



# Cyberbullying Involvement and Internalizing Symptoms

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## Introduction

- The prevalence rates of cyber victimization in college students ranges between 9% - 34% (Baldasare et al., 2012).
- Prior research has established youth who are cyber victims experience more depressive and anxious symptoms than students who were uninvolved in cyber bullying (Wang et al., 2011).
- Studies reveal that cyber victimization contributes to both depression and anxiety over time (Wright, 2016); additional research has yielded these findings in a sample of college students (Wigderson & Lynch, 2013).
- Some researchers have found that one mechanism by which cyber victimization directly affects depression is social anxiety. These researchers also utilized a college-age sample (Wang et al., 2019).

## Purpose

- To better understand the associations of cyber victimization, depression, and anxiety in college students.
- To examine anxiety as a mediator between cyber victimization and depressive symptoms.

## Method

A total of 197 college students attending a public midwestern university completed an online survey (67% Female; 49.7% White, 17.8% African American, 9.6% Asian, 19.3% Hispanic/Latinx, 1.5% American Indian, 1% Other). IRB was obtained as well as participant consent.

## Measures

- The Cyberbullying and Victimization Survey (Brown, Demaray, & Secord, 2014).
- Behavioral Activation for Depression Scale (Kanter et al., 2007).
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006)

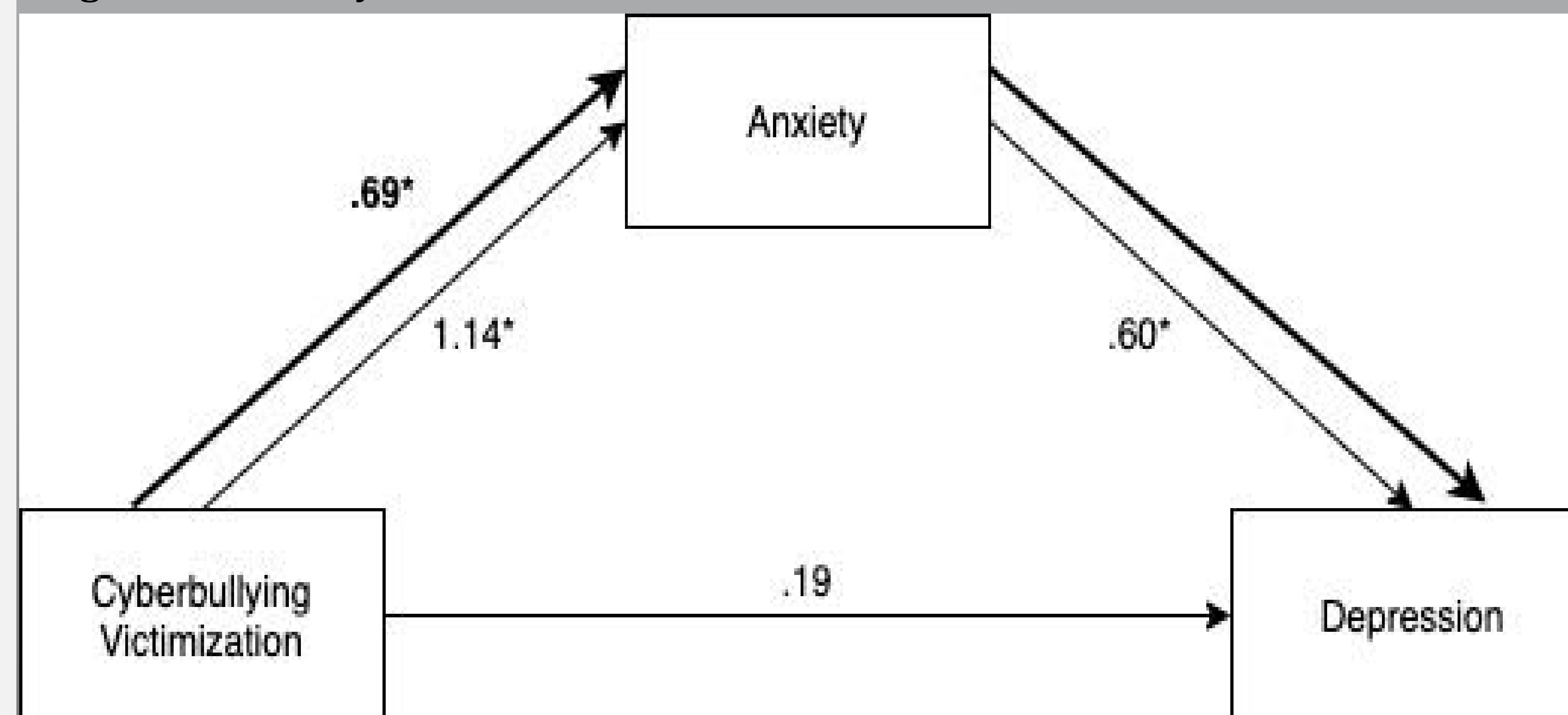
## Analyses

- 2 regressions were conducted with Gender and Cyber Victimization entered as the IVs and Depression and Anxiety entered as the DVs, respectively.
- SPSS PROCESS macro model 4 was used to examine Anxiety as a mediator of the association between Cyber Victimization and Depression.

## Results

- Gender and Cyber Victimization significantly ( $p < .001$ ) predicted **Depression** (accounting for 9% of the variance)  
Being a woman (Beta = .173,  $p < .05$ ) and higher victimization scores (Beta = .268,  $p < .001$ ) were significantly associated with Depression.
- Gender and Cyber Victimization significantly ( $p < .001$ ) predicted **Anxiety** (accounting for 17% of the variance)  
Being a woman (Beta = .276,  $p < .001$ ) and higher victimization scores (Beta = .341,  $p < .001$ ) were significantly associated with Anxiety.
- The association between Cyber Victimization and Depression was significantly ( $p < .001$ ) mediated by Anxiety (Beta = .691). The model below represents the associations among these variables.

Figure 1. Anxiety Mediation Model



## Discussion

- Overall, findings indicate that being a woman and experiencing cyber victimization is associated with depressive and anxious symptoms in college students.
- Additionally, anxiety mediates, or explains, the association between cyber victimization and depressive symptoms.
- This research highlights the importance of cyber victimization interventions to focus on internalizing symptoms in victims.
- Our mediation model illustrates that anxious symptoms explain why depressive symptoms are elevated within individuals who report cyber victimization. Thus, intervention targeting anxious symptoms may also reduce depressive symptoms

College students who report being **cybervictims** are more likely to report symptoms of **anxiety and depression**.

**Anxiety** mediated, or explained the association, between **cyber victimization** and **depressive symptoms**.

