



Research Paper

Predicting Adolescent Bullying Victimization based on Attachment to Parents and Peers, and Self-Compassion with the Mediating Role of Problem Solving

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Abstract

Aim: The study was carried out to predict the bullying victimization of adolescents based on attachment to parents and peers and self-compassion with the mediating role of problem solving in junior high school students of Tehran in the academic year 2020-2021. Purposive sampling was used to select 320 students in a cross-sectional correlational design with the help of Klein's formula. The data collected from 312 questionnaires was analyzed in SPSS 19 and PLS 3. Path analysis results indicated that 88.7% of the changes in the victims of bullying are caused by the changes in attachment and self-compassion, and all the variables (except attachment to father) have a significant effect on the victim of bullying. According to the results, problem solving has a mediating role in the relationship between adolescent bullying victims and types of attachment, and self-compassion.

Keywords: Attachment to parents and peers, self-compassion, adolescent bullying victim, problem solving

Introduction

Bullying is one of the most prevalent forms of aggression, characterized by intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance (Ng, Chua, & Shorey, 2020). Bullying can present in various forms (physical, verbal, communication, and cyber) (Smith et al., 2018) where most victims of bullying are perceived as weak by the bully (Chen et al., 2018). Social and educational variables of attachment styles, relationships with parents and peers are among the factors that affect the transformations during adolescence, each of which could lead to a positive or negative change in the adolescent's developmental path (Jackson and Goossens, 2020). A secure attachment bond with parents could act as a shield in the relationship between youth victimization and dysfunctional thoughts (Balén et al., 2021). Self-compassion can be defined as a three-component structure: self-compassion (developing understanding and kindness towards oneself instead of harsh judgment), shared human experience (seeing one's experience as a part of the experience of human society instead of personalizing it) and mindfulness (keeping painful thoughts and feelings in consciousness in a balanced way instead of deep identification) (Neff and Germer, 2003; Jiang et al., 2022). Thus, students with less self-compassion face more self-criticism (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Problem solving is a critical coping strategy that increases personal and social capabilities and development, and reduces psychological tensions (Samiei Zafarghandi, 2020). Moradi (2017) reported that among both bullies or victims have low levels of problem-solving skill, and students, especially male students, resort to bullying far more because they do not know how to solve problems. Few studies have investigated healthy personality characteristics, especially the most significant characteristics and factors associated with it, and the mediating role of problem solving. Therefore, the present study aimed to predict adolescent bullying victimization based on attachment to parents and peers, and self-compassion with the mediating role of problem solving.

Methodology

This study used descriptive method with a structural equation correlation design. The study population included all students aged 12-15 years in Tehran in the academic year 2020-2021. According to Klein's formula (1:20 ratio), the sample size was calculated as 320 individuals. Illinois Bullying Questionnaire, Adolescent Attachment to Parents and Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) and Heppner and Peterson Problem Solving Inventory (PSI) were used for collecting data.

The completed questionnaires were collected in person and electronically, and finally 312 questionnaires entered analysis.

Results

Table 1. Direct and indirect and total effects between the study variables

Independent	Mediating	Dependent	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Sig.	Results
Mother attachment	---	Victim	-0.472	---	-0.472	13.657	Confirmed
Father attachment	---	Victim	0.034	---	0.034	1.484	Rejected
Peer attachment	---	Victim	-0.359	---	-0.359	11.577	Confirmed
Self-compassion	---	Victim	-0.251	---	-0.251	10.347	Confirmed
Mother attachment	Problem solving	Victim	-0.472	-0.034	-0.506	2.086	Confirmed
Father attachment	Problem solving	Victim	0.034	-0.013	-0.013	2.011	Confirmed
Peer attachment	Problem solving	Victim	-0.359	-0.014	-0.373	1.721	Rejected
Self-compassion	Problem solving	Victim	-0.251	-0.017	-0.268	2.14	Confirmed

The results obtained from the final model revealed the effect intensity of the independent variables as -0.472 (T = 13.675) for mother attachment, 0.034 (T = 1.484) for father attachment, -0.359 (T = 11.577) for peer attachment, and -0.251 (T = 10.347) for self-compassion on the victim, among which mother attachment, peer attachment, and self-compassion had significant effects with the victim of bullying.

As per the mediating relationships of the problem solving, the effect intensity of the independent variables was -0.506 (T = 2.086) for mother attachment, -0.013 (T = 2.011) for father attachment, -0.373 (T = 1.721) for peer attachment and -0.268 (T = 2.14) for self-compassion on the victim, among which the relationships of mother attachment, father attachment, and self-compassion with the victim of bullying were significant.

Table 2. Discriminant validity of Fornell and Larcker

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1- Solving the problem	0.958					
2- Mother attachment	0.74	0.979				
3- Peer attachment	0.594	0.814	0.978			
4- Father attachment	0.379	0.183	-0.003	0.967		
5- Self-compassion	0.671	0.778	0.756	0.755	0.871	
6- Victim	-0.751	-0.903	-0.814	-0.199	-0.504	0.797

As seen, the values on the main diameter of the matrix are larger compared to all the values in its corresponding column, showing the good diagnostic validity of our model. Additionally, the results of fit indices CV_red and CV_Com were greater than 0.35, in other words, within the strong range.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings associated with the mediating role of problem solving indicated that attachment to father, mother and self-compassion have an indirect effect on adolescent bullying victims through problem solving. Accordingly, as attachment to mother and peers, and problem-solving skills increase, the mediator variable decreases victimization. Therefore, problem solving skills and attachment to mother and peers as well as self-compassion can reduce the rate of victimization. Given the necessity of factors predicting student victimization at schools, school counselors must identify risk factors associated with bullying and establish standards for educational and therapeutic interventions (Khamis, 2015).

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