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Assessing the links between punitive parenting, peer deviance, social isolation and bullying perpetration and victimization in South Korean adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Children who are abused at home are at an increased risk of bullying perpetration and bullying victimization. Within that context, the purpose of the present study was to test Agnew's general strain theory and the peer deviancy training hypothesis by utilizing structural equation modeling to empirically examine pathways linking punitive parenting to bullying perpetration and bullying victimization. This study adds to the literature in two important ways. First, potential mediating linkages between punitive parenting and bullying perpetration and bullying victimization were examined, including socially withdrawn behavior and deviant peer affiliation. Second, these relationships were considered in a longitudinal sample of South Korean adolescents, which is a novel examination given that parenting in South Korea is guided largely by Confucianism which reinforces parental control, restrictiveness, and a punitive nature. Results indicate that: (1) punitive parenting is directly related to bullying perpetration but not bullying victimization; (2) punitive parenting was found to have indirect effects only on bullying perpetration; (3) deviant peer affiliation increased the likelihood of bullying perpetration and victimization; and (4) socially withdrawn behavior only affected bullying perpetration via its effect on deviant peer affiliation.

1. Introduction

Since the publication and dissemination of Olweus' (1978) research on bullying, there has been a growing amount of research interest on the subject (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefvooghe, 2002). Bullying has been widely defined in Western societies as a type of aggressive behavior, which is exhibited repeatedly towards a target who is unable to defend themselves (Olweus, 1999). Spreading from Western societies, research on this phenomenon has reached an international dimension (Smith et al., 1999). In South Korea, bullying is primarily conceptualized as *jipdan-ttadolim* (isolation by a group), *jipdan-goeropim* (harassed by a group), *hakgyo pong-nyeok* (school violence), or *wang-tta* (bullied individual; Lee, Smith, & Monks, 2011). Over the years, scholars in South Korea have examined several antecedents that might increase the likelihood of some adolescents to be involved in school bullying, as either victims or perpetrators, with parenting style being one of the most frequently identified. The aim of the present study is to investigate

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both direct and indirect links between punitive parenting and adolescents' involvement in bullying in South Korea.

Unlike the case in most traditional Western countries, parenting styles in South Korea, as influenced by the traditional culture of Confucianism, are characterized as punitive (Park & Ko, 2004). There is a growing consensus that children who are physically or verbally abused have a heightened risk of bullying (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007; Holt, Kantor, & Finkelhor, 2008; Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo, & Jaffe, 2009). In South Korea, study findings also reveal that punitive parenting is positively related to children's aggressive behaviors and involvement in bullying victimization (Choi, 2014; Doh & Kim, 2007; Hwang, Doh, & Shin, 2008; Park & Chae, 2011; Roh & Sim, 2004).

Parenting has a profound impact on adolescent development, behavior, and socialization outside the home (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993; Engels, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2002), and adolescents tend to observe and model the behavior and socialization of their parents in the home (see Bandura, 1977). Explanations of the link between punitive parenting and adolescents' peer relations have been primarily derived from social learning theory or social control theory (Hollist, Hughes, & Schaible, 2009). Social learning theory postulates that after observing or experiencing abusive or aggressive behavior in the home or among peers, abused children may model such behavior when interacting with their peers (Bandura, 1977). Social control theory hypothesizes that adolescents' involvement in bullying may emerge when their bonds or ties to social institutions (e.g., family) are diminished (Pittaro, 2007).

More recently, scholars have also begun to explore the relevance of s (1992, 2006); s (1992, 2006) general strain theory (GST) in understanding the link between punitive parenting and adolescents' involvement in bullying. Unlike earlier macro-based strain theories, GST is a social-psychological theory, which explains certain behaviors as a response to negative emotions that are elicited by adverse experiences or relationships (Hollist et al., 2009). GST proposes that exposure to negative relationships or circumstances (e.g., punitive parenting, parent-adolescent conflict) has the potential to produce negative emotional reactions (e.g., depression, anger), which can increase the risk of involvement in peer conflicts. Antisocial involvement or victimization may be outcomes of pressures or strains that are reinforced by negative interpersonal relations or negative experiences (Jang, Song, & Kim, 2014).

In addition, the peer deviance training hypothesis can shed light on the association between punitive parenting and adolescents' involvement in bullying. Deviancy training refers to social processes, which occur in peer interactions, that can influence subsequent involvement in antisocial behavior (Dishion, Spraklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996). Derived from social learning research, deviancy training occurs when adolescents affiliate with deviant and antisocial peers and hold discussions that positively respond to rule breaking and delinquent behaviors (e.g., involvement in bullying; Levesque, 2011). Adolescents who are exposed to a negative home environment are unlikely to form secure attachment relationships with their caregivers. Consequently, they may learn to behave in ways that increase their risk of developing relationships with peers who engage in deviant activities (Cicchetti, Lynch, Shonk, & Manly, 1992), subsequently increasing the risk of bullying involvement (Mouttapa, Valente, Gallaher, Rohrbach, & Unger, 2004; Poulin, Dishion, & Burraston, 2001; Weiss et al., 2005).

Using a nationally representative sample of adolescents from South Korea, and informed by the theoretical insights of GST and the peer deviance training hypothesis, the present study uses structural equation modeling to examine some of the potential pathways linking punitive parenting to bullying perpetration and victimization. To further our understanding of the link between punitive parenting and adolescents' bullying and victimization, we examine this association through the mediating roles of socially withdrawn behavior and deviant peer affiliation, controlling for age, sex, and family socioeconomic status.

2. Prior research

2.1. Parenting and its link to involvement in bullying in South Korea

A significant body of research in South Korea has examined the relevance of parenting in children and adolescents' involvement in bullying over the years. Despite rapid industrialization and globalization, parenting practices in South Korea remain guided by Confucianism, which reinforces parental control, restrictiveness, and punitiveness (Chao & Tseng, 2002). A growing body of research in South Korea has found that the quality of parenting practices is significantly related to adolescents' risk of involvement in bullying (Doh & Kim, 2007; Hwang et al., 2008; Park & Chae, 2011; Roh & Sim, 2004). For instance, Roh and Sim's (2004) study, which collected data from 514 elementary school students in grades 1–6, reported that parenting behaviors were significantly associated with bullying perpetration and victimization. Moreover, the study found that children identified as bully/victims reported the lowest parental warmth-acceptance, and both victims and bully/victims showed the highest parental rejection-restriction. Hwang et al. (2008) examined the association between parents' marital conflict, maternal parenting behavior, and children's friendship quality in bully/victim groups. Their findings suggest that both bullies and victims perceived higher maternal rejection/maternal punishment than the non-involved groups.

2.2. Other mechanisms linking parenting and involvement in bullying

Several mechanisms underlie the association between punitive parenting and adolescents' bullying and peer victimization. Children whose parents display punitive behaviors toward them may experience abuse across multiple developmental periods, which may impair their social functioning and they may internalize the experienced hostility in ways that might lead to socially withdrawn behavior (Alink, Cicchetti, Kim, & Rogosch, 2012; Elliott, Cunningham, Linder, Colangelo, & Lilly, 2006). Consequently, the child

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