



The link between juvenile offending and victimization: Sources of change over time in bullying victimization risk among South Korean adolescents[☆]

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ABSTRACT

This study involves a longitudinal analysis of whether changes in bullying victimization over time corresponded with changes in lifestyles and/or self-control. The data from the Korean Youth Panel Survey were collected from a national sample of 2844 fourth grade students in South Korea and were followed for five years. Latent growth curve modeling was estimated to examine how individual differences in bullying victimization changed over time and whether inter-individual differences in average victimization for the first wave and inter-individual changes in risk across all five waves could be explained by time-invariant individual-trait variables as well as time-varying lifestyle variables. The findings reveal the significant cross sectional and longitudinal effects on bullying victimization, supporting to propositions, derived from both state dependence and population heterogeneity perspectives.

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Over the past half-century, researchers have argued that juvenile victims and offenders are overlapping populations (Lauritsen, Laub, & Sampson, 1992; Lauritsen, Sampson, & Laub, 1991; Meldelsohn, 1956; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990, 1994; Schafer, 1968; Von Hentig, 1948; Wolfgang, 1958). Recently, scholars have provided empirical evidence supporting a relatively strong relationship between offending and victimization showing that offenders and victims have similarities in demographic characteristics (Broidy, Daday, Crandall, Sklar, & Jost, 2006; Lauritsen & Laub, 2007; Smith & Ecob, 2007).

Following the logic of victimization theories (i.e., lifestyle and routine activities), recent studies have proposed that juvenile delinquents put themselves in high risk situations which, in turn, might lead to high rates of victimization due to their risky routine activities (Ousey, Wilcox, & Fisher, 2011; Schreck, Fisher, & Miller, 2004; Wittebrood & Nieuwebeerta, 2000). There is evidence that a lower level of self-control exacerbates victimization risks (Holtfreter, Reisig, & Pratt, 2008; Ousey et al., 2011; Schreck, 1999; Schreck, Stewart, & Fisher, 2006; Schreck, Wright, & Miller, 2002). Despite this empirical evidence, theoretical understanding of the offending-victimization relationship remains ambiguous. There are several potential causes of the

overlapping relationship, such as: consequences of a risky lifestyle, a lack of social control, or the influence of self-control deficits. Further, relatively few studies have also examined this effect with a longitudinal research design (Chen, 2009; Wittebrood & Nieuwebeerta, 2000).

From these perspectives, the purpose of the current study is to understand theoretical backgrounds by using varied theoretical arguments. First, the current study attempts to explore the offending-victimization association by assessing the net effect of offending on victimization (i.e., whether youths more likely to have risky lifestyle patterns are also those more likely to be victimized by such behaviors). Moreover, it includes the time-invariant factor of self-control deficits, in addition to the time-varying factor of lifestyles, when examining the nature of the offending-victimization association. It further provides some insight into how the exclusion of time-invariant factors may mislead the net effect of time-varying factors on victimization. Unlike previous studies, the longitudinal data were used to assess the nature of the offending-victimization association. This is meaningful, because it allows this study to specify the longitudinal results, (i.e., how the rate of change in offending influences the rate of change in victimization over time).

1. Review of prior literature

The prevalence estimates of the offending-victimization association have varied widely across studies depending on how offending and victimization have been defined and measured (Schwartz, Proctor, & Chien, 2001). One approach to study the offending-victimization

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association is to classify individuals into three categories by using certain cutoff values on both offending and victimization: (1) youths who are only victims, such as youths who are assaulted, kidnapped, and sexually abused (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), (2) youths for whom risky lifestyles are unrelated to their victimization risk, such as children victimized by parents (Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994), and (3) delinquents who are only offenders and never victims, such as bullies who exhibit aggressive behaviors to “conquer” their weaker peers (Olweus, 1978; Olweus & Limber, 2000). Then, the extent of the relationship between offender-victim can be examined (i.e., how a large proportion of offenders report their experience of victimization and vice versa) (Haynie et al., 2001). The other approach is “correlational” between offending and victimization (Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007). However, only a few studies have used this approach to measure the relationship between the bully and the victim, because it might vary upon age or developmental period.

Several studies have identified significant differences among three categories: “pure” offenders (offenders-only), “pure” victims (victims-only), and victim-offenders (aggressive victims) for violent offenses (Ousey et al., 2011; Schreck, Stewart, & Osgood, 2008) and homicide (Broidy et al., 2006). Homicide victims are more likely than non-victims to be involved in criminal offending even after controlling for individual- and neighborhood-level characteristics (Dobrin, 2001; Piquero, MacDonald, Dobrin, Daigle, & Cullen, 2005). Involvement in gang activities, outweighing the impacts of common factors (risky, protective, and individual trait factors), are correlated with victimization, indicating that youth in gangs are most likely to be victim-offenders (Miller & Decker, 2001; Taylor, Freng, Esbensen, & Peterson, 2008).

Despite the increase of research on the link between offending and victimization, little is known about the extent to which the correlation might vary based on age and the child’s developmental stage (Schwartz et al., 2001; Smith & Ecob, 2007; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Lauritsen and Quinet (1995) analyzed panel data on victimization to explain the link between prior and later victimization, but they did not explore how changes in deviance affected victimization during a five-year period. Miethe, Stafford, and Sloane (1990) studied how changes in routine activity patterns affected victimization, but only during a two-year period. Some studies have provided varied theoretical causal arguments on the offending-victimization association by testing opportunity perspectives (e.g., lifestyles and routine activities theory) and individual trait perspectives (e.g., self-control theory) but did not provide longitudinal results whether the rate of change in offending is associated with the rate of change in victimization over time (Ousey et al., 2011; Schreck et al., 2008). Wittebrood and Nieuwebeerta (2000) found significant effects of both prior victimization experiences and routine activity patterns on subsequent victimization by studying changes in persons’ lives but not the rate of change in victimization. Chen (2009) found that the rate of change in deviant lifestyle patterns was significantly and positively related to the rate of change in victimization risk over time. However, neither study included a control for the effect of individual traits, such as self-control deficits, when they assessed the nature of the offending-victimization association (Chen, 2009; Wittebrood & Nieuwebeerta, 2000). With relatively limited research on victimization through the lens of self-control, the current study assumes that less self-control corresponds to a higher risk of bullying victimization.

2. The cultural context of bullying among South Korean youth

The distinctive cultural difference between South Korea and western countries is the social group/category principle, stemming from the collectivistic tradition that highlights the power of group norms as opposed to individual values (Lee & Kim, 2016; Ojala & Nesdale, 2004). Membership in a social group not only provides its members with a sense of social identity but also reinforces behaviors sanctioned by the social group. The notion that bullying victimization is related to “group ostracism” (Lee, 1999) and “peer group rejection” (Park, 2000)

grew rapidly across urban areas in South Korea during the 1990s (Cho, Wooldredge, & Sun Park, 2016). In fact, Lee (1999) estimated that 16% of middle-school students reported experiencing “group ostracism,” and 70% considered it a problem in their schools. In fact, a large body of studies in South Korea has suggested that youth who socialize with prosocial peer groups (groups who conform to socially accepted behaviors) are less likely to be victimized and be involved in delinquency, while those who fail to conform to group norms are more likely to be victimized (Koo, Kwak, & Smith, 2008). Empirical evidence, however, has been inconsistent. Lee and Kim (2016) found that delinquent peer associations were not significantly related to victimization risks, although conventional peer attachment was negatively associated with victimization.

In addition, studies of youth victimization in South Korea have supported that activities related to an individual’s exposure/proximity to potential offenders are related to victimization risks (Cho et al., 2016; Jung & Park, 2010; Noh, 2007; Woo & Cho, 2013). Woo and Cho (2013) found that youth who were involved in deviant activities (unexcused absences and running away) tended to be at a higher risk of victimization. Cho et al. (2016) found that the number of school club activities (i.e., the average number of hours spent per week in school club activities) was significantly and positively related to victimization risk. It is assumed that more school club meetings corresponded to less time spent in supervised activities.

Regarding a youth’s relationship with parents, South Korea is a more family-oriented and Confucian-based society having an unequal power between parents and their youth compared to western countries (Yang, 2009). This difference in socio-cultural contexts highlights youth’ obedience to their parents, which influences the parent-youth relationships for shaping youth victimization. It also favors the idea that South Korean youth are more supervised to their parents compared to youth in western countries. Empirical evidence has shown that youth with more favorable relationships with parents might be more attached and were less likely to be victimized (Woo & Cho, 2013) and to be bullied (Doh, 2000). Choi and Doh (2001) also found that youth who did not communicate regularly with their parents were generally at a high risk of victimization. Further, Lee (2015) found that youth with strong parental attachment showed lower rates of involvement in juvenile offending that, in turn, led to a decreased likelihood of victimization. However, some studies found inconsistency for the relevance of capable guardianship that increases or decreases victimization risks (S. Lee, 1995). Noh’s (2007) findings revealed that youth (but for only males) with the lack of capable guardians were generally at lower risks of physical assaults. Also, Cho et al. (2016) found that youth with a closer relationship with their parents showed a high risk of bullying victimization.

3. Theoretical framework

To date, longitudinal research on the offending-victimization association have fallen into two broad mechanisms, including a “state dependence perspective” and a “population heterogeneity perspective.” The following section will discuss each of these perspectives and develop research questions that serve as the foundation for the following analyses.

3.1. A state dependence perspective

A “state dependence perspective” asserts that the prior experience of offending (or victimization) changes people in ways that influence their subsequent risks of victimization (or offending). In other words, individuals who were involved in crime at one point in time are more likely than non-criminal offenders to commit crime at a later point (Nagin & Paternoster, 1991, 2000; Sullivan, Ousey, & Wilcox, 2016). Stability in offending is attributed to a process of contagion that criminal behavior causes subsequent criminality by weakening social ties and restrictions and strengthening incentives to criminal offending (Bushway, Brame, & Paternoster, 1999). This perspective implies that involvement in crime

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