

▼ Research Regarding Peer Aggression and Victimization

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Research Areas

Risk factors and outcomes associated with peer aggression and peer victimization

Ways of reducing negative outcomes associated with experiencing peer victimization/aggression

Strategies for preventing and reducing peer victimization

What is peer victimization?

- Relationship-based pattern of behavior that involves the use of bullying and other aggressive acts to intentionally oppress, humiliate or dominate others

CDC, 2012; Vernberg & Biggs, 2010

Peer Victimization

INVOLVES

- Bully(ies)
- Victim(s)
- Bystander(s)



Common Consequences for Victims				
<u>Psychological Impact</u>	<u>Behavioral Difficulties</u>	<u>School Performance</u>	<u>Peer Relationships</u>	<u>Physical Impact</u>
Loneliness	Delinquency	Academic Achievement	Rejection	Frequent Nurse Visits
Depression	Emotion Dysregulation	Negative School Attitudes	Isolation	Illnesses
Suicidality	Hyperactivity	Truancy	Affiliate with other rejected youth	Injuries
Anxiety	Argumentative	Absenteeism		Bodily Complaints
Low Self-Esteem	Substance Use	Dropping Out		

Common Consequences for Bullies

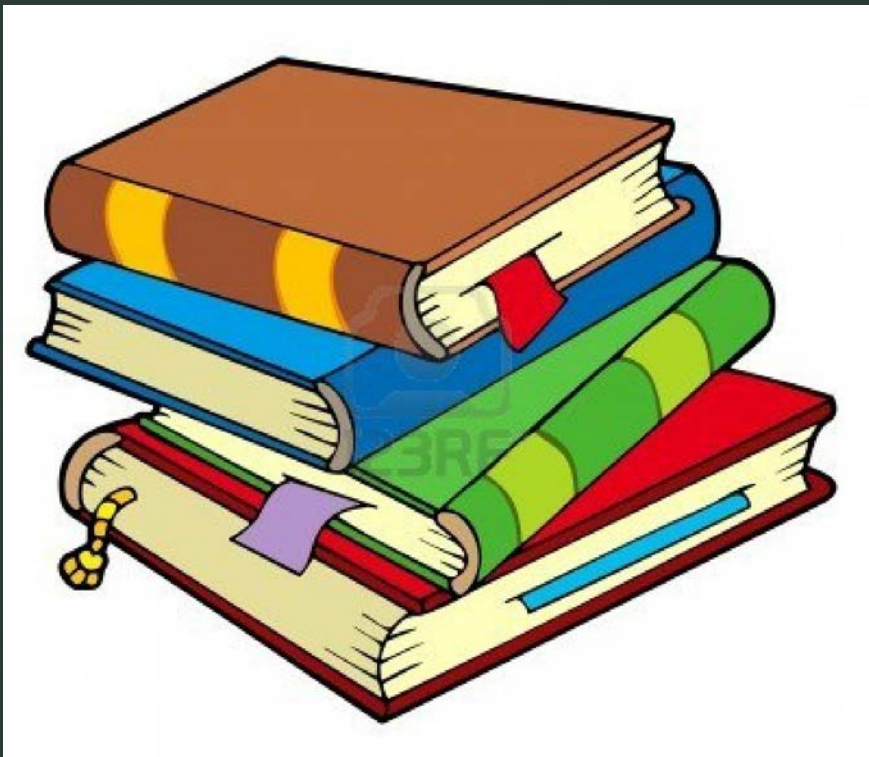
<u>Psychological Impact</u>	<u>Behavioral Difficulties</u>	<u>School Performance</u>	<u>Peer Relationships</u>	<u>Physical Impact</u>
Anger	Delinquency	Dislike School	High conflict friendships	Frequent Nurse Visits
Depression	Aggression			Illnesses
Hostility	Hyperactivity			Injuries
	Violence/ Criminality			Bodily Complaints
	Substance Use			

Common Consequences for Bystanders

<u>Psychological Impact</u>	<u>Behavioral Difficulties</u>	<u>School Performance</u>	<u>Peer Relationships</u>	<u>Physical Impact</u>
Depression	Substance Use	Absenteeism	Isolation	Bodily Complaints
Anxiety				
Hostility				
Suicidality				

Prevention and
Intervention is
NEEDED

Importance of Environment



Starting with a good Policy

Williford, A. **Fite**, P. J., DePaolis, K., Cooley, J., Hawley, P., & Isen, D. (2019). A Comprehensive Training Initiative for Educators to Develop and Implement Effective Anti-Bullying Policies in K-12 Schools. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*.



Policy Considerations

1. It is recommended that an anti-bullying policy explicitly state that any form or type of bullying regardless of the severity is unacceptable and will be taken seriously by school personnel, students, and their families.

Policy Considerations

2. Policies may benefit from clearly defining bullying, including its various forms, to reduce ambiguity about what behaviors the policy covers



Policy Considerations

3. At minimum a policy should be clear about the contexts in which it covers, such as bullying behavior that occurs on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity or event (on or off campus), on school-associated transportation, or through school-owned technology.



Policy Considerations

4. It is recommended that a bullying policy includes consistent reporting, investigating and tracking procedures that all teachers and staff are aware of and trained on how to use any forms the school requires.



Policy Considerations



5. At a minimum, anti-bullying policies should include reporting procedures for students, families, and community members such that it is clear to whom they can report the incident and how the incident will be investigated.

Policy Considerations

6. Policies may benefit from stating that bullying that is motivated by race, gender, social class, religious beliefs, sexual or gender identity, and other relevant characteristics is strictly prohibited.



Policy Considerations

7. School policies should consider outlining the disciplinary actions and sanctions for bullying.



Policy Considerations

8. It is recommended to share and post the school's policy and procedures so that staff, students, and parents are all informed of the school's response to bullying.





Understanding Where Peer Victimization Occurs

Fite, P. J., Williford, A., Cooley, J., DePaolis, K., Rubens, S. L.,
Vernberg, E. M. (2013). *Child and Youth Care Forum*.

Williford, Fite, DePaolis, & Cooley (2018). *Children and Schools*

Background

- Need to know where victimization occurs to inform prevention and intervention
- Limitations from prior studies:
 - Focused solely on school locations
 - Did not specify the forms of aggression
 - Did not consider gender differences

	Physical n = 129	Relational n = 155	Cyber n = 36
Lunchroom	4.7%	9.0%	2.8%
Hallway	4.7%	5.8%	2.8%
Bathroom	6.2%	3.2%	2.8%
Classroom	9.3%	12.3%	5.6%
Playground	56.6%	61.9%	11.1%
On the bus	18.6%	21.9%	25.0%
Program or club	18.6%	11.6%	11.1%
Sporting activity	7.0%	9.0%	8.3%
Babysitter	7.8%	3.9%	2.8%
Home	31%	25.2%	52.8%
Neighborhood	20.9%	21.3%	16.7%
At a party	6.2%	8.4%	8.3%
Another fun activity	6.2%	5.2%	16.7%
At a friend's house	17.1%	16.1%	19.4%

Conclusions

- Victimization occurs both at home and school
- Locations in which child:adult ratio is greater and less adult monitoring are risks
- Although cyber victimization is occurring off school ground can also impact schools
- Findings are similar overall for males and females

Intervention
can include:

More monitoring

Removing the aggressors
from these scenarios if
possible

Changing routine, avoiding
situations in which
victimization occurs

Fite, P. J., Poquiz, J., Diaz, K. I., Williford, A., & Tampke, E. C. (in press). Links between peer victimization, perceived school safety and internalizing symptoms in middle childhood. *School Psychology Review*.

School Safety

Perceived School Safety

- The degree to which students perceive that it is safe to go to school and safe to be at school (feeling that their well-being is not threatened)
 - Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2009.

IF students
don't feel
safe



Lack of connectedness to
students and teachers



Less likely to report
incidents



Feelings of hopelessness
and worry

Found That

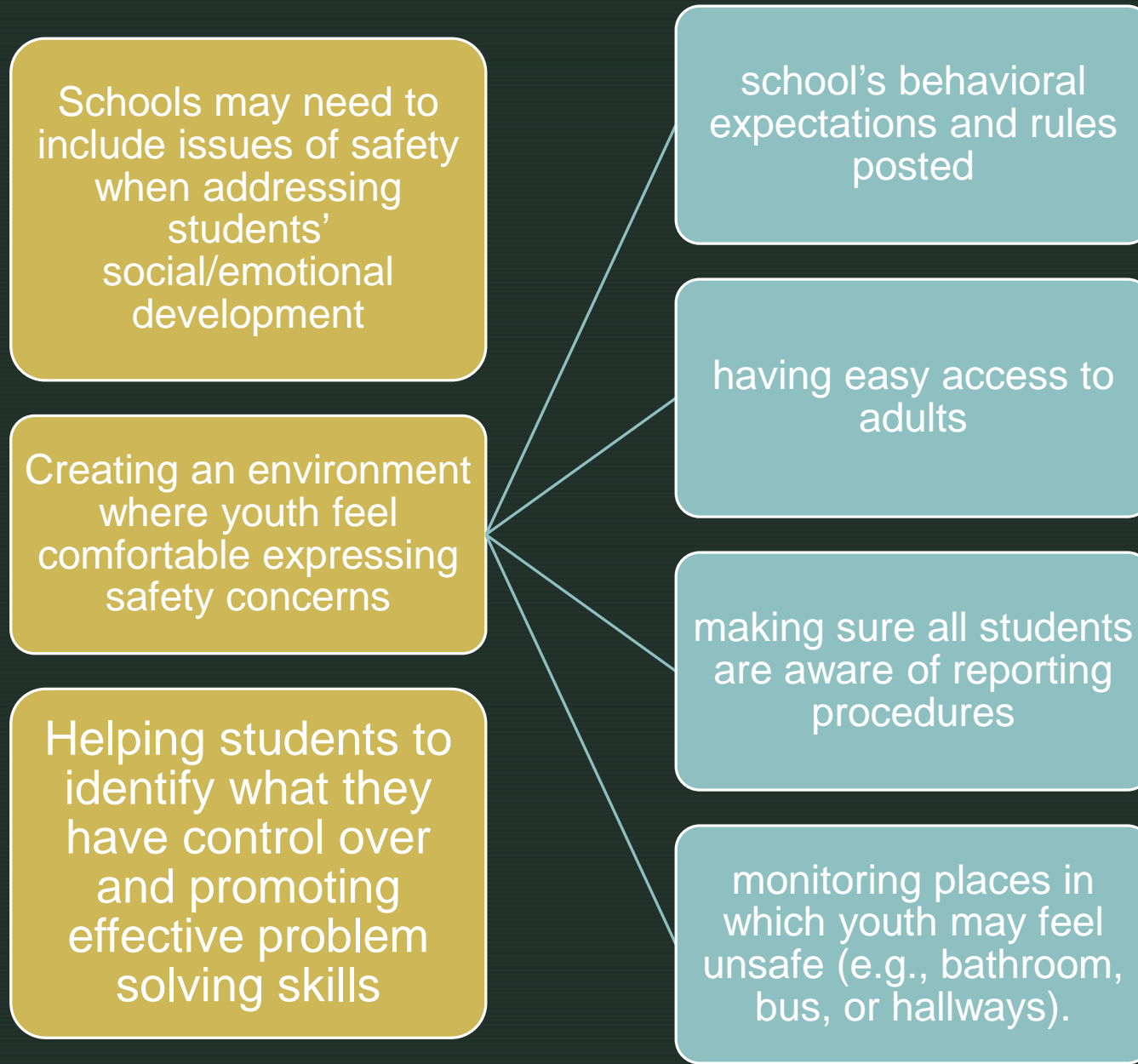
- low levels of perceived school safety contributed to symptoms of depression and anxiety and exacerbated the associations between relational victimization and these symptoms

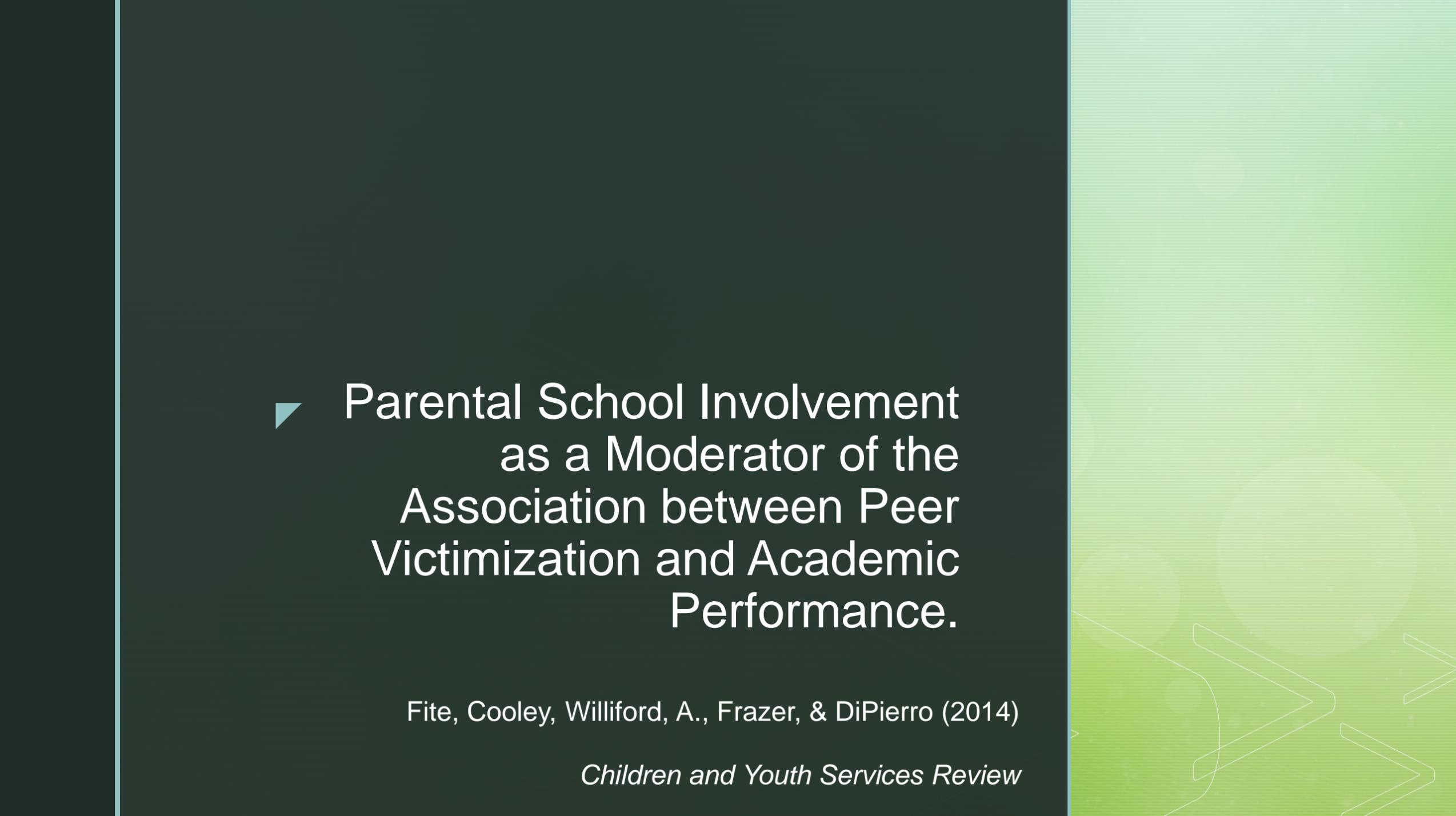


Association between Relational Victimization and Anxiety Symptoms at High and Low Levels of Perceived School Safety



Implications





- Parental School Involvement
as a Moderator of the
Association between Peer
Victimization and Academic
Performance.

Fite, Cooley, Williford, A., Frazer, & DiPierro (2014)

Children and Youth Services Review

Background

A link between experiences of peer victimization and poor academic performance has been established (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010)

However, the specific links between overt and relational forms of victimization and academic performance are not well understood.

Further, factors that may help to mitigate this association are not known.

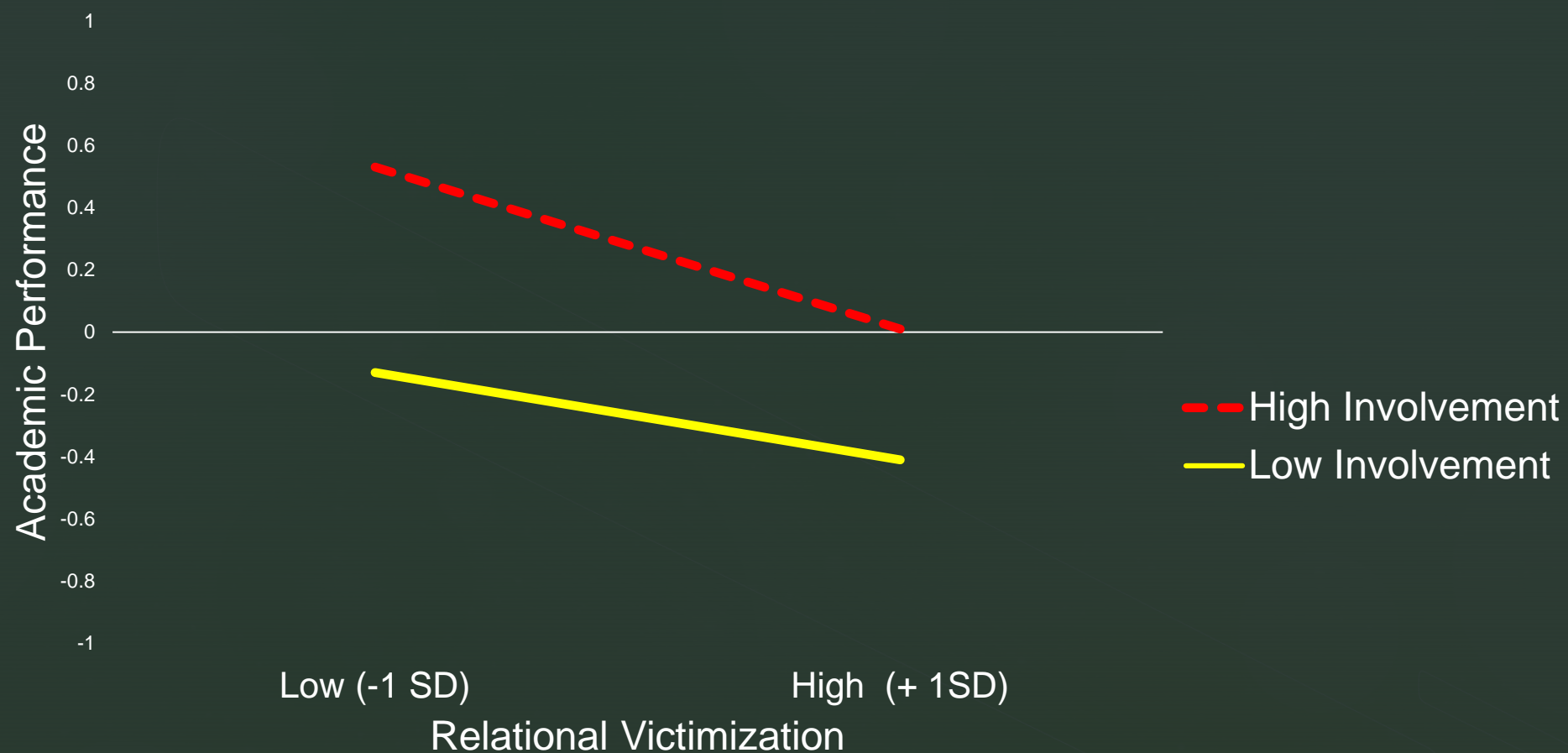
Parental School Involvement

High levels of parental school involvement have been found to be associated with high levels of academic performance (e.g., Domina, 2005; Englund et al., 2004; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Stewart, 2008; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Parenting behavior has also been found to buffer the deleterious effects of peer victimization on child outcomes (e.g., Davidson and Demaray, 2007; Stadler, Feifel, Rohrmann, Vermeiren, & Poustka, 2010).

High levels of parental school involvement may help prevent victimized youth from experiencing negative academic outcomes.

Association between Relational Victimization and Academic Performance at High and Low Levels of Parental Involvement



Conclusions

Peer victimization, particularly relational, and parental involvement are linked to academic performance.

Parental school involvement buffers the link between peer victimization and academic outcomes.

Parental school involvement should be a target of intervention for victimized youth.

Need for Targeted Intervention



Pilot Evaluation of a Targeted Intervention for Peer-Victimized Youth


Fite, Cooley, Poquiz, & Williford (2019).

Journal of Clinical Psychology

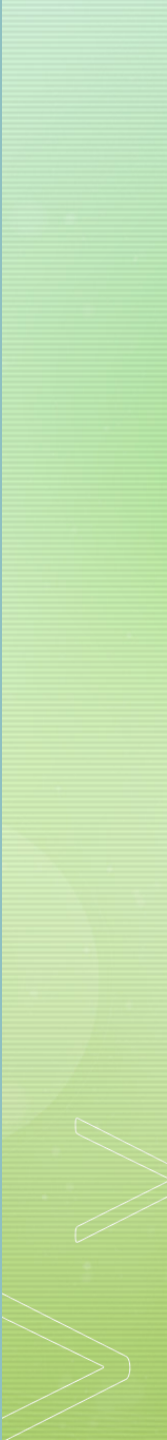


Background

- Peer victimization and internalizing symptoms bidirectionally associated (Card et al., 2007; Schacter, White, Chang, & Juvonen, 2014)
 - Individuals who do not regulate their emotions effectively tend to respond to peer aggression in ways that put them at risk for experiencing subsequent victimization
 - Being victimized by peers is associated with increases in internalizing symptoms.



Interventions for peer victimization that focus on changing negative (i.e., self-blaming) cognitions and implementing effective coping strategies in order to reduce negative emotions may prevent subsequent peer victimization and internalizing symptoms



Taking Action

- Group-based cognitive behavioral intervention
- Focuses on problem-solving, behavioral activation, coping skills, and positive self-evaluation by targeting negative cognitions among elementary school-age children (Stark & Kendall, 1996).
- Found to reduce both depressive and anxiety symptoms (Stark, Reynolds, & Kaslow, 1987; Stark, Rouse, & Livingston, 1991)
- May be useful in reducing the negative emotions and social withdrawal that victimized youth experience, ultimately preventing subsequent victimization.

Taking Action Session Topics

- 1 Establish a sense of hope
- 2 Discuss, model, and practice problem solving
- 3 Establish goals and subgoals for self-improvement
- 4 Introduce and practice "what if"
- 5 Identify negative emotions and associated thoughts
- 6 Identify internal emotion cues
- 7 Coping strategies – including pleasant events
- 8 Develop coping counters
- 9 Identify thoughts that interfere with coping strategies
- 10 Build a positive sense of self
- 11 Identify and counter pessimistic thoughts
- 12 Self-monitor positive thoughts
- 13 Self-monitor personal positive qualities
- 14 Build a positive sense of self-reframing activities

Conclusions

Current findings, in conjunction with limited previous research, provide preliminary support for the use of cognitive behavioral interventions for victimized youth.

Observed changes in youths' level of peer victimization, as well as depressive symptoms and passive coping, are likely tied to the targeted intervention's focus on cognitive restructuring of victims' attributions.

Take Home Messages



Virtually all children and adolescents face issues regarding peer victimization



Pay attention to patterns and problem solve locations



Safe environment is crucial



Encourage parental school involvement



Targeted intervention is needed for victims and aggressors

Helpful Resources

Websites

- CDC's information:
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/bullyingresearch/>
- Government site:
www.stopbullying.gov

Books

- Coyne, S. M., & Ostrov, J. M. (2018). *The developmental of Relational Aggression*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kowalski, R.M., Limber, S.P., & Agatston, P.W. (2011). *Cyberbullying: Bullying in the digital age*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Vernberg, E. M., & Biggs, B. K. (2010). *Preventing and treating bullying and victimization*. New York: Oxford University Press.



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Social or Relational Victimization



Ostracism

Social exclusion

Gossip/"trash talking"/rumor spreading

Nonverbal gestures such as:
eye rolling
directed laughter
mimicking

Cybervictimizaiton

- Circulating Electronic Images or Videos
- Insulting Text Messages
- Harassment Through Online Games
- Harassment Through Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram



Physical victimization



Tripping

Pushing

Tackling

Poking

Hitting

**Tugging/tearing
Clothes**

Casey

*******WARNING*******
DISTURBING FOOTAGE

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vkhEYcbAlo>

How Frequent Is Bullying?

- Approximately **19%** of children engage in bullying behavior
- At least **60%** of youth report experiencing peer victimization
- As many as **10-20%** of youth experiencing chronic victimization by their peers.
- Virtually **ALL** children will be a witness or bystander to bullying behavior