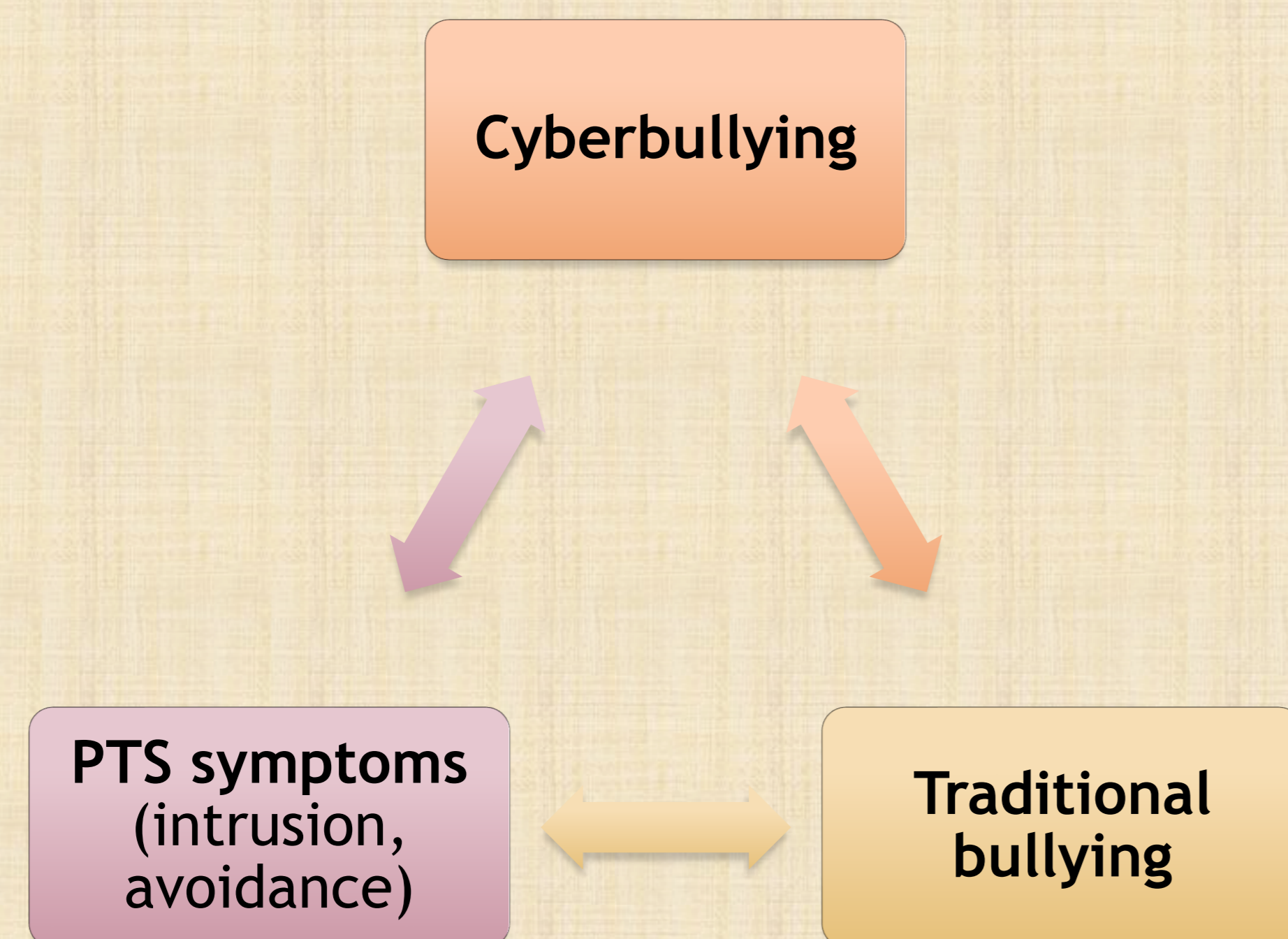


# Intrusion and avoidance as post-traumatic stress symptoms in cyberbullying

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## INTRODUCTION

More than 90% of adolescents use the internet for social networking within the UK. Attention has been drawn to its potential for use in interpersonal aggression. Despite the mental health consequences for adolescents involved in cyberbullying, post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms (e.g. intrusion, avoidance) have not received much attention in the UK.



### • AIMS:

- To assess the overlap between cyber and traditional (i.e. face-to-face) bullying
- To analyse the relationship between cyberbullying and PTS symptoms in UK adolescents.

## METHODS

### • PARTICIPANTS:

- Four London (UK) secondary schools (pupils 11-19yrs) were included in the survey.
- 2764 pupils were on register.
- A response rate of 80.3% (n=2218) was achieved.

### • DESIGN AND PROCEDURE:

- Cross sectional survey at school.
- Parental consent was requested.

### • INSTRUMENTS:

- Sociodemographic questions
- Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ): for cyberbullying/traditional bullying involvement
- Children Revised Impact of Events Scale (IES): for PTS symptoms

### • STATISTICAL ANALYSES:

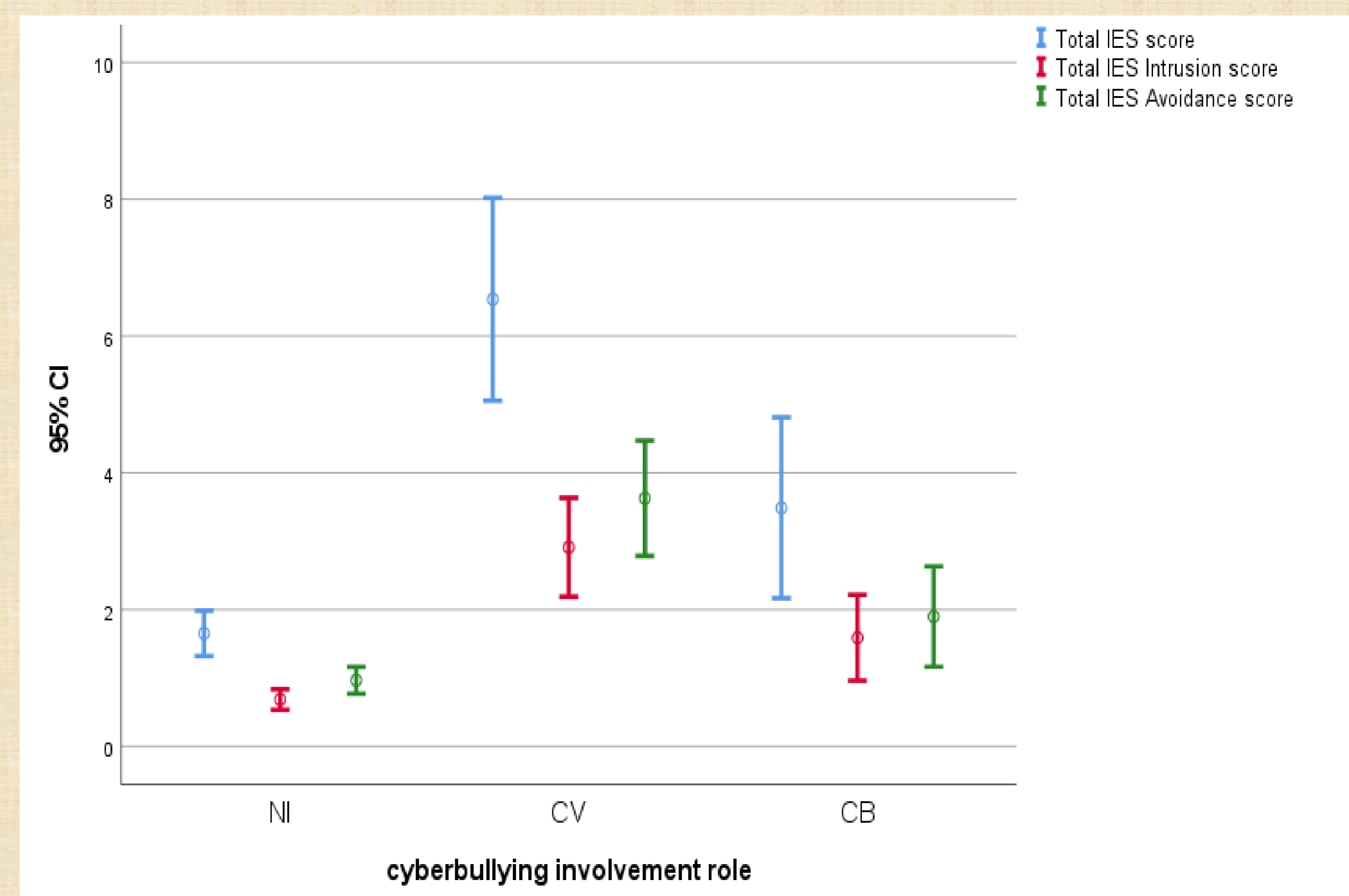
- Chi-square, Kruskal-Wallis and bootstrap multiple regression analyses were used.

## RESULTS

- Half of those involved in a specific cyberbullying role were also involved in the same role in traditional bullying (52.2% of the cybervictims were also traditional victims, whereas 45.5% of the cyberbully victims were also traditional bully victims, and 48% of the cyberbullies were also traditional bullies).

- A significant proportion of those who were cybervictims (n=280; 35%), cyberbullies (n=178; 29.2%) or cyberbully-victims (n=77; 28.6%) presented clinically significant PTS symptoms (above threshold).

- Victims and perpetrators showed higher severity of symptoms compared to the non-involved.



- ✓ Cybervictims (both cyber-only and cyberbully victims) suffered more intrusion (z=3.45, p=0.003; z=-4.53, p<.001) and avoidance (z=3.37, p=0.005; z=-4.67, p<.001) than cyber-bullies.
- ✓ However, cyberbullies still suffered more PTS symptoms than non-involved young people (intrusion: z=-3.67, p=0.001; avoidance: z=-3.57, p=0.002).

- Both intrusion and avoidance were significantly predicted (R<sup>2</sup>=13.2) by cyber- and traditional victimisation.

- ✓ Being a cybervictim only explained 7.5% of the variance in PTS symptoms, being a traditional victim only explained 11.7%.
- ✓ Being a cyberbullyvictim explained 3.6% of the variance in PTS symptoms, being a TBV explained 2%.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a strong **overlap between cyber and traditional bullying**.

Both **bullies and victims have more intrusion and avoidance** than NI. **Cyber and traditional victimization significantly predicted both intrusion and avoidance**.

Health professionals need to bear in mind **screening for possible PTS symptoms** in young people involved as both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. Early cost-effective treatments could be implemented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS