



Research article

The role of anger and depressive mood in transformation process from victimization to perpetration



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ABSTRACT

Violence exerts detrimental influence on children's lives. Reported delinquent behaviors of children have reached an alarming level throughout all societies, and tend to be followed by further victimization. Victimized children suffer various physical and psychological difficulties, with the worst being further involved in perpetrations which puts these children at a greater risk. This study explores the transformation process from victimization to perpetration, by hypothesizing that depressive mood and anger serve as mediators.

Data extracted from the Korean Child Youth Panel Survey (KCYPS), of which the first wave (8th graders, $n = 2283$) were used. Apart from depressive mood and anger, we included violent parenting and peer victimization to measure victimization, and for perpetration, conventional and cyber delinquent behaviors were included in this model. Structural Equation Modeling was employed to test the hypothesis using Mplus, and bootstrapping method was used to test mediators while FIML was used to handle missing responses.

The model yielded an appropriate fit including $\chi^2 = 391.477$ ($df = 73$, $p < 0.001$), $CFI = 0.968$, $TLI = 0.954$, $RMSEA = 0.044$ (0.040–0.048). Specifically, anger was reported to be mediated in the relations between victimization and perpetration. Depressive mood was mediated in the relations between victimization and perpetration, except for the relation arising from parental victimization. The implications of these findings related to the transformation process and future research direction are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Viewing protection of children from violence from a rights-based perspective has been made possible through the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with 196 ratifications to date. Almost all countries have agreed to comply with the responsibility to protect, promote, and fulfill the provisions stipulated under the Convention. Specifically, it stipulates in Article 19 that protection from all forms of violence is an inherent right of all children. In this regard, children who commit delinquent behaviors also should be considered as victims. A non-violent environment that would prevent delinquent violent behaviors was not provided during childhood (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011, 2012).

Unfortunately, reported delinquent behaviors of children have reached an alarming level throughout all societies. Many children are exposed to violence as victims and/or perpetrators. In a cross-national study of 40 countries, 20% of the 53,249 respondents reported exposure to peer violence. Specifically, males involved in bullying ranged from a low of 8.6% in Sweden

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to a high of 45.2% in Lithuania; and for females, it ranged from a low of 4.8% in Sweden to a high of 35.8% in Lithuania (Craig et al., 2009). This issue has become increasingly more pronounced with the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet-enabled devices as delinquent behaviors can take place anytime and anyplace through the Internet (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Li, 2007a). The Cyberbullying Research Center (2015) released its findings by summarizing the most recent international studies on cyberbullying, and about 26% of the studies' respondents were reported to be victims, and about 16% were perpetrators.

In the case of South Korea, approximately one third of the 5958 school-aged respondents were reported to be involved in some forms of peer violence as a perpetrator, and 6.8% reported to bully others online (ChungYeDan, 2015). One international report mentioned South Korea as the first ranked country in cyberbullying (NGO Advisory Council for Follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children, 2011). In addition to this, a total of 3338 children were reported to be involved in various delinquent behaviors online, including hacking (2.1%), cyber violence (1.0%), internet fraud (0.3%) (Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning & National Information Society Agency, 2012). Further, in practice, crime committed by youth accounts for more than 4% of the total for the last seven consecutive years (Supreme Prosecutors' Office, 2014).

Violence exerts detrimental influence on children's lives. Media reports of suicide as a result of chronic bullying demonstrate the seriousness and urgency of this phenomenon. Apart from this extreme end, various consequential damage related to physical/psychological health, self-esteem, and/or school adjustment were also reported (Back & Chung, 2013; Barker, Arseneault, Brendgen, Fontaine, & Maughan, 2008; Hoof van, Raaijmakers, Beek, Hale, & Aleva, 2008; Jantzer, Haffner, Parzer, Resch, & Kaess, 2015; Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finkelhor, 2007), and these might prolong into adulthood (Kwon, 2011; Rudolph, Troop-Goerdon, Hessel, & Schmidt, 2011). In addition, as a perpetrator, involvement in delinquent behaviors poses risk to their psychological health and general wellbeing (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Kim, Lim, & Lim, 2013; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). They could suffer psychological damages in the process, and be at further risk of committing a crime in the future. The worst feature is that victimization and perpetration could be dependent on each other (Kim & Choi, 2012; Kim, Sung, & Kim, 2015; Lim, 2015; Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliewer, 2006; Shin, 2005). Victimized children could be further involved in perpetrations and this places children at a greater risk. This type of dual – victim/perpetrator experiences could lead to more severe psychological consequences than when experiencing either victimization or perpetration.

For the purpose of devising and implementing preventive methods to counteract delinquent behaviors, it is imperative to identify the precursors. A significant amount of research identifies that these delinquent behaviors tend to be followed by victimized experiences, such as violent parenting (Cicchetti, Lynch, Shonk, & Manly, 1992; Egeland, Yayas, Appleyard, & Dulmen, 2002; Kim & Choi, 2001; Kim & Yoon, 2012; Lim, 2015; Nho & Lee, 2003; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001; Stuewig & McCloskey, 2005). That is, children subjected to violent parenting are more likely to behave toward others in a similar manner because parent-child relationship creates a basis for interpersonal relations afterwards (Cicchetti et al., 1992). Kim and Choi (2001) explained that children were scared of violence inflicted by their parents, but at the same time, they learned violent problem solving strategies on the basis of modeling effect. It was not until recently that the consequential delinquent behaviors could be manifested online, and that it is emerging and increasing with the development of ICT and Internet-enabled devices (i.e. smartphone). In this context, Kim and Yoon (2012) reported that witnessing parental conflicts was positively related to involvement of children in delinquent behaviors in cyber space. Conventional delinquency or cyber delinquency followed by parental victimization was usually considered separately in previous studies although two pathways could co-exist. Thus more research considering these two types of delinquency together is needed to better understand this phenomenon.

Along with parental influence, peer victimization has been documented in explaining the precursors of delinquent behaviors (ChungYeDan, 2015; Juvenen & Graham, 2014; Kim & Choi, 2012; Kim & Nho, 2015). Specifically, children subjected to peer victimization are more likely to be involved in harassing others (Kim & Nho, 2015). In practice, 77% of the victims reported to have a desire for revenge toward the perpetrator (ChungYeDan, 2015). This pattern is also being observed online. For example, bullied children were reported to commit delinquent behaviors in cyber space more than those who were not bullied (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kim & Choi, 2012; Kim & Yoon, 2012; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). According to previous research, due to the characteristics of the place as "cyber space", anonymity, convenient accessibility, or ubiquitousness, children could frequently and easily engage in cyber delinquent behaviors. Again, in this regard, it is needed to consider conventional and cyber delinquency arising from peer victimization simultaneously, like parental victimization.

As described in the research above, the transformation in roles from victim to perpetrator is critical issue in delinquency, as well as in their wellbeing in a broader context (Schäfer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke, & Schulz, 2005). Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all children exposed to victimization by immediate others (parents or peer) harass others afterwards. While some victims would commit offensive behaviors against others, some do not (Olweus, 1994). Rather, it is assumed that there might be precipitating factors in the transformation process from victimization to perpetration. From the preventive perspective, it is critical to identify these factors to cease the vicious cycle. Previous studies ascertained that children subjected to abusive parenting or peer victimization were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors compared to those who were not. Also, those studies also identifies the role of negative emotions in the relationship between victimization and perpetration as a precipitating factor (Bao, Hass, & Pi, 2004; Kim & Choi, 2012; You & Lim, 2015). Specifically, aggression and depression was reported to be mediated in the relation between parental maltreatment and delinquent behaviors in children who grew up in nuclear families. That is, children subjected to parental maltreatment were more likely to show higher level of anger and depression, which led to a higher possibility of involvement in delinquency, compared to children who were

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