



Different forms of online and face-to-face victimization among schoolchildren with pure and co-occurring dimensions of reactive and proactive aggression

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ABSTRACT

This pioneer study filled up research gaps on differentiation and associations between various forms of online (general victimization, sexual victimization, individual racial discrimination, and vicarious racial discrimination) and face-to-face peer victimization (physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attacks on property) among schoolchildren with pure and co-occurring dimensions of reactive and proactive aggression and ordinary ones. Significant differences consistently found across four-domain online victimization between three groups of schoolchildren with pure and co-occurring dimensions of reactive and proactive aggression and ordinary schoolchildren; and the lowest mean scores were constantly found in pure reactive aggression group comparing with pure proactive and co-occurring forms of aggression. Although similar significant differences were found in four-factor multi-dimensional peer-victimization between three groups of schoolchildren with pure and co-occurring dimensions of reactive and proactive aggression and ordinary schoolchildren, the scores in pure reactive group were very comparable with pure proactive and co-occurring forms of aggression groups. Only pure reactive aggressor group of schoolchildren has no correlation between online and face-to-face peer victimization. The explanation may be based on Social Information Processing model that reactive aggressors are affected by hostile attributional bias, provocations mainly may happen in face-to-face interpersonal ambiguous situation rather than in the online world.

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1. Introduction

Many studies have focused on cyber bullying as it relates to aggressive behavior (Aricak et al., 2008; Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009; Williams & Guerra, 2007) and aggression subtypes (Calvete, Orue, Estévez, Villardón, & Padilla, 2010; Law, Shapka, Domene, & Gagné, 2012) among schoolchildren. However, victims who have been bullied according to multiple aggression subtypes, both online and face-to-face, have not received a great deal of attention.

To the best of our knowledge, no prior study has examined the relationship between reactive and proactive aggression and the various forms of online victimization (general online victimization, sexual online victimization, individual online racial discrimination, and vicarious online racial discrimination) and face-to-face peer victimization (physical victimization, social victimization, verbal victimization, and attacks on property) in schools. This study aims to fill these specific research gaps and to investigate in an original

way the differences between online and face-to-face victimization among ordinary schoolchildren and schoolchildren with reactive, proactive, and co-occurring aggression.

Aggression was originally defined as “an act whose goal response is injury to an organism or organism surrogate” (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, & Sears, 1939, p. 11). The definition was then changed to focus on the perpetrator’s intent to inflict harm (excluding accidental harm) rather than the behavioral act. In the past two decades, the distinction between reactive and proactive aggression has been well documented across the behavioral (Dodge, 1991; Schwartz et al., 1998), affective (Dodge, 1991; Price & Dodge, 1989), cognitive (Dodge, Lochman, Harnish, Bates, & Pettit, 1997; Miller & Lynam, 2006), physiological (Baker, Raine, Liu, & Jacobson, 2008; Brendgen, Vitaro, Boivin, Dionne, & Pérusse, 2006; Pitts, 1997), and psychosocial (Card & Little, 2006; Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Pulkkinen, 1996) domains.

Reactive aggression is aggression associated with hostile aversive provocations unrelated to reward motivation. Schoolchildren with reactive aggression are characterized as impulsive, inattentive, oversensitive, paranoid, easily provoked, and angry due to a hostile attributional bias, poor emotional regulation, and unpopularity within their peer groups (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Dodge & Coie, 1987; Walters, 2007). In contrast, proactive aggression is an

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instrumental aggression that is purposeful and rewarding. Children with proactive aggression are described as narcissistic, callous/unemotional, calm, personal goal oriented, reward driven, and socially dominant among peers (Vitaro, Gendreau, Tremblay, & Oigny, 1998; Walters, 2007).

The differentiation between the cognitive distortion of reactive and proactive aggression is based on the social information processing (SIP) model. The model has five processing steps: the encoding of social cues, the interpretation of social cues, a response search, a response evaluation, and enactment (Boxer & Dubow, 2002; Huesmann, 1998). Cognitive distortion in reactive aggressors is mainly related to selective attention, especially in terms of negative cue choices and hostile attributional bias in early-stage information processing (Arsenio, Adams, & Gold, 2009; Crick & Dodge, 1996; Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002). The aggressors are overly sensitive to cues and perceived as a threat and provocation under ambiguous circumstances (Gouze, 1987). Driven by their aggressive scripts (Eron, 2001), they generate aggressive behavior in response to such circumstances (Dubow & Reid, 1994).

This cognitive distortion of proactive aggression is found not in the early stages of social information processing, but the later stages (Arsenio et al., 2009; Crick & Dodge, 1996; Orobio de Castro et al., 2002). Proactive aggressors have no such difficulty in choosing cues and experience no hostile attributional bias, but have overly high expectations in achieving positive outcomes and reinforcement through their adoption of aggressive strategies and action (Erdley & Asher, 1996). Proactive aggressors are driven by the personal goals and rewards of bullying, but under-evaluate the disciplinary consequences (Boldizar, Perry, & Perry, 1989). One recent study showed that proactive aggressors are characterized by narcissistic and callous/unemotional psychopathic personalities (Fung, Raine, & Gao, 2010) and have no empathy or regretful feelings towards their victims' suffering when they execute aggressive acts.

A further evidence-based support study showed that while a psychopathic personality is predominantly found in proactive aggression, only some psychopathy components are related to reactive aggression (Cima & Raine, 2009). More recent studies have revealed that pure proactive aggression is more associated with schizotypal personality; its prevalence among schoolchildren is found to be lower than pure reactive aggression and co-occurring proactive and reactive aggression (Fung & Raine, *in press*; Raine, Fung, & Lam, 2011). Furthermore, Fite, Colder, and Pelham (2006) observed that the three-factor models of aggression, which specify both pure and co-occurring dimensions of proactive and reactive aggression, are more common than proactive or reactive aggression alone (Dodge et al., 1997). To the best of our knowledge, very little research has examined the three-factor models of aggression.

In this study, four groups of schoolchildren, including ordinary children and those with pure and co-occurring dimensions of proactive and reactive aggression, were screened to compare online and face-to-face peer victimization. The number of pure proactive aggressor groups was predicted to be fewer than that of other groups.

Peer victimization is defined as a kind of harassment involving direct, face-to-face physical or verbal aggression and the intimidation of a target that take places among peers at a school (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). Peer victimization can take real-life and cyber forms; Wang et al. (2009) showed that the prevalence rates of victimization among 7508 polled adolescents in grades 6–10 in the United States were 12.8% for physical, 36.5% for verbal, 41% for relational, and 9.8% online victimization. Peer victimization happens not only to the pure victims but also to the aggressors (Dilmaç, 2009; Sontag, Clemans, Graber, & Lyndon, 2011). Evidence-based studies have revealed that schoolchildren with

aggressive behavior are also bullied by others (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Ragatz, Anderson, Fremouw, & Schwartz, 2011), and it is well proven that both reactively and proactively aggressive schoolchildren are being victimized (Raine et al., 2011; Fung & Raine, *in press*). However, to the best of our knowledge, no specific study has further explored various forms of online and face-to-face victimization and the differences between victimizations across the subtypes of aggression.

Online victimization is commonly defined as the intentional and repeated infliction of harm by others through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Smith et al., 2008). In reviewing previous studies with large sample sizes, Kowalski and Limber (2007) found that among 3767 adolescents aged 12–14, 18% reported to have been cyber bullied in the United States. Similar findings were shown by Hinduja and Patchin (2009), who noted that 9.4% of the cyber bullying occurrences had happened in the 30 days prior to the study and that 17.3% of a sample of 1963 US middle schoolchildren had been cyber bullied in their lifetime. Many previous studies have focused solely on general online victimization, Internet harassment, and unwanted sexual solicitation (Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). A recent development and validation of the various forms of online victimization (general victimization, sexual victimization, individual racial discrimination, and vicarious racial discrimination) was advocated by Tynes, Rose, and Williams (2010), and appears more comprehensive and all-inclusive in exploring online victimization among adolescents.

Face-to-face peer victimization is defined as doing harm to and suffering attacks by others either directly (physically and verbally) (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Hawker & Boulton, 2000) or indirectly (manipulative attacks and assault through a third party) (Mishna, 2003; Rigby, 1996). Yet, peer victimization has often been examined as a one-dimensional construct (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Mynard and Joseph (2000) developed the Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale (MPVS) to outline different types of peer victimization (physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attacks on property) and achieve a better understanding of this largely overlooked area. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this four-factor peer-victimization construct has not been validated in a Chinese population.

One recent study with a very large sample size (6896 Dutch from the general population) revealed that online activities can result in traditional threat victimization and, conversely, real-world activities can result in online threat victimization. The physical and online worlds are closely connected (Van Johan, 2011). However, to our knowledge, no study has examined physical and online victimization among proactive and reactive aggression types. Although a number of previous findings have shown a stable moderate relationship between aggression and victimization among schoolchildren (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Henttonen, 1999; Kochendarfar & Ladd, 1997; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Llargerpetz, 1998; Sourander, Helstelä, Helenius, & Piha, 2000), reactively aggressive children have been found to experience a higher level of victimization than those with proactive aggression (Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum Terwogt, & Shuangel, 2002).

The significance of this pioneering study is to investigate whether both subtypes of aggressors are consistently being victimized or have different victimization experiences in the real world and online. It is not known if any significant differences exist between ordinary schoolchildren and schoolchildren with pure and co-occurring dimensions of proactive and reactive aggression.

This study presents four well-formulated hypotheses. First, it postulates that the four-domain online victimization and four-factor multidimensional peer-victimization construct can be applied to Chinese schoolchildren. Second, it assumes a strong

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