

Evaluating the role of Poly-Victimization and Perceived Social Support in Suicidal Ideation Among University Students in Lahore, Pakistan

Arsha Noor

arshanoor511@gmail.com

BS Criminology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Muhammad Irfan

irfa5248@gmail.com

BS Criminology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab

Abdullah Chaudhary

abdullah.ch11000@gmail.com

BS Criminology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab

Iqra Afzal

iqra46093@gmail.com

BS Sociology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab

Abdullah Sardar

abdullahsarddaar@gmail.com

BS Sociology, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab

Corresponding Author: Arsha Noor arshanoor511@gmail.com

Received: 14-02-2026

Revised: 26-02-2026

Accepted: 12-03-2026

Published: 27-03-2026

ABSTRACT

The issue of suicidal ideation and self-harm behavior among university students has become a public health problem in Pakistan. The present study focused on the relationship among experiences of poly-victimization, perceived social support and suicidal ideation among University students in Lahore. The design for this survey was quantitative, cross-sectional, and the tools used to collect the data included standardized instruments that assessed the victimization experiences, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation. The results showed that perceived social support was negatively associated with suicidal ideation while poly-victimization was positively associated with suicidal ideation. Additionally, regression analysis showed that both victimization experiences and perceived social support were significant predictors of suicidal ideation, suggesting that victimization was a risk factor and that social support was a protective factor. Overall, there was little evidence of gender differences in the study variables, but some differences were found with specific types of victimization. The results support the Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, the General Strain Theory, and the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, highlighting the need to focus on victimization experiences to prevent internalization of suicidal thoughts and increase social support networks to buffer the impact of victimization experiences on the development of suicidal ideation among university students. Overall, the study sheds light on the importance of implementing mental health programs in universities, providing trauma-informed support services, and promoting mental health education and prevention strategies to create a safer school environment and enhance students' mental health in Pakistan.

Keywords: suicidal ideation, poly-victimization, perceived social support, university students, Lahore, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Suicide is an incredibly harmful and saddening occurrences in society. Globally, suicide is third-leading cause of death among 15-29 years olds (World Health Organization: WHO, 2025). The Dawn News states that in Pakistan, 15 to 35 people commit suicide on a daily basis (Rehman & Haque, 2020). There are some studies suggesting that suicide is an under-reported phenomenon in Pakistan and many cases are reported as accidents, natural death or simply not reported because of social, cultural and legal taboos (Asad et al., 2022). In Pakistan, 77.5% of the reported cases are from Punjab and 67.5% of the cases are of students (Imran et al., 2022). This also means that University students are one of the most vulnerable groups, as they face academic pressure, loneliness, lack of guidance, family conflicts, relationship issues and mental health issues (Malik et al., 2025). Number of students in Lahore, Punjab exceeds 300,000 (Hussain, n.d.). Recently, a 22-year-old fifth semester pharm-D student from the University of Lahore (UOL) took his own life on 19 December 2025 (Dawn, 2025). On 5th January 2026 (Dawn, 2026), a 21 year old first semester student of Pharm-D at UOL tried to commit suicide. A 22-year-old 5th semester student of Institute of Education and Research (IER) at the Punjab University (PU) took her own life in a university hostel on 13th October 2024 (Dawn, 2024). Another student of the PU took her life in the sports hostel of the university in 2014 (Girl Commits Suicide in PU Hostel, n.d.). Moreover, there are about 34% of medical students reported suicidal ideations, with 21.6% experiencing frequent suicidal thoughts (Jaffar & Khalid, 2025).

Eze et al. (2019) suggest that those bullied who rate their social support as low will have a stronger desire to commit suicide than those who rate their social support as supportive. In other studies, this argument was made and found to be supported by the findings, as the students who experienced peer victimization and who had higher perceived social support, reported lower levels of suicidal ideation, than students who had lower perceived social support (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010). Though the relationship between the victimization experiences, perceived social support and suicidal ideation has been reported so far, there is a wide gap in understanding these relationships among university students in the western setting of Pakistan. Specifically, the study of moderation between different types of victimization and suicidal ideation, with the role of multidimensional perceived social support in the academic context of Lahore where children are exposed to high stress, is limited. The academic pressure, socioeconomic problems and quick social changes have become serious issues in the minds of the university students in Pakistan and suicide or suicidal thoughts have become a major concern. Victimization, especially cyber-victimisation, peer bullying, relationship victimisation and harassment is a risk factor for mental health problems and suicidal ideation that are commonly faced by students in Lahore. Social support referring to family, peers and institutions as perceived protective factors are generally accepted but there is limited study on this aspect of higher education in Pakistan.

Most of the previous studies have been conducted in the western countries and few studies have been conducted specifically with the university students of Lahore regarding the moderation or mediation of the multidimensional perceived social support between the victimization and suicidal ideation. This is a decontextualized research, making it hard to build prevention and intervention strategies for universities and policymakers. This is an important issue because the number of student suicides at universities is increasing. Research is required to determine what factors are at risk for these students. The society will have to suffer from the serious consequences if these issues are not resolved. For this reason, the current study aims to investigate the interaction among social support, victimization and suicidal thoughts in university students of Lahore.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic pressure, social indicator and personal stressors are the major contributing factors to suicidal ideation which has become the major issue especially among students of universities all over the world. The

aim of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived social support, victimization experiences and suicidal ideation as explained by Joiner's (2005) Interpersonal Theory of Suicide and Cohen and Wills' (1985) Stress-Buffering Hypothesis. This section includes literature existing on these variables with specific focus on gaps in South Asian, particularly, Pakistani context.

Many studies have established the strong relation between victimization and suicidal ideation. These are the major factors that lead to the psychological distress and suicidal thoughts among students especially the adolescents and young adults, and these relate to cyber-victimization, bullying and peer harassment. (Dorol--Beauroy-Eustache & Mishara, 2021; Van Geel et al., 2021; Galván et al., 2020). Additionally, some studies also focus on the impact of being exposed to multiple violence and the relationship between poly-victimization and psychological issues and suicidal behaviours (Haahr-Pedersen et al., 2020). Competition in universities and social hierarchy makes the university students more susceptible to experience the poly-victimization.

But in other studies, it is suggested that the perceived social support as the subjective perception of a person about someone who cares for him/her or he/she has the chance to obtain help or support from family members, peers and other important persons in his/her life is considered as a protective factor for victimization. The impact of victimization is relatively small when compared with the impact when perceived social support is relatively low among the students have less perceived support from their family, peer or institution. This shows the negative link of perceived social support and suicidal ideation (Eze et al., 2021).

The relation of victimization, perceived social support and suicidal ideation has received the growing attention. The relationship between victimization and suicidal ideation has been shown to be neutralized by perceived social support, with strong social support found to be associated with weaker victimization-suicidal thought links (Bonanno & Hymel, 2010; Galindo-Domínguez & Losada, 2023). But, there is no proper work done about which one of them is the strongest source of support in the collectivist cultures, some findings favour the family support and some studies indicate that peer support is the strongest support.

In Pakistan, student mental health has been studied based on issues of victimization and academic pressure (Nazish et al., 2023; Imran et al., 2024). There are a few studies that highlight suicidal behavior in medical as well as university students but no research has been done to combine the issues of victimization and social support. In Pakistan research is cross-sectional and it is conducted on a selected population. The research in Pakistan fails to target educational centres such as Lahore where recent incidents took place.

Even though there is a considerable amount of literature available at the international level, yet some of the gaps persist in this regard. For example, few studies have investigated the relationship between victimization, multi-dimensional perceived social support and suicidal ideation, in a single model, in non-Western and collectivist societies. Furthermore, (moderating) role of social support in the Pakistani context of higher education has not been studied yet. Lastly, there are hardly any studies that take into account the universities of Lahore due to the high level of competition prevailing in this city. The present study would attempt to address the above-mentioned gaps by studying suicidal ideation, direct and indirect effect of victimization and role of social support among the university students of Lahore.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The multi-theoretical framework used for this study includes Joiner's (2005) Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, Cohen and Will's (1985) Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, Durkheim's (1897/1951) Theory of Social Integration and Agnew's General Strain Theory. All three of these theories focus on a specific aspect of this relationship between victimization experiences and perceived social support and, when taken together, offer a fuller framework for understanding why some university students experience victimization and become suicidal as

compared to those who have strong social supports, do not. These ideas together account for the relationship between experiences of victimization, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation.

Interpersonal Theory of Suicide (Joiner, 2005)

Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide suggests that there are three major components necessary for the development of serious suicidal behavior; thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness and capability of suicide or self-harm (Van Orden et al., 2010). In this model, suicidal ideation is likely to occur when there is a lack of positive social interaction along with the perception that the person is a burden to others and when this desire is combined with a reduction in fear of harming oneself. With respect to this study, victimisation experiences (such as bullying and social exclusion or peer harassment) will be viewed as key potential sources of thwarted belongingness. Students who are repeatedly teased by peers start to feel like they don't belong in their social and/or academic environment, which decreases inter-personal relationships which are vital to preventing suicidal thoughts. Therefore, this theory provides a psychological route and direct link between victimization and suicidal thinking among university students.

The stress-buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985)

Cohen and Wills' (1985) Stress Buffering Hypothesis is a relevant concept to this study because it proposes that perceived social support has a buffering effect between the stressful event and its impact. The role of family, peers, institutions and other resources in this research is in the form of perceived social support, which provides emotional support, reduces isolation, and increases coping skills, as a moderator that influences the relationship between victimization (as a stressor) and suicidal ideation. Students who feel unsupported will experience more severe victimization and fewer supports to cope with the distress from victimization. The key concept to be investigated in the study and the focus of the hypothesis is that social support is a protective and buffering factor and not just a cumulative factor.

Theory of Social Integration (Durkheim, 1897/1951)

Emile Durkheim is credited with Classical Theory of Social Integration which states that a society's or social group's level of integration and regulation largely influence the rate of suicide in that group. Social disintegration renders an individual vulnerable and for today's University setting in which social change occurs rapidly, rendering pressure on the university academic level, which could result in a decline of the social bonds of an individual. In the Pakistani context in particular, in which the family system is traditionally a key integrative structure in the society, the loss of this structure either due to migration for studies, pressure of studies or victimisation is essentially a significant deviation from the protective norm. Durkheim's theory thus points to a wider structural framework: victimisation is not just a matter of being a victim, but of experiencing a breakdown of social ties as a result.

General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992)

The General Strain Theory of Robert Agnew is an extension of classical strain theory that takes into account the emotional effects of negative life experiences, such as victimization and academic pressure, develop negative emotions (e.g., anger, depression, hopelessness) that may lead to suicidal ideation when proper support or coping mechanisms are unavailable. It is important that General Strain Theory identifies perceived social support as one of the conditioning factors, because if students have high levels of social support, they are more able to deal with the negative emotions they are experiencing because of strain, whereas students lacking in social support are more likely to experience the negative emotions to the point where they turn to hopelessness and suicidal ideation. This theory, therefore, reinforces the buffering effect of social support that has been previously mentioned by Cohen and Wills and offers an emotion-focused relationship between

victimization and suicidal outcome. With the help of the above mentioned theories, this current study takes the concept of victimization as an important strain, victimization as an important cause of thwarted belongingness, perception of social support as an important protective factor for social integration and suicidal tendencies as an outcome of the study. This theoretical framework is particularly relevant to this study as its main focus is on the university setting of Lahore due to its diversity and multi-cultured environment.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- To examine the relationship between poly-victimization experiences and suicidal ideation among university students in Lahore, Pakistan.
- To investigate the relationship between perceived social support and suicidal ideation among university students in Lahore, Pakistan.
- To determine whether perceived social support moderates the relationship between poly-victimization experiences and suicidal ideation among university students in Lahore, Pakistan.
- To examine differences in poly-victimization experiences, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation across selected demographic characteristics among university students in Lahore.

Hypothesis

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived social support, victimization and suicidal ideation among the university students in Lahore. The main hypothesis include:

(H1) Higher levels of victimization experiences will be positively associated with suicidal ideation

(H2) Higher perceived social support will be negatively associated with suicidal ideation

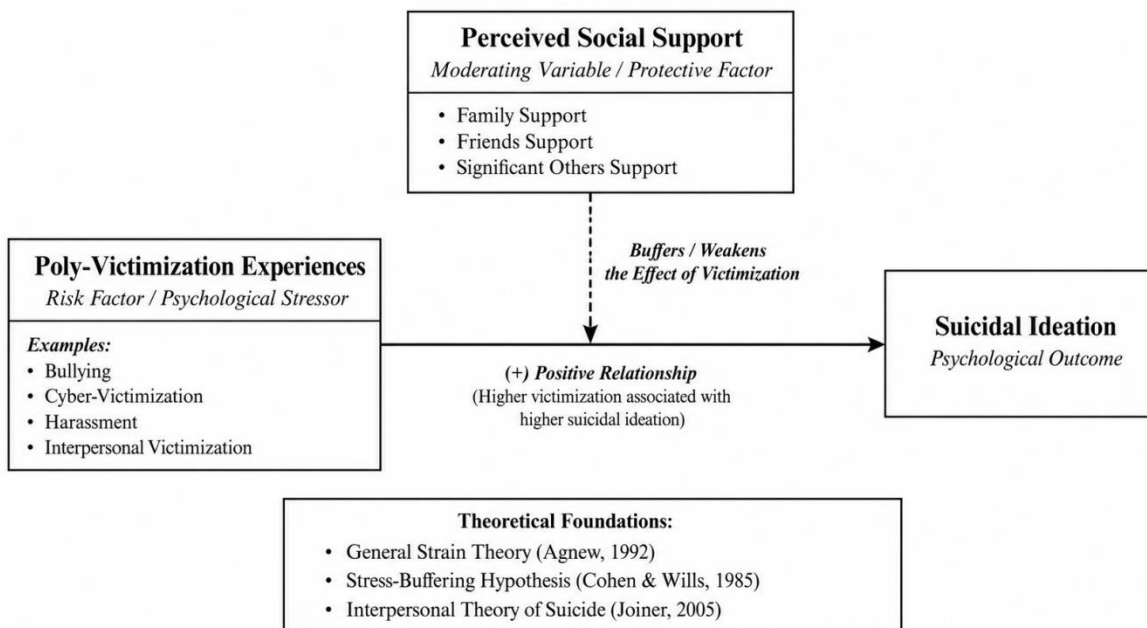
(H3) Perceived social support will significantly moderate the relationship between victimization and suicidal ideation, such that the positive association between victimization and suicidal ideation will be weaker among students reporting high levels of social support compared to those with low social support.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the present study is that of poly-victimization experiences and perceived social support are important predictors of suicidal ideation among the university students in Lahore, Pakistan. The model indicates that poly-victimization is the independent variable, while perceived social support is the moderating variable, and suicidal ideation is the dependent variable.

It is based on the principles of the General Strain Theory, Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, and Interpersonal Theory of Suicide. Poly-victimization, a psychological stressor, could be linked to emotional distress, social isolation, and diminished belongingness, which may contribute to suicidal ideation. On the other hand, perceived social support from family, friends, peers and significant others is hypothesized to have a protective effect on negative psychological outcomes of victimization by enhancing coping resources and emotional protection.

Conceptual Model



This framework suggests that students experiencing multiple forms of victimization may demonstrate higher levels of suicidal ideation; however, strong perceived social support may weaken this relationship by reducing psychological distress and promoting resilience. Therefore, the study examines both the risk effect of poly-victimization and the protective role of social support among university students in Lahore.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between poly-victimization experiences, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. Poly-victimization and perceived social support were considered predictor variables, while suicidal ideation was treated as the outcome variable. Selected demographic characteristics, including gender, age, family system, residence type, and monthly family income, were also examined to explore their association with suicidal ideation.

Study Area and Population

The study targeted undergraduate students enrolled in public and private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Participants were recruited from seven universities representing diverse academic backgrounds, including Punjab University, University of Lahore, University of Health Sciences, University of South Asia, Government College University Lahore, Forman Christian College University, and National College of Arts.

The target population consisted of undergraduate students aged between 16 and 25 years, including both hostel residents and day scholars from nuclear and joint family systems.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed to recruit participants from selected universities. A total of 226 responses were collected; after data screening and removal of incomplete responses, 225 valid responses were included in the final analysis.

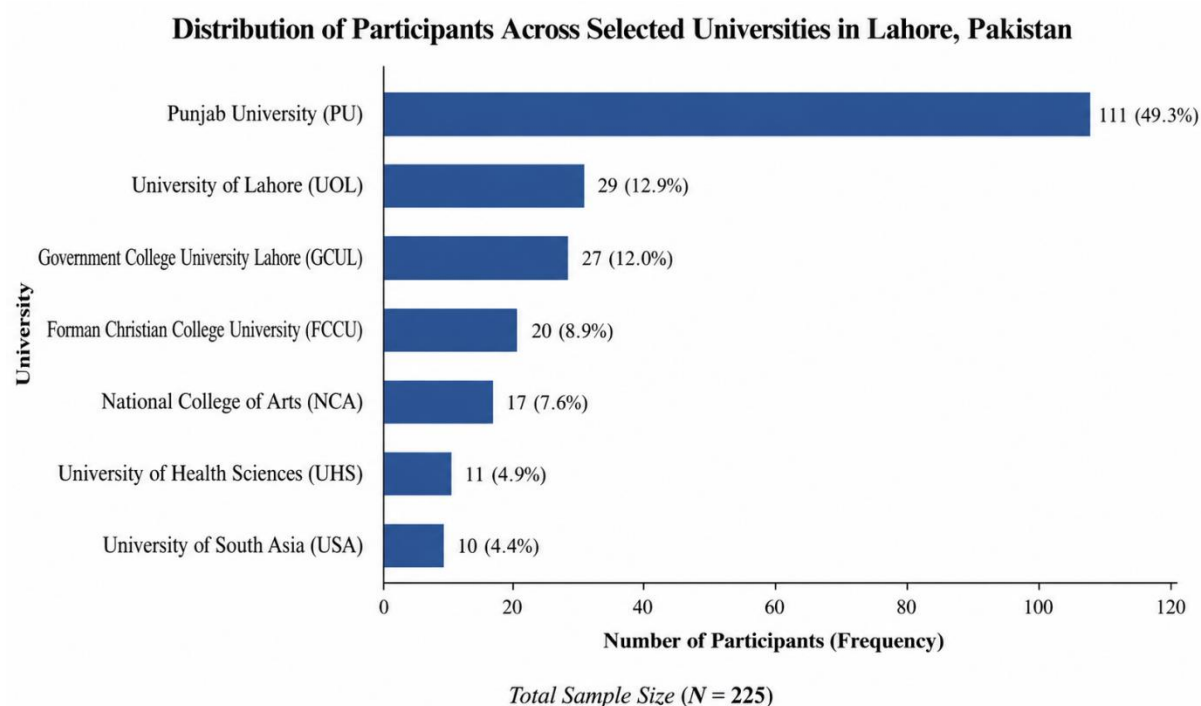
The final sample consisted of both male and female undergraduate students from different universities of Lahore.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Participants by University

University	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Punjab University (PU)	111	49.3
University of Lahore (UOL)	29	12.9
University of Health Sciences (UHS)	11	4.9
University of South Asia (USA)	10	4.4
Government College University Lahore (GCUL)	27	12.0
Forman Christian College University (FCCU)	20	8.9
National College of Arts (NCA)	17	7.6
Total	225	100.0

Interpretation

Most of the participants were from the Punjab University (49.3%) followed by UOL (12.9%) and GCUL (12.0%) and the rest of the participants were from other universities.



Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections:

- **Demographic Information:** age, gender, university, family system, residence type, and family monthly income.
- **Poly-Victimization Experiences:** assessed using the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire–Revised (JVQ-R2).
- **Perceived Social Support:** measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).
- **Suicidal Ideation:** assessed using the suicidal ideation measurement scale.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically through Google Forms using online communication platforms. A pilot study was conducted before final data collection to assess instrument reliability.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. Data screening was conducted before analysis, including checking missing values, coding errors, and outliers.

Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, group comparison tests, and regression analysis were performed to examine the study objectives and hypotheses.

The following statistical procedures were applied:

- Frequency and percentage analysis for demographic characteristics.
- Mean and standard deviation for study variables.
- Cronbach’s alpha for reliability assessment.
- Normality assessment using Shapiro–Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests.
- Mann–Whitney U test for two-group comparisons.
- One-way ANOVA for multiple group comparisons.
- Multiple linear regression for hypothesis testing.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Statistics of Study Instruments

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Interpretation
Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	12	0.899	Good Reliability
Suicidal Ideation Scale	5	0.824	Good Reliability

Interpretation

The Cronbach's alphas of both study instruments were >0.80 , which is indicative of acceptable internal consistency.

Normality Assessment

Table 3: Normality Test Results for Study Variables

Variable	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Statistic	p-value	Shapiro–Wilk Statistic	p-value
Suicidal Ideation	0.202	$<.001$	0.801	$<.001$
Perceived Social Support	0.063	.032	0.981	.005
Poly-Victimization	0.171	$<.001$	0.859	$<.001$

Interpretation

All of the study variables were found to be significantly different from normal distribution in normality tests, hence non-parametric tests were used.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Correlation Between Poly-Victimization, Social Support, and Suicidal Ideation

Variables	1	2	3
1. Poly-Victimization	—		
2. Perceived Social Support	-0.165*	—	
3. Suicidal Ideation	0.219**	-0.183*	—

Note:

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Interpretation

Furthermore, there were positive associations between poly-victimization and suicidal ideation, and negative associations between perceived social support and both suicidal ideation and poly-victimization.

Correlation Analysis

A Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among poly-victimization, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation. The results indicated that suicidal ideation was significantly and positively correlated with poly-victimization, suggesting that students reporting greater victimization experiences also tended to report higher levels of suicidal thoughts. In contrast, perceived social support demonstrated a significant negative relationship with suicidal ideation, indicating that higher levels of social support were associated with lower suicidal thoughts. Additionally, poly-victimization was negatively associated with perceived social support.

Table 5: Correlation Between Poly-Victimization, Perceived Social Support, and Suicidal Ideation

Variables	1	2	3
1. Suicidal Ideation	—		
2. Perceived Social Support	-.183**	—	
3. Poly-Victimization	.219**	-.165*	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Interpretation

The results of the correlation showed that victimization was positively related to the level of suicidal ideation and that social support was negatively related to suicidal thoughts.

Gender and Demographic Differences

A Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to examine gender differences in poly-victimization, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation. The findings showed no statistically significant differences between male and female students across suicidal ideation, perceived social support, and overall victimization experiences. This indicates that the levels of these psychological and social factors were comparable across genders within the current sample.

Similarly, no significant differences were observed across selected demographic characteristics, including age group, family system, and monthly income. These findings suggest that the examined demographic factors did not significantly influence the primary study variables.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine whether poly-victimization and perceived social support significantly predicted suicidal ideation among university students. The regression model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictor variables collectively explained a significant proportion of variance in suicidal ideation.

Poly-victimization emerged as a significant positive predictor of suicidal ideation, suggesting that students with greater exposure to multiple victimization experiences reported higher levels of suicidal thoughts. Conversely, perceived social support was a significant negative predictor, indicating that stronger social support was associated with reduced suicidal ideation.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Suicidal Ideation

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	1.90	0.78	—	2.42	.016
Perceived Social Support	-0.28	0.11	-.16	-2.44	.016
Poly-Victimization	0.77	0.31	.17	2.48	.014

Note. $N = 225$, $R^2 = .067$, Adjusted $R^2 = .059$, $F(2,222) = 7.998$, $p < .001$.

Interpretation

Regression analysis showed that poly-victimization significantly increased suicidal ideation, while perceived social support significantly reduced suicidal ideation among university students.

Gender Differences in Specific Victimization Experiences

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to examine whether specific forms of victimization differed by gender. Significant gender differences were observed for physical victimization and sexual harassment.

Male students were more likely to report experiencing physical attacks by other students compared with female students, whereas female students reported higher experiences of sexual harassment compared with male students. No significant gender differences were identified for other forms of victimization.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Another important finding of the study was the significant negative relationship between perceived social support and poly-victimization. Students reporting higher levels of social support tended to report fewer victimization experiences. Although the strength of this association was relatively small, the finding suggests that supportive interpersonal environments may reduce exposure to certain forms of victimization or reduce students' vulnerability to harmful experiences. Family relationships, peer networks, and institutional support systems may provide protection through emotional encouragement, practical assistance, conflict resolution, and early intervention. This finding is consistent with the Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, which emphasizes the protective role of supportive relationships in reducing the negative consequences associated with stressful experiences.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that both poly-victimization and perceived social support significantly predicted suicidal ideation. Although the explained variance of the model was relatively modest, this finding should be interpreted within the broader understanding that suicidal ideation is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple interacting biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Variables such as depression, anxiety, academic stress, childhood trauma, personality characteristics, substance use, financial difficulties, and psychiatric conditions may also contribute to suicidal thoughts but were beyond the scope of the current study. Nevertheless, identifying victimization and social support as significant predictors remains valuable because both represent potentially modifiable factors that universities can address through preventive and supportive interventions.

No statistically significant gender differences were identified in overall levels of poly-victimization, perceived social support, or suicidal ideation. This suggests that male and female university students in the current sample demonstrated comparable levels of vulnerability regarding these broader psychological and social outcomes. One possible explanation is that both genders experience similar academic, career-related, financial, and interpersonal pressures within university environments.

However, analysis of specific victimization experiences revealed significant gender differences. Male students were more likely to report physical victimization, whereas female students reported higher experiences of sexual harassment. These findings highlight that although overall victimization patterns may appear similar across genders, the forms of victimization experienced may differ. Therefore, university prevention strategies should consider gender-specific patterns of vulnerability rather than applying a uniform approach to victimization prevention.

The absence of significant differences across age groups, family income levels, and family systems should also be interpreted carefully. The relatively homogeneous nature of the sample, particularly the predominance of students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and age categories, may have limited variability and reduced the ability to detect group differences. Future research involving more diverse populations may provide further insight into how demographic characteristics influence suicidal ideation and victimization experiences.

The findings can also be interpreted through Durkheim's Theory of Social Integration, which emphasizes the importance of social connectedness and integration in reducing vulnerability to suicide. Students experiencing limited social support may experience weaker social bonds and reduced feelings of belonging, potentially increasing psychological vulnerability. Conversely, supportive family relationships, peer connections, and institutional support may strengthen social integration and reduce suicidal thoughts. Thus, despite its sociological origins, Durkheim's perspective remains relevant for understanding contemporary student mental health.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between poly-victimization, perceived social support, and suicidal ideation among undergraduate university students in Lahore, Pakistan. Guided by the General Strain Theory, Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, and Theory of Social Integration, the study investigated how negative interpersonal experiences and supportive social relationships contribute to suicidal thoughts among university students.

The findings demonstrated that poly-victimization was positively associated with suicidal ideation, whereas perceived social support was negatively associated with suicidal ideation. Furthermore, regression analysis showed that both poly-victimization and perceived social support significantly predicted suicidal ideation. These findings highlight the importance of considering both risk and protective factors when examining student mental health outcomes.

The positive relationship between poly-victimization and suicidal ideation suggests that students exposed to multiple forms of victimization may experience greater psychological vulnerability. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that repeated exposure to adverse interpersonal experiences, including bullying, harassment, cyber-victimization, and physical or emotional abuse, is associated with psychological distress and suicidal thoughts.

The findings also support Agnew's General Strain Theory, which proposes that repeated negative experiences generate psychological strain that may result in negative emotional states, including hopelessness and emotional distress. Within university environments, students experiencing multiple forms of victimization may perceive reduced control over their circumstances, experience social isolation, and struggle to access effective coping mechanisms. Therefore, poly-victimization may represent an important psychosocial stressor associated with increased suicidal ideation.

The study further found that perceived social support was negatively associated with suicidal ideation. Students reporting stronger support from family, friends, peers, and significant others demonstrated lower levels of suicidal thoughts. This finding supports Cohen and Wills' Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, which suggests that supportive relationships can reduce the psychological impact of stressful experiences by providing emotional security, coping resources, and a sense of belonging.

The protective role of social support is also consistent with Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide. According to this theory, feelings of thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness contribute to

suicidal desire. Strong interpersonal relationships may reduce these feelings by enhancing connectedness, acceptance, and perceived value within social networks. Therefore, students with stronger social support may be less vulnerable to suicidal ideation despite experiencing stressful or adverse events.

Overall, the findings emphasize that suicidal ideation among university students cannot be understood solely through exposure to negative experiences. Instead, it reflects an interaction between psychological stressors and available protective resources. Strengthening social support systems within universities, including peer-support programs, counselling services, and family-based interventions, may help reduce psychological distress and promote student well-being.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1), 47–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093.x>
- Chen, S., Khan, A., & Rameli, M. R. M. (2026). The association between social support and suicidal ideation among undergraduate students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 16(5), 59. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe16050059>
- Chu, C., Buchman-Schmitt, J. M., Stanley, I. H., Hom, M. A., Tucker, R. P., Hagan, C. R., Rogers, M. L., Podlogar, M. C., Chiurliza, B., Ringer, F. B., Michaels, M. S., Patros, C. H. G., & Joiner, T. E. (2017). The interpersonal theory of suicide: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(12), 1313–1345. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000123>
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310>
- Dorol-Beauroy-Eustache, O., & Mishara, B. L. (2021). Systematic review of risk and protective factors associated with suicidal ideation among adolescents. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 5, 100164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2021.100164>
- Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide: A study in sociology* (J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). Free Press. (Original work published 1897)
- Finkelhor, D., Ormrod, R. K., Turner, H. A., & Holt, M. (2009). Pathways to poly-victimization. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(4), 316–329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559509347012>
- Haahr-Pedersen, I., Perera, C., Hyland, P., Vallières, F., Murphy, D., Hansen, M., Spitz, P., Hansen, P., & Cloitre, M. (2020). Females have more complex patterns of childhood trauma: Implications for understanding trauma-related psychopathology. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 11(1), 1748529. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2020.1748529>
- Holt, M. K., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Polanin, J. R., Holland, K. M., DeGue, S., Matjasko, J. L., Wolfe, M., & Reid, G. (2015). Bullying and suicidal ideation and behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Pediatrics*, 135(2), e496–e509. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2014-1864>
- Joiner, T. (2005). *Why people die by suicide*. Harvard University Press.
- Khan, M. M., & Prince, M. (2003). Beyond rates: The tragedy of suicide in Pakistan. *Tropical Medicine & International Health*, 8(11), 955–960. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-3156.2003.01137.x>

- Kleiman, E. M., & Riskind, J. H. (2013). Utilized social support and self-esteem mediate the relationship between perceived social support and suicide ideation. *Crisis*, 34(1), 42–49. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000159>
- Lee, J. M. (2024). Polyvictimization and suicidal ideations/behaviors among college students: Examining protective factors of resilience and social support. *Global Health Economics and Sustainability*, 3(3), 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.36922/ghes.3737>
- Mortier, P., Cuijpers, P., Kiekens, G., Auerbach, R. P., Demyttenaere, K., Green, J. G., Kessler, R. C., & Bruffaerts, R. (2018). The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and behaviours among college students: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Medicine*, 48(4), 554–565. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291717002215>
- Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., Finkelhor, D., & Hamby, S. (2017). Polyvictimization and youth violence exposure across contexts. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(4), 512–535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515586377>
- Van Geel, M., Vedder, P., & Tanilon, J. (2014). Relationship between peer victimization, cyberbullying, and suicide in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 168(5), 435–442. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4143>
- Van Orden, K. A., Witte, T. K., Cukrowicz, K. C., Braithwaite, S. R., Selby, E. A., & Joiner, T. E. (2010). The interpersonal theory of suicide. *Psychological Review*, 117(2), 575–600. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018697>
- World Health Organization. (2025). *Suicide*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>
- Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52(1), 30–41. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2