



The Nature and Consequences of Peer Victimization

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction: Magnitude/Consequences of Victimization
- Defining Peer Victimization
- Forms of Victimization
- Types of Victims
- Victimization Dynamics

Magnitude of the problem

- 22.6% of children in one kindergarten sample reported moderate to high levels of peer victimization.
- 10% of 8- to 12-year-olds in another sample were nominated by their peers as “extreme victims.”

Consequences

- Victimized students report...
 - high levels of emotional distress, loneliness, peer rejection, and a desire to avoid school; elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and lowered self-
- The loneliness associated with bullying tends to linger even after bullying ends; and subsequent adjustment difficulties, such as adult depression, have been associated with peer victimization .

Peer Victimization Defined

- Peer victimization is the consequence of acts of **intentional aggression**, by a peer (or group of peers) operating from a position of **strength** or power, and directed at a victim who is viewed as relatively **weak**. The aggressor's goal is to **damage status and/or social relationships**. The victim may or may not have had a role in **provoking** the aggression. As a consequence of the aggression, the victim **perceives** him- or herself as having been hurt or abused, and the victimization significantly decreases his or her well-being. These negative acts occur over a period of time and are viewed by victims **not as isolated** events, but as comprising a pattern of aggressive behavior.

Forms of Victimization

- The behavior of the aggressor
 - Overt (direct) aggression,
 - Relational (indirect/social) aggression.

Overt Victimization

- Systematic verbal or physical harassment of a weaker child by a stronger one.
 - Includes extortion, name-calling, hitting and kicking, threatening, and sexual harassment.
- Most typically involves boys who tend to view physically aggression as most hurtful.
- Rates of overt victimization tend to decline with age among both boys and girls.

Relational Victimization

(AKA Social Aggression)

- Involves the deliberate and hurtful manipulation of peer relationships or friendships.
 - Includes slandering, spreading rumors, and manipulating classroom friendships.
 - Girls are suggested to be most typically involved in of his type of aggressive behavior and tend to view this type of victimization as more upsetting and distressful, and are more affected than boys by this type of victimization in early and middle childhood and
- In cases where the victim is not directly confronted, the victimization type can be classified as indirect.

Types of Victims

- Passive (non-aggressive victims)
- Provocative (aggressive victims)

Passive Victims

- The majority of peer victims are passive, have internalizing behavior problems (e.g., emotional distress and loneliness), and can be described as submissive and unassertive.

Provocative Victims

- A minority of students create tension by offending, irritating, and teasing others.
- They are rarely withdrawn or passive.
- Instead they are characterized by a combination of anxious and aggressive reaction patterns; and are described as being hot tempered, restless, and as fighting back when attacked.

Victimization Dynamics

■ Characteristics of the Victims

- Given that the role of “victim” tends to be relatively durable, it is important to identify the factors that place students at risk for initial peer rejection and victimization.
 - Students who demonstrate elevated levels of irritable-inattentive and withdrawn-internalizing behavior problems are more likely to be rejected and victimized .
 - Disruptive-hyperactive behaviors also predicted rejection and peer victimization. Furthermore, elevated levels of withdrawn-internalizing behavior in elementary school predicted rejection and peer victimization in junior high school.

Victimization Dynamics

- Characteristics of the Victims
 - Not all students with behavioral risk factors are subject to chronic peer victimization, suggesting that other factors interact with dysregulated behaviors to facilitate or mitigate the victimization risk generated by these behavior problems.
 - Confidence in one's standing in a peer group
 - High self-regard and assertiveness
 - few friends or have friends who are physically weak and not able to be protective

Victimization Dynamics

- Role of peers.
 - Although peers witness more than 80% of peer victimization episodes most do not help the victim.
 - Students' helping behavior depends on how their social network members react.
 - About 1/5 of students report that they might join bullying when their friends bully others.
 - A victim is more likely to attract help if he or she is an in-group member with bystanders.
 - Children who defend victims tend to hold higher social status.
 - Friendship and peer acceptance moderate the relationship of several individual risk factors, such as physical weakness, behavioral problems, and harsh home environments, to future peer victimization.

Victimization Dynamics

- Role of school staff.
 - Social support from teachers benefits school adjustment, social skills, and academic performance.
 - Victims of bullying perceive this support as more important than do non-victimized children.
 - Students who are the recipients of verbal or physical aggression report receiving less support from their teachers compared to their peers.
 - The teacher-student relationship accounts for 38-54% of the variance in peers' evaluation of social and academic competence.
 - Teacher warmth and negative attitudes towards aggression have a positive effect in enhancing peer acceptance of withdrawn and aggressive students.

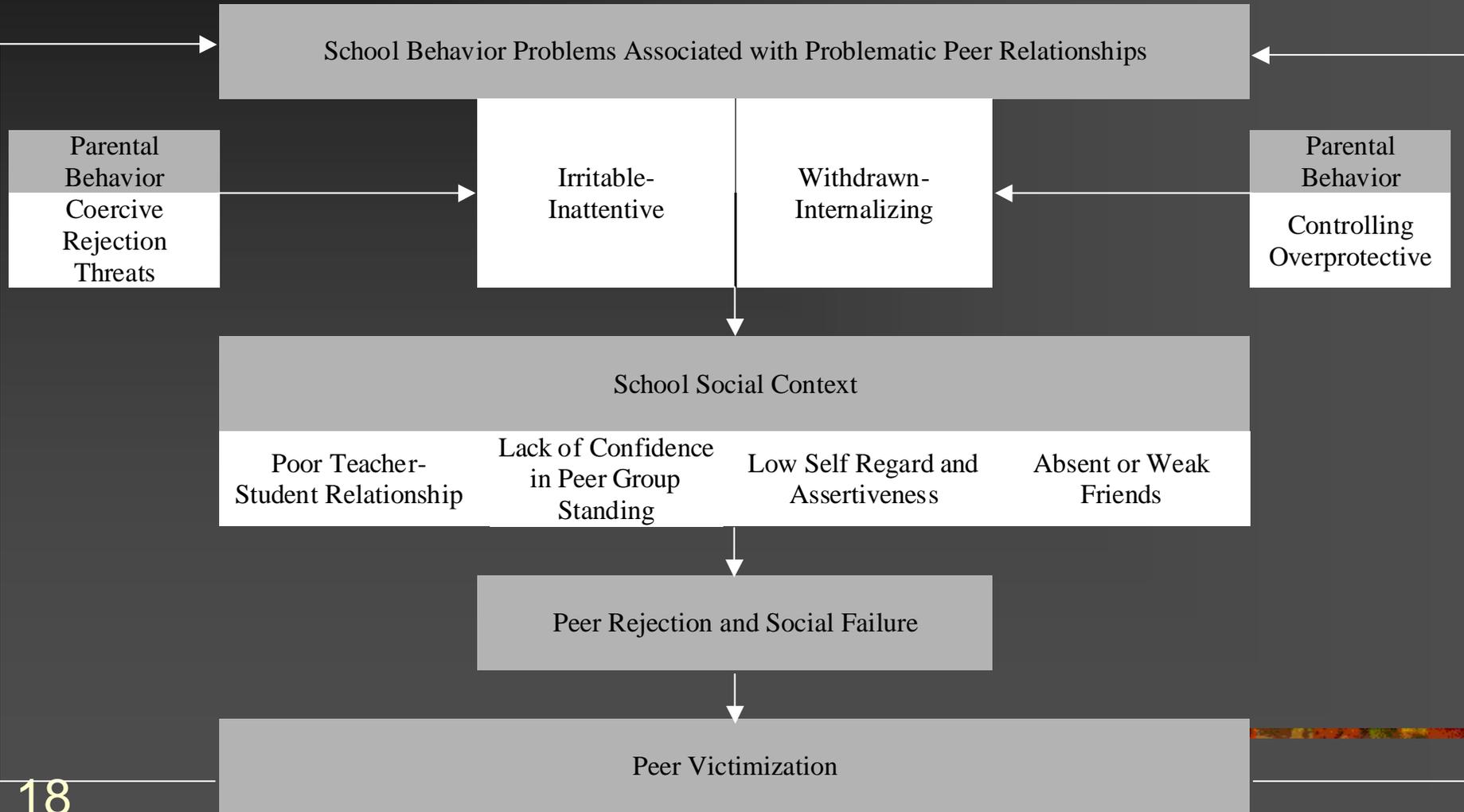
Victimization Dynamics

- Role of parents.
 - Peer victims tend to be anxiously attached.
 - Victimizers tend to have avoidant attachment histories.
 - Responsiveness to children's needs and father involvement is associated with decreased victimization.
 - Enmeshment with parents has been associated with increased risk for victimization

Victimization Dynamics

- Role of parents.
 - Emotionally intense parent-child relationships appear to place boys at increased risk for victimization.
 - Exceptions to this pattern occur for girls and provocative victims, whose parents tend to exert a high degree of psychological control.
 - Maternal threat of rejection, coercion, and low encouragement of assertion (as opposed to overprotection) have been associated with girls' risk for victimization.
 - Provocative victims indicate that their parents are low in accurate monitoring and warmth, yet high in overprotection and neglect, suggesting inconsistent discipline practices not tempered by warmth.

Victimization Dynamics



Conclusion

- Peer victimization is a cyclical pattern typically catalyzed in the earliest stages of school socialization.

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