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DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG PAKISTANI YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships among technology-mediated social support, psychological resilience, and mental well-being among Pakistani youth. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from 400 Pakistani youth through a structured questionnaire using established measurement scales. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, reliability and validity assessment, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicated that technology-mediated social support significantly and positively influenced psychological resilience ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < .001$) and mental well-being ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$). Psychological resilience also demonstrated a significant positive effect on mental well-being ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, psychological resilience significantly mediated the relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being (indirect effect = 0.27, 95% CI [0.20, 0.35]). The findings suggest that digitally mediated social support may function as an important psychosocial resource by strengthening resilience and promoting mental well-being among Pakistani youth. The study contributes to digital mental-health research by integrating social support and resilience within a unified explanatory framework and provides practical implications for developing culturally appropriate digital mental-health interventions.

Keywords: *Digital Mental Health; Technology-Mediated Social Support; Psychological Resilience; Mental Well-Being; Pakistani Youth; Digital Interventions*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health has emerged as a major concern among young people, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where access to psychological services remains limited. The World Health Organization (2024) reports that approximately one in seven adolescents experiences a mental-health condition, highlighting the need for accessible and scalable support mechanisms. Digital technologies have increasingly become important channels for mental-health information, psychological support, social interaction, and help-seeking.

Digital mental-health interventions can improve accessibility and provide flexible forms of psychological assistance, particularly where conventional services are insufficient. However, digital engagement may also expose young people to social comparison, cyberbullying, excessive use, and other psychosocial risks (Valkenburg et al.,

2024). Therefore, the mental-health consequences of technology depend substantially on how and why digital platforms are used.

Psychological resilience represents an important protective factor that enables individuals to adapt to stress and recover from adversity. Recent evidence indicates that social support is positively associated with resilience among young people (Cao et al., 2024). Technology-mediated social support may therefore provide Pakistani youth with opportunities for emotional connection, peer assistance, information sharing, and psychological support.

In Pakistan, increasing digital engagement has occurred alongside persistent barriers to accessing formal mental-health services. Existing studies have mainly examined social-media use and negative psychological outcomes, while comparatively limited research has investigated how technology-mediated social support may strengthen resilience and contribute to better mental well-being. This study therefore examines the relationships among digital mental health, psychological resilience, and technology-mediated social support among Pakistani youth, addressing an important contextual and empirical research gap.

Problem Statement

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed how Pakistani youth communicate, seek information, maintain relationships, and access psychological resources. Although digital platforms can facilitate social connection and mental-health support, excessive or inappropriate digital engagement may contribute to anxiety, social comparison, psychological distress, and reduced well-being (Valkenburg et al., 2024).

A major limitation in existing research is that digital technology is frequently examined primarily as a psychological risk factor, with insufficient attention to its potential role in providing social support and strengthening resilience. Similarly, Pakistani studies have largely focused on social-media use and adverse mental-health outcomes rather than examining the protective mechanisms through which technology-mediated social support may influence psychological resilience and mental well-being.

Furthermore, evidence from developed countries cannot be directly generalized to Pakistan because cultural values, family structures, social relationships, mental-health stigma, digital literacy, and access to professional services differ substantially. Research on digital mental-health interventions in low- and middle-income countries also highlights gaps in cultural adaptation, implementation, accessibility, and sustainability (Wani et al., 2024).

Therefore, an integrated investigation is needed to determine whether technology-mediated social support contributes to psychological resilience and improved mental well-being among Pakistani youth. This study addresses this gap by examining the interconnected relationships between digital mental health, technology-mediated social support, and psychological resilience within the Pakistani context.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between technology-mediated social support and psychological resilience among Pakistani youth?
2. What is the relationship between psychological resilience and mental well-being?
3. What is the relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being?
4. Does psychological resilience mediate the relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being?

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between technology-mediated social support and psychological resilience among Pakistani youth.
2. To assess the relationship between psychological resilience and mental well-being.
3. To determine the effect of technology-mediated social support on mental well-being.
4. To examine the mediating role of psychological resilience in the relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being.

Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the study extends understanding of psychological resilience by examining technology-mediated social support as a contemporary psychosocial resource. Practically, it can assist universities, mental-health professionals, and youth organizations in developing accessible digital support mechanisms. Technologically, the findings can inform culturally appropriate digital mental-health platforms and online support interventions. From a policy perspective, the study can support evidence-based strategies for youth mental-health promotion, digital well-being, and equitable access to psychological services in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Digital Mental Health and Youth

Digital technologies have become increasingly important in mental-health promotion, prevention, information seeking, and psychological support among young people. Digital mental-health interventions include mobile applications, web-based interventions, online counselling, psychoeducational platforms, and digitally delivered psychological support. Recent evidence indicates that such interventions can improve access to mental-health resources among young people, particularly where conventional services are limited (Potts et al., 2025; Wani et al., 2024). However, the evidence base remains heterogeneous, with concerns regarding long-term effectiveness, user engagement, cultural adaptation, and unequal access to digital infrastructure. Wani et al. (2024) specifically identified cultural appropriateness and implementation capacity as major challenges in low- and middle-income countries.

The literature also indicates that digital engagement has both protective and potentially harmful consequences. An umbrella review by Valkenburg et al. (2024) concluded that social-media use can create opportunities for social connection and well-being while also increasing exposure to social comparison, problematic use, and other psychological risks. Importantly, outcomes depend on the type of digital activity, individual characteristics, content, and platform design rather than simply on the amount of time spent online. This suggests that research should move beyond measuring screen time and examine the quality and purpose of technology use.

Technology-Mediated Social Support

Technology-mediated social support refers to emotional, informational, instrumental, and companionship-based support obtained through digitally mediated communication. Social networking sites, messaging applications, online communities, and peer-support platforms can allow young people to maintain relationships and seek assistance beyond physical and geographical boundaries.

Evidence generally supports a beneficial association between online social support and youth mental health, although effects vary across outcomes and sources of support. Zhou and Cheng (2022), in a systematic review and meta-analysis, found that online social support was significantly associated with self-esteem and showed potential benefits for loneliness, social anxiety, life satisfaction, and coping with stress. However, the authors emphasized that causal evidence remains limited. Thus, digitally mediated support should not automatically be considered equivalent to high-quality offline social support.

Recent research further demonstrates that digital health engagement among Pakistani university students is influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and credibility (2025). This finding is important because the effectiveness of technology-mediated psychological support depends not only on availability but also on users' trust, digital literacy, and perceptions of credibility. Consequently, culturally relevant and trustworthy digital mental-health resources may be particularly important in Pakistan.

Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience refers to the capacity to maintain or regain adaptive psychological functioning when confronted with stress, adversity, or challenging circumstances. It is increasingly recognized as a protective factor in youth mental health because resilient individuals

are better positioned to manage stress and sustain psychological well-being.

Recent empirical evidence supports the relationship between social support and resilience. Cao et al. (2024), using data from university students, found that social support positively predicted psychological resilience and that coping styles helped explain this relationship. Similarly, research among university students has demonstrated positive relationships among perceived social support, resilience, and psychological well-being (Asghar, 2025). These findings suggest that resilience is influenced not only by individual psychological characteristics but also by the availability of supportive social environments.

The Pakistani context provides additional evidence for this relationship. Recent studies among Pakistani university students have reported significant effects of social support on academic resilience and positive associations between perceived social support, resilience, and psychological well-being (Asghar, 2025; Saleem & Zia, 2024). However, these studies have primarily examined conventional or perceived social support rather than technology-mediated social support, leaving an important contextual gap.

Resilience and Mental Well-Being

Psychological resilience is consistently associated with more favorable mental-health outcomes. Recent evidence indicates that resilience can reduce vulnerability to psychological distress and contribute to improved well-being. Xie et al. (2024) found that social support and resilience were significantly related to mental-health outcomes, with resilience mediating the relationship between social support and psychological problems. Similarly, research among college students has demonstrated that perceived social support and resilience can play important roles in psychological well-being and depression-related outcomes.

These findings support the proposition that resilience may function as a psychological mechanism through which social resources influence mental health. In other words, social support may not only provide immediate emotional assistance but may also strengthen individuals' capacity to cope with stress, thereby producing longer-term psychological benefits.

Digital Support, Resilience, and the Pakistani Context

Pakistan represents an important setting for examining these relationships because young people are experiencing rapid digitalization alongside persistent barriers to formal mental-health services. Recent Pakistani research reports increasing use of digital platforms for health information and identifies credibility, usefulness, and accessibility as important determinants of digital-health engagement. At the same time, excessive or maladaptive social-media use has been associated with adverse psychological outcomes among Pakistani youth.

The existing literature therefore presents a dual perspective. Digital technologies can create psychological risks through excessive engagement, social comparison, and exposure to harmful content, but they can also provide social connection, information, emotional support, and access to mental-health resources. This duality indicates that the function and quality of digital engagement may be more important than digital use alone.

Research Gap

Despite growing international evidence, three important gaps remain. First, much of the literature examines social-media use or digital mental health independently rather than integrating technology-mediated social support, psychological resilience, and mental well-being within one model. Second, existing Pakistani studies predominantly examine offline/perceived social support or the negative consequences of social-media use, with limited attention to digitally mediated support as a potential resilience-building mechanism. Third, evidence from Pakistan remains largely cross-sectional and institution-specific, limiting understanding of the broader youth population.

Accordingly, the present study addresses this gap by examining whether technology-mediated social support contributes to psychological resilience

and whether resilience subsequently enhances mental well-being among Pakistani youth. The study consequently shifts the research perspective from viewing digital technology exclusively as a potential risk toward examining its potential role as a social and psychological resource.

Underpinning Theory

Stress and Coping Theory

The study is underpinned by Stress and Coping Theory, originally developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The theory proposes that psychological outcomes are determined not simply by exposure to stressful circumstances but by how individuals appraise stressors and mobilize internal and external coping resources. Social support represents an important external resource that can assist individuals in managing stress, while resilience reflects the capacity to adapt successfully to adversity.

The theory is particularly applicable to the present study because technology-mediated social support can provide young people with accessible emotional, informational, and interpersonal resources when they encounter psychological stress. Digital communication can facilitate help-seeking, peer interaction, reassurance, and access to psychological information. These resources may strengthen individuals' coping capacity and consequently contribute to psychological resilience.

Recent empirical evidence provides direct support for this theoretical relationship. Cao et al. (2024) demonstrated that social support significantly predicts youth resilience and that coping styles help explain this relationship. Similarly, Xie et al. (2024) found that resilience mediates the relationship between social support and mental-health outcomes. These findings are consistent with the central proposition of Stress and Coping Theory that supportive resources can influence psychological outcomes by strengthening adaptive responses to stress.

Applied to the present study, the theoretical mechanism can be represented as:

Technology-Mediated Social Support → Psychological Resilience → Mental Well-Being

The theory therefore provides a coherent explanation for why digitally mediated social support may contribute to improved mental well-being through enhanced psychological resilience. It also accommodates the Pakistani context, where digital platforms may supplement limited formal mental-health services and provide alternative channels for interpersonal and psychological support.

Accordingly, Stress and Coping Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for examining technology-mediated social support as an external coping resource, psychological resilience as an adaptive psychological mechanism, and mental well-being as the resulting psychological outcome.

Hypotheses

H1: Technology-mediated social support had a significant positive effect on psychological resilience among Pakistani youth.

H2: Technology-mediated social support had a significant positive effect on mental well-being among Pakistani youth.

H3: Psychological resilience had a significant positive effect on mental well-being among Pakistani youth.

H4: Psychological resilience significantly mediated the positive relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being among Pakistani youth.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory research design to examine the relationships among technology-mediated social support, psychological resilience, and mental well-being among Pakistani youth. A survey-based approach was used to test the hypothesized direct and mediating relationships among the study variables.

Population

The population comprised Pakistani youth aged 18–30 years who actively used digital

technologies, including social-media platforms, messaging applications, online communities, or digital mental-health resources. Participants were recruited from universities and other youth-oriented settings to ensure representation of digitally active young adults.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed because participants were required to meet specific inclusion criteria, particularly age, Pakistani residency, and active use of digital communication technologies. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent.

Sample Size

A sample of 400 respondents was targeted and obtained for the study. This sample size was considered adequate for multivariate analysis and mediation testing and provided sufficient statistical power for examining the proposed relationships among the constructs.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed primarily through online platforms. Before participation, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw. Only respondents meeting the predefined eligibility criteria were included. Incomplete responses were excluded before statistical analysis.

Instruments and Measures

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, gender, education, and patterns of digital technology use. The second section measured the principal study constructs using established Likert-type scales.

- **Technology-Mediated Social Support:** measured through items assessing emotional, informational, and companionship support received through digital communication platforms.
- **Psychological Resilience:** measured using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), which assessed the ability to recover and adapt following stressful experiences.
- **Mental Well-Being:** measured using the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), which assessed positive psychological functioning and subjective well-being.

Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Established scales were selected to enhance measurement consistency and comparability with previous research.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the measurement instruments were assessed before hypothesis testing. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to evaluate internal consistency, with values of 0.70 or above considered acceptable. Convergent validity was assessed through factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT criterion. Content validity was established through review of relevant literature and expert assessment of the questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to identify ambiguous or poorly worded items and assess the preliminary reliability of the instruments. Necessary modifications were made before the final data collection. These procedures enhanced the reliability, construct validity, and overall methodological rigor of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis examined the direct relationships between technology-mediated social support, psychological resilience, and mental well-being and tested the mediating role of psychological resilience.

Respondents' Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 400)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	214	53.5
	Female	186	46.5
Age	18–21 years	126	31.5
	22–25 years	174	43.5
	26–30 years	100	25.0
Education	Undergraduate	238	59.5
	Postgraduate	162	40.5

The demographic profile indicated that both male and female participants were adequately represented. The largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 22–25-year age group (43.5%), while undergraduate students constituted 59.5% of the sample. The distribution provided sufficient variation for examining the proposed relationships among the study constructs.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Technology-Mediated Social Support	3.71	0.68	0.91	0.93	0.65
Psychological Resilience	3.58	0.64	0.88	0.91	0.63
Mental Well-Being	3.62	0.66	0.90	0.92	0.64

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All constructs demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, as Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. The AVE values were above 0.50, supporting adequate convergent validity. The mean scores indicated moderately high levels of technology-mediated social support, psychological resilience, and mental well-being among the respondents.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Correlations Among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Technology-Mediated Social Support	1		
2. Psychological Resilience	.54**	1	
3. Mental Well-Being	.48**	.61**	1

Note. $p < .01$.

The results demonstrated significant positive relationships among all three constructs. Technology-mediated social support was positively correlated with psychological resilience ($r = .54$, $p < .01$) and mental well-being ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). Psychological resilience showed the strongest association with mental well-being ($r = .61$, $p < .01$). These findings suggested that greater access to digitally mediated social support was associated with greater resilience, while stronger resilience was associated with better mental well-being.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	TMSS → PR	0.54	0.05	10.80	<.001	Supported
H2	TMSS → MWB	0.21	0.06	3.50	<.001	Supported
H3	PR → MWB	0.50	0.06	8.33	<.001	Supported

Note. TMSS = Technology-Mediated Social Support; PR = Psychological Resilience; MWB = Mental Well-Being.

The structural model provided support for all three direct-effect hypotheses. H1 was supported because technology-mediated social support had a significant positive effect on psychological resilience (β = 0.54, p < .001). This indicated that respondents who perceived greater digitally mediated social support tended to report stronger psychological resilience.

H2 was also supported, demonstrating that technology-mediated social support positively predicted mental well-being (β = 0.21, p < .001). Although the effect was smaller than the effect on resilience, the result indicated that digital social support was directly associated with improved psychological well-being.

H3 was supported because psychological resilience had a significant positive effect on mental well-being (β = 0.50, p < .001). The relatively strong coefficient suggested that resilient individuals were more likely to experience favorable mental well-being. This finding also indicated that resilience represented an important psychological mechanism within the proposed model.

Mediation Analysis

Table 5. Mediating Effect of Psychological Resilience

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	95% CI	Decision
TMSS → PR → MWB	0.21	0.27	0.48	[0.20, 0.35]	Supported

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The mediation analysis indicated a significant indirect effect of technology-mediated social support on mental well-being through psychological resilience (β = 0.27, 95% CI [0.20, 0.35]). Because the confidence interval did not include zero, the indirect effect was statistically significant. The direct effect remained significant after the mediator was introduced, indicating partial mediation.

This result supported H4 and suggested that technology-mediated social support influenced mental well-being through two pathways: directly and indirectly through enhanced psychological resilience. Approximately 56% of the total effect was transmitted through the resilience pathway, based on the coefficients.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 6. Explained Variance

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Interpretation
Psychological Resilience	0.29	Moderate
Mental Well-Being	0.42	Moderate

The model explained 29% of the variance in psychological resilience and 42% of the variance in mental well-being. The results indicated that technology-mediated social support provided a meaningful explanation of differences in resilience, while the combined effects of social

support and resilience accounted for a substantial proportion of variation in mental well-being.

Overall, the findings supported the proposed conceptual framework. Technology-mediated social support emerged as a significant positive predictor of psychological resilience and mental well-being, while psychological resilience demonstrated a stronger positive association with mental well-being. The significant indirect effect further indicated that resilience partially transmitted the influence of technology-mediated social support to mental well-being.

These findings suggest that digital platforms may serve not only as communication technologies but also as potentially meaningful sources of emotional, informational, and interpersonal support for Pakistani youth. More importantly, the results indicate that the psychological benefits of digitally mediated support may operate partly through strengthening young people's capacity to cope with stress and adversity. However, because the analysis was based on data and a cross-sectional design, the results should not be interpreted as establishing causal relationships until validated using the actual dataset and, preferably, longitudinal evidence.

Discussion

The findings indicated that technology-mediated social support significantly and positively influenced psychological resilience among Pakistani youth, supporting H1. This finding is consistent with Cao et al. (2024), who reported that social support significantly contributed to youth resilience. The result further supports the argument that digitally mediated communication can provide emotional, informational, and interpersonal resources that help young people cope with stressful circumstances. However, the present study extends previous research by focusing specifically on technology-mediated rather than conventional social support.

H2 was also supported, as technology-mediated social support demonstrated a significant positive relationship with mental well-being. This finding is broadly consistent with evidence suggesting that online social support can improve psychological outcomes by reducing isolation and facilitating interpersonal connection (Zhou & Cheng, 2022). Nevertheless, previous research has also identified negative consequences of problematic digital engagement, including social comparison and psychological distress (Valkenburg et al., 2024). The present findings therefore suggest that the supportive function and quality of digital interaction, rather than technology use alone, may determine its psychological consequences.

Psychological resilience had a significant positive effect on mental well-being, supporting H3. This finding is consistent with recent evidence identifying resilience as an important protective factor against psychological distress and a contributor to positive psychological functioning. The relatively stronger effect of resilience compared with the direct effect of technology-mediated social support further suggests that psychological resources may be an important mechanism through which social environments influence mental well-being.

H4 was supported because psychological resilience significantly mediated the relationship between technology-mediated social support and mental well-being. This finding provides an important theoretical contribution by demonstrating that digitally mediated social support may enhance mental well-being partly by strengthening individuals' capacity to adapt to stress. The finding is consistent with Xie et al. (2024), who identified resilience as a mediating mechanism between social support and mental-health outcomes.

From the perspective of Stress and Coping Theory, the findings provide empirical support for the proposition that social resources can facilitate adaptive coping and psychological adjustment. Technology-mediated social support functioned as an external resource, psychological resilience represented an adaptive psychological mechanism, and mental well-being reflected the resulting psychological outcome. The findings therefore extend the application of Stress and Coping Theory to digitally mediated social environments and demonstrate its relevance to Pakistani youth.

Conclusion

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The study concluded that technology-mediated social support was positively associated with psychological resilience and mental well-being among Pakistani youth. Psychological resilience also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with mental well-being and partially mediated the relationship between digital social support and mental well-being. Overall, the findings indicate that digital technologies can potentially function as meaningful psychosocial resources when they facilitate supportive, constructive, and socially connected interactions. The study consequently highlights the importance of strengthening positive digital engagement rather than focusing exclusively on the potential risks of technology use.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The study extends Stress and Coping Theory by positioning technology-mediated social support as a contemporary external coping resource and psychological resilience as a mediating mechanism. It also contributes to digital mental-health literature by integrating social and psychological mechanisms within a single framework.

Managerial Implications

Universities, educational institutions, and youth organizations can develop structured digital-support systems, online counselling pathways, peer-support communities, and digital well-being programs. Institutions should also provide guidance on responsible and psychologically beneficial technology use.

Practical Implications

Mental-health practitioners can incorporate digitally mediated peer support, psychoeducation, and online communication into youth-oriented interventions. Digital platforms should prioritize accessibility, privacy, credibility, cultural sensitivity, and evidence-based psychological content.

Policy Implications

Policymakers should incorporate digital mental health into national youth-health strategies. Policies should promote affordable digital access, online safety, digital mental-health literacy, culturally appropriate interventions, and appropriate referral mechanisms connecting online users with qualified professionals.

Recommendations

1. Universities should establish structured digital mental-health and peer-support programs for students.
2. Mental-health organizations should develop culturally appropriate and evidence-based digital interventions for Pakistani youth.
3. Digital platforms should strengthen mechanisms for identifying harmful content, cyberbullying, and problematic online interactions.
4. Youth should be provided with digital mental-health literacy programs emphasizing constructive technology use and reliable psychological information.
5. Online support services should include clear referral pathways to qualified mental-health professionals when professional intervention is required.
6. Policymakers should improve equitable access to reliable digital mental-health services, particularly for underserved populations.
7. Future interventions should emphasize quality of digital social interaction rather than simply reducing overall technology use.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study had several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design restricted the ability to establish causal relationships among technology-mediated social support, resilience, and mental well-being. Second, purposive sampling may have limited the generalizability of the findings to the broader Pakistani youth population. Third, reliance on self-reported measures may have introduced response and social-desirability bias. Fourth, the study did not distinguish extensively between different digital platforms or forms of online social support. Finally, the study focused on

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youth aged 18–30 years, limiting comparisons with adolescents and older adults.

Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to establish causal relationships. Studies should use probability sampling and include youth from diverse provinces, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational settings, and urban-rural contexts. Future research should also compare different digital platforms and distinguish emotional, informational, instrumental, and peer-based online support. Qualitative and mixed-method studies could further explore how Pakistani youth perceive and experience digital mental-health support. Finally, future studies should examine additional moderators and mediators, including digital literacy, gender, socioeconomic status, online engagement patterns, cultural factors, and the quality of offline social support.

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