

Relationship between Peer Victimization, Future Mindedness and Perceived Social Support among Adolescents

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Abstract

The study was conducted to find out the Relationship between Peer Victimization, Future Mindedness and Perceived Social Support among Adolescents. The sample population chosen for this study was, 300 adolescents, both boys and girls (150 each), aged 13-19 years. The tools of assessment used were The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard, H. & Joseph, S., 2000), The Future Time Perspective (FTP) scale, (Carstensen L. and Lang F., 1996) and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet G. D et. al., 2000). The statistical tool used for the study was Pearson Product Moment correlation. The statistical analysis was carried out using MS-Excel operation. It was found that there were correlations established within the variables of the study, namely Peer Victimization, Future Mindedness and Perceived Social Support.

Keywords: Adolescents, Peer Victimization, Future Mindedness, Perceived Social Support.

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood. Adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years, but its physical, psychological or cultural expressions may begin earlier and end later. Age provides only a rough marker of adolescence, and scholars have found it difficult to agree upon a precise definition of adolescence. Adolescence has long been characterized as a time when individuals begin to explore and examine psychological characteristics of the self in order to discover who they really are, and how they fit in the social world in which they live. During the transition into adolescence, however, individuals tend to spend increasing

amounts of time alone and with friends, and there is a dramatic drop in time adolescents spend with their parents (Larson & Richards 1991).

Adolescents choose friends with similar behaviours, attitudes, and identities (Hogue & Steinberg 1995). Finally, susceptibility to peer influence is not uniform among adolescents. Factors such as adolescents' age, personality, socialization history, and perceptions of peers are all important to consider. Adolescents are most influenced by peers in middle adolescence, compared to early and late adolescence (Brown, 1990).

Peer victimization is the experience among children of being a target of the aggressive behavior of other children, who are not siblings and not necessarily age-mates. Peer victimization also commonly labeled harassment or bullying— as physical, verbal, or psychological abuse of victims by perpetrators who intend to cause them harm is associated with multiple aspects of psychosocial functioning, including anxiety, depressive symptoms, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Bullying can occur anywhere; some of the most common reported places being schools, the workplace, and even within one's own family. Bullies are described as aggressive, disruptive, likely to start fights, while simultaneously displaying less cooperative behaviour and lower self-esteem. Olweus, a leading investigator in the field, defined bullying as aggressive behaviour with the intent to harm another person. Bullying occurs intentionally and persistently over time, and in relationships characterized by an imbalance of power. Bullying usually takes one of three forms: (i) direct bullying which includes verbal or physical aggression toward another, (ii) indirect bullying includes using social relationships to harm the victim e.g., gossiping and spreading rumors, and intentional isolation, and (iii) cyberbullying that occurs via electronic communication through internet, phone, or social media. (Olweus, 1993).

Future mindedness refers to a general orientation toward the pursuit and achievement of future goals. While psychology has historically focused on negative orientations toward the future such as hopelessness and pessimism, psychologists have more recently examined the potential benefits of positive expectations in the form of hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. These conceptualizations of positive expectations for the future have been dubbed “Velcro constructs” for their tendency to be associated with positive life outcomes in a wide range of life domains and have been found to be one of the strongest, if not the strongest, predictors of life satisfaction.

Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends, pets, neighbours, co-workers and organizations. Perceived social support refers to a person's perception of readily available support from friends, family, and others. It also shows the complex nature of social support including both the history of the relationship with the individual who provides the supportive behaviour and the environmental context (Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993).

Perceived social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional (e.g., nurturance), tangible (e.g., financial assistance), informational (e.g., advice), or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging) and intangible (e.g., personal advice). Social support can be measured

as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated in a social network.

The present study was formulated as an effort to identify significant correlations between the variables. There are three variables in this study: Peer victimization, future mindedness and perceived social support.

In present times, the current generation is facing a lot of problems concerning the bullying or victimization which they face in their school premises. While some individuals after being victimized, receive the much needed support from their family, friends and significant others, most individuals do not.

The study conducted by Muchicko M., Lepp A. & Jacob E. (2015) put some light on the relation between peer victimization, social support and leisure-time physical activity in transgender and cisgender individuals. The study stated that, Transgender individuals were less physically active and reported lower social support and physical self-perception than their cisgender peers.

Malhi P., Bharti B. and Sidhu M., conducted a study in 2015 on Peer Victimization (relational and physical) on Indian adolescents. The study depicted that, Physical bullying was reported by 8 %, relational bullying by 12 %, and 4 % reported being victims of both physical and relational bullying be victims of relational bullying. Victims of relational aggression had relatively higher depression scores and conduct problems, while physically victimized adolescents reported more peer problems.

Galand B., Hospel V. (2012) tried to study the concept of Peer victimization and school disaffection: Exploring the moderation effect of social support and the mediation effect of depression. The study emphasized that, Peer victimization was negatively associated with self-efficacy and positively associated with school disaffection.

After extensive review of literature, we found a dearth of studies on Future mindedness and therefore, this variable was chosen to be studied.

It was proposed that:

- There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Future mindedness.
- There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Perceived social support.
- There will be a positive correlation between Perceived social support and Future mindedness.

METHOD

Participants: The sample of 300 adolescents, (150 males and 150 females) within the age group of 13 to 19 years of age from Mumbai city was selected for the study.

Sample Inclusion Criteria: Participants with at least 5 years of formal education in an English Medium School were selected. Participants who are not on any form of medication were selected for the study.

Sample Exclusion Criteria: Participants with any co-morbidity of learning disability, intellectual sub-normality or any other mental disorder was excluded.

Variables:

Peer victimization, Future Mindedness and Perceived social support.

Tools:

The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale:

The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale will be used to measure the victimization faced by adolescents. It is a self-report measure, designed to assess four types of peer victimization (social manipulation, attacks on property, verbal victimization, and physical victimization). Created by: Mynard, H. & Joseph, S. (2000). The scale has good reliability and validity. (Internal reliability for each subscale: Physical victimization = 0.85, verbal victimization = 0.75, social manipulation = 0.77, property attacks = 0.73). The scale is a 3 point Likert type scale ranging from 0 to 2 where 0 being not at all to 2 being more than once.

The Future Time Perspective (FTP) scale:

The Future Time Perspective (FTP) scale, developed by Laura Carstensen and Frieder Lang, can be administered on paper or online. The FTP scale includes ten items answered by indicating agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale (from 1= very untrue, to 7 = very true). The last three items of the Future Time Perspective scale (#s 8-10) are reverse coded. When scoring the measure, researchers calculate the participant's mean scores. There are no defined cutoffs for interpreting FTP scores.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support:

The multidimensional scale of perceived social support was used to measure the social support provided to the individual after he/she has faced victimization at the hands of their peers. It is created by Zimet G. D., Dahlem N. W., Zimet S. G., Farley G. K. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) is a brief research tool designed to measure perceptions of support from 3 sources: Family, Friends, and a Significant Other. The scale is comprised of a total of 12 items, with 4 items for each subscale. Cronbach alpha level of .88 for the scale. The scale is a likert type scale ranging from 1 to 7 where 1 being very strongly disagree to 7 being very strongly agree.

PROCEDURE

The participants were contacted individually. Rapport was established with them. After the brief interview to rule out the comorbidity, the participants who met the inclusion criterion were requested to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was explained to them and written informed consent was taken from each participant. The participants were assured of confidentiality of data. They also had the freedom to leave the study if they desired to do so. The questionnaires were then administered explaining the instructions for answering them. Any queries or doubts of the respondents were answered by the researchers. Although there was no time limit, the respondents were requested to respond with the first response that comes to their mind. It took approximately 20 minutes for each respondent to fill all the measures. After making sure that no statement was left unanswered, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

	Peer Victimization	Future Mindedness	Perceived Social Support
Peer Victimization	1		
Future Mindedness	-0.5231	1	
Perceived Social Support	-0.2342	0.777	1

The 1st hypothesis tested in the present study was, “There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Future mindedness.”

The correlation value obtained between Peer victimization (M= 17.85, SD= 4.41) and Future mindedness (M= 56.2, SD= 10.82) was that of -0.52 ($r = -0.52$, $n = 300$, $df = 298$) which was found to be significant at 0.05 level ($p \leq 0.05$). This suggested a moderate negative correlation between the two variables. This implied that that the variables are inversely correlated. Which means that if the value of Peer Victimization increases, the value of the other variable, that is, Future mindedness will decrease. The results obtained were as per the expectation of the study.

The 2nd hypothesis tested in the present study was: “There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Perceived social support.”

The correlation value obtained between Peer victimization (M= 17.85, SD= 4.41) and Perceived social support (M= 56.2, SD= 10.82) was that of -0.23 ($r = -0.23$, $n = 300$, $df = 298$) which was found to be significant at 0.05 level ($p \leq 0.05$). This suggested a mild negative correlation between the two variables. This implied that that the variables are inversely correlated. Which means that if the value of Peer Victimization increases, the value of the other variable, that is, Perceived social support will decrease. The results obtained were as per the expectation of the study.

The 3rd hypothesis tested in the present study was: “There will be a positive correlation between Perceived social support and Future mindedness.”

The correlation value obtained between Perceived social support (M= 56.2, SD= 10.82) and Future mindedness (M= 56.2, SD= 10.82) was that of 0.777 ($r = 0.77$, $n = 300$, $df = 298$) which was found to be significant at 0.05 level ($p = \leq 0.05$). This suggested a strong positive correlation between the two variables. This implied that that the variables are directly correlated. Which means that if the value of Perceived social support increases, the value of the other variable, that is, Future mindedness will also increase. The results obtained were as per the expectation of the study.

DISCUSSION

Peer victimization is the experience among children of being a target of the aggressive behavior of other children, who are not siblings and not necessarily age-mates. This construct is well observed among students, especially in the adolescent age group. The variable of Future Mindedness has its roots in the field of positive psychology. The term Future Mindedness refers to a general orientation toward the pursuit and achievement of future goals.

The present study made efforts to study the role of Peer victimization and Future mindedness in the first hypothesis. Both of these somewhat opposing constructs are crucial when it comes to a healthy life led by an adolescent individual. The correlation found amidst the variables acknowledged expedient results. It was found that both the variables were negatively correlated with each other and that increase in one of them would mean that the other variable decreases. The results obtained were as per the expectation of the study. However, due to the relative novelty of the concept of Future Mindedness, there is a dearth of overall studies on this topic. As these variables have not been studied before, there is a severe exiguity of researches to support the data calculated in this study. The topic of Peer Victimization has been studied widely but not with the aforementioned variable.

Perceived social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. The second hypothesis considered, variables such as Peer victimization and Perceived social support. The topic of this particular study has not been studied extensively before, therefore there are limited number of studies which can provide support to the study. However, the study conducted by Muchicko M., Lepp A. & Jacob E. (2015) put some light on the relation between peer victimization, social support and leisure-time physical activity in transgender and cisgender individuals, helping us understand the presence of a negative correlation between the two variables. Another study by Galand B., Hospel V. in 2012 explored the moderation effect of social support and the mediation effect of depression. The study emphasized that, Peer victimization was negatively associated with self-efficacy and positively associated with school disaffection.

The third hypothesis looked at the relationship between variables namely, Perceived social support and Future mindedness. The results of the study are in accordance to the hypothesis proposed, however, the overall dearth of research evidence on the topics mentioned serves as a prospective limitation in validating the results. The discussion lacks the evidence of such research which has taken place in the past. And hence, more factual researches have to be conducted in this particular field. However, this study might act as a stepping stone towards the instrumentation of researches in this field.

Significance of the Study

The present topic involves variables such as Peer Victimization, Future Mindedness and Perceived Social Support. This study involves a comparison between these variables in a correlational method within a population of adolescents.

As there is now a correlation established within the variables, this study needs to be further empirically sound and pragmatic. Implications of this study may include forming intervention strategies for the individuals faced with peer victimization. They may be helped by providing them with social support and also providing them with a direction towards self- change. This study can be taken one step further by conducting a multiple regression analyses to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables.

The present study can serve as a ground work for various future studies which could lead to a new direction of interventions and aid for the adolescents.

LIMITATIONS

The topic at hand is multifaceted and because of this, there tends to be certain limitations to the study. The present study lacks enough empirical support in relation with Positive Psychology Variables, especially Future mindedness and the overall interaction between the variables and perceived social support. Another limitation of the present study could be the small sample size of the sample population involved in the study which is not a representative of the total population. The geographic location was restricted to Western and Southern parts the city of Mumbai which may not a representative of the other regions of Mumbai City. The socio-economic level of the participants in the study were not stable across the group which could also serve as a limitation for the study.

CONCLUSION

While considering Peer victimization and Future mindedness, the 1st hypothesis tested in the present study was, “There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Future mindedness.” This hypothesis was supported by the results obtained. There was a moderate negative correlation established between the two variables.

Peer victimization is the experience among children of being a target of the aggressive behavior of other children, who are not siblings and not necessarily age-mates. The variable of future mindedness has its roots in the field of positive psychology. The term Future mindedness refers to a general orientation toward the pursuit and achievement of future goals.

Perceived social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. The 2nd hypothesis tested in the present study was: "There will be a negative correlation between Peer victimization and Perceived social support." This hypothesis was supported by the results obtained. There was a mild negative correlation established between the two variables.

The 3rd hypothesis tested in the present study was: "There will be a positive correlation between Perceived social support and Future mindedness." This hypothesis was supported by the results obtained. There was a strong positive correlation established between the two variables.

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