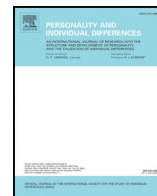




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Individual differences and co-occurring victimization online and offline: The role of impulsivity

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ABSTRACT

With the proliferation of the Internet for everyday use, opportunity for online victimization has correspondingly increased. Research examining online victimization has illustrated that both routine online activities and individual differences in traits such as impulsivity affect the likelihood of victimization. Such research corresponds to that found for offline victimization as well. However, empirical examinations of the extent to which individual differences affect co-occurring (i.e., on- and offline) victimization is relatively scant. Employing data from a nationally representative sample of adults in the Netherlands ($N = 3021$), the current study examined the differential effect of online and offline routine activities and individual differences in impulsivity on co-occurring victimization. In both cross-sectional and longitudinal logit regression models, impulsivity had an independent effect on co-occurring victimization. Respondents with lower impulse control had substantially increased odds of reporting co-occurring victimization. Overall, the findings point to the importance of integrating individual differences into the study of victimization experiences in both online and offline environments. The discussion focuses on how the current study adds to the relevant theoretical and cybersecurity literature.

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1. Introduction

Researchers in criminology and elsewhere have long focused on how individuals vary in the likelihood of experiencing personal victimization. While the majority of this research has focused on how opportunity via lifestyle and routine activities affect victimization experiences, less attention has been paid to the influence of individual characteristics beyond basic demographics (e.g., Mitchell, Finkelhor, Wolak, Ybarra, & Turner, 2011). However, recent research has highlighted the importance of individual differences such as personality traits (e.g., Homant, 2010), cognitive abilities (e.g., Kim & Glomb, 2010), and impulsivity (e.g., Beaver, Mancini, DeLisi, & Vaughn, 2011; Pratt, Turanovic, Fox, & Wright, 2014; Schreck, Wright, & Miller, 2002) as factors affecting the likelihood of personal victimization in offline and online environments. Consequently, the overall extant literature on victimization highlights the necessity to account for *both* opportunity/routine activities as well as individual differences in empirical assessments of victimization.

While the bulk of the research on victimization has focused on offline victimization (Pratt et al., 2014), the substantial increases in everyday Internet activity has provided researchers the opportunity to also study online victimization. While online and offline domains are often treated as separate in the victimization literature (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2011), there is ample evidence illustrating extensive overlap in many areas of life (Pew Research Center, 2016). Thus, people are replacing or substantially augmenting their offline activities (e.g., social

gatherings, shopping, and employment) with online activities (van Wilsem, 2011).¹ Consequently, empirical assessments of the extent to which routine activities and/or individual differences differentially affect personal victimization should incorporate *both* offline and online victimization. In other words, researchers should address the extent to which individual characteristics affect the likelihood of victimization in both online and offline domains. However, analyses of co-occurring victimization (i.e., offline and online) that incorporate both routine activities and individual characteristics are rare in the extant literature. The current study seeks to address this gap.

1.1. Co-occurring victimization & impulsivity

Numerous researchers have assessed the influence of routine activities on the likelihood of online victimization (e.g., Holt & Bossler, 2008). In general, this literature indicates that those individuals who spend more time online, employ the Internet for a wider range of economically-related (e.g., banking and shopping) and social activities, and engage in cyberdeviance (e.g., digital piracy and hacking) are more likely to experience online victimization (Bossler & Holt, 2009; Marcum, Higgins, & Ricketts, 2010; Holt & Bossler, 2008; van Wilsem, 2011). While such

¹ As noted by an anonymous reviewer, increases in cybervictimization are due primarily to the increase in such Internet usage. Nonetheless, the extent to which variance in individual characteristics (e.g., impulsivity) affects the likelihood of cybervictimization remains an important empirical question.

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research includes measures of lifestyle or routine activities that affect the likelihood of victimization, less frequently acknowledged are the individual differences that could lead to differential engagement in such lifestyles or activities. For example, some scholars have noted that individual differences in impulsivity² influence online (e.g., Bossler & Holt, 2010) and offline (Pratt et al., 2014) victimization beyond the effects of routine activities. However, outside of research on bullying victimization (see Guo, 2016 for a meta-analytic review) few researchers include assessments of how routine activities and individual characteristics differentially affect experiences of victimization both on- and offline. An exception is a recent cross-sectional examination of a large Dutch sample conducted by van Wilsem (2011).

Briefly, van Wilsem (2011) found that particular online routine activities (i.e., making online purchases, using online forums, and webcam use) as well as greater levels of impulsivity increased the likelihood of experiencing co-occurring victimization. Notably, however, van Wilsem's (2011) operationalization of victimization was limited to personal threats (i.e., digital threats and non-digital threats). Thus, van Wilsem's (2011) analyses provide a preliminary indication that individual differences in traits such as impulsivity may have an influence on co-occurring victimization. However, while van Wilsem's (2011) study is informative in terms of co-occurring threat victimization it leaves unaddressed the association of routine activities and individual differences to a wider range of online and offline victimization (i.e., general co-occurring victimization). Additionally, given that van Wilsem's (2011) analyses were cross-sectional it is not clear whether the effect of impulsivity on co-occurring victimization is long term.

Against this backdrop, the current study sought to address whether variance in impulsivity affects the likelihood of experiencing both online and offline victimization (beyond the effects of routine activities). The current study adds to the current literature in at least four different ways. First, the data employed are derived from a large nationally representative sample of households in the Netherlands. Such a sample improves on the typical use of college samples in examinations of online victimization. Second, unlike past examinations the current study includes multiple forms of both online and offline victimization. Third, the analyses in the current study examined the effect of individual differences in impulsivity while controlling for both online and offline routine activities. The focus on impulsivity is conducive with a swath of literature indicating a wide impact of impulse control on overall experiences (e.g., Moffitt et al., 2011), including victimization offline (e.g., Pratt et al., 2014) and online (e.g., Bossler & Holt, 2010). Fourth, expanding on van Wilsem's (2011) analyses the current study includes both cross-sectional and longitudinal examinations of the influence of impulsivity on co-occurring victimization.

2. Methods

2.1. Data

Data for the current study are drawn from the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences (LISS) panel. Details of the sampling process for the LISS panel are described elsewhere (see Scherpenzeel & Das, 2010). Briefly, the panel is a nationally representative sample of households in the Netherlands. Participants have been responding to monthly online questionnaires since October 2007 and they are paid for each completed questionnaire. Households without a computer or Internet access were provided with a PC and a broadband connection. In addition to the LISS Core Study, researchers have added questions pertaining to a variety of topics creating assembled studies. For example, every two years from 2008 to 2012 (three waves; T1: 2008, T2: 2010, T3: 2012) all respondents aged 16 years or older were asked to participate in an assembled study on

² Impulsivity and self-control are often considered synonymous concepts and generally refer to an ability to delay gratification, anticipate consequences, control impulses, and regulate emotional expression (Moffitt et al., 2011).

Table 1
Summary statistics for all study variables.

| | N | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <i>Co-occurring victimization</i> | | | | | |
| 2008 | 2786 | 0.349 | 0.477 | 0 | 1 |
| 2010 | 2776 | 0.058 | 0.233 | 0 | 1 |
| 2012 | 2704 | 0.039 | 0.192 | 0 | 1 |
| More than one wave | 2533 | 0.057 | 0.232 | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Impulsivity</i> | | | | | |
| 2008 | 2980 | 1.109 | 0.157 | 1 | 2 |
| 2010 | 2940 | 1.103 | 0.147 | 1 | 1.917 |
| 2012 | 2925 | 1.101 | 0.151 | 1 | 2 |
| 3-wave avg. | 2852 | 1.102 | 0.124 | 1 | 1.889 |
| <i>Offline variables</i> | | | | | |
| Urban, 2008 | 3019 | 2.927 | 1.255 | 1 | 5 |
| Urban, 2010 | 3018 | 2.932 | 1.250 | 1 | 5 |
| Urban, 2012 | 3011 | 2.934 | 1.250 | 1 | 5 |
| Urban, 3-wave avg. | 3009 | 2.927 | 1.227 | 1 | 5 |
| Precaution, 2008 | 3010 | 1.360 | 0.432 | 1 | 3 |
| Precaution, 2010 | 3001 | 1.349 | 0.450 | 1 | 3 |
| Precaution, 2012 | 2984 | 1.347 | 0.441 | 1 | 3 |
| Precaution, 3-wave avg. | 2965 | 1.350 | 0.381 | 1 | 3 |
| Good neighborhood, 2008 | 2874 | 3.645 | 0.722 | 1 | 5 |
| Good neighborhood, 2010 | 2852 | 3.649 | 0.729 | 1 | 5 |
| Good neighborhood, 2012 | 2861 | 3.688 | 0.703 | 1 | 5 |
| Good neighborhood, 3-wave avg. | 2681 | 3.687 | 0.601 | 1.067 | 5 |
| SES, 2008 | 2972 | -0.025 | 0.681 | -8.006 | 0.788 |
| SES, 2010 | 3004 | -0.023 | 0.674 | -2.454 | 13.217 |
| SES, 2012 | 3007 | -0.020 | 0.680 | -2.116 | 16.200 |
| SES, 3-wave avg. | 2968 | -0.020 | 0.591 | -2.850 | 3.297 |
| <i>Online variables</i> | | | | | |
| Precaution, 2008 | 2290 | 0.702 | 0.263 | 0 | 1 |
| Precaution, 2010 | 2260 | 0.734 | 0.271 | 0 | 1 |
| Precaution, 2012 | 2209 | 0.746 | 0.281 | 0 | 1 |
| Precaution, 3-wave avg. | 1820 | 0.746 | 0.214 | 0 | 1 |
| Computer/Web use, 2008 | 2794 | 1.339 | 2.613 | -6.250 | 30 |
| Computer/Web use, 2010 | 2789 | 1.428 | 2.722 | -5.500 | 42 |
| Computer/Web use, 2012 | 2765 | 3.544 | 3.335 | 0 | 32.500 |
| Computer/Web use, 3-wave avg. | 2589 | 2.155 | 2.061 | -1.917 | 19.542 |
| <i>Control variables</i> | | | | | |
| Age (2008) | 3021 | 48.522 | 15.340 | 16 | 87 |
| Sex (2008) | 3021 | 0.472 | 0.499 | 0 | 1 |
| Multiple respondent HH (2008) | 3021 | 0.571 | 0.459 | 0 | 1 |

Notes: "SES": socioeconomic status (z-scored); "HH": household; Co-occurring victimization measures, Sex, and Multiple respondent HH are coded dichotomously.

computer crime victimization. The study included questions regarding experiences of a variety of offline and digital crime victimization (van Wilsem, 2011, 2013). Of the initial 6897 completed questionnaires in 2008, 5751 were completed in 2010 and 5695 were completed in 2012 – a retention rate of 82.6% for completed questionnaires from 2008 to 2012.³ The current study employed data from this assembled study and portions of the Core Study. After merging datasets containing the required information (see Appendix A) and dropping cases with missing data at one or more waves, the analytical sample of $N = 3021$ was formed.

2.2. Measures⁴

2.2.1. Co-occurring victimization (dependent variable)

Detailed description of the items that constitute the co-occurring victimization measure – and all of the measures – is outlined in Appendix A. Briefly, at each wave respondents were asked to report if they had ever experienced offline victimizations such as burglary, theft from their car or wallet, damaged property, or physical maltreatment (serious and otherwise). In all, seven dichotomous items (0 = no, 1 = yes) were

³ Questionnaires were sent to 8947 respondents in February 2008 and 6897 (77.1%) completed questionnaires were received. In February 2010, 6693 questionnaires were sent and 5764 (86.1%) responses were obtained (5751 [85.9%] were completed). Finally, in February 2012, 6688 questionnaires sent and 5709 (85.4%) were received (5695 [85.2%] were completed; see LISS Panel Study documentation).

⁴ See Appendix B for results of factor analyses of the items used in the impulsivity, co-occurring victimization, precaution, and neighborhood measures.

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