

## **CYBERBULLYING: ‘THE HEINOUS CRIME AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT THE INTERVENING ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION**

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### **Abstract**

*The education field is a highly significant factor that determines the growth of a country. Therefore, every country makes considerable investments to uplift the field of education. They hope to create a very talented group of intelligent students. Students must have good academic performance to succeed in all educational endeavors. However, some cases break academic performance. This study was conducted quantitatively with the population of undergraduates covering three universities and final year, and faculty of management studies in state universities in Sri Lanka, and 291 university students were selected as the sample through a random sampling technique. Data collected through a questionnaire, all the constructs were valid, reliable, and fit with the research model. The model has seven hypotheses analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software. Correlation, regression, and descriptive analyses were all utilized to test hypotheses, and all were accepted. Finally, the study's results confirmed that cyberbullying significantly negatively impacts the psychological contract, and social media addiction played a partial mediation.*

Keywords: Cyberbullying, social exclusion, emotional response, resilience, social media addiction

### **Introduction**

In the digital age, cyberbullying has become a prevalent issue that affects many young people's mental health and well-being. University undergraduates, mainly, are susceptible to cyberbullying due to their frequent use of social media and online communication. In addition, undergraduates have expectations and perceptions of their psychological contract with their university, which may influence their experience of cyberbullying. The psychological contract is individuals' expectations, beliefs, and obligations about their relationship with their employer or institution. Universities in Sri Lanka are in severe difficulties and are in disarray. University education is crucial to development because it offers top-notch training and abilities in various occupations. Therefore, the psychological contract is about "individual views about the parameters of trade between individuals and their organization, molded by the organization. A vital feature of the psychological contract is that the individual voluntarily asserts to make and accept specific promises as he or she understands them (Krivokapic-Skoko & O'Neill,

2008). Cyberbullying happens when a person or group uses Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to harm someone defenseless (Aparisi et al., 2021). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid technological advancements, Sri Lankan universities have adopted digital learning platforms where they must be connected, leading them to be online 24/7. Thereby, the usage of social media among them has increased.

Given that social media use is fast expanding and that social media addiction is a subset of internet addiction, a technique known as a psychometric assessment of potential addiction is required. In recent studies, measurement measures have been attempted to reveal social media addiction, notably on Facebook. These studies have reported several addiction types, including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Further, a plethora of studies have investigated the effect of cyberbullying on psychological contact; however, studies on the mediating effect of social media addiction were lacking in the Sri Lankan context. Following this empirical gap in the literature, this research aimed to investigate the impact of cyberbullying, known as the 'heinous crime,' on the psychological contract of university undergraduates with the mediation role of social media addiction.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the impact of cyberbullying on the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
2. To examine the impact of emotional response on the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
3. To examine the impact of social exclusion on the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
4. To examine the impact of resilience on the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
5. To examine the impact of cyberbullying on social media addiction in the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
6. To examine the impact of social media addiction on the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.
7. To examine the impact of the mediating role of social media addiction on the relationship between cyberbullying and the psychological contract of the academic sector of state universities in Sri Lanka.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Psychological Contract**

The psychological contract idea has been the subject of scholarly discussion (Donohue et al., 2007). The psychological contract is a relevant paradigm for evaluating the effectiveness of employee-organization relationships. When researching the relationship between psychological contract and outcome, the psychological contract generally tends to take a main effects approach. It has not

considered numerous individual and situational variables that can moderate or exacerbate our reactions. Most psychological contract research has concentrated on how a breach affects organizational results. Employees' beliefs about what they are entitled to should be received because they think their employer communicated pledges to deliver those things in exchange for their contributions, making up psychological contracts. Employees' expectations of the amount of work they owe their employers make up the psychological contract. In recent years, the body of literature on psychological contracts has grown astronomically (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013).

### **Cyberbullying**

With the advent of the internet in Turkey in the 1980s, cyberbullying was first observed there, and it has since expanded throughout the country (Aparisi et al., 2021). Cyberbullying uses information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group intended to harm others. Cyberbullying is a way of being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or other digital technologies. Finally, cyberbullying is simply an electronic form of peer harassment (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013).

### **Emotional Response**

According to Adam et al. (2021), emotions are affective responses to stimuli frequently characterized by intense feelings associated with a particular thing, circumstance, or individual. Thus, emotions result from the neural system being activated, manifesting as sensations, excitement, and alterations in a person's physiology and behavior (Adam et al., 2021).

### **Social Exclusion**

The term "social exclusion" is frequently used in the context of development, especially in the years following the 1995 World Social Summit in Copenhagen. Several multilateral development organizations, including the World Bank and the International Labor Organization, embraced social exclusion as a multifaceted framework. Several national and regional programs have prioritized social exclusion, and many policy teams support the idea (Beall & Piron, 2005). A term known as "social exclusion" can refer to both a situation and result and a dynamic process. Social exclusion is a state in which excluded people or groups cannot fully engage in their society, either as a condition or as a result (Beall & Piron, 2005).

### **Resilience**

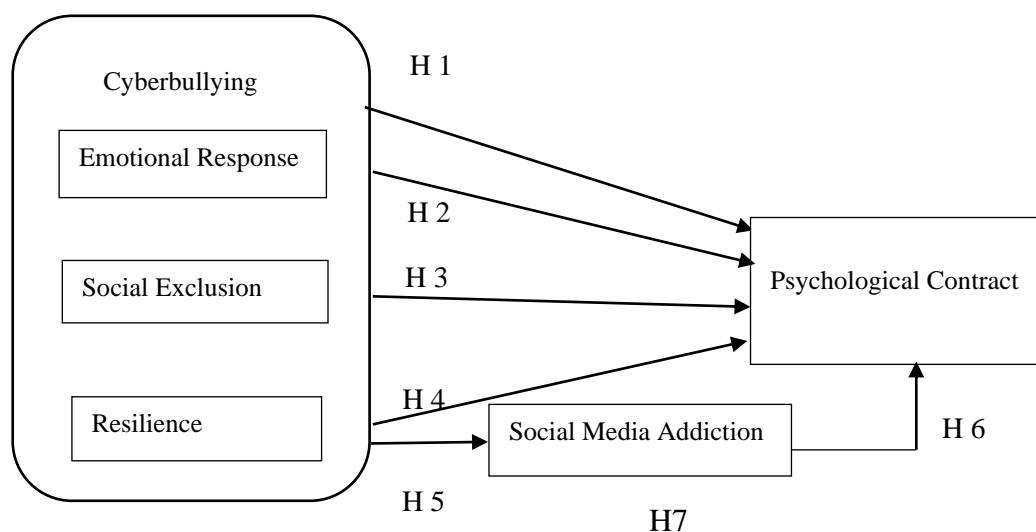
Resilience is human actors' ability and natural drive to resist, avoid, and convert unforeseen events and hostile conditions that threaten their self-actualization. It is often defined as maintaining positive adaptation during severe adversity (Sitaloppi et al., 2022).

## Social Media Addiction

Given that social media use is fast expanding and that social media addiction is a subset of internet addiction, a technique known as a psychometric assessment of potential addiction is required. In recent studies, measurement measures have been attempted to reveal social media addiction, notably on Facebook. These studies have reported on several types of addiction, including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse (Abrak, 2018).

## Methodology

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 01: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Developed by researcher

### Population and Sample

In this study, the researcher studies the impact of cyberbullying on the psychological contract with the mediating role of social media addiction of university students of state universities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study is expected to collect data from three state universities in Sri Lanka. The study population consists of 1200 university students in the faculty of management studies (academic year 2017/ 2018, Final Year) of these three state universities in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the population of this study is as follows.

The sample is the smaller data set selected from the population relevant to the research using a predefined selection method (Majid, 2018). According to that, Krejci and Morgan's method is used to select the sample size in this research. This method was developed by Krejci and Morgan in 1970. The researcher can use the Morgan table to select the sample size if the population size is known. This method is most widely used by researchers in determining sample size. It enables the researcher to determine the sufficient size to achieve the desired objective of the research. The population of this

research is 291 undergraduates in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to the Morgan table, the sample size of this research is 291 university students (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

**Table 1: Population of the study**

Name of University	Number of Students
University 01	425
University 02	320
University 03	455

### **Data collection method**

The questionnaire for measuring cyberbullying, emotional response, social exclusion, resilience, and impact was a standard questionnaire that comprised 17 questions, and the questionnaire for quantifying mediating variables of social media addiction was a standard questionnaire that included 03 questions. The questionnaire for calculating psychological contracts was standard and comprised 05 questions. In section two of the questionnaire, participants must mark their contract on each item according to their judgment using the 5-point Likert scale rating. Such as 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

### **Data Analysis Results**

#### **Reliability and Validity Test**

The researcher adopted Cronbach's Alpha test to analyze the reliability of the survey questionnaire. SPSS software generated the following values for Cronbach's Alpha for each variable in the study.

**Table 2: Reliability and validity test**

Variable	Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
<b>Independent Variables</b> (Cyberbullying)	Emotional Response	0.582	4
	Social Exclusion	0.757	4
	Resilience	0.776	4
<b>Dependent Variable</b> (Psychological Contract)		0.654	5
<b>Mediating Variable</b> (Social Media Addiction)		0.638	3

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

**Table 3: Multiple regression analysis**

**Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.790	.214		8.377	.000
1 Cyber_b	-.125	.059	.006	.108	.005
E_R	-.125	.047	-.190	-3.075	.005
S_E	-.129	.073	.031	.498	.003
Reseli	.127	.054	.176	3.022	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Contract

**Mediation Analysis**

As the most popular method in empirical mediation analysis, the Baron-Kenny approach estimates the indirect and direct effects of the treatment on the outcome based on linear structural equation models. Baron and Kenny laid out several requirements that must be met to form a genuine mediation relationship. This study has three mediation analyses. This survey method uses the SPSS analysis and plugs its process macro for SPSS, SAS, and R.

Description of the model along with the different variables where Y is the dependent variable (Psychological Contract), X is the independent variable (Cyber-bullying), and M is the mediating variable (Social Media Addiction). This mediation model is illustrated in the figure 02.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

	Coeff	se	t	P	LICI	ULCI
Constant	.5756	.1886	3.0517	.0025	.2044	.9468
Cyberbullying	0.5882	.1055	5.5776	.0000	.3806	.7957

**Table 5: Total Effect and Direct Effect**

	Effect	se	t	P	LICI	ULCI
Total effect	.2916	.0905	3.22111	.0014	.1134	.4698
Direct effect	1.0000	.0000	6.2481	.0000	1.0000	1.0000

**Table 6: Indirect Effect**

	Effect	BoostSE	BootLICI	BootULCI
Indirect effect	.1706	.0397	.1011	.2553

**Table 7: Output Matrix: Total Effect Model**

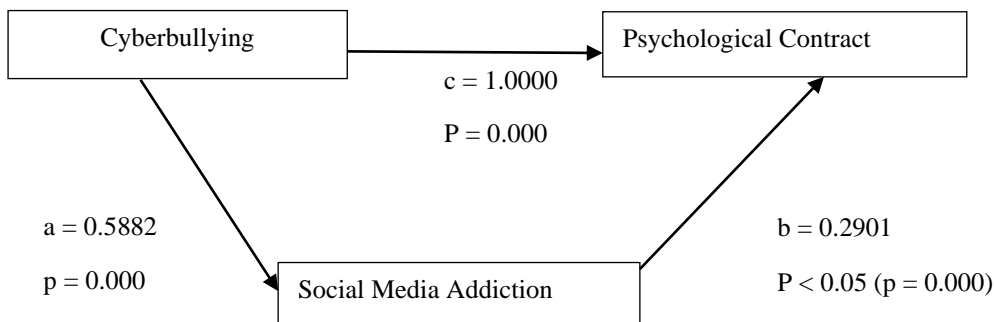
	Coeff	se	t	P	LICI	ULCI
Constant	1.1654	.1551	7.5140	.0000	.8602	1.4707
Cyberbullying	1.0000	.0000	6.2481	.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Social Media Addiction	.2901	.0476	6.0923	.0000	.1964	.3838

As per Table 4, cyberbullying significantly impacts social media addiction. The coefficient value of cyberbullying is 0.5882 with a 0.001 significance value, which is less than 0.01. This is path 'a'. Table 7 shows the total effect of cyberbullying on psychological contract (b=1.0000, t=6.2481, p=0.000) in the presence of social media addiction. This is the direct effect, as shown in 'c.' Social media addiction was also found to significantly impact psychological contract (b=.2901, t 6.0923, p=.000). This is the indirect effect, as shown in 'b.' Next, the total effect is presented.

Total effect = Direct effect (c) + Indirect effect (a\*b)

$$= 1.0000 + 0.5882 * .2901$$

$$= 1.171$$



**Figure 02: Mediation analysis**

Source: The author developed

**Table 8: Mediation Summary Analysis**

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Cyberbullying->SMA-> PC	.2916 (.000)	1.0000 (.000)	.1706	.1011	.2553

Based on the above analysis, there is a partial mediation.

## Hypotheses Testing and Discussion

### Summary of Hypotheses Testing

**Table 9: Summary of Hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Multiple Regression Analysis	Mediation Analysis Results	Results
H1: There is a negative impact of cyberbullying on psychological contract	B: -.125 Sig: .005	-	H1: Accepted
H2: There is a negative impact of emotional response on psychological contract.	B: -.125 Sig: .005	-	H2: Accepted
H3: There is a negative impact of social exclusion on psychological contract.	B: -.129 Sig: .003	-	H3: Accepted
H4: There is a negative impact of resilience on the psychological contract.	B: -.127 Sig: .004	-	H4:Accepted
H5: There is a significant impact of cyberbullying on social media addiction.	-	Coeff: .5756 P= .0025	H5: Accepted
H6: There is a significant impact of social media addiction on psychological contract	-	Coeff: 1.1654 P= .0000	H6: Accepted
H7: There is a significant impact of the mediating role of social media addiction on the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological contract	-	Total: .2916 Direct: 1.0000 Indirect: .1706	H7: Accepted

### **Cyberbullying has a significant impact on the psychological contract of university students.**

Cyberbullying includes a -0.125 B value, which signifies that when cyberbullying rises by 1 unit, psychological contract rises by -0.125 components and vice versa. This conclusion can also be finished with a 99.875% confidence interval; the significant level is 0.005. Therefore, cyberbullying does not significantly affect the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to the outcome of this study, cyberbullying cannot be recognized as a significant factor influencing the rise in the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. The study's findings are consistent with a prior study investigating the relationship that cyberbullying substantially influences psychological contracts. Cyberbullying is an independent variable that does not positively affect psychological contracts. There is, however, little study on the correlations between the commission of cyberbullying and behavioral problems like violence and psychological problems like despair and anxiety. However, the few studies that have been conducted have also targeted college and high school students rather than adults in general (Gunathillake &Perera,



2020). The current study suggests a significant effect of cyberbullying on a psychological contract in university students. There is a negative relationship of these two.

**There is a significant impact of emotional response on the psychological contract.**

Emotional response includes a -0.125 B value, which signifies that when emotional response rises by 1 unit, psychological contract also rises by -0.125 components and vice versa. This conclusion can also be finished with a 99.875% confidence interval; the significant level is 0.005. Therefore, emotional response has a negligible effect on the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to the outcome of this study, emotional response cannot be recognized as a significant factor influencing the rise in the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. The results are consistent with prior research that has revealed that relationship emotional response substantially influences psychological contract. Emotional response is a dimension of cyberbullying and does not positively influence psychological contract. However, previous empirical studies investigated the relationships between breaches and outcomes. Accordingly, the current study suggests that emotional response significantly affects psychological contracts in university students. The emotional response can help to explain negative consequences (Eckerd et al., 2013). According to Hecht and Allen (2009), the psychological contract has a significant antagonistic relationship.

**There is a significant impact of social exclusion on psychological contract.**

Social exclusion is -0.129, which indicates that growing 1 unit of social exclusion raises psychological contract by -0.129 units while other independent variables remain constant. This conclusion can also be finished with a 99.87 % confidence interval; the significant level is 0.003. Therefore, social exclusion has the most considerable influence on the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to the outcome of this research, social exclusion can be recognized as a significant factor influencing the rise in the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. The study's discoveries are consistent with prior research that has examined the substantial influence of social exclusion on the psychological contract. Then, the current study suggests that social exclusion significantly affects psychological contracts in university students. There are adverse outcomes of social exclusion and psychological contract (Abrams & Killen, 2014).

**There is a significant impact of resilience on the psychological contract.**

Resilience comprises a -0.127 B value, which denotes that when resilience rises by 1 unit, psychological contract also rises by -0.127 units and vice versa. This conclusion can also be finished with a 99.873% confidence interval; the significant level is 0.004. Therefore, resilience does not considerably influence the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. According to the outcome of this research, resilience cannot be recognized as a significant factor influencing the rise in the psychological contract of university students in state universities in Sri Lanka. The study's discoveries are consistent with prior research investigating that relationship resilience substantially

impacts psychological contracts. Resilience is a dimension of cyberbullying and does not positively influence psychological contracts. According to Handy et al.(2020), An increasing number of authors have critiqued the emphasis on some claims that psychological contracts should be studied as reciprocal psychological connections where all parties have interwoven expectations of and felt duties toward one another. With that fact, the current study suggests a resilience significant effect, psychological contract in university students. Positive responses to stress have been described using the term "resilience," which is now acknowledged as a separate field of study in and of itself (Hind et al., 1996).

**There is a significant impact of cyberbullying on social media addiction.**

As shown in this matrix, cyberbullying involves .5882 effects, and .0000 is a significant value. LICI and ULCI are going the same line. Correspondingly, there is a negative relationship between cyberbullying and social media addiction. The significant predictive link between social media addiction and cyberbullying supports this finding (Abrak, 2018). With that fact, the current study suggests that social media addiction significantly affects cyberbullying in university students.

**There is a significant impact of social media addiction on psychological contract.**

This matrix psychological contract involves 1.0000 effects; 0.0000 is a significant value. LICI and ULCI are going on different lines. Also, there is no relationship between social media addiction and psychological contract. However, a moderately favorable association between social media addiction and communications and an extensive weak positive relationship between motivational beliefs and interpersonal communication skills were discovered (Thomas, 2018). Accordingly, the current study suggests that social media addiction significantly affects psychological contracts in university students.

**There is a significant impact of the mediating role of social media addiction on the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological contract.**

As shown, this impact of the mediating role of social media addiction on the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological contract 0.1706 LICI and ULCI is going the same line. Also, social media addiction negatively affects the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological contract. It is important to remember that psychological contracts can have positive and negative effects. The retention and provision of adequate facilities for the skills that are useful for the organization's development by the organizations is crucial. Treating the psychological contract concerns will be challenging if the causes are not found (Chakraborty, 2022). With that fact, the current study suggests the mediating role of social media addiction and the significant effect of cyberbullying on psychological contracts in university students.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study tested identified factors on a simple random sample of 291 university students in the Faculty of Management Studies final year. Seven hypotheses were advanced and grounded on the revealed criteria to fulfill the research's future objectives. Because of the literature reviewed and data collected,

analyzed, and the findings derived. The following conclusions were made: There was a significant negative relationship between the cyberbullying of psychological contracts and the mediating role of social media addiction in university students of state universities in Sri Lanka. Resilience and emotional response pass the hypothesis test. Therefore, mediated relationships between cyberbullying and psychological contracts are seen. Correspondingly, further research can investigate the impact of cyberbullying on the psychological contract with the mediating role of Social Media Addiction of University Students of State Universities in Sri Lanka (including government universities and private universities). As per the emotional response, social exclusion and resilience are dimensions of cyberbullying. The number of participants was restricted to 291, the small sample was limited to generalize results, and the research population was limited to three universities. Therefore, expanding the population to management faculties in final year students in these three universities in Sri Lanka is an excellent area to conduct research.

### **Limitations**

The decision about the sample size was taken considering time and cost, the need for precision, and a variety of further considerations. Some respondents could only be partially truthful for various reasons, including misunderstandings of the study's objectives, compliance issues with organizational policies, and language limitations. This study only considers university students in Sri Lanka. As a result, the findings of this study might not be relevant to other students or the private sector.

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