



Perceived Emotional Neglect, Peer Support, and Psychological Distress in Female Students

Sidra Noreen¹, Dr. Muhammad Luqman Khan² & Asif Ali Johar³

¹MPhil Scholar, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus,
Email: sidranoreen@gcwuf.edu.pk, ORCID: 0009-0002-4048-572X

²Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus,
Email: luqman.khan0078@gmail.com

³Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan,
Email: asifalijohar786786@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>Female students in Pakistan face intense academic, relational, and socio-cultural pressures that heighten their vulnerability to psychological distress. The present study examined the relationships among perceived emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress, and tested the moderating role of peer support in the emotional neglect–psychological distress relationship. Group differences across residential areas were also examined. Grounded in Attachment Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Stress-Buffering Hypothesis, the study proposed that peer support functions as a protective relational resource that buffers the harmful effects of early emotional deprivation. A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed with 300 female university students enrolled in bachelor's and master's programs at multiple public and private universities in Faisalabad, Pakistan, using non-probability convenience sampling. Perceived emotional neglect was measured using the emotional neglect subscale of the Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale (Finkelhor et al., 2009), peer support was assessed using the Peer Support Scale (Mostafaei Alaei & Hosseinneshad, 2020), and psychological distress was measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, K-10 (Kessler et al., 2002).</i>
Received:	March	19, 2026	
Revised:	April	20, 2026	
Accepted:	June	01, 2026	
Available Online:	June	07, 2026	
Keywords:			
Perceived emotional neglect, peer support, psychological distress, female university students, Pakistan, moderation			
Corresponding Author:			
Sidra Noreen			
Email:			
sidranoreen@gcwuf.edu.pk			
 OPEN ACCESS			



Introduction

Emotional neglect can be considered a special kind of maltreatment that is usually unrecognized, and although it may not involve any injuries from overt actions, it is characterized by injuries from a lack of actions that are not defined as neglect. Caregivers that emotionally neglect a child are

unable to see, recognize, and respond to the child's emotional expressions (Xu et al., 2023). Childhood emotional neglect affects psychological functioning throughout one's life, and its effects start to arise in adolescence, impacting emotional functioning even in adulthood. Poor emotional regulation, emotional neglect, and reliance on strategies like emotional suppression, which is linked to an increase in depressive symptoms, are found in college students who have experienced emotional neglect in childhood (Xu et al., 2023).

Peer support is defined as the assistance provided by people who have similar experiences, backgrounds, or circumstances to the person they are helping (Pointon-Haas et al., 2023). This assistance can take one of four forms: emotional support, informational support, appraisal support, or instrumental support. Peer support is varied in university environments. It includes peer counseling, peer mentoring, study groups, close friendships, or emotional support, which can occur informally between classmates (Richard et al. 2022). Psychological distress is a multifaceted construct consisting of a vast range of negative emotions. The most prominent of these include depression, anxiety, and stress, all of which are detrimental to an individual's daily activities and overall quality of life. Unlike individual clinical diagnoses, psychological distress embraces the dimensional and ever-changing quality of psychological suffering. It embodies the subjective experience of emotional pain due to chronic and acute stressors (Kessler et al., 2003). Psychological distress is a major mental health concern for university students, and in the post-pandemic world, it is a growing concern (Khan et al., 2025).

In mental health research, gender is not a background variable. It is a central organizing principle. It influences the experience of emotional neglect, how peer support is sought and received, and how psychological distress is developed and expressed. Within the context of higher education, female students are in an especially precarious position. They experience a combination of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural influences that increase their vulnerability to relational adversity (Mirzaei-Alavijeh et al., 2025).

Literature Review

Within the neglect category, emotional neglect is different from physical neglect, which involves the basics of survival, such as food and shelter. In contrast, emotional neglect involves emotional warmth, psychological availability, and age-appropriate stimulation that may be required at different developmental phases. The comprehensive meta-analytic review by Silva et al. (2024) confirmed that emotional neglect is, at the very least, the most prevalent form of childhood adversity, occurring in approximately 43.1% of the world's children (Xu et al., 2023). The Lovibond tripartite model of psychological distress consists of three interrelated but separate components: (1) Depression is defined by low mood, anhedonia, and feelings of hopelessness. (2) Anxiety is defined in terms of physiological arousal and apprehension. (3) Stress is described in terms of chronic tension, irritability, and the feeling of being unable to relax. This three-component model is one of the most frequently used for the evaluation of psychological distress among non-clinical groups or populations, and it is particularly true for university students (Naswiibah et al., 2025).

Emotionally neglecting one or more individuals and consistently lengthening the neglect will cause the victim of the neglect to experience psychological distress, which can manifest in the form of depression and anxiety. Greater neglect will lead to greater psychological ramifications (Silva et al, 2024). Emotional neglect was positively correlated with depression in Pakistani university students (Shafique et al, 2025). In Pakistan, female students face even more cultural constraints, including the emotional suppression norm, limited social mobility, and inadequate access to professional mental health support, which may heighten the neglect-distress connection (Causier et al., 2024).

The study shows that peer support in different university populations shows a strong positive correlation with psychological distress. Multiple global studies show a strong positive correlation with peer support, depression, anxiety and loneliness (Richard et al., 2022). Pointon-Haas et al. (2023) show that peer support interventions help in the reduction of anxiety and stress of university students. Participation in peer mentoring programs has been shown to reduce depressive symptoms in greater magnitude than control groups (Grégoire et al., 2023). Since emotional neglect community supports peer community, it supports the emotional neglect community of the neglect community. Correctional experiences emotionally supported peer clusters in young adult development and provided emotional support to the young development caring experiences in emotionally supportive peer clusters. Adaptive coping resources emotionally supported psychologically ruptured self-care in support of the emotionally caring early self of the young development peer clusters. Neglected community emotionally supports the community (Xu et al., 2023).

Research Hypotheses:

1. There will be a significant correlation between emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress in female students.
2. Emotional neglect will be a significant predictor of psychological distress in female students.
3. Peer support will significantly moderate the relationship between perceived emotional neglect and psychological distress in female students.
4. There will be significant group differences in emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress in female students in terms of residential area.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional quantitative research design. Cross-sectional surveys take a one-time self-report from multiple participants and try to investigate relationships between however many variables exist, without making causal inferences (Creswell, 2018).

Sampling Technique

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed. This approach is practical for accessing students who are readily available during class breaks and campus activities, particularly when random sampling is constrained by institutional access (Taherdoost, 2016).

Participants:

The final sample comprised 300 full-time female students. The minimum required sample size was estimated at 107 participants using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), based on a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), $\alpha = .05$, and power = .80 for multiple regression with three predictors.

Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Currently enrolled as full-time undergraduate or graduate, MS female students in a public or private university.
2. Aged between 17 and 24 years to capture emerging adulthood.

3. Lived with at least one parent or primary caregiver for a minimum of five years during childhood/adolescence.
4. Able to read and comprehend English or Urdu sufficiently for questionnaires.
5. Provided voluntary written informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Part-time, distance-learning, or non-degree students.
2. Current diagnosis of severe psychiatric disorders (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder).
3. On long-term medical/psychiatric leave from studies.
4. Questionnaires with invalid patterns (e.g., straight-lining >10% missing items).
5. Current substance dependence or acute intoxication.

Research Procedure

Potential participants were approached during class breaks and campus activities. The researcher explained the study's purpose, scope, voluntary nature, and confidentiality provisions to prospective participants. Students who met the inclusion criteria and expressed willingness to participate were provided with a questionnaire booklet containing the consent form, demographic information sheet, and the three study scales (MNBS, PSS, and KDS). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to questionnaire completion.

Questionnaires were administered in quiet, distraction-free settings, with the researcher available to clarify any item wording without influencing responses. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that participation was entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without academic consequence. Participants displaying signs of significant distress were provided with referral information for university counseling services.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 23. Descriptive statistics characterized distributions. To test hypotheses, Pearson correlations examined bivariate associations, linear regression analysis. The primary moderation hypothesis was tested using Hayes' (2018) PROCESS macro (Model 1), employing 5,000 bootstrapped samples for bias-corrected confidence intervals around the interaction term. Rural-urban differences were explored via T-test.

Results

It reports descriptive statistics, reliability, demographics, correlations, simple regression, moderated regression, and t-test analyses, providing empirical support for all four hypotheses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Study Variables (N = 300)

Variable	Range	M	SD	A	k
MNBS	10–118	50.84	23.67	.86	20
MNBS_EN	1–35	14.21	6.88	.78	5
MNBS_CN	4–33	14.47	5.10	.76	5
MNBS_SN	0–35	12.76	6.91	.74	5
MNBS_PN	0–35	10.13	8.20	.79	5
PSS	28–108	74.92	17.42	.94	22

KDS	11–49	27.64	8.71	.87	10
-----	-------	-------	------	-----	----

Note. MNBS = Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale; MNBS_EN = Emotional Neglect (**focal construct**); MNBS_CN = Cognitive Neglect; MNBS_SN = Supervisory Neglect; MNBS_PN = Physical Neglect; PSS = Peer Support Scale; KDS = Kessler Psychological Distress Scale. Additional subscales are reported for descriptive purposes; all hypothesis testing used MNBS_EN only.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all study variables. The total neglect score ($M = 50.84$, $SD = 23.67$) indicated moderate levels of neglect among participants. Among the neglect subscales, cognitive neglect ($M = 14.47$) was slightly higher than emotional neglect ($M = 14.21$), supervisory neglect ($M = 12.76$), and physical neglect ($M = 10.13$). Peer support was relatively high ($M = 74.92$, $SD = 17.42$), while psychological distress was present at a moderate level ($M = 27.64$, $SD = 8.71$). Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .74 to .94, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency across all instruments, confirming their suitability for further analysis.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Participants ($N = 300$)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	300	100.0
Age	17–20 years	126	42.0
	21–24 years	174	58.0
Birth Order	First born	87	29.0
	Middle born	129	43.0
	Last born	72	24.0
	Only child	12	4.0
Family Head	Father	270	90.0
	Brother	30	10.0
Education Level	BS	270	90.0
	MS	30	10.0
Residential Area	Rural	150	50.0
	Urban	150	50.0
Marital Status	Married	15	5.0
	Unmarried	285	95.0
SES	Lower class	15	5.0
	Middle class	282	94.0
	Upper class	3	1.0

Table 2 shows that all 300 participants were female. Most participants were aged 21–24 years (58.0%), while 42.0% were between 17 and 20 years. Regarding birth order, the largest group was middle born (43.0%), followed by first born (29.0%), last born (24.0%), and only child (4.0%). Most participants reported their father as the family head (90.0%), were enrolled in BS programs (90.0%), were unmarried (95.0%), and belonged to the middle class (94.0%). The sample was equally distributed across rural and urban residential areas, with 150 participants in each group.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis: Emotional Neglect, Peer Support, and Psychological Distress ($N = 300$)

Variable	1	2	3
1. MNBS_EN	—		
2. PSS	-.31**	—	

3. KDS	.38**	-.46**	—
--------	-------	--------	---

Note. ** $p < .01$. MNBS_EN = Emotional Neglect; PSS = Peer Support Scale; KDS = Kessler Psychological Distress Scale.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress as shown in table 3. Emotional neglect had a significant negative correlation with peer support, $r = -.31$, indicating that higher emotional neglect was associated with lower peer support. Emotional neglect also had a significant positive correlation with psychological distress, $r = .38$, suggesting that greater emotional neglect was associated with higher distress. Peer support was significantly negatively correlated with psychological distress, $r = -.46$, showing that students with higher peer support reported lower psychological distress. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Neglect, Neglect Subscales, Peer Support, and Psychological Distress (N = 300)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MNBS	—						
2. MNBS_EN	.77**	—					
3. MNBS_CN	.41**	.29**	—				
4. MNBS_SN	.84**	.49**	.33**	—			
5. MNBS_PN	.81**	.47**	.30**	.71**	—		
6. PSS	-.35**	-.31**	-.40**	-.29**	-.30**	—	
7. KDS	.43**	.38**	.55**	.34**	.31**	-.46**	—

Note. ** $p < .01$.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among neglect, neglect subscales, peer support, and psychological distress. Total neglect had significant positive correlations with all neglect subscales and psychological distress, and a significant negative correlation with peer support. Emotional neglect showed a significant positive relationship with psychological distress and a significant negative relationship with peer support. Cognitive neglect showed the strongest positive correlation with psychological distress. While all neglect subscales correlated significantly with peer support and psychological distress, only the emotional neglect subscale (MNBS_EN) was used in subsequent regression and moderation analyses, in alignment with the study's theoretical focus.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for the Effect of Emotional Neglect on Psychological Distress

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Constant	21.48	1.09	—	19.71	< .001	[19.34- 23.62]	
MNBS_EN	0.43	0.06	.38	7.20	< .001	[0.31 - 0.55]	
R^2	.14						
F	(1, 298)						

Note. $p < .001$.

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether perceived emotional neglect significantly predicted psychological distress among female university students. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 298) = 51.84$, $p < .001$, with emotional neglect explaining 14% of the variance in psychological distress ($R^2 = .14$). Emotional neglect significantly and positively predicted psychological distress, $B = 0.43$, $SE = 0.06$, $\beta = .38$, $t = 7.20$,

$p < .001$, 95% CI [0.31, 0.55]. This indicates that higher levels of perceived emotional neglect were associated with greater psychological distress among female university students. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 6: Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Distress from Emotional Neglect, Peer Support, and Their Interaction

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	36.42	4.18	—	8.71	< .001
MNBS_EN	0.58	0.18	.41	3.22	.001
PSS	-0.17	0.05	-.34	-3.40	.001
MNBS_EN $\times$ PSS	-0.015	0.005	-.19	-3.00	.003
R^2	.30				
F	(1, 298)				

Note. $p = .003$.

Moderation is shown by a significant interaction effect, and in this case, the interaction is significant, $B = -0.015$, $SE = 0.005$, $\beta = -.19$, $t = -3.00$, $p = .003$, indicating that the relationship between perceived emotional neglect and psychological distress is moderated by peer support. Perceived emotional neglect significantly predicted higher psychological distress, $B = 0.58$, $\beta = .41$, $t = 3.22$, $p = .001$, while peer support significantly predicted lower psychological distress, $B = -0.17$, $\beta = -.34$, $t = -3.40$, $p = .001$. The negative interaction term suggests that as peer support increases, the strength of the positive relationship between emotional neglect and psychological distress weakens. In other words, peer support buffers the harmful effect of perceived emotional neglect on psychological distress in female university students. The overall model accounted for 30% of the variance in psychological distress, $R^2 = .30$, $F(3, 296) = 42.29$, $p < .001$, with the interaction term contributing an additional 3% of variance, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p = .003$, supporting H3.

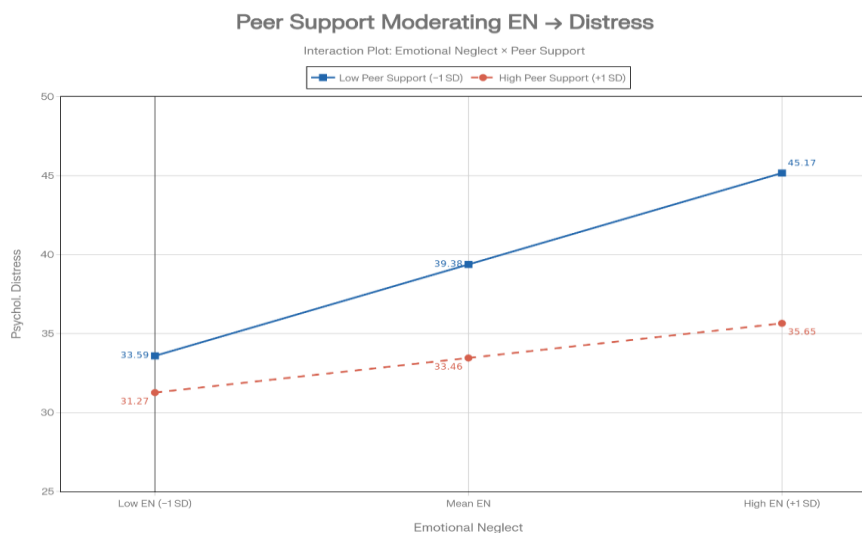


Figure 2. Interaction Plot Showing the Moderating Role of Peer Support in the Relationship between Emotional Neglect and Psychological Distress.

The slope of emotional neglect on psychological distress is steeper at low levels of peer support and considerably flatter at high levels of peer support, indicating that peer support buffered the harmful effect of emotional neglect on psychological distress.

Table 7: Differences between Students from Rural and Urban Residential Areas on Emotional Neglect, Peer Support, and Psychological Distress.

Variable	Rural (<i>n</i> = 150)	Urban (<i>n</i> = 150)				95% CI	Cohen's
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	[LL, UL]	<i>d</i>
<i>MNBS_EN</i>	15.68 (6.72)	12.74 (6.81)	298	3.76	< .001	[1.40, 4.48]	0.43
<i>PSS</i>	70.81 (17.84)	79.03 (15.92)	298	-4.21	< .001	[-12.06, -4.38]	-0.49
<i>KDS</i>	29.83 (8.96)	25.45 (8.01)	298	4.46	< .001	[2.45, 6.31]	0.52

Note. *MNBS_EN* = Emotional Neglect; *PSS* = Peer Support Scale; *KDS* = Kessler Psychological Distress Scale.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to examine differences in emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress among female university students based on residential area. The results showed significant group differences on all three variables. Rural students reported significantly higher emotional neglect ($M = 15.68$, $SD = 6.72$) than urban students ($M = 12.74$, $SD = 6.81$), $t(298) = 3.76$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.43$. Rural students also reported significantly lower peer support ($M = 70.81$, $SD = 17.84$) than urban students ($M = 79.03$, $SD = 15.92$), $t(298) = -4.21$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.49$. In addition, rural students experienced significantly higher psychological distress ($M = 29.83$, $SD = 8.96$) than urban students ($M = 25.45$, $SD = 8.01$), $t(298) = 4.46$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.52$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported, indicating significant residential-area differences in emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress among female students.

Discussion

The first finding confirmed the significant negative correlation between perceived emotional neglect and peer support and the significant positive correlation between emotional neglect and psychological distress. This relational pattern shows that there is early relational deprivation that is linked to social and emotional vulnerability and a loss of protective network resources in adulthood. The impact of emotional neglect on relationships with peers is recognized and may indicate the interpersonal ramifications of neglect, which continue into the university years. Emotionally neglected students may start university emotionally withdrawn and Having heightened sensitivity to rejection.

The link between emotional neglect and psychological distress is well documented, both internationally and locally. Emotional neglect removes critical co-regulatory experiences, which impedes the development of healthy effective emotional regulation and creates core, maladaptive beliefs about the self and others. Many empirical studies, including those conducted in Pakistan, have demonstrated that emotional neglect in childhood contributes to psychological distress and maladaptive emotional regulation, particularly emotional suppression and depressive symptoms, of university students (Shafique et al., 2025).

Regression analysis confirmed the second hypothesis, showing that emotional According to regression analysis, the second hypothesis was confirmed, and emotional neglect was shown to predict psychological distress. This finding substantiates the concern that emotional neglect is a substantial developmental risk factor in the affected female university students' emotional experiences.

This study's third hypothesis was supported. The moderated multiple regression analysis predicts a significant negative interaction between emotional neglect and peer support in predicting psychological distress. This means that peer support mitigated the detrimental effect of emotional neglect on distress. In other words, students who experienced emotional neglect and peer support reported less psychological distress than students who experienced emotional neglect and no peer support. The moderating effect of peer support can also be understood from the Self-Determination Theory and attachment theory. If peer connections are warm, reciprocal, and emotionally present, they can satisfy the relatedness need that has been chronically undermined by emotional neglect, thus providing a corrective relational experience to the individual and lowering overall distress (Yang et al., 2025).

The fourth hypothesis is also backed up by data. For the three study variables, independent sample t-tests provided a rural-urban comparison. Findings suggest that rural students experience a greater level of emotional neglect, a lower level of peer support, and a greater level of psychological distress than urban students. The results from this study apply to the practices of higher education institutions in Pakistan. Emotional neglect should be considered a background risk factor when developing student mental health frameworks, as distress in female students may be due to relational issues rather than current academic stressors.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the relationships among perceived emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress in female students in Pakistan. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design and validated psychometric instruments, the study found that all four hypotheses were supported. Emotional neglect was significantly and positively correlated with psychological distress and negatively correlated with peer support, confirming that early relational deprivation is associated with both reduced protective resources and elevated psychological suffering, consistent with attachment theory and self-determination theory frameworks.

Emotional neglect significantly and independently predicted psychological distress, confirming it as a meaningful developmental risk factor in this population. Most importantly, peer support significantly moderated the relationship between emotional neglect and psychological distress, indicating that peer relationships function not only as a general source of wellbeing but as a specific buffer that reduces the harmful psychological impact of early relational adversity, thereby validating the stress-buffering hypothesis in this cultural context. Rural students demonstrated significantly higher emotional neglect and distress and significantly lower peer support than urban students, highlighting residential area as a meaningful contextual variable that shapes both early relational experiences and current psychological outcomes.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and noted limitations, the following recommendations are made for future research and practice. Future research should utilize longitudinal studies to explore the ways emotional neglect, peer support, and psychological distress evolve and to determine the order and direction of causation among these variables. Research involving multiple universities and studies crossing provincial boundaries with larger and more heterogeneous samples will permit findings to be applied to wider and more general populations and will be useful in assessing institutional and regional influences on the neglect-distress relationship.

The proposed range of other possible moderators and mediators includes attachment insecurity, emotion regulation strategies, self-esteem, resilience, academic self-efficacy, and the quality and

intimacy of peer relationships. Furthermore, the different forms of peer support, in particular, more formally organized peer mentoring and counseling programs compared to informal friendship groups, should be differentiated in future research to assess whether more structured peer support programs are better at producing the anticipated buffer effects.

References

1. Hajira, B., Hamid, S., ur Rehman, N., Ahmed, S. N., & ur Rehman, S. (2025). Mobile-assisted language learning in a preparatory year English program: Enhancing motivation and receptive skills. *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, 3(3), 1147-1173. <https://doi.org/10.63468/jpsa.3.3.78>
2. Ahmed, S. N. (2007). Need for a paradigm shift: Teacher education at the college level.
3. Ahmed, S. N. (2008). The role of governance and its influence on quality enhancing mechanism in higher education. *Business Review*, 3(1), 145-152. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.54784/1990-6587.1138>
4. Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
5. Alvi, M. H., Ashraf, T., Naz, F., & Sardar, A. (2024). Burden of mental disorders by gender in Pakistan: Analysis of Global Burden of Disease data. *BJPsych Bulletin*, 48(1), 24–31.
6. Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., Demyttenaere, K., Ebert, D. D., Green, J. G., Hasking, P., Murray, E., Nock, M. K., Pinder-Amaker, S., Sampson, N. A., Vilagut, G., Zaslavsky, A. M., & Kessler, R. C. (2024). The protective role of supportive relationships in mitigating bullying victimization and psychological distress in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 74(3), 512–520.
7. Ayyubi, M. S., Ahsan, H., Anwar, A., Khan, A. E., & Shabeer, M. G. (2024). The nexus between growth and unemployment rate in Pakistan: does Okun's law exist. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(2), 2124-2152.
8. Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529.
9. Bekiros, S., Jahanshahi, H., & Munoz-Pacheco, J. M. (2022). A new buffering theory of social support and psychological stress. *PLOS ONE*, 17(10), 33–45.
10. Boldt, L. J., Falgares, G., Marchetti, D., & Verrocchio, M. C. (2024). Childhood emotional maltreatment and internalizing problems in a non-clinical sample of adolescents: A moderated-mediation model of insecure anxious attachment style and gender. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 153(2), 106–127.
11. Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
12. Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
13. Cambridge University Press. (2026). Prevalence and epidemiology of depression symptoms among Pakistani university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Global Mental Health*, 12(1), 45–61.
14. Carvalho Silva, R., Oliva, F., Barlati, S., Perusi, G., Meattini, M., Dashi, E., Colombi, N., Vaona, A., Carletto, S., & Minelli, A. (2024). Childhood neglect, the neglected trauma: A systematic review and meta-analysis of its prevalence in psychiatric disorders. *Psychiatry Research*, 335(2), 115–131.
15. Causier, C., Bhatt, P., Banerjee, S., & Bhugra, D. (2024). Experiences of help-seeking for severe mental health problems in young Pakistani women: A preliminary qualitative study. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, 18(6), 412–421.

16. Chen, Y., Liu, X., & Wang, H. (2025). Childhood emotional abuse and suicidal ideation in young adults: The mediating roles of hopelessness and depressive cognitions. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16(1), 167–189.
17. Chen, Z., Liu, Y., & Wang, J. (2021). Peer relationships and psychological well-being among university students: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(3), 512–526.
18. Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357.
19. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
20. Daniel, I., Yusuf, A. H., Masih, S., & Daniel, K. (2025). Unraveling the path from digital fatigue to workplace thriving: A serial mediation model based on the job demands–resources framework. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 4575–4593.
21. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
22. Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
23. European Psychiatry. (2023). Emotional neglect and parents’ adverse childhood events. *European Psychiatry*, 66(1), 12–31.
24. Falgares, G., Marchetti, D., Manna, G., & Verrocchio, M. C. (2024). Linking early emotional abuse/neglect with young adolescents’ internalizing problems: The mediating role of expressive suppression and social anxiety. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 162(5), 107–127.
25. Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A.-G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods*, 39(2), 175–191.
26. Faustino, B. (2021). Early maladaptive schemas, emotion regulation, and psychopathology: Clinical implications and treatment approaches. *Current Psychology*, 40(12), 6089–6097.
27. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140.
28. Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2009). *Children’s exposure to violence: A comprehensive national survey* (NCJ 227744). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
29. Ghazanfar, H., & Ul Haq, A. (2025). Ethical and legal implications of AI in human resource management. *Journal of Social & Organizational Matters*, 4(2), 417–428.
30. Grégoire, S., Lachance, L., Bouffard, T., & Bherer, L. (2023). A peer-based mentoring program for reducing anxiety and depression symptoms among college students: A preliminary study. *Journal of American College Health*, 72(9), 3491–3498.
31. Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299.
32. Huang, L., Zhang, Y., & Chen, X. (2025). The impact of childhood trauma on meaning in life among middle school students: The mediating role of social support. *BMC Psychology*, 13(1), 267–289.
33. Imran, H., Nadeem, S., Khan, M. L., & Qureshi, U. (2025). Impact of Artificial Intelligence Personalized Learning on Student Motivation and Academic Performance. *SOCIUM Учредители: Jomard Publishing*, 2(1).
34. Iqbal, N., Farooq, S., & Rehman, A. (2024). Distress tolerance and mental health problems among university students in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Health Sciences*, 5(1), 112–119.

35. Jalil, A., Sarmad, M., & Shafi, M. Q. (2023). Abusive supervision fosters employees' silence: the mediating role of avoidance orientation and moderating role of leader-member exchange. *International Journal of Business and Systems Research*, 17(3), 291-308.
36. Javaid, M., Tariq, S., & Malik, F. (2024). Mental health issues and awareness among college students in Pakistan: Implications for peer-based interventions. *Migration Letters*, 21(3), 879–891.
37. Kausar, R., & Qayyum, A. (2018). How Cash Flow News and Discount Rate News Impact the Unexpected Stock Returns of Energy Firms of Pakistan.
38. Kessler, R. C., & Mroczek, D. K. (1994). *Final versions of our non-specific psychological distress scale*. Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.
39. Kessler, R. C., Andrews, G., Colpe, L. J., Hiripi, E., Mroczek, D. K., Normand, S. L. T., Walters, E. E., & Zaslavsky, A. M. (2002). Short screening scales to monitor population prevalences and trends in non-specific psychological distress. *Psychological Medicine*, 32(6), 959–976.
40. Khan, A., Hussain, R., & Mirza, I. (2025). Gender differences in mental health experiences and help-seeking among university students: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 25(1), 103.
41. Khurshid, S., Shoaib, M., Mushtaq, M., Kiran, T., Hussain, N., & Ali, S. (2020). Frequency of depression, anxiety and stress among university students in Lahore, Pakistan. *Journal of Ayub Medical College Abbottabad*, 32(Suppl. 1), S576–S582.
42. Lacey, R. E., Smith, B. J., Cable, N., & Steptoe, A. (2024). The role of social support in reducing the long-term burden of cumulative childhood adversity on adulthood internalising disorder. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 152(3), 106–120.
43. Laila, N., Sulistyorini, L., & Wahyuni, C. U. (2023). The relationship between peer support and stress levels among nursing students. *KIAN: Journal of Nursing*, 4(2), 89–97.
44. Levpušček, M. P., Zupančič, M., & Sočan, G. (2012). Predicting academic achievement in adolescents: The role of individual and social factors. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 32(4), 550–570.
45. Li, X., Zhang, Y., & Chen, M. (2026). Childhood trauma and depressive symptoms in college students: The mediating role of fear of happiness. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 17(3), 147–167.
46. Lovibond, S. H., & Lovibond, P. F. (1995). *Manual for the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales* (2nd ed.). Psychology Foundation of Australia.
47. Malik, N., Hussain, I., & Iqbal, Z. (2024). Prevalence and factors associated with anxiety and depression among nursing students in Pakistan. *Khyber Medical University Journal*, 16(1), 34–40.
48. Mental Health America. (2023). *Peer support in college mental health*. Mental Health America.
49. Mirzaei-Alavijeh, M., Jalilian, F., Zinat Motlagh, F., & Sharifirad, G. (2025). Psychological distress and its association with gender in university students: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 14(1), 78–99.
50. Mostafaei Alaei, M., & Hosseinneshad, H. (2020). The development and validation of peer support questionnaire (PSQ). *Teaching English as a Second Language Quarterly*, 39(3), 67–109.
51. Naswiibah, N., & Muhindo, R. (2025). Psychological distress among undergraduate health sciences students in Uganda. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 17(1), 1–9.

52. Pilkington, P. D., Karantzas, G. C., Faustino, B., & Pizarro-Campagna, E. (2023). Early maladaptive schemas, emotion regulation difficulties, and alexithymia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 31(1), 1–14.
53. Pointon-Haas, J., Carey, M., Lancaster, G., Wood, B., Jones, P. B., & Bhatt, S. (2023). A systematic review of peer support interventions for student mental health and well-being in higher education. *BJPsych Open*, 9(6), 210–231.
54. Rana, A. M. (2015). Inter Relationship between Team Conflict Management, Employee Satisfaction and Organizational Performance. *Information Management and Business Review*, 7(2), 93-99.
55. Saddique, R., & Haq, A. U. (2025). Assessing the impact of regulatory frameworks on corporate governance, CSR, and firm performance in Pakistan. *Dialogue Social Science Review (DSSR)*, 3(6), 524-538.
56. Shabbir, T., Ali, Z., Uddin, S., Wazir, M., & Gopang, M. A. (2021). A critical study about the human rights concerns in the Kashmir valley. *South Asean Journal of social studies*, 1(1), 66-83.
57. Uddin, S. S., Farooq, A., Ali, R. A., & Aurangzeb, M. (2025). The Role of Human Rights in China and USA's Foreign Policy Approaches. *Journal of Social Signs Review*, 3(2), 218-230.