

Longitudinal Relations between Peer victimization in High Schools and Mental Health in College

Sohyeon Lee, Jisu Lee, and Hana Song

Abstract— This study examined the longitudinal relationship between peer victimization experience of high school students and depression and suicidal ideation. We analyzed the data of the Youth Panel which were collected by the Ministry of Employment and Labor in Korea. Twenty victimized students were compared with twenty non-victimized peers. Results showed that victimized students in their high school period experienced depression and suicidal ideation more frequently than did non-victimized peers in their college years.

Keywords— peer victimization, depression, suicidal ideation, longitudinal study adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

PEER victimization is one of common types of school violence, and includes being target of various aggressive behaviors by peers or age-mates (Flannery et al., 2007). School violence includes physical and psychological forms of aggressive behaviors, and in some cases, an entire peer group as well as a few bullies was involved in peer victimization (Flannery et al., 2004).

Although the prevalence, patterns, and related causes and effects of bullying and victimization vary with cultural characteristics, peer victimization has been shown across culture and countries in the world (Park., 2000). Within the Korean context, “wang-dda (bullying in Korean)” is one of major forms of school violence, and wang-dda students were rejected and isolated by peer groups (Kim., 2004). Thus, victims of wang-dda have suffered from loneliness, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

Especially, in Korea, the third year of high school is an important and stressful period during which most students take

College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) or college entrance exams. Third-year-students are asked to decide making a transition toward either academic career or working career. As a result, high levels of stress by entrance exam might interact with stress by peer victimization, and furthermore, could interfere with students’ adaptation to college and mental

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health. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the association between peer victimization in the third year of high schools and adaptation to college.

Many previous studies have reported that experience of peer victimization in childhood and adolescence has affected psychosocial problem such as depression and anxiety. In a meta-analytic review of Hawker and Boulton (2000), depression, loneliness, and self-esteem reported larger effect sizes in relations to peer victimization than did social and general anxiety.

In addition, Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, and Schonfeld(2008) also reported that the students who were victimized by peers were more likely to experience depression and suicidal ideation than did those who were not victimized. In this study, various risk factors for peer victimization were suggested; religion, race, prejudice, language, domestic violence, rumor, sexual joke and cyber bullying. Moreover, victimized students reported higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation even four years later. Similarly, Lawrence (2011) reported that the victims of bullying in high school were more likely to experience depression and suicidal ideation during their college years. Gu and Kim (2013) also showed that peer victimization in high school lead to suicidal ideation in Korea.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether peer-victimization experiences of high school students is related to the mental health in their first years of college. Specifically, we examined longitudinal links between peer victimization and the risk of depression, suicidal ideation, and the level of stress.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The data of 20 college students who experienced peer victimization in their high school period were analyzed in this study. These students were selected from the Youth Panel of The Ministry of Employment and Labor, a longitudinal survey project conducted annually from 2007 through up to now. Initially, 10,206 Korean adolescents aged from 15 to 29 years participated in the study. Out of 864 participants in 2008 data, twenty students identified as victims of school violence were selected.

In addition, we intended to compare victimized students with non-victimized peers in this study, and thus, 20 students without victimized experience in a control group were randomly selected.

B. Measures

We used the longitudinal panel to do a comparative analysis between data of 2008 and 2009. We asked a question to participants to identify victimized students in 2008. "Do you have experience of peer victimization in high school years?" Students answered yes or no. We also asked the participants whether they had a depression or a suicidal ideation problem in 2009.

III. RESULTS

Frequencies and percentages of research variables between 2008 and 2009 were reported in table 1 and figure 1.

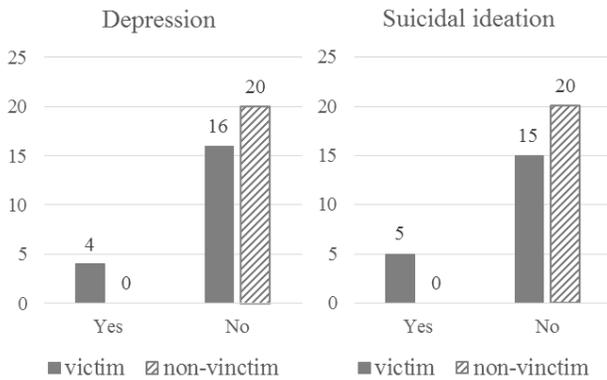


Fig. 1 Frequency of depression and suicidal ideation

Four out of 20 students in the victimized group (20%) reported that they were depressed by e and five out of twenty students (25.5%) had suicidal ideation as well. But, none of students experienced depression or suicidal ideation in the non-victimized group.

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Variable	2008 peer victimization involved		χ^2
	yes(N=20)	no(N=20)	
2009 depression			
Yes	4(20%)	0(0%)	
No	16(80%)	20(100%)	4.44*
2009 suicidal ideation			
Yes	5(25%)	0(0%)	
No	15(75%)	20(100%)	5.71*

*p<.05

Then, Chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the longitudinal relationship between peer victimization in high school period and depression and suicidal ideation in the first year of college. The results indicated that peer victimization was significantly related to depression and suicidal ideation.

IV. CONCLUSION

This examined whether peer- victimization experiences of high school students is related to depression and suicidal ideation in their first years of college. Results showed that students who were victimized by peer in their high school were more likely to experience internalizing behavior problems such as depression and suicidal ideation. This implies that peer victimization is a significant risk factor for mental health of college students.

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