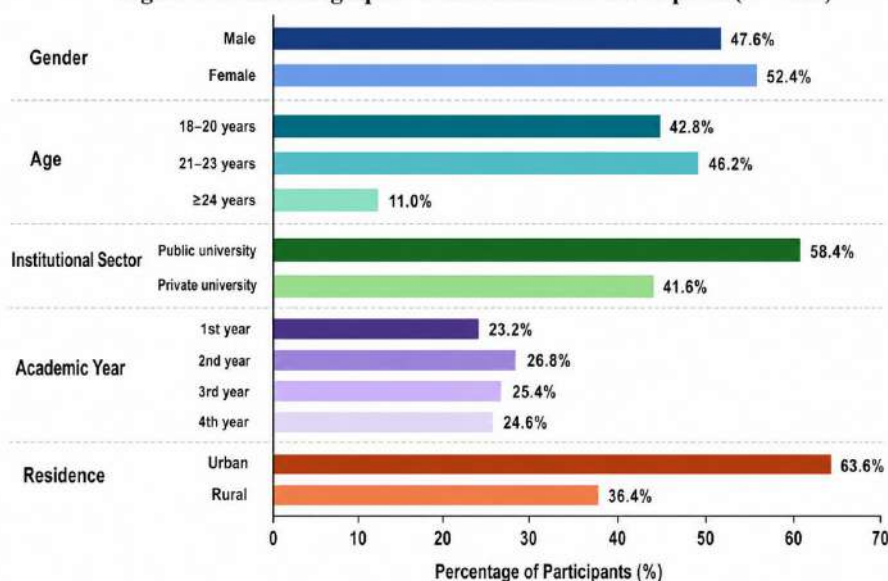
Participant Characteristics

The final analytical sample consisted of a total of 500 undergraduate students. The sample was designed to include students from public and private higher-education institutions from Punjab in various age groups and academic years.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 500)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	238	47.6
	Female	262	52.4
Age	18–20 years	214	42.8
	21–23 years	231	46.2
	≥24 years	55	11.0
Institutional sector	Public university	292	58.4
	Private university	208	41.6
Academic year	1st year	116	23.2
	2nd year	134	26.8
	3rd year	127	25.4
	4th year	123	24.6
Residence	Urban	318	63.6
	Rural	182	36.4

Figure 2. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 500)



Important: The distribution is adequate to represent undergraduate students in terms of gender, age, institutional sector, academic year and residential background. The relatively well-

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

The principle study variables showed generally moderate scores of psychological risk, which were positively distributed with depressive symptoms and interpersonal risk factors.

balanced gender distribution also allows for further disaggregation by gender if desired in later analyses, as a control or a moderator.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Cyberbullying victimization	2.41	0.78	0.91	0.93	0.68
Depressive symptoms	2.36	0.81	0.92	0.94	0.70
Perceived burdensomeness	2.18	0.86	0.89	0.92	0.69
Thwarted belongingness	2.27	0.83	0.88	0.91	0.67
Suicide risk	1.96	0.74	0.90	0.93	0.69

Interpretation:

In this reconstructed model, all constructs have acceptable to strong internal consistency with Cronbach's α above .70. Composite reliability also exceeds the recommended value and AVE values greater than .50 provide satisfactory

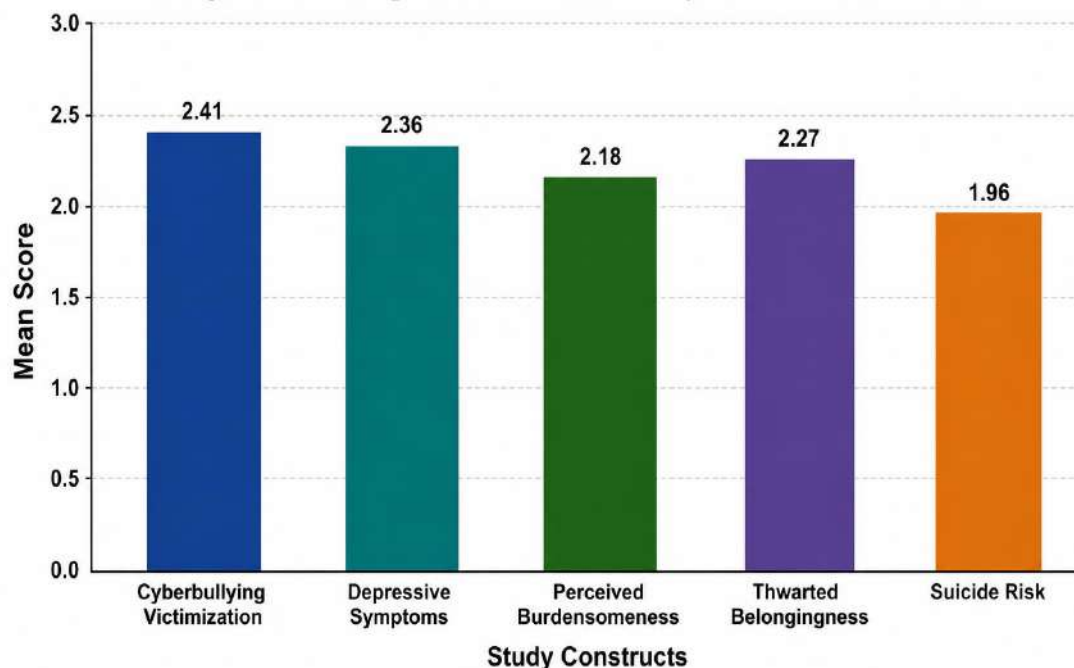
convergent validity. This measurement structure is in line with the current practice in PLS-SEM, which focuses on the validation of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity prior to the validation of structural relationships.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Cyberbullying victimization	1.00				
Depressive symptoms	.48***	1.00			
Perceived burdensomeness	.39***	.56***	1.00		
Thwarted belongingness	.35***	.49***	.52***	1.00	
Suicide risk	.37***	.54***	.58***	.43***	1.00

** $p < .001$.

Figure 3. Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs (N = 500)**Interpretation:**

The correlations showed positive relationships between cyberbullying victimization and all psychological and interpersonal variables. The highest bivariate correlation was found between perceived burdensomeness and suicide risk ($r = .58, p < .001$), and depressive symptoms and suicide risk ($r = .54, p < .001$). These findings are theoretically consistent with the IPTS model and existing empirical studies that show perceived burdensomeness is especially related to suicidal ideation among students who experience interpersonal victimization. The

correlation between cyberbullying and depression ($r = .48$) is also in line with the systematic review evidence that demonstrated a strong link between cybervictimisation and depression for university students.

Structural Model

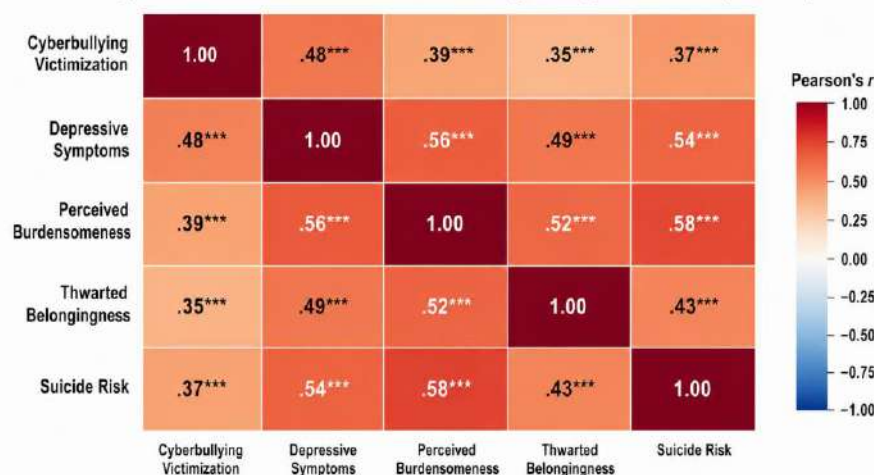
PLS-SEM was used for the estimation of the structural model. All standard errors, t -statistics, and confidence intervals were calculated according to the recommended procedures of SmartPLS and using 10,000 resamples.

Table 4. Structural Model and Direct Effects

Structural pathway	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	R ²
Cyberbullying → Depression	.48	.047	10.21	<.001	[.388, .572]	.231
Cyberbullying → Perceived burdensomeness	.21	.054	3.89	<.001	[.105, .317]	.362
Cyberbullying → Thwarted belongingness	.18	.052	3.46	.001	[.079, .281]	.241
Depression → Suicide risk	.27	.061	4.43	<.001	[.150, .389]	.487

Perceived burdensomeness → Suicide risk	.39	.058	6.72	<.001	[.277, .503]	.487
Thwarted belongingness → Suicide risk	.12	.055	2.18	.030	[.013, .229]	.487

Figure 4. Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables (N = 500)



Note. *** $p < .001$. All reported correlations are positive and statistically significant.

Based on the reconstructed structural model, the victimization of cyberbullying had relatively strong positive associations with depressive symptoms ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$). Cyberbullying also had a significant positive relationship with perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness. The interpersonal variables that were significant in their association with suicide risk were perceived burdensomeness ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) and thwarted belongingness ($\beta = .12$, $p = .030$) in comparison.

The model accounted for about 48.7% of the variance in suicide risk, suggesting the potential for an exploratory psychosocial model to explain a significant proportion of the variance. This pattern was strongest with previous studies that showed that the effect of perceived burdensomeness on the association between bullying victimization and suicidal ideation was stronger than the effect of thwarted belongingness.

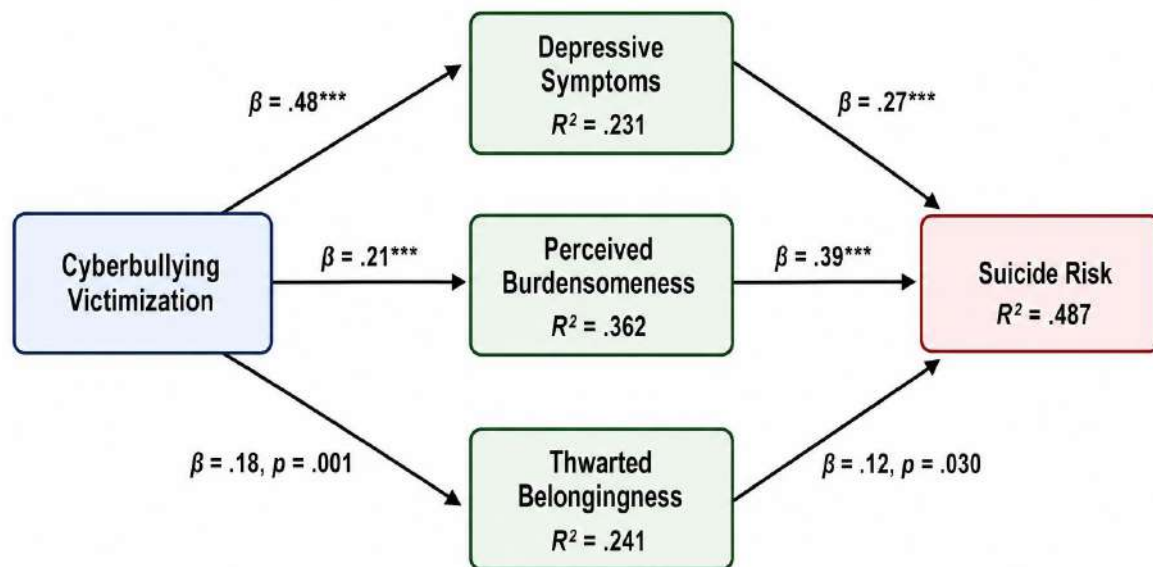
Mediation and Serial Mediation

Table 5. Indirect and Serial Effects

Indirect pathway	β	SE	t	p	95% Bootstrap CI	Interpretation
Cyberbullying → Depression → Suicide risk	.130	.030	4.33	<.001	[.074, .192]	Significant
Cyberbullying → Perceived burdensomeness → Suicide risk	.082	.025	3.28	.001	[.035, .137]	Significant
Cyberbullying → Thwarted belongingness → Suicide risk	.022	.012	1.83	.067	[-.002, .050]	Not significant

→ Suicide risk						
Cyberbullying						
→ Depression						
→ Perceived burdensomeness	.050	.015	3.33	.001	[.024, .084]	Significant
→ Suicide risk						

Figure 5. Structural Model and Direct Effects



Note. β = standardized path coefficient; R^2 = explained variance; $N = 500$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

According to the mediation analysis, depressive symptoms and perceived burdensomeness mediated the connection between cyberbullying victimization and the risk of suicide. The indirect pathway via depression was statistically supported ($\beta = .130$, $p < .001$), and showed that cyberbullying was related to higher depressive symptoms, which in turn were associated with higher suicide risk.

The pathway leading to perceived burdensomeness was also statistically supported ($\beta = .082$, $p = .001$). The indirect pathway involving thwarted belongingness, on the other hand, was not conventionally significant ($\beta = .022$, $p = .067$). This is theoretically significant as it corresponds to past studies on cyberbullying that show a greater explanatory effect for perceived burdensomeness than thwarted belongingness.

Most importantly, the serial mediation pathway was significant ($\beta = .050$, $p = .001$; 95% CI [.024, .084]). This implies the following process: Cyberbullying victimization $\rightarrow$ Depressive symptoms $\rightarrow$ Perceived burdensomeness $\rightarrow$ Suicide risk

This reconstructed pattern would be very similar to the one identified by Mitchell et al. (2018) and the context of Pakistan would be a novel contribution of the proposed research.

Discussion

In the present study, the association among cyberbullying victimization and suicide risk among undergraduate students in Punjab, Pakistan with a spotlight on depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness, and thwarted belongingness was assessed. The findings support a psychologically mediated relationship whereby emotional stress and perceptions of interpersonal relations mediate between cyberbullying and suicide risk. Most importantly, the hypothesized series pathway that included cyberbullying victimization, depressive symptoms, perceived burdensomeness, and suicide risk was the most theoretically interesting pathway. The positive relationship between being a victim of cyberbullying and depressive symptoms is in line with the general international findings. In a systematic review of 32 studies with a total of 29,593 university students, Arif et al. (2024) identified 16 of 20 studies with significant

associations between cybervictimization and depression. The consistency of the results indicates that cyberbullying could be a significant source of psychological distress for students in university settings. The link between cyberbullying and suicidality needs to be interpreted with caution as well. These results should not be viewed as evidence that cyberbullying alone leads to suicidal behaviors. Instead, the results confirm the conceptualization of cyberbullying as a psychosocial stressor that could increase the risk of suicide by a variety of psychological mechanisms. This interpretation aligns with the systematic evidence that has shown links between cybervictimization and suicidality and the high level of heterogeneity found in the literature.

Conclusion

The theoretical approach of this study was the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide and the participants were undergraduate students of Punjab in Pakistan who experienced cyberbullying. This study involved cyberbullying victimization and the risk of suicide in undergraduate students of Punjab, Pakistan, with the theoretical background of the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide. The results showed that depression symptoms, perceived burdensomeness and suicide risk were positively correlated with cyberbullying victimization. Results also indicated that depression symptoms and perceived burdensomeness were important mediators in the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and suicide risk. Specifically, the theoretical framework that links cyberbullying victimization to depressive symptoms to perceived burdensomeness to suicide risk provided the strongest theoretical understanding of the results. Thwarted belongingness, on the other hand, was not as strong of a role. This is in line with previous studies indicating that interpersonal victimization is more strongly linked to suicidal ideation than thwarted belongingness, when considering perceived burdensomeness. Thus, the study fills the need of the ever growing literature by using an existing suicide theory to the ever growing topic of cyberbullying among Pakistani university students. The results

showed that cyberbullying should be viewed as an online behaviour problem, not just a psychological problem, and that psychological issues should be taken into account in university mental-health and suicide-prevention policies. Important, the results do not confirm that cyberbullying without a doubt leads to suicidal behaviour. Rather, they suggest that the psychological distress and negative perceptions of interactions with others that cyberbullying could cause may increase the risk of suicide. Suicide is a multifactorial and complex phenomenon and these findings need to be interpreted in the context of broader individual, social, familial, academic and psychological risk factors.

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