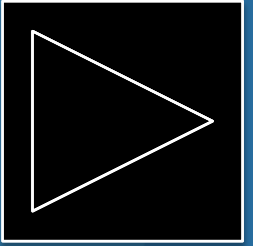




Trusted Adults as a Protective Factor for Bullying and Suicide Attempts among Youth across Differences in Race, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In young Park
University of Denver

TAP TO RETURN TO KIOSK MENU



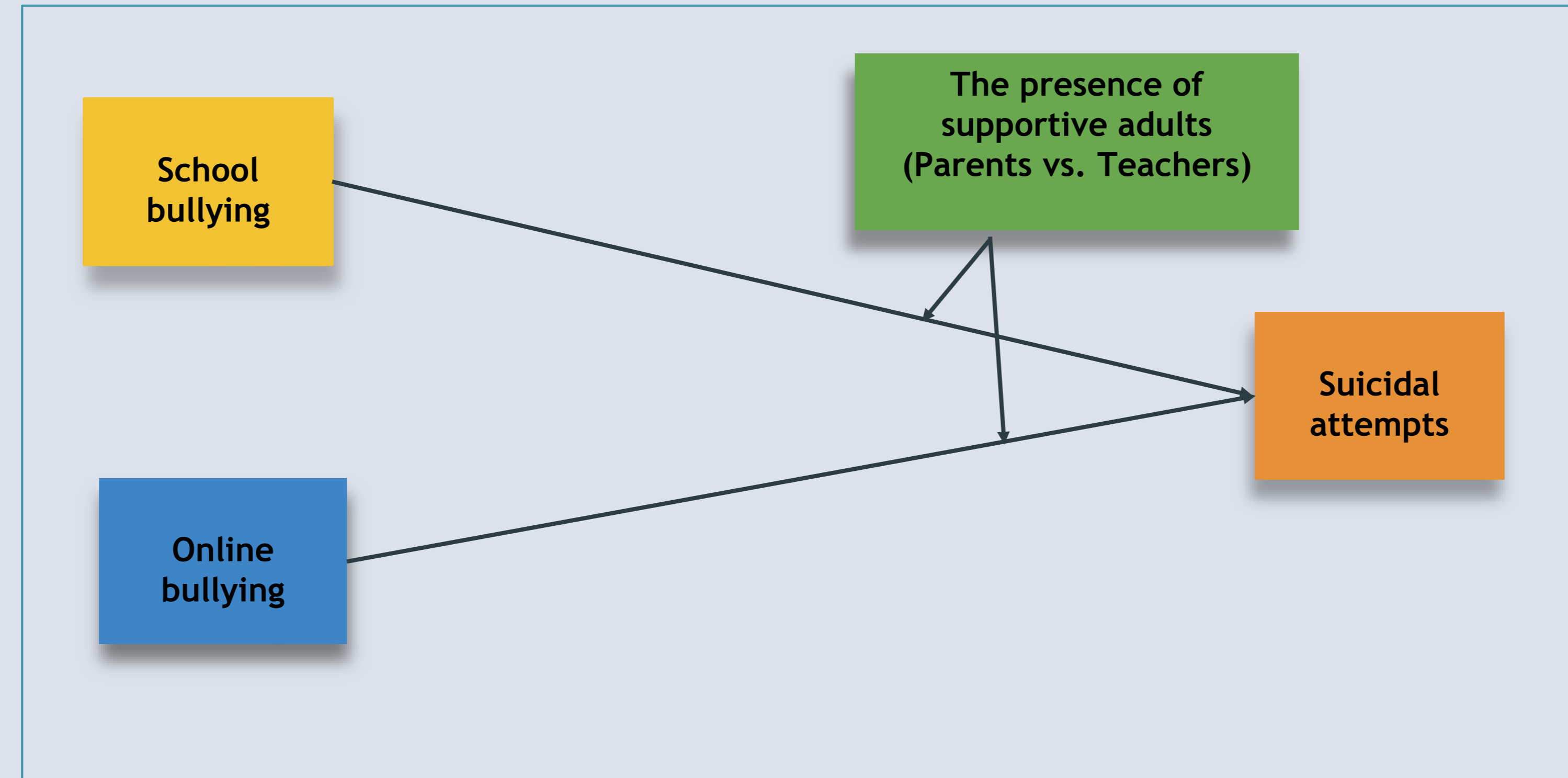
Introduction

- Suicide among 14- to 18-year-old youth is a major public health concern (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2019).
- One environmental risk factor for suicidal thoughts and behaviors among youth is bullying. Both school bullying and online bullying negatively influence the psychological well-being of youth (Koyanagi et al., 2019).
- For youth at increased risk for suicide attempts, supportive home and school environments where the youth feel connected are crucial protective resources.
- Although previous studies help us understand the link between bullying and suicide at-tempts, it is still unclear whether reports of suicide attempts are similar across these two types of bullying.

Research Aims

- Using the stress-buffering hypothesis as a theoretical framework, this study examines school bullying and online bullying and their relationships with suicide attempts.
- The protective roles of the availability of supportive adults in the relationship between bullying and sui-cide attempt are tested separately.

Conceptual model

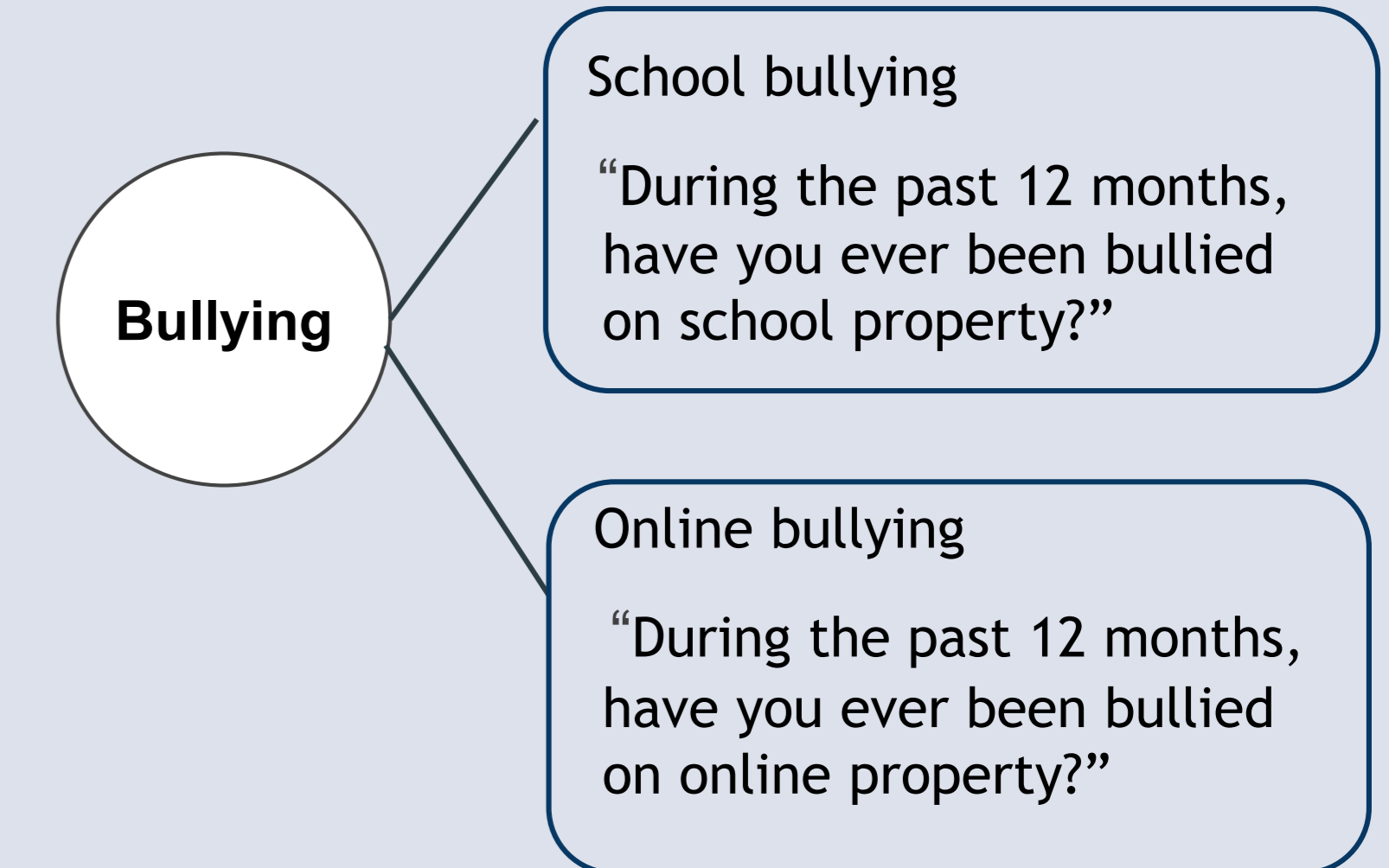


Participants

- **Dataset:** This study is a secondary data analysis of data collected for the 2015 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS), a biennial survey administered in public high schools by the Colorado Department of Education
- **Participants:** A sample of 5,351 students ages 14-18 (Mean age = 15.68) in Colorado was used

Measures

Independent variable



Moderation variable : Presence of supportive adults

- “When you feel sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious, with whom would you most likely talk about it?”
- Based on the research questions, we derived two dichotomous variables indicating parents/other adult family members as the most likely support or teachers/other school-based adults as the most likely support

Dependent variable: Suicide attempts

- Measured by asking respondents “During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?” with a response set of 0 times (0), 1 time (1), 2 or 3 times (2), 4 or 5 times (3), and 6 or more times (4)

Control variables: Students’ gender, age, Race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity



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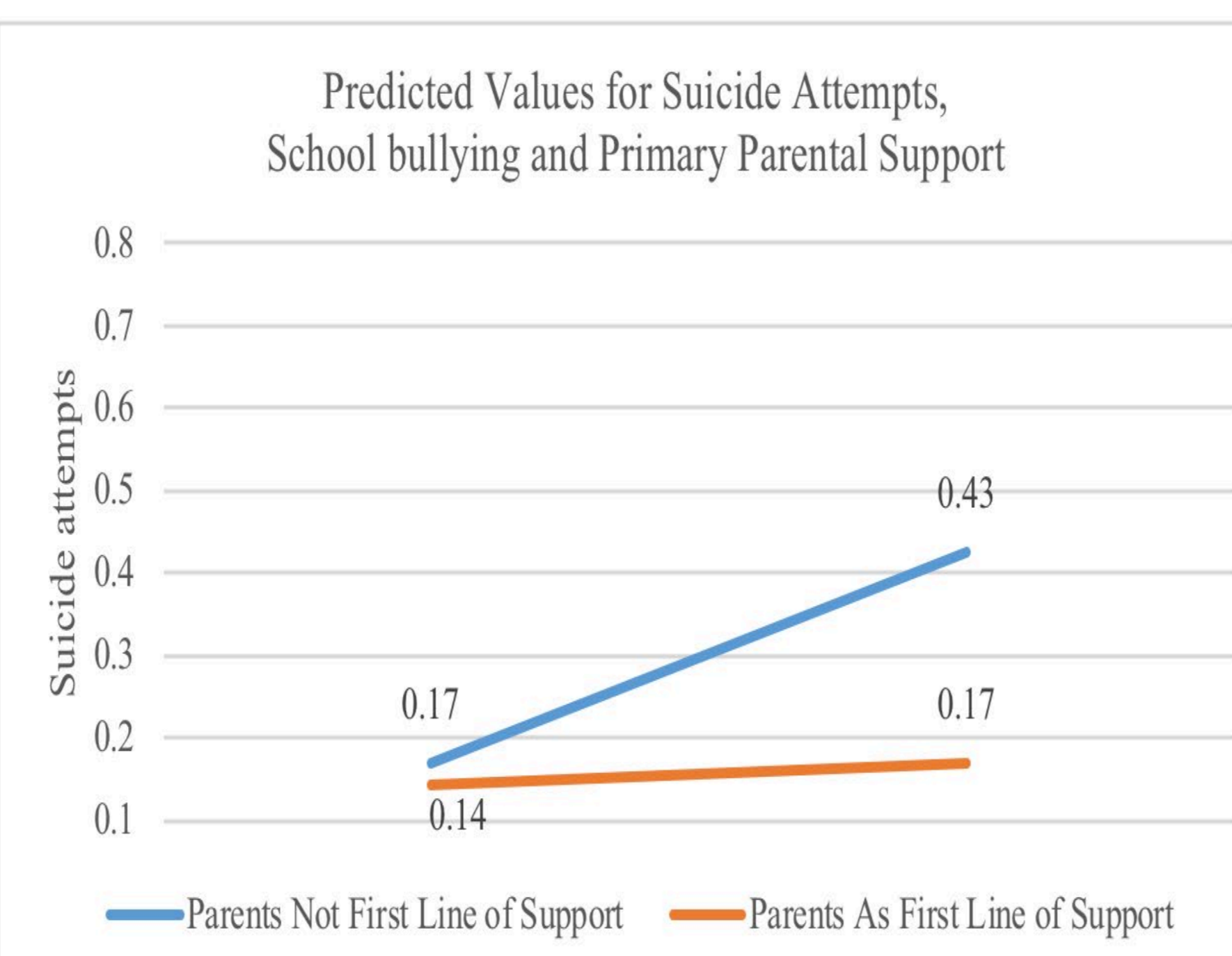
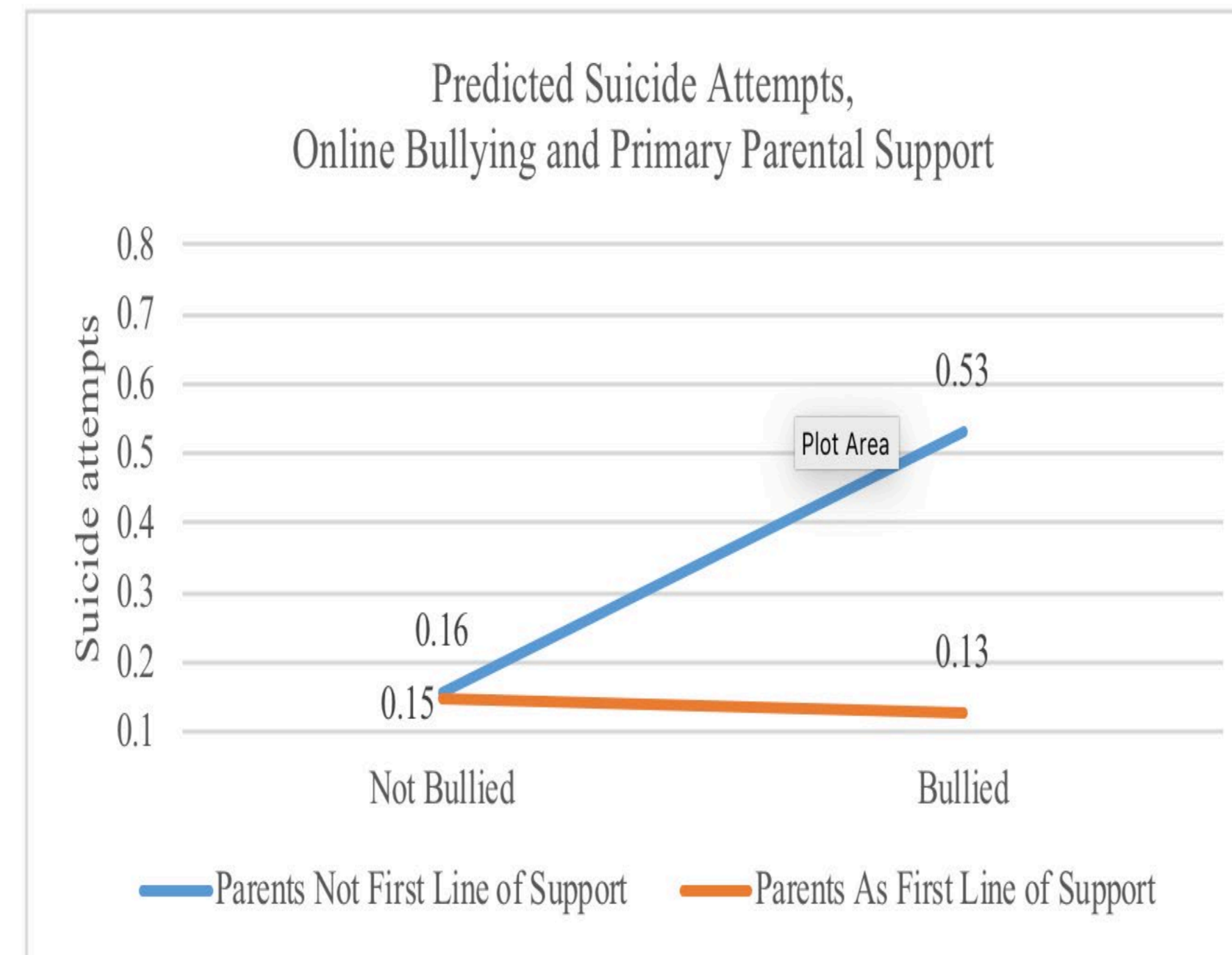
Analysis

- Following the analysis of descriptive statistics, multiple hierarchical regressions predicting suicide attempts were undertaken to examine demographics, mental health, the presence of adult support, role of supportive adults, and bullying variables.
- 3 steps of interaction model bullying:
 - First, we predicted suicide attempts in a model consisting of bullying (school and online bullying respectively) and the presence of adult support (Step 1).
 - Next, the interaction between bullying and the presence of adult support was entered into the model (Step 2).

Results

- The mean of students age was 15.7 years (SD = 12) and 58.3% (n = 3,132) of the sample identified as female. A majority of the sample was white (n = 3,045; 57.4%)
- In terms of bullying, 23.6% (n =1,261) of the youth were a victim of school bullying and 18.2% (n = 973) were a victim of online bullying. Slightly more than two-thirds of the youth (n = 3,719; 69.5%) reported having at least one adult with whom they would talk or go for help

Results (cont.)



- Result revealed that school bullying and online bullying were associated with youths' suicide attempts.
- Asian (B= -.06, p<.05) and African American youth (B= -.10, p<.05) reported fewer suicide attempts compared to white counterparts. Youth identifying as cisgender LGB (B = 0.19, p <.05) transgender LGB (B = 0.38, p <.05), transgender questioning LGB (B= 0.20, p<.05) were more likely report suicide attempts, while LGBTQ students who do not know if they are transgender (B= -0.22, p<.001) reported fewer suicide attempts compared to cisgender heterosexual respondents.
- Between teachers and parents as the first line of support, only parental support moderated the relationship between bullying and suicide attempts.

Conclusion

- The findings replicate previous work demonstrating that youth who experience bullying are more likely to attempt suicide and that youth with mental health concerns (reported as number of days of bad mental health or experiencing depressive symptoms) are at increased risk.
- Our results also support the stress-buffering hypothesis by demonstrating that the presence of adult support, especially from parents, can mitigate the effects of bullying on suicide attempts among youth.
- Our findings provide implications that anti-bullying education programs and public health and community awareness campaigns should be enhanced at the local, state, and national levels to address the nature of bullying and its consequences on mental health. Particularly given the protective role of primary parental support, parents may serve as significant targets for interventions to reduce the impact of bullying on youth.