



Associations Between Bully Role Behaviors and Academic Achievement



Logan Riffle, DaShae Rodriguez-Harris, Kathleen Kelly, Jonathan Emmons, Morgan Eldridge,
Michelle Demaray, Ph.D., & Christine Malecki, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University

Introduction

- Involvement in bullying has been associated with lower academic performance (e.g., GPA).
- There are five different bullying role behaviors that youth can engage in: bullying, assisting the bully, being victimized, defending the victim, and ignoring bullying (i.e. outsider behavior).
- The current study examined the associations between the five bully role behaviors and GPA.
- Being a victim is associated with lower GPA (Glew, Fan, & Katon, 2008).
- Students identified as bully-victims have the most significant negative association between bullying behaviors and academic achievement (Glew, Fan, Katon, & Rivara, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Nansel et al., 2001).
- Little research exists on academic outcomes for those involved in bystander bullying role behaviors (assisting, defending, and being an outsider).
- Higher academic achievement is related to increased academic investment, which is a predictor of prosocial behavior indicative of increased likelihood of defending behavior (Evans & Smokowski, 2015).

Method

Population

- N = 4,575
- Ethnicity: White (61.1%), African American (8.8%), Hispanic (18.6%), Asian (5.5%), Other (6.0%)
- Grades: 9th (27.7%), 10th (28.9%), 11th (24.2%), 12th (19.2%)
- Gender: 51.2% male, 48.6% female

Measures

- *Bullying Participant Behavior Questionnaire* (BPBQ; Summers & Demaray, 2008)
 - 50-item measure rated on a 5-pt scale from 0 (*Never*) to 4 (*7 or More Times*)
 - 5 scales:
 - Bully
 - Victim
 - Assistant
 - Defender
 - Outsider

Records Data

Procedure

- The BPBQ was administered in the fall to collect data on bully role behaviors.
- Spring semester GPA was collected via records data at the end of the school year.
- University IRB approval was obtained to analyze the data.

Questions & Hypotheses

1. **Would involvement in bullying behavior be associated with lower GPA?** It was hypothesized that student involvement in bullying via perpetration of bullying, assisting the bully, and being a victim of bullying would be associated with lower GPA. It was predicted that defending may be associated with higher GPA.
2. **Would there be gender differences among these associations?** No hypotheses were made.

Analyses

- A regression was conducted with Gender, bullying role behaviors (i.e., Bully, Assistant, Victim, Defender, Outsider), and all two-way Gender by bully role behaviors (e.g., Bully X Gender) entered as independent variables.
- Cumulative Spring GPA was used as the dependent variable.

Figures

Table 1
Simple Regression Results for Gender and Bully Roles

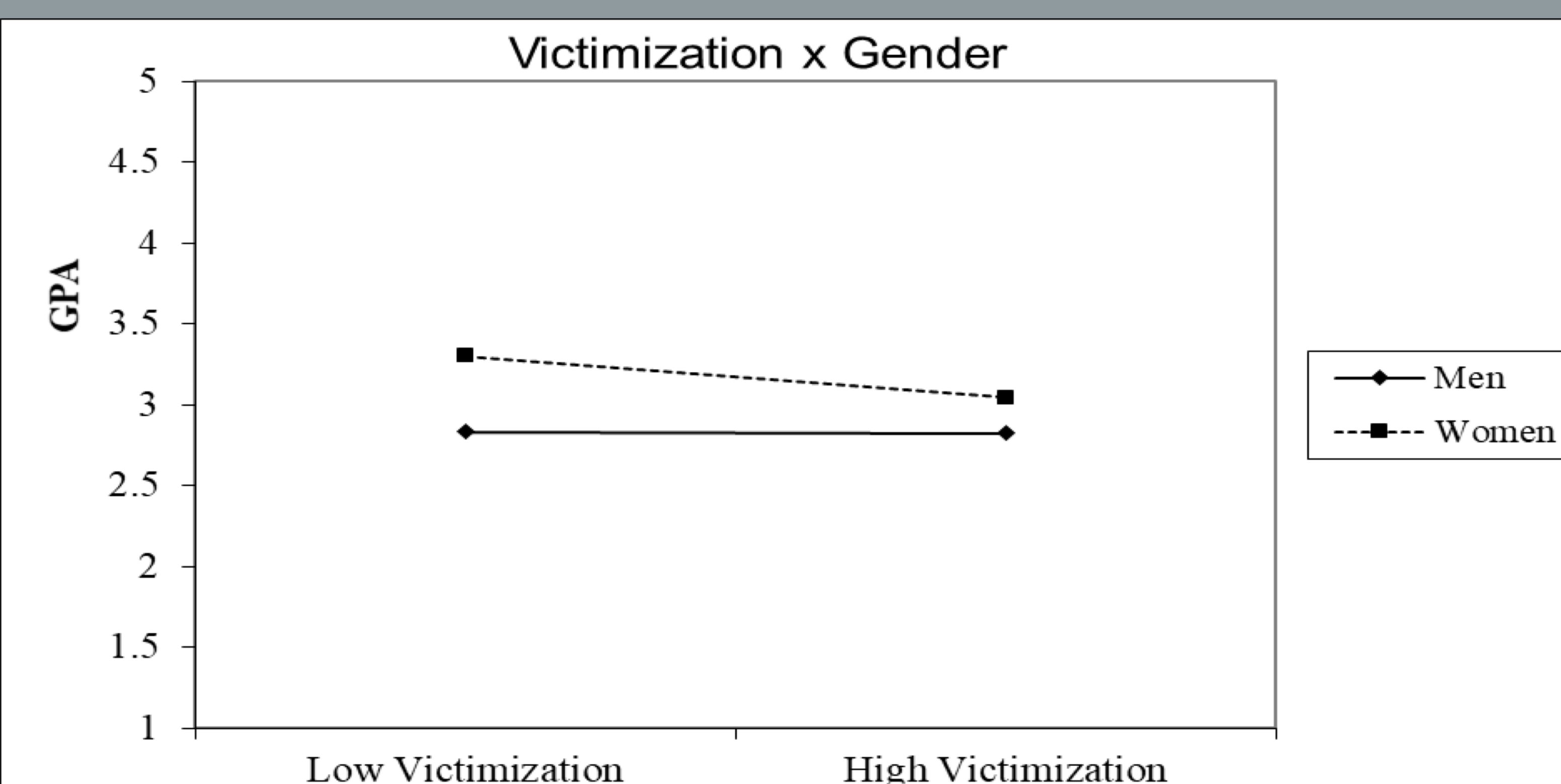
Predictor	β	Significance Level
Gender***	.338	< .001
Victim	-.002	.932
Defender*	-.052	.035
Outsider	-.038	.195
Assistant*	-.114	.042
Bully	-.032	.501

Note. Model includes Gender and Bully roles as independent variables with GPA as the dependent variable; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.
Simple Regression Results for Gender Interactions on High School Sample

Predictor	β	Significance Level
BXG	.104	.177
AXG	-.243	.062
VXG***	-.146	< .001
DXG	-.046	.175
OXG	-.083	.101

Note. Model includes Gender and Bully roles as independent variables with GPA as the dependent variable; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.



Results

Question #1

Both the Defending and Assisting scores were significantly and negatively associated with GPA.

Question #2

There was a significant Gender X Victimization interaction in the association with GPA. For girls, higher victimization was associated with lower GPA (See Figure).

Discussion

- Results indicate that defending, assisting, and victimization (for girls) are associated with lower academic performance.
- Understanding bullying-related associations and outcomes may be important when leading anti-bullying efforts in schools.

Limitations and Future Directions

- This study utilized self-report data to examine bullying behaviors. Therefore, the collected data assesses perceived bullying behaviors opposed to objective behaviors.
- A more generalizable sample would have been useful as our sample was predominately White.
- This study only examined bully role behavior and gender interactions within a high school sample. Future studies should examine other grade level interactions as well.