Mediating Role of Demoralization between Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement among Adolescents

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2018

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A Research Report submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the

DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The present study explored the relationship between peer victimization, demoralization and academic achievement among adolescents. The mediating role of demoralization in relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement was also examined. Furthermore, the role of various demographic variables in relation to study variables was also explored. The sample was approached using convenience sampling technique, it consisted of 335 students, age range was 14-19 years ($M = 15.96$, $SD = 1.75$). Data was collected through Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000), Demoralization Scale-II (Kissane, 2016), and academic percentages of past three years. Results showed significant positive correlation between peer victimization and demoralization. A significant negative correlation of peer victimization and demoralization was found with academic achievement. Moreover, nonsignificant mediating role of demoralization was found for peer victimization and academic achievement relationship. Boys seem to be more peer victimized as compared to girls, age was found to be significantly negatively related with peer victimization. Parental education was significantly positively correlated to academic achievement. This study is not only valuable for parents and teachers in terms of providing stimulating environment for the children but may prove helpful to mental health and educational psychologists by specially focusing tendencies of hopelessness and helplessness among adolescents that may turn out to demoralize the individual and thus impairs functioning not only in personal domain but also on academic domain.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Adolescence is taken from a Latin word, meaning 'to grow up' or 'to grow into maturity.' This stage of life encompasses different physical changes, along with changes in learning and relationships. It is the stage of life that connects infancy with adulthood (Ikorok, Lawal, Akpabio, 2005). Adolescence is a difficult stage of development for an individual, where one is progressing both physically and psychologically. This stage is noted for progressive changes in familial and social relationships (Lerner as cited in Carrick, Rush, & Quas, 2013).

Most of the adolescent time is spent in socializing with peers (Bee & Boyd, 2007; Hortacsu, 2003; Rubin, Chen, Coplan, Buskirk, & Wojslawowics, 2005). Peers are important in development of both social as well as academic skills for an individual. This developmental progression also entails some risks to the life of an individual. According to Pellegrini (2002) peer victimization and relational aggression occurs mostly at this stage of life.

Peer victimization has important health effects on adolescents. Many researches have linked it to inequality of power, expressed among adolescents in terms of overt, relational, and social aggressive acts (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Raskauskas & Stoloz, 2007; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2008). A clear link has been established between peer victimization and its adverse effects like anxiety, stress etc. (Barchia & Bussey, 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Hogland, 2007). Studies describe these interpersonal conflicts as especially irritating for adolescents (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Literature indicates that victimization is not a single event rather it is a continuation of harmful actions culminating in progressively difficult situations for the victim (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007).

Although physical and psychological disturbances associated with peer victimization are clearly put forward (Cole, 2010). It is important to clearly familiarize ourselves with the mediating cognitive processes used by a child in developing propensity as opposed to consequences. Most of these studies have been based on socio-ecological factors in formulating the susceptibilities of peer

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victimization and its harmful consequences (Altaf, 2014; Spiggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007). Other researchers describe these studies to reveal that cognitive vulnerabilities are prone to peer victimization and its consequences (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Singh & Bussey, 2010). According to Cognitive-Diathesis Stress Model, the meddling of cognitive susceptibilies with stressors initiate psychological repercussions. Adolescents are prone to anxiety when experiencing negative events (peer victimization and other distresses) when they are with cognitive diathesis (negative self-view). Current research adopts such a focus where victimization and academic achievement are seen with reference to the demoralization one experiences.

Peer Victimization

Among the many problems arising in school-going children are situations of harassment and bullying (Olweus, 1993) including physical, verbal, or psychological abuse of victims by perpetrators who intend to cause them harm. These in turn are aggressive and intentional attacks carried out repeatedly overtime by an individual or group against a victim who cannot fight back depicting a scenario of power imbalance (Olweus, 2013). The problem is common and makes no distinction for geographical distribution, social status, and private or government institutions, etc.

Brock (2006) defined peer victimization as an outcome of intentional acts done by peer or a group of peers having more power or individual with position of strength which performed on an individual who is comparatively weaker. Peer victimization aggressor wants to damage status or social relationship of a victim. Involvement of the victim in initiating this aggression does not necessarily require the victimized person to feel himself abused and thus become victim. Therefore, peer victimization, is viewed as a repetitive act which should not be viewed as an individual event occurring singularly.

Peer victimization has probably occurred throughout human history. Accounts of peer victimization in literature were described as early as in the 1850s. Initially, it was Burk (1897) who explored the phenomena of peer victimization scientifically. The foundation for the recent advancement in research on peer victimization was laid by the work of Olweus (1978) in Norway and Sweden and in the United States by

Perry, Kussel, and Perry (1988). Since then, research on the topic has grown rapidly and has been investigated throughout the world (Smith et al., 1999).

Studies assessing whether students have been victimized during the current semester or school year yield prevalence rates between 30% and 60% (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Rigby, 2000; Smith & Shu, 2000). The more commonly used criterion for classifying children as frequent victims (weekly or more) provides estimates in the range of 6% to 15% (Rigby, 2000; Smith, & Shu, 2000). Therefore, victimization is a problem that most children experience at least at some point in their lives.

Types of Victimization

There are several types of victimization, two of which are mentioned below

Overt. Overt (apparent) type of victimization is physical or verbal, being hurt through physical attacks (including property theft, intimidation, or sexual victimization) or verbal fear of harm (which is not limited to name calling, spreading malicious rumors, insults, teasing, etc.).

Covert. This is also defined as relational victimization (or indirect victimization) whereby a child's public status or reputation is harmed by means of methods such as societal desertion/rejection. It explains the experiences of being the recipient of aggressive and violent actions or behaviors usually performed by the manipulating and destroying friendships and social relationships such as spreading false stories and rumors, excluding or isolating a person from group that damages the adolescents peer relationship. The covert form of victimization is more prevalent among females (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick, Casas, & Nelson, 2002; Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005).

School related problems have been implicated in peer victimization. Studies have shown school disliking to be related to peer victimization (Boulton, Chau, Whitehand, Amataya, & Murray 2009). Buhs, Ladd, and Herald (2006) have described ignorance of school, low attendance, and less participation in classroom activities to be related to peer victimization. Similarly, Graham (1998) indicated about

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peer victimized students that they tend to score lower on school attachment and feelings of belonging as compared to those who are involved in bullying or who have been bullied by others. Goldstein, Young, and Boyd (2008) cross-sectionally studied students from 7th to 12th grade and found that students who report high level of indirect or relational peer victimization think of their school as less safe and are not satisfied by the climate and surroundings of school.

Goldstein (2008) cross-sectionally examined the mediating role of externalizing and internalizing problems for relational and physical types of peer victimization among 6th and 7th grade students. In addition, their relation to school attachment and achievement was also examined, which is referred to as Risk-to-Maladjustment Model. For Peer Victimization and school adjustment related problems, negative association was found. Maladjustment-to-Risk Model utters that physical victimization plays a role of mediator between internalizing/externalizing problems and school performance for both boys and girls.

Other researchers have all described peer victimization as an unbearable form of victimization that occurs across the world (Brener et al., 2002; Currie, 2004; Due et al., 2005; Rigby, 1997; & Rigby, 2000). King (1996) provided the first ever link between mental health and bullying. Students with fewer friends in school felt lonelier in school, helpless, relatively unhappy, difficult to communicate with, more often depressed and nervous, and consider themselves as outsiders. Peer victimization has also been implicated in lower self-esteem, poor mental health, school avoidance, and short attendance. Similarly, victimized students think of school as an unsafe place (King et al., 1996; Rigby, 2000).

Buhs et al. (2006) identified peer rejection as the factor involved in mediating the association between academic results and class participation in kindergarten and peer rejection also had in impact on academic results later on in classes from 3 to 5. The child rejected by peers in an early age and in kindergarten, has a negative relation with academic performance. When sociometric procedures were used to measure the degree of peer rejection, it was found to be related to disengagement from school, not being liked by peers, excluded by groups, and abused by classmates.

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With reference to peer problems, Larson (1999) initially described the association between difficult peer relationships and various psychological and behavioral problems throughout the childhood until adolescence. Unpopular students together with those having poor interaction with others, during their adolescence, have a greater propensity to stop continuation of studies than students who are socially accepted by their peers. Berndt (2002) associated these dropout rates with wide array of learning disabilities, culminating in a range of emotional and health problems even during adulthood.

With reference to fear of peer victimization skipping school is common among students who fear being attacked or bullied by others with almost 160,000 students avoiding school worldwide daily for this very reason (Musu-Gillette, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2017). Skues (2005) estimated 10% students dropped out of schools just because of repeated bullying. Brewster & Railsback (2001) points out the worrying fact that two-third of the shooters of schools have been bullied. Similarly, Siris and Osterman (2004) connect bullying to withdrawal, aggression, and feelings of rejection resulting in social outcomes and academic consequences. Moreover, detachment from peers and friends is common among these students. Moreover, they have poor and irrational beliefs about themselves, develop negative relationships and do not follow classroom norms.

Antecedents and Consequences of Peer Victimization

Past researches suggest that children who are anxious and depressed, peer rejected, have lower self-esteem, and those without friends are prone to victimization (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005). Misbehavior (Hutzel & Payne, (2012), peer rejection, social anxiety were found to be associated with victimization (Ranta, Kaltiala-Heino, Frojd, & Marttunen, 2012). Different studies saw anxiety (Sharp, Thompson & Arora, 2000), depression (Baldry, 2004), suicidal ideation (Carney, 2000; Kim & Leventhal, 2008) as the negative consequences of victimization. Children with poor physical health are more prone to victimization and get manifested in school disengagement and associated factors like truancy and poor grades etc. (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Knack, Jensen-Campbell, & Baum, 2011).

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Plenty of research has been conducted on psychosocial maladjustment in the context of victimization. Hawker and Boulton (2000) in their meta-analysis linked peer victimization with various internalizing problems including anxiety depression, self-esteem, and loneliness (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Sweeting, Young, West, & Der, 2006). Others argue that victimization is connected to both internalizing and externalizing problems (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2011; Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). Psychological problems like anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem have been linked with victimization in numerous studies (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001).

Wolke et al. (2001) is of the opinion that those students who are suffering from both forms of victimization relational, physical, and are victims of bully are more likely to have externalizing issues, while Hawker and Boulton (2000) observed more anxiety and depression in them together with more psychotic problems and symptoms (Bebbington et al., 2004). Kumpulainen et al. (2001) found that in bullying victims in schools were suffering from both internalizing and externalizing problems. A number of researchers observed that after many years more psychotic diagnoses were made among the victims of bullying (Sourander et al., 2007; Sugden et al., 2010). Similarly, Schreir et al. (2009) and Arseneault et al. (2011) found that there is dose-response relationship between psychotic symptoms and different forms of victimization. On the positive side, it has also been observed that children can be protected by positive support of family, friends, siblings, and neighbors from the severe impact of peer victimization (Bowes et al., 2009).

Research conducted in Pakistan by (Hussain as cited in Arif, 2016) suggested that effects of peer victimization are dynamic in the sense that victims suffer from depression and have poor self-esteem as compared to non-victimized peers. Tariq and Tayyab (2011) found that victimization results in depression, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction, and the victims become more socially isolated, which is more prevalent among Pakistani adolescents. Similarly, Shireen, Janapana, Rehmatullah, Temuri, and Azim (2014) examined the significant association between suicide and peer victimization among teenagers and adolescents in the local context.

Factors Related to Peer Victimization

In line with the present research focus, some of the factors related to peer victimization, as indicated by past literature are discussed below.

Personal factors. Victimized children have certain characteristics that make them vulnerable to victimization. Children who exhibit poor prosocial behaviors, have low self-regard, experience internalizing and externalizing problems like hyperactivity, aggression, emotional dysregulation, and delinquency etc are more prone to being victimized. Physical characteristics like physical weakness work as a risk factor for peer victimization. Other apparent features like being short, overweight, or wearing spectacles are somehow not consistently related to victimization. Thus, the most consistently related characteristic is physical weakness. Interpersonal or communication skills, namely assertiveness and conflict resolution predict lesser victimization. Thus, lacking prosocial skills can be thought of as an antecedent to victimization (Card, Noel & Hodges, 2008).

Peer victimization, self-concept, internalizing problems, and certain externalizing problems are interconnected in a complex manner. Each of them is taken as a consequence of victimization by peers in such a way that victimization leads to internalizing problems like low self-concept and certain externalizing problems due to an increase in emotional dysregulation and negative attribution about peers. Children with low self-concept have a tendency to internalize problems, these problems escalate future victimization. These individuals are viewed by the aggressors as `easy targets` as they are less likely to defend themselves and reward the perpetrators by exhibiting their suffering. Children with externalizing behaviors, specifically hyperactivity are likely to irritate or else provoke aggressors. Thus, a vicious cycle exists in which personal and social factors contribute to stabilize victimization across time and situation (Card et al., 2008).

With reference to gender differences, recent research into bullying and victimization suggests that girls are often the victims of subtle (gossiping) victimization, while their counterparts are more commonly victims of physical (damaging property) and verbal (teasing) bullying. Moreover, among victims of physical and verbal bullying hopelessness was found to be much higher than non-

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victims. Furthermore, students did not discuss bullying with their teachers and parents, hopelessness was found to be much more common among bully-victims than in non-victims (Siyahhan, Aricak, & Cayirdag-Acar, 2012).

Academic factors.   Peer victimization has been studied in relation to academic factors in various forms such as school avoidance, low school attachment, truancy, notion of school as being unsafe, poor academic aptitude, achievement, and admittance in special education and others. Past literature suggests a negative association between Academic Achievement and Peer Victimization (Nakamoto and Schwartz, 2010).

Longitudinal research is preferable for determining long term developmental effects of peer victimization as they span over a long period of time and focus targeted population. However, there is a lack of longitudinal research on academic correlates of victimization, yet some inferences can be drawn. Victimization predicts disliking school. Considering that victims perceive their school as insecure and fear of abuse leads to their desire to avoid school and increased truancy. Some investigators have found a positive association between victimization and lower school grades. Nonetheless, poor academic accomplishment is probably a consequence of victimization. First, taking into consideration the fact that if children are anxious about being victimized, they are less likely to engage in academic course work. Second, academic achievement may be the very reason for teasing. School norms for academic achievement predict victimization. Schools, where high achievers are valued, and low achievers are demoralized, might promote this effect or on the contrary may place high achievers at risk (Card, Noel, & Hodges, 2008).

Interpersonal factors.   At social level, acceptance and rejection by peer group are strong associates of victimization. Children who are not well accepted or excluded have a greater likelihood of victimization, because children who are not liked by peers and are rejected are perceived as 'easy targets' by assailant, in turn the assailants are positively reinforced by their peers cheering on attacks or bullies receive little or no punishment for attacking these children (Card, et al., 2008).

Peer victimization and societal status operate in a collaborative strengthening cycle, such that poor social status is a result of peer victimization. At the dyadic level,

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having a few companions or none at all is both a risk factor and an outcome of victimization. Friendships buffer victimization because friends might shield the child from possible assailants. Nevertheless, victimization isolates a child because peers distance themselves from the targeted victim, resulting in a lack of friendship. Despite that, not all friendships are the same. Friends with certain qualities like physical strength and peer acknowledgement can guard children from being victimized. Likewise, being friends with a victimized child, increase their own chances of victimization and have personal and interpersonal factors that run a risk of victimization. Antipathetic relationships are more common among victimized children (Card, 2007). Methods commonly used in research settings for the assessment of peer victimization are observational, self, teacher, and peer reports (Crothers, & Levinson, 2004).

Prevalence of Peer Victimization

Peer victimization and bullying is a common problem prevalent worldwide with country wide occurrence ranging from 10% to 15% (Analitis, 2009; Wolke, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests that bullying and peer victimization remain moderately constant over a period of time (Sapouna et al., 2011). Similarly, victimization was found to be relatively stable from primary to secondary school age group children (Schafer, Koom, Brodbeck, Wolke & Schulz, 2005). Besides, victimization is not an arbitrary term and instead can be a personality trait or gained from life experiences (Ball, 2008).

Shaikh (2013) reported 41.3% peer victimization among students, with males being victimized more than females (45.1 versus 35.5%). Shujja, Atta, and Shujjat (2014), gave a prevalence rate of 19.6-24.1% in middle school students from different schools of Lahore and Sargodha and 20.9-21.8% in children belonging to lower socio-economic status, while among children belonging to average socio-economic status, victimization rates of 22.7-23.6% were reported. Discerning the prevalence between private and government school students victimization spanned from 20.4-23.85% in private and 19.1-24.9% in government school. Victimization was less common in private institutions as when compared with government schools. Khawar, Malik, and Batool (2015) reported 19% victims and 17% bullies in Pakistani schools. Similarly, Tariq and Tayyab (2011) reported 77.14% peer victimized adolescents as compared to

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57.14% peer victimized adults. Country wise statistics were provided by Perry & Kusel (1998) and Ziegler and Rosenstein (1991), for United States and Canada as 10% and 8% respectively.

Furthermore, other researches gave the reason of source and maintenance of peer victimization and bullying overtime by the interaction between inter and intra-individual variables being responsible (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001). Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd (1998) proposed children's relationships with peers are directly or indirectly affected by parents. Stroufe (2010) believes parents can create internal working model of relationship in children while peers can disrupt intra-family relationships (Ingoldsby, 2001).

Theoretical Perspective

There are different theories as to what makes an individual prone to peer victimization. Theories ranging from cognitive, biological, ecological, behavioral, and interpersonal domains have been used to explain the phenomenon among adolescents.

The Victim Schema Model. As shown in Figure 1, The Victim Schema Model integrates elements of Relational Schema Theory (Baldwin, 1992), Social Information Processing Model (Crick and Dodge, 1994) and the initial formation of the victim schema (Perry, Hodge, & Egan, 2001). This model proposes distinct mechanisms by which accessibility of the victim schema interacts with children's socio-cognitive and emotional processing and put them at risk for victimization. This schema varies with individual personality and is affected by social experiences and biological influences and thus increase the chances of an individual to be victimized. The core components of the victim schema model are discussed briefly below.

Implicit self-association with victimization. Baldwin (1992) defined relational schema as "a cognitive structure that represents regularities in patterns of interpersonal relatedness". Schemas include knowledge, perception, and expectation of self and others in the interaction. This model proposes that the more frequently individuals experience a certain role within a social interaction, the more likely that they will incorporate that role into their social schemas, such that they identify themselves as victims and their peers as aggressors.

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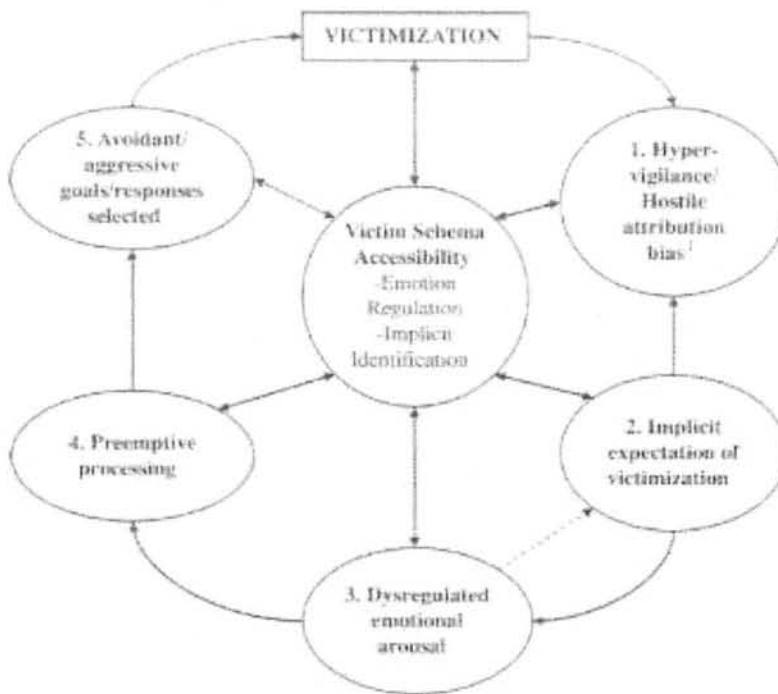
Figure 1. The Victim Schema Model by P. Rosen, R. Milich, & M. Harris, 2009. p.83.

Emotion regulation. Research indicates that children who exhibit high rates of negative emotionality experience numerous indicators of social dysfunction, peer rejection (Bierman, 2004), and victimization by peers (Hanish et al., 2004), have fewer friends (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004). But children who regulate their emotional and behavioral response to stressful situations may mediate the relationship between peer problems and negative emotionality (Murray and Kuschanska, 2002). The victim schema proposes that the difficulty regulating negative emotional responses puts children at risk for victimization (Rosen, 2007). Children who have difficulty regulating emotions are thus likely to experience an intense negative arousal in association with the expectation of victimization, making it difficult for them to control their emotional distress, efficiently process social information, set goals or enact response strategy to effectively navigate the conflict.

Hyper vigilance/ hostile attribution bias. The victim schema model implements the perspective of both the relational schema model and the social information processing model such that individuals interpret and assign intent to the behaviors of others based on previously encountered experiences (Crick & Dodge,

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1994). Children who experience more aggression as aggressors or victims are more likely to attribute hostile intent to the behavior of others, by becoming suspicious and developing an expectation that their peers will be hostile and so become more vigilant to threatening cues (Schwartz et al., 1998).

Emotional distress and preemptive processing. Children with easily accessible victim schemas experience intense and debilitating negative emotional distress in the presence of a social threat (Rosen et al., 2007). Children who experience strong negative emotional arousal are unable to accurately attend to and process external cues and instead rely on automatic preemptive processing of information (Lemerise & Arsenio,2000). Thus, chronically victimized children are more likely to use emotionally driven, ineffective response strategies when confronted by peers, instead of appropriate conflict resolution strategies (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004).

Goal selection and response generation. Goal selection for social interaction is said to be heavily influenced by emotional state. Children who are chronically victimized by peers engage in either high rates of submissive (i.e., submission, avoidance) or reactively aggressive behaviors (i.e., anger) in response to threat and that children who frequently employ these responses to threat are likely to be victimized (Schwartz et al., 1998). Both aggressive and submissive responses to threat are consistent with victim schema's formulation of high emotional arousal that leads to the application of victim schema, to generating goals and responses to perceived threat and have been shown in association to increase in victimization (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004).

Dominance Theory. Sidanius and Pratto (1999) in their Dominance Theory suggest about in-group relations, where preservation and strength of group-based social hierarchies' is the primal focus. From the beginning of pubescence, adolescents try to establish their identities with size and growth playing an integral part to develop behaviors which victimize others through the school years. So, children feel like dominating others for gaining social status and for rank attainment.

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Social Information Processing Model. This model argues that changes in processed social information occurred with index of learned information in circumstances. The information processing takes place through programming, understanding of cues, setting of social objectives, response generation, and representation. The understanding of situation and presentation of adaptive or maladaptive response towards social challenges is determined by structured database build through past experiences of the individual. The relations a child may develop with past experience of victimization leads the child to respond with biased socio-cognitive information during social encounters (Hanish & Guerra, 2002).

Social Self-Discrepancy Theory. The Self-Discrepancy Theory was developed by Higgins and colleagues (1987). They gave the essential framework to understand social needs which play a role of mediator of the effects of peer relationship problems on school adjustment issues (Strauman & Higgins, 1987). Self-Discrepancy Theory gives differentiation between two domains of self, the actual self and the ideal self. The actual self presents characteristics that are actually possessed. Whereas, ideal self is the presentation of attributes that has the capacity to be possessed in an ideal world.

These two domains are related to explain the inconsistency of interest. Moreover, the Self-Discrepancy Theory describes the two points of self, the representation of the person's own point of view and the representation of significant point of view of another one.

A number of studies conducted with adults have found a strong association between the actual and the ideal self with dejection-related emotions like feeling sad, discouraged, or disappointed (Higgins, !986; Strauman & Higgins, 1987). Thus, a discrepancy between one's ideal social self and one's actual social self would be expected to be related with dejection-related affect. Children's subjective experiences or different types of desired peer relations have been examined in several studies. For instance, loneliness was associated with lack of friendships, low peer acceptance, and poor quality of friendships (Parker & Asher, 1993). This theory then proposes that loneliness could be predicted from the discrepancy in ideal and actual social self.

Rank Theory of Depression. Hawker and Boulton (2001) explain the connection between different types of peer victimization and school adjustment as described by the Rank Theory of Depression. This theory explains that internalizing problems like depression being associated with the sense of hopelessness and of disconnectedness and lack of belonging. The two forms of victimization effect students.

Victims of Physical abuse report low power control and lack of potential in-groups of peers. On the other hand, relational victimization plays a greater role than physical victimization because one's feelings of not belonging cause more depression than not having power or potential in peer groups. Therefore, depression has a strong correlation with relational victimization (Hawker & Boulton, 2001).

Attribution Theory. Humans are propelled to assign causes to their actions and behaviors. Attribution is the process by which people explain the cause of their behavior and events. Keeping in mind the mental maladjustment, two forms of attribution styles are explored in context of victimization; the hostile attribution bias in which external factors like peers are blamed and in the depressogenic attribution style where a person blames oneself.

High hostile attribution is positively linked with peer victimization (Pornari & Wood, 2010), specifically in a situation of peer incitement (Keil & Price, 2009). Hoglund and Leadbeater (2007) in a cross-sectional study, found that hostile attribution plays the role of mediator between victimization and aggressive behavior. In another cross-sectional research, there was a mediating role of hostile attribution between relational aggression and victimization (Yeung & Leadbeater, 2007). Researchers have mostly studied the mediational role of hostile attributions, but it is also possible that hostile attributions moderate (i.e., exacerbate) certain associations. A study showed that hostile attributions were only associated with relational aggression if higher levels of relational victimization and emotional sensitivity was reported by girls (Mathieson, 2011).

Demoralization

The notion of demoralization encompasses the tendency 'to deprive a person of spirit, courage or discipline and to reduce to a state of weakness or disorder' (Delbridge, Bernard, Blair, Peters, & Butler, 1991). Demoralization is experienced as a consistent inability to cope with a stressful situation together with feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, meaninglessness, ineptitude and diminished self-esteem (Sahoo, 2009) whereas in psychiatric literature, demoralization is viewed as a self-perceived incapacity to deal effectively with stressful situation that is portraying it in terms of incompetence.

Demoralized people see themselves as a burden to others, often losing the will to continue living, refusing to cooperate, and expressing their desire to seek help or treatment. Peer victimization and bullying has adverse effects on adolescents' mental and emotional health causing increased anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and suicide in some cases, thus there is a likelihood of association to demoralization (Baldry, 2004; Roland, 2002).

Responding to stressful situations with depression or dysphoric states is common in everyday life. Demoralization, a phenomenon explained as a nonspecific distress or marked anxiety (Frank, 1974) that is induced when confronted with a severe threat to which the person does not know how to respond. Further cultivating the thoughts of helplessness, which if not addressed appropriately induce hopelessness and the inability to cope. Similarly, failure in meeting others expectations lead to feelings of rejection, and diminished self-esteem. This, when coupled with social isolation, produce a sense of alienation, distress, and severe demoralization. People with depression, psychosis, or personality disorder are more prone to suffering from demoralization. Adolescents frequently associate it with a wish to die. A strong link exists between demoralization (in terms of depression and hopelessness) and suicide among adolescents (Dori & Overholser 1999). Demoralization with its characteristics of hopelessness and giving up, lessens a person's coping capacity initiating a vicious cycle whereby the sufferer is helpless to come out of this predicament.

With reference to gender differences it has been concluded that boys were more likely to be victimized both verbally and physically and experienced higher levels of hopelessness than girls (Siyahhan, Aricak, & Acar, 2012). Bullying and victimization simultaneously has a considerable effect on hopelessness. This supports the previous findings that bully-victims are probably more prone to develop psychological problems such as depression and suicidal thoughts (Ivarsson, Broberg, Arvidsson, & Gillberg, 2005; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007).

Bullying and victimization together drastically affect the level of hopelessness. Similarly, previous studies suggest high levels of depression and suicidal ideation in both bullies and victims (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; West & Salmon, 2000). Other authors have all reached the unified finding that bully-victims are susceptible for developing psychological problems like depression and suicidal thoughts (Ivarsson, Broberg, Arvidsson, & Gillberg, 2005; Klomek., Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). Likewise, Daniel and Goldston (2012) support the assertion that hopelessness is significantly related to depression and suicide.

Demoralization and Its Correlates

In line with the present research focus, some of the correlates of peer victimization, as indicated by past literature are discussed below.

Demoralization and hopelessness. Hopelessness or negative expectations toward the future emerged out of clinical psychology depression literature (Hattie, & Alexander, 2009). Hopelessness is a cognitive aspect of depression. It is linked to an individual's perception of lacking control over the outcomes of future events and it plays an important part in predicting depression (Marshall & Lang, 1990; McLaughlin, Miller, & Warwick, 1996). Hopelessness has been described as a negative affective state (Snyder, Wrobleski, Parenteau, & Berg, 2004). Although there is a lack of research, which pinpoints the exact causes of hopelessness, it has been proposed that children who succumb to the challenging or threatening circumstances, experience hopelessness (Bolland, 2003). Further it was also suggested that hopelessness is a developmental construct since it was negatively related to age

(Bolland, 2005). These 'threatening circumstances' faced by children might include elements of violence and poverty (Bolland, 2003; 2005).

In relation to hopelessness, peer victimization and bullying both have marked effects on adolescents, including elevated anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem and suicide (Baldry, 2004; Roland, 2002). Similarly, another study linked hopelessness with depression and suicidal behavior (Beck, Kovacks, & Weissman, 1975). Hopeless individuals feel lack of control over outcomes of future events, further increasing the depressed state of mind (Marshal & Lang, 1990; Mclaughlin, Miller, & Warwick, 1996). Likewise, depressive thoughts and suicidal tendencies have been found to increase number of peer victimized and bullied adolescents (West & Salmon, 2000). Hopelessness is positively related to depression and negatively related to self-esteem and social behavior (Kazdin, Rodgers, & Colbus, 1986). It is related to an increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior (Daniel & Goldston, 2012) and tends to mediate the relation between suicidal ideation and depression' (Beck, Brown, & Steer, 1989).

Hopelessness and academic achievement.   Past research argued that hopelessness impairs thinking. Individuals experiencing hopelessness have difficulty incorporating their plans and understanding alternative methods of resolving issues (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995). Concerning bullying and those factors that undermine peer and school support Siyahhan, Aricak, and Cayirdag-Acar (2012) found higher levels of hopelessness among students who were bullied than those who were not bullied, and also higher levels of hopelessness was reported for students who did not talk about their victimization to teachers and parents.

With regard to academic outcomes, Au, Watkins, Hattie, and Alexander (2009) emphasized the importance of the effect of hopelessness in academic settings and developed a model of hopelessness in relation to learning and achievement. Students who experience high levels of hopelessness during testing situations put forth little academic effort, which then negatively affects their academic performance. Additionally, hopelessness mediates the relationship between student's stress reduction strategies, self-encouragement, and their academic achievement (Buric & Soric, 2012).

Demoralization and depression. De Figueiredo (1993) differentiated depression from demoralization. The main features of depression were found to be anhedonia in which one is unable to experience pleasure, there is a lack of motivation even though when the proper direction of action is known. On the contrary demoralized person has feelings of subjective incompetence and helplessness and feels inhibited by not knowing what course of action to take. A demoralized person expresses anxiety and depression. As there is no coping ability in a demoralized person, such a person feels trapped, confused, and becomes helpless.

Demoralization and coping. Lazarus and Folkman's Model of Stress and Coping describe two key concepts which are appraisal and coping. Appraisal involves how a person sees a given situation, it is affected by person's beliefs, values and commitments as well as general sense of optimism, pessimism, and self-efficacy. Coping demonstrates how a person regulate distress and is commonly considered in two categories, that is, problem-focused (information seeking, problem solving, and direct action) and emotion focused (looking for escape and seeking social support rather than cognitive reframing). When these mechanisms are not coherent and sufficient, distress and helplessness is likely to follow.

Theoretical Background

Abramson, Matalsky and Alloy (1989) developed a Hopelessness Theory of Depression and proposed that those who explain negative experiences in stable terms develop hopelessness.

Theory of Hopelessness. According to the Theory of Hopelessness, the person's negative regard to the event, the future, and the self, determines his level of hopelessness (Beck & Beamesderfer, 1974). Hopeless individuals make three kinds of inferences in the face of adverse event. Firstly, they ascribe the cause of a negative event to stable (constant) and global causes. Secondly, they believe that outcomes are fixed and have immense impacts. Thirdly, they view themselves as worthless or on a low standing (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). Abela and Sarin (2002) found that they are relatively independent for younger children but are interrelated in adolescence.

As per the Hopelessness Theory of Depression (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989), some people have a cognitive vulnerability such that when they interact with stressful circumstances their likelihood of depression increases. Hopelessness theory expounds cognitive vulnerability as an individual's tendency to make particular inferences about the causes, consequences, and self-worth implications of stressful events. In such stressful circumstances people with cognitive vulnerability, attribute such events as stable and global, they believe the negative event will lead to other negative consequences, and they interpret the event as implying the individual him/herself is unworthy. Individuals who precipitate negative inferences are hypothesized to be at risk for hopelessness, which is seen as a sufficient cause for depression. Cognitive Vulnerability-Stress Hypothesis has been most thoroughly tested and consistently supported element of the Theory of Hopelessness (Liu, Kleiman, Nestor, & Cheek, 2015).

Theory of Learned Helplessness.   This theory suggests that when people attribute the causes of events to factors that are unmanageable or controlled by powerful others, they consequently develop chronic self-handicapping behaviors in the face of an unfamiliar situation. The anticipation of failure, results in adaptation of negative self-image. Thus, people who expect negative events or are pessimistic are more inclined to have low self-esteem and feel helpless. As a result, they are more vulnerable to depression than those who do not have negative prospects Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale (as cited in Khan, 2011).

Summarizing the two theories above, Engel (1968) described attribution of individuals who give up as being hopeless and helpless. According to this explanation, being helpless is attributed to lack of help from other people while being hopeless is attributed to failure of the self.

Cognitive Vulnerability-Stress Framework Model.   Together, the theories of hopelessness and helplessness form the basis of Cognitive Vulnerability-Stress Framework Model, according to which, both hopelessness and helplessness moderate the association between the negative life circumstances and the development of depression (Hankin & Abramson, 2001), individuals with cognitive vulnerability are more liable to be depressed when faced with negative events than those who are not.

Academic Achievement

When a child shows good performance in studies it is defined as academic achievement. Ashraf (2004) suggests this is only possible when a particular child adjusts well into his environment. Further it is explained that achieving educational tasks and their related activities may be comprehended differently by different individuals and measurement of their understanding can be sought by administering different academic tests and examinations. When students perform satisfactorily well in these school administered examinations the term academic achievement is utilized. While Bukhari (2010) linked academic achievement to the marks obtained in final examinations of that particular school year. Similarly, Shafiq (2002) define the marks obtained in a particular subject to the mastery of that subject while Darling, Dornbush, Lamborn, and Steinberg (1992), defined it as mastery achieved of a particular subject in a given time after studying it for a particular length of time. Citing an example of academic achievement is that only after satisfactory performance in these scheduled examinations, can a pupil progress onto the next grade.

A number of studies have proved the impacts of peer victimization which not only impede a child's psychological functioning (Espelage, 2012; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; Espelage, & Holt, 2007; Espelage, Low, & De La Rue, 2012) but also adversely effects his/her academic performance in particular and adjustment to school environment in general (Ladd, Herald-Brown, & Reiser, 2008). Peer victimization and poor academic performance have a correlational association. The devastating effects of chronic victimization not only limit a child's participation in class activities but also have a negative impact on their performance (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011).

Even temporary victimization can seriously impair students' academic performance and achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Emotional wellbeing and secure relatedness have been found to be necessary prerequisites for academic engagement (Schwartz, Farver, Chang, & Lee-Shin, 2002). Another study found a strong relationship between peer victimization and poor academic performance (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, & Toblin, 2005). These findings have been substantiated by a

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series of longitudinal findings which adds peer rejection as another correlational factor to the existing two factors (Cohen, 2006).

Approaches and efforts directed towards improving student-teacher relationships in schools is a necessary step to prevent peer victimization as it is at the school level that children are more prone to its negative impacts (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). These negative impacts include low academic performance coupled with depression, low self-esteem, and social anxiety (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000). Similarly, loneliness, depression, and low self-worth are symptoms of self-perceived peer harassment which in turn is predictive of students' score averages and attendance.

School Connectedness and Academic Achievement. School connectedness is defined as 'the extent to which a pupil feels attachment or perceives him/herself belonging to a school' (Waters & Cross, 2010). Terms like school engagement, bonding or association have been used (Libbey, 2004). In the past school connectedness has been based on five components such as classroom behavior, performance, participation in extra-curricular activities, social interactions, and school community. Past literature has consistently shown that school connectedness predicts high academic performance and good conduct. Similarly, Klem and Connell (2004), stated that students with high school connectedness had low probability to drop out of school, be absent or engage in disruptive behaviors. The term has also been used to describe an adolescent's awareness of protection, belongingness, esteem, and affection to school (Resnick et al., 1997). Moreover, research has concluded that school connectedness reduced negative outcomes like aggression and hostile behavior (Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Heinrich, 2006).

School Climate and Academic Achievement. School climate is multidimensional topic that combines interpersonal, organizational, and instructional dimension (Kupermine, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 2001). The physical and psychological aspects of school as perceived by teachers, students, and parents etc. is called school climate and its influence on the development of youth i.e., mental health outcomes (Loukas & Robinson, 2004). Positive school climate leads to better academic accomplishment of adolescents (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009) decreased behavioral problems, wellbeing and positive health outcomes (Wang, Selman,

Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010). Furthermore, positive school climate and teachers support decrease depression and depressive symptom among adolescents (LaRusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008).

The aforementioned studies have shown school disliking to be related to peer victimization (Boulton, Chau, Whitehand, Amataya, & Murray 2009). Buhs, Ladd, and Herald (2006) have described ignorance of school, low attendance, and less participation in classroom activities to be related to peer victimization. Similarly, Graham (1998) indicated about peer victimized students tend to score lower on school attachment and feelings of belonging as compared to those who are involved in bullying or who have been bullied by others. Goldstein, Young, and Boyd (2008) also have found that students who report high level of indirect or relational peer victimization think of their school as less safe and are not satisfied by the climate and surroundings of school. Therefore, there is a greater likelihood of victimized students to display adverse academic performance at school since then it has been said that ties with school and school environment serve to have an impact on pupils academic performance.

Academic Achievement and Hope. Alexander and Onwuegbuzie (2007) found hope serves as a coping strategy for academic anxiety. Students with high levels of hope are unlikely to procrastinate on academic habits or practices because they are capable of coping with school-related-anxiety and overcoming a fear of failure at school (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Moreover, hope predicts overall GPA and the probability of graduation (Snyder et al., 2002). Thus, hopeful students are capable of setting effective goals, establish multiple ways to attain those goals (Lopez, Rose, Robinson, Marques, & Pais-Rebeiro, 2009). Furthermore, students with high levels of hope are enabled to take control of their own learning and to thrive academically. Likewise, hopeful thinking predicts academic achievement, as measured by GPA and grades (Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010).

Crosnoe, Glen, and Johnson, (2004) stated that admission points, social economic status, and school background can affect academic performance. Moreover, Baldwin (1992) points out to the fact that social acceptance for academics can also affect academic achievement. Also, students tend to excel and perform academically well when they are socially well accepted in contrast to those who are socially

neglected or rejected. About academically underachieving students it has been suggested that most of the times these students are those who have not be given enough social acceptance at any particular times in their lives (Qureshi, 2007).

Theoretical Background

Excelling in academia and the associated factors have been described by the following theoretical notions.

Theory of Educational Productivity.   Walberg (as cited by Bruinsma & Jansen, 2007) provided Theory of Educational Productivity. It is one of the few empirically tested theories of educational outcomes. The theoretical model consists of characteristics of the learner, the learning environment, and the quality of instruction received by the learner. The theory postulates that an individual's psychological characteristics (cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal) and his immediate psychological environment influence educational outcomes (Reynolds & Walberg, 1992). Moreover, Walberg's research study identified nine factors or variables that influence educational output such as student's age/developmental level, ability/prior achievement, motivation, the quantity and quality of instruction, home and classroom environment, peer group and the level of exposure to mass media (Walberg, Fraser, & Welch, 1986). A study Wang, Haertel, and Welberg's (1993) indicated that student characteristics exhibit the most significant and direct influence on achievement. However, Fullarton (2002) showed that psychosocial characteristics of classroom learning environments predicted student achievement.

Social Emotional Theory of Learning.   According to Elias et al. (1997) Social Emotional Theory of learning suggests that students feeling emotionally and socially secure do better in schools, have lesser negative behaviors and are friendlier.

Attribution Theory.   According to this theory students level of achievement is influenced by the attributions they make about their chances of success or failures (Weiner 1985). It was further proposed that failure and success motivated students (Weiner & Kulka, 1970). Individuals high in achievement motivation attribute their performance to internal factors. They attribute their success to the substantial ability

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and effort they put into work and their failures to lack of ability and effort. Whereas, low achievers attribute success to external factors such as luck or ease of task.

Relationship among Study Variables

Many students in school are affected by peer victimization which acts as a prominent stressor for them. These students are not socially connected and experience repeated aggression directed towards them. Similarly, another research found that peer victimization and academic achievement are seen in several longitudinal and cross-sectional studies to be negatively associated with each other (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010).

Academic performance and achievement have also been studied in connection to peer acceptance, peer rejection, peer victimization, and harassment. According to Woods and Wolks (2004) role of relational victimization to children's academic performance has only now been scrutinized. Similarly, Crick, Casas, and Nelson (2002) found relational victimization to be strongly correlated to adjustment problems like negative peer relations, internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The association between peer reported victimization and academic competence has also revealed to be buffered or minimized among students who had friends with high prosocial behavior, low social anxiety, and low peer victimization (Tu, 2009). Looking for the association between peer victimization with academic performance mediating role has been identified for psychological adjustment (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2008), disruptive behaviors, school adjustment, school connection, and friendship circle of the victim (Schwartz, Gorman, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 2008).

Research findings provide strong clues of the association between middle school students' experiences of victimization and academic performance (Glew et al., 2008; Juvonen et al., 2011; Schwartz et al., 2005). Moreover, research points out that early adolescent have to simultaneously face the pubertal changes and new environment in schools (Malaspina & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008) that may serve to increase the risk of victimization among them. Similarly, Eisenberg, Sadovsky, and Spinrad (2005) suggests dealing with such problems as soon as possible to avoid conflict with student's other researchers concur that children's difficulties with peer relations needs to be dealt with as early as possible.

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Demoralization is the inability to cope with a stressful situation, resulting in feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and low self-esteem (Sahoo, 2009). It is the experience of non-specific distress or anxiety (Frank, 1974). Peer victimization and bullying are stressful situations faced by many students, who usually don't know how to respond to the situation. This induces a state of helplessness which if not addressed induces hopelessness. These demoralized individuals perceive themselves as failures, feel socially isolated, rejected, distressed, depressed and wish to die (Dori & Overholser 1999).

Peer victimization and bullying adversely effects adolescents' mental and emotional health. Thus bully-victims are more prone to develop psychological problems (Sharp, Thompson, & Arora, 2000) like increased anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and suicide (Baldry, 2004; Kim & Leventhal, 2008; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Roland, 2002). Children with poor physical health are more prone to victimization and get manifested in school disengagement and associated factors like truancy and poor grades etc. (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Knack, Jensen-Campbell, & Baum, 2011). Hawker and Boulton (2000) linked peer victimization with various internalizing problems (Young, West, & Der, 2006) and externalizing problems (Espelage & Swearer, 2011). Likewise, anxiety and depression have been observed among victims together with more psychotic problems and symptoms (Bebbington et al., 2004).

Rationale of Study

Peer victimization is a considerable problem for a large number of children in schools keeping in view the prevalence described (Analitis, 2009; Wolke, 2001). Adolescence being a transitional phase of life marked with energy and strength puts psychologically disadvantaged individuals at risk. The transition period may pose psychological challenges for students and negatively affect their academic performance (Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, & Smith, 2000). Research, up to the present time, indicates that peer victimization can seriously compromise a child's psychosocial functioning (Espelage, 2012; Espelage & Holt, 2007), school adjustment, and in particular academic performance (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Research findings mentioned earlier suggest that those children and early adolescents who experience peer victimization at school have major implications for academic

achievement (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010; Siyahhan Aricak, & Acar, 2012). Thus, it is of great importance to explore what factors in combination with victimization serve to impair performance in academic arena.

With special reference to Pakistani context, it has been seen that the overall prevalence rate is 41.3%, where males reported higher peer victimization as compared to females (Shaikh, 2013). Studies in the local context also showed that 77.14% adolescents were peer victimized as compared 57.14% adults, showing that adolescents are more to victimization in Pakistan in comparison to adults (Tariq & Tayyab, 2011). Keeping in focus the contributing factors to victimization, the present research analyzes the association between peer victimization and academic achievement by looking for mediating role of demoralization in this relationship. Although a lot of researches have been conducted on peer victimization and academic achievement resulting in a negative association between the two variables (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010), focusing demoralization as a connecting link between the two, provides the study a different focus. Demoralization with its elements of hopelessness, helplessness, meaninglessness and incompetence has been studied in relation to the two variables.

It is known that adolescence is a critical phase associated with significant shifts in one's biological, psychological, and social roles (Holmbeck et al., 1994). During early social exchange of adolescence, pattern of peer victimization with its consequences become quite apparent and difficult to ignore. Majority of adolescents are provoked with mental and societal issues concerning their peer connection, as the lack of secure connection can evoke challenges in monitoring feelings and recognizing emotions and feelings with others, creating problems like feeling helplessness to sever mental distress (Ouellette & DiPlacido, 2001).

METHOD

Method

Research Design

The present research seeks to study the association between Peer Victimization, and Academic Achievement considering the role of Demoralization among adolescents. Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Joseph & Mynard, 2002), Demoralization Scale–II (Kissane, 2016) and academic record of previous one year were used to measure peer victimization, demoralization, and academic achievement respectively. The present study comprised of two phases. The first phase comprised tryout phase. The purpose of the tryout phase was to assess the cultural appropriateness, ease of comprehension, and level item difficulty for adolescents (age range 14 to 19 years). The pilot study was carried out on a small sample of 10 students. The second phase comprised of main study for achieving study objectives and testing the proposed hypotheses through empirical testing.

Objectives

Following are the objectives of current study.

1. To investigate relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement among adolescents.
2. To explore mediating role of demoralization in the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement among adolescents.
3. To investigate the role of different demographic variables including gender, age, education, family system, and parental education for study variables among adolescents.

Hypotheses

In order to fulfill study objectives following hypothesis were proposed.

1. Peer victimization will be positively related with demoralization.
2. Peer victimization and demoralization will be negatively related with academic achievement.

3. Demoralization will mediate in the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement.

4. Students of middle school years will report higher peer victimization as compared to students of secondary school years.

5. Male students will report higher peer victimization as compared to female students.

Operational Definitions

Operational definitions of study variables have been provided below along with conceptual definitions.

Peer Victimization. Peer victimization generally considered harassment or bullying as physical, verbal, or mental abuse of victims by assailant who mean to cause them harm carried out repetitively and over time. This occurs in an interpersonal relationship where power imbalance exists. There are two types of peer victimization that are explained below.

Physical victimization. It is overt or direct form of victimization in which victim is hurt physically (Crick, 2011).

Verbal victimization. It is covert or indirect form of victimization in which victim is hurt through verbal medium (gossiping, rumor spreading, foul language, name calling, etc. (Crick, 2011).

Social manipulation. It is an indirect from of victimization, in which a person's social environment (social standing or status, turning people away) is manipulated with the intention of causing hurt or harm to that person (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996).

Attacks on property. It is an overt form of victimization in which a victims' belongings are snatched, stolen, or broken without permission (Cole, Maxwell, Dukewich, & Yosick, 2010).

In this study Peer Victimization is operationalized through scores obtained on a scale called Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS). Similarly, various forms of victimization are operationalized through the subscales Physical

Victimization (PV), Attacks on Property (AP), Verbal Victimization (VV) and, Social Manipulation (SM; Mynard & Joseph, 2000)

Demoralization.   Demoralization is a non-adaptive coping response that presents with hopelessness, helplessness, and loss of meaning and purpose (Kissane, 2016).

In this study Demoralization is operationalized through scores obtained on Demoralization Scale-II with subscales measuring Purpose and Meaning (PM) and, Distress and Coping Ability (DA; Kissane, 2016).

Academic Achievement.   A behavior that is task-focused and allows the individual's performance to be evaluated depending on some internally externally imposed criterion that individual is in competition with others, or that otherwise involves some standard of excellence (Spencer, 1983).

In this study academic achievement was operationalized through academic percentages of one previous year of study participants.

Instruments

Following instruments were utilized in the study. A brief description is given below.

Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS). Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale was developed by Mynard and Joseph (2000). It is a 16-item scale, with four subscales namely, Physical Victimization (item no. 6, 7, 8, and 9), Verbal Victimization (item no. 1, 4, 5, and 16), Attacks on Property (item no. 3, 10, 12, and 15), and Social Manipulation Scale (item no. 2, 11, 13, and 14). Responses are given using a 3-point response scale, 0 for (not at all), 1 for (once) and 2 for (more than once; see Appendix D1). Scores on the total scale have a possible range of 0 to 32 and a possible range of 0 to 8 on each of the four subscales. Scores are computed by adding up the total of all responses, with higher scores indicating higher victimization. Chronbach alpha reliability of the measure was .84 (Mynard & Joseph, 2000).

Demoralization.   The recently refined Demoralization Scale-II (Kissane, 2016) has 16-items, self-administered measure of demoralization and uses a 3-point

response scale, with 0 for (never), 1 for (sometimes) and 2 for (often). It has two subscales; Meaning and Purpose (item no. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 13, and 14) and Distress and Coping Ability (item no. 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 16; see Appendix D2). Scores on the total scale have a possible range of 0 to 32 and in the possible range of 0 to 16 on each of the two subscales. Scores obtained on all of scales and subscales are summed to get the total score on each, the higher the score higher is the demoralization or respective dimension. Chronbach alpha reliability of the measure was .89 (Kissane, 2016).

Stage 1: Try Out Phase

This stage is a trial run, done in preparation for the main study, usually conducted to warn in advance if the instruments to be used are inappropriate or are too complicated. The present try out phase also aimed to test the adequacy of research instruments.

Objective. Tryout phase was designed to determine the extent of comprehension of the items of Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale and Demoralization Scale.

Sample. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The sample comprised of 10 students (5 girls and 5 boys). The sample age spanned between 14 to 19 years. Data was collected from Aim High School and The Educators in Islamabad. Then for expert opinion, experts of field were contacted. The team of experts comprised of two professionals (PhD faculty members) and four PhD scholars. Experts were chosen from the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

Procedure. The try-out phase of study comprised of different steps. At first, to follow research ethics, it was essential to attain the consent from the authors of the instruments; the Multidimensional Peer Victimization and Demoralization Scale. For this purpose, respective authors of both the scales were contacted through email. Both the authors provided permission to use their scales (see Appendix E1 and E2). Then to get the sample opinion, five boys and five girls were approached in their schools after getting permission from respective school authorities. They were briefly instructed

about the aim of the study and their agreement to participate was obtained. The participants were guaranteed that the garnered information will be kept undisclosed and will be used for research purpose only. The students were stated verbal/written instructions to give their views on ease of comprehension and level of difficulty. This was done by providing the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale and Demoralization Scale-II with response categories designed to measure the level of difficulty sentences (see Appendix B1 and B2). Also, participants were instructed to pinpoint the words or phrases that were difficult to understand for them. Participants' ambiguities about providing the responses were answered on the spot.

Keeping in mind the age group of the sample, it was essential to review and modify some of the items. For this purpose, expert opinion was required. The experts were individually approached in their place of employment or the educational institute (of PhD Scholars). They rated each item separately on the cultural appropriateness and comprehension of each item of Demoralization Scale and Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale. The words, phrases, or sentences selected as difficult to understand were either rephrased or were provided with the easier synonyms in parenthesis. The rephrased draft was then presented to the experts. They selected the best alternate words or sentences that in their opinion were the easiest to be understood by the said age group. In agreement with their suggestions the original items, words, or sentences were retained along with rephrased words, phrases, or sentences (see Appendix C1 and C2). The words, phrases, and sentences chosen as appropriate to understand were then made part of the scales measuring the variables. Therefore, a linguistically and culturally suitable version of scale was generated from this phase. This version of the scales was then used in the main study

Study II: Main Study

To achieve study objectives, the main study intended to explore the mediating role of demoralization in the relationship amid peer victimization and academic achievement among adolescents.

Sample. Convenience sampling was used to access the sample. The sample was taken from two private schools including Aim High School and The Educators. It comprised of 335 school boys ($n = 147$) and girls ($n = 188$). The age range of the

sample was 14 to 19 years ($M = 15.95$; $SD = 1.75$) and education level ranged from 7 grade to12 grade. The present study examined the role of several demographics of age, gender, education, family system, and parental education. A total of 339 questionnaires were distributed among participants, out of which 4 were discarded due to incomplete information provided. Further details of the sample are given below in Table 1.

Demographic sheet. A short demographic sheet was used in this study. It inquired information about age (14-19 years), gender (male/female), family system (nuclear or joint), school system (segregated or coeducation), parent's education, and academic percentages of previous one year (see Appendix A2).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics and Sample Characteristics (N = 335)

Demographics	*f*	*(%)*
Gender		
Male	147	43.9
Female	188	56.1
Age		
14-15	149	44.5
16-17	99	29.6
18-19	87	26.0
School		
Segregated	98	29.3
Coeducation	237	70.7
Grade		
7-8	134	40.0
9-10	75	22.4
11-12	126	37.6
Father's Education		
0	46	13.7
1-5	12	3.6

Continued...

6-10	74	22.1
11-12	51	15.2
13-14	78	23.3
15-18	74	22.1
Mother's Education		
0	104	31.0
1-5	48	14.3
6-10	77	23.0
11-12	26	7.8
13-14	29	8.7
15-18	51	15.2
AA One Year		
40% below	5	2.1
41%-45%	14	3.6
46%-50%	27	8.1
51%-55%	26	7.8
56%-60%	34	10.2
61%-65%	11	3.3
66%-70%	41	11.7
71%-75%	37	11.1
76%-80%	45	13.5
81%-85%	26	6.9
86% above	56	16.8

Table 1 shows details about demographic variables. It is evident that the high frequency of age group is for 14-15 years and the lowest is for 18-19 years. More participants belonged to co-education schools (70.7%). Students belonging to nuclear family system have the higher frequency. Highest frequency of individuals is from 7th -8th grade and the lowest frequency is from 9th-10th grade. In father's education, the highest frequency is for 13-14 years of education while the lowest is for 1-5th grade of education. In mother's education, the lowest frequency is for 11 to 12 years of education and, illiteracy had highest frequency. The highest frequency academic

percentages of previous one year were of above 86% and the lowest frequency was of below 40%. For academic percentages 13 values were missing.

Procedure. After the consent from the official authorities of the institutes, individuals were approached in their regular academic settings. Informed consent was attained from each participant only after the purpose of the study was briefly explained. An informed consent form was provided to study participants for this purpose. In which they were conveyed the topic of the research, their selection criteria, average time duration required for participation, and purpose of the study was explained in easy language. They were clarified their right to quit or refuse participation. Instructions were given to read the questionnaires carefully and provide answers genuinely without leaving any question unanswered. Furthermore, they were assured the confidentiality of the information they provided and that it will be used for research purpose only (see Appendix A1). Assistance was available to the participants in case of they had any queries about the procedure. All of the participants were handed over a booklet about demographics, Multidimensional Peer Victimization Sale and Demoralization Scale and were instructed to provide their previous one year of academic achievement (percentages). The participants and administrative authorities were payed gratitude for their willingness to cooperate.

RESULTS

Results

The present research aimed to examine the relationship between peer victimization, academic achievement, and the role of demoralization among adolescents. The SPSS-21 software was used, and appropriate statistical procedures were applied for data analysis. The internal consistencies of the scales were determined by Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients. Independent sample t-test was computed to check for gender differences on the study variables. Pearson Product Moment Correlations were also calculated to determine the relationship between the study variables. Mediation analysis was done to determine demoralization as a mediator in the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement.

Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties of Scales

To see the descriptive statistics and psychometric properties alpha coefficients, mean, standard deviation, range, skewness, and kurtosis were computed for Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation and Attacks on Property and, Demoralization Scale-II, Distress and Coping Ability and, Meaning and Purpose.

Table 2

Cronbach alpha and descriptive statistics for study variables (N = 335)

Scales	Items	α	M	SD	Range Potential	Range Actual	Skew	Kurt
MPV	16	.77	12.82	6.02	0-29	0-32	.15	-.38
PV	4	.65	2.66	2.20	0-8	0-8	.69	-.46
VV	4	.52	3.47	2.06	0-8	0-8	.25	-.65
SM	4	.57	3.22	2.13	0-8	0-8	.31	-.65
AP	4	.59	3.47	2.12	0-8	0-8	.08	-.87
DS-II	16	.76	12.74	5.20	0-32	0-32	.39	.80
MP	8	.64	5.33	2.90	0-16	0-16	.70	.88
DCA	8	.62	7.42	2.93	0-16	0-16	.04	-.03
AA			69.94	14.99	0-100	30-98	-.28	-.77

Note. MPV = Multidimensional Peer Victimization; PV = Physical Victimization; VV = Verbal Victimization; SM = Social Manipulation; AP = Attacks on Property; DS = Demoralization Scale; MP = Meaning and Purpose; DCA = Distress and Coping Ability; AA = Academic Achievement.

Table 2 illustrates descriptive statistics, alpha-coefficients, mean standard deviation, range, skewness, and kurtosis for all scales and their subscales. The reliability analysis indicates that the alpha coefficient of the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPV) is .77 and for Demoralization Scale (DS), it is .76. The reliability coefficients of the Demoralization subscales are .64 and .62 respectively, the reliability coefficients of the Multidimensional Peer Victimization subscales range from .52 to .65, the low reliabilities of the subscales are supported by another research (Arif, 2016). Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale has the higher mean value of 12.82 then Demoralization with a mean value of 12.74. This shows that participants responded low and almost equally on both the scales. High standard deviation value is for MPV i.e., 6.01 which means that the variability among responses is more in this scale. Values of skewness and kurtosis show that the values are between the range of +2 and -2, indicating the normal distribution of the data (Field, 2013).

Table 3

Inter-Scale Correlation between Peer Victimization, Demoralization, their Subscales, Academic Achievement, and Demographic Variables (N = 335)

Variables	MPV	PV	VV	SM	AP	DS-II	MP	DCA	AA	Age
MPV	-	.72**	.72**	.68**	.70**	.43**	.365**	.41**	-.15**	-.22**
PV		-	.41**	.26**	.33**	.32**	.27**	.30**	-.21**	-.18**
VV			-	.40**	.30**	.36**	.28**	.36**	-.11**	-.08
SM				-	.33**	.39**	.35**	.35**	-.02	-.11
AP					-	.14**	.11*	.15**	-.08	-.25**
DS-II						-	.88**	.89**	-.17**	.01
MP							-	.58**	-.16**	.04
DCA								-	-.14*	-.03
AA									-	-.18**

Note. MPV = Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale; PV = Physical Victimization; VV = Verbal Victimization; SM = Social Manipulation; AP = Attacks on Property; DS-II = Demoralization Scale; MP = Meaning and Purpose; DCA = Distress and Coping Ability; AA =Academic Achievement
$*p < .05, **p < .01$

Table 3 displays the correlation matrix for scales and subscales of Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, Demoralization Scale, and Academic Achievement. All the subscales have significant positive correlation ($p < .01$) with the total score, showing construct validity of both the scales. Results show that Peer Victimization and its subscales are significantly positively correlated ($p < .01$) with Demoralization and its subscale. Table 3 also depicts a strong negative correlation of Peer Victimization and two of its subscales (Physical Victimization and Verbal Victimization) with academic achievement. Furthermore, Demoralization and all its subscales are shown as significantly negatively correlated with Academic Achievement. Also, the table displays the correlation results for demographic variables in relation to the scales and subscales of Multidimensional Peer Victimization, Demoralization, and Academic Achievement. Age is shown as significantly negatively correlated ($p < .01$) with Peer Victimization and two of its subscale (Physical Victimization and Attacks on Property Scale), Correlation analysis of study variables with father/mother education was also conducted. Mother's education is significantly negatively correlated ($p < .05$) with the verbal victimization. Both father's and mother's education is significantly positively correlated ($p < .01$) with the Academic Achievement of the adolescents. Other correlations are nonsignificant, therefore are not reported in table.

Mediation Analysis

Mediating role of Demoralization in predicting Academic Achievement was also analyzed from Peer Victimization. Mediation is a hypothesized causal chain in which one variable (Peer Victimization) gets affected by a second variable (Demoralization) and this in turn, affects a third variable (Academic Achievement).

Table 4

Direct and Indirect Effect of Peer Victimization in Predicting Academic Achievement (N = 335).

Predictor	Model 1B	Academic Achievement Model 2 B	95% CI LL	UL
Constant	74.71**	77.58**	72.91	82.25
MPV	-.37**	-.22	-.52	.07
DS		-.37*	-.72	-.02
R^2	.02	.03		
F	7.21*			
ΔR		.01		
ΔF		1.33		

Note. PV = Peer Victimization; DS = Demoralization Scale.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Mediating effect of demoralization in predicting Academic Achievement from Multidimensional Peer Victimization is described in Table 4. The table shows that Demoralization partially mediates the relationship between Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement, since predictor to outcome paths has become nonsignificant with addition of mediator in the model.

Group Differences on Study Variables

Independent sample *t*-test has been used showing mean, standard deviation and *t*-values for differences between two groups on study variables (Peer Victimization, Demoralization and Academic Achievement) with reference to demographic variables i.e., gender and school system.

Table 5

t-test showing Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values for Gender Differences on Study Variables (N=335).

Variables	Boys (n = 145)		Girls (n = 177)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen`s d
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			*LL*	*UL*	
MPV	13.71	5.31	12.13	6.43	2.41	.01	.29	2.88	.26
PV	2.94	2.32	2.44	2.07	2.08	.03	.03	.976	.22
VV	3.72	1.95	3.28	2.13	1.94	.05	-.00	.88	.21
SM	3.29	1.87	3.16	2.31	.51	.60	-.34	.58	.06
AP	3.77	1.94	3.24	2.23	2.25	.02	.07	.98	.25
DS-II	12.70	5.02	12.78	5.33	-.13	.89	-1.20	1.05	.01
MP	5.27	2.76	5.37	3.01	-.33	.73	-.73	.52	.03
DCA	7.44	2.90	7.40	2.96	.10	.92	-.60	.66	.01
AA	70.23	14.99	69.71	15.04	.30	.75	-2.79	3.82	.03

Note. MPV = Peer Victimization Scale; PV = Physical Victimization Scale; VV = Verbal Victimization Scale; SM = Social Manipulation Scale; AP = Attacks on Property Scale; DS = Demoralization Scale; MP = Meaning and Purpose Scale; DCA = Distress and Coping Ability; AA = Academic Achievement.

Table 5 represents the mean differences between adolescent boys and girls on all study variables. The analysis shows that mean differences are significant *(p < .01)* for Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, where boys reported more peer victimization as compared to girls. It was also shown that mean differences are significant *(p < .05)* on Physical Victimization Scale (PV), and Attacks on Property Scale (AP), subscale of Multidimensional Peer Victimization, where boys reported higher Physical Victimization, where boys reported higher attacks on property as compared to female individuals. All other variables of study showed nonsignificant mean differences across two groups.

Table 6

t-test showing Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values for Differences Between School Systems on Study Variables (N =335)

Variables	Segregated (n = 98)		Co-education (n = 237)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
MPV	11.59	6.27	13.33	5.85	-2.43	.02	-3.15	-.33	.28
PV	2.70	2.14	2.64	2.22	.25	.80	-.45	.59	.02
VV	3.28	2.19	3.56	2.00	-1.14	.26	-.77	.21	.13
SM	2.61	2.23	3.47	2.04	-3.40	.00	-1.35	-.36	.40
AP	3.00	2.15	3.67	2.09	-2.66	.01	-1.17	-.17	.31
DS-II	12.24	5.26	12.95	5.16	-1.13	.26	-1.93	.52	.13
MP	5.35	3.15	5.32	2.80	.09	.93	-.66	.72	.01
DCA	6.90	2.85	7.63	2.95	-2.10	.04	-1.43	-.05	.25
AA	62.46	14.05	72.76	14.39	-5.76	.00	-13.81	-6.78	.72

Note. MPV = Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale; PV = Physical Victimization Scale; VV = Verbal Victimization Scale; SM = Social Manipulation Scale; AP = Attacks on Property Scale; DS = Demoralization Scale; MP = Meaning and Purpose Scale; DCA = Distress and Coping Ability Subscale; AA =Academic Achievement.

Table 6 shows the mean differences between adolescents belonging to segregated or co-education school system. The analysis shows that mean differences are significant *(p < .05)* for Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, where adolescents from co-education school reported more Peer Victimization as compared to those from segregated school system. It was also shown that mean differences are significant *(p < .001)* on Social Manipulation Scale (SM), a subscale of Multidimensional Peer Victimization, where coeducation system reported higher Social Manipulation. Furthermore, mean differences are significant (*p* < .01) on Attacks on Property, a subscale of Multidimension Peer Victimization Scale, for co-education system compared to segregated school system. The analysis also shows that mean differences are significant (*p* < .001) for Academic Achievement where students belonging to Co-education system reported higher Academic Achievement as compared to segregated school system. All other variables indicated nonsignificant mean differences across two groups.

Group Differences on Study Variables

One-Way Analysis of Variance has been performed to compare the mean differences on study variables based on grade level of the participant. The comparison has been made for the groups 7-8 grade, 9-10 grade and 11-12 grade.

Table 7

One-Way Analysis of Variance on Study Variables Based on Grade level ($N = 335$)

Variables	7-8 Grade ($n = 134$)		9-10 Grade ($n = 76$)		11-12 Grade ($n = 125$)		F	p	i-j	$d(i$-$j)$	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD					LL	UL
MPV	14.64	4.99	11.57	6.57	11.64	6.22	10.80	.00	1 > 2	3.08*	1.08	5.07
								.00	1 > 3	3.00*	1.26	4.75
PV	3.23	2.06	2.38	2.12	2.21	2.27	8.12	.02	1 > 2	.85*	.12	1.58
								.00	1 > 3	1.02*	.38	1.67
VV	3.66	1.83	3.13	2.08	3.49	2.27	1.58	.21	n.s.			
SM	3.53	1.79	3.00	2.43	3.02	2.24	2.42	.09	n.s.			
AP	4.22	2.01	3.05	1.98	2.93	2.10	15.18	.00	1 > 2	1.17*	.48	1.87
								.00	1 > 3	1.30*	.69	1.90
DS-II	13.23	4.23	12.03	5.08	12.66	6.12	1.34	.27	n.s.			
MP	5.41	2.56	5.42	3.04	5.18	3.18	.26	.77	n.s.			
DCA	7.82	2.40	6.61	3.63	7.48	3.50	4.29	.01	1 > 2	1.22*	.22	2.21
AA	74.58	14.13	63.79	12.77	68.32	15.58	13.68	.00	1 > 2	10.79*	5.66	15.92
								.00	1 > 3	6.26*	1.92	10.60

Note. MPV = Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale; PV = Physical Victimization; VV = Verbal Victimization; SM = Social Manipulation; AP = Attacks on Property; DS-II = Demoralization Scale; MP = Meaning and Purpose; DCA = Distress and Coping Ability; AA = Academic Achievement.

Table 7 shows the group mean differences between three grade based groups i.e., those belonging to class 7-8, participants belonging to class 9-10, and similarly the participants belonging to class 11-12. One-way analysis of variance indicates that significant ($p < .001$) mean differences are there on Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, where 7-8 graders reported higher Peer Victimization than 9-10 and 11-12 grade students, which supports the hypothesis of the study. Similarly, significant ($p < .001$) mean differences are observed for the subscales of Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale i.e., Physical Victimization and Attacks on Property Scale, where 7-8 graders reported higher Victimization than 9-10 and 11-12 graders. Moreover, significant ($p < .05$) mean differences were found on Distress and Coping Ability, a subscale of Demoralization Scale, where 7-8 graders reported higher Demoralization than the 9-10 grade students. Furthermore, significant ($p < .001$) mean differences are observed for Academic Achievement, where 7-8 graders reported higher Academic Achievement as compared to the other two groups. All other study variables showed nonsignificant mean differences between groups.

Table 8

Multiple Linear Regressi9n for Predicting Academic Achievement from Peer Victimization (N = 335)

Variables	B	SE	β	R^2	R	F	95% CI LL	UL
Constant	73.84	1.99					69.92	77.76
PV	-1.27	.43	-.19**				-2.10	-.43
VV	-.34	.46	-.05				-1.24	.56
SM	.36	.42	.05				-.47	1.20
AP	-.14	.44	-.02	.04	.20	3.57	-.99	.72

Note. PVS = Physical Victimization Scale; VVS = Verbal Victimization Scale; SMS = Social Manipulation Scale; APS = Attacks on Property Scale.
**$p < .05$

Table 8 displays the results of multiple linear regression analysis in which Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation, and Attacks on Property were used as predictors of Academic Achievement. The result indicates that 20% variance in the outcome variable can be accounted by the Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation, and Attacks on Property (*F* = 3.57; *p* < .05). Here Physical Victimization stood significant negative predictors of Academic Achievement.

Table 9

Multiple Linear Regression for Predicting Demoralization from Peer Victimization (N = 335)

Variables	B	SE	β	R^2	R	F	95% CI	
							LL	UL
Constant	8.02	.59					6.85	9.20
PV	.43	.12	.18**				.18	.68
VV	.54	.13	.21***				.27	.81
SM	.73	.12	.30***				.48	.98
AP	-.19	.13	-.08	.24	.49	26.99	-.45	.05

Note. PVS = Physical Victimization Scale; VVS = Verbal Victimization Scale; SMS = Social Manipulation Scale; APS = Attacks on Property Scale.
***$p < .001$

Table 9 displays the results of multiple linear regression analysis in which Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation, and Attacks on Property were used as predictors of Demoralization. The result indicates that 49% variance in the outcome variable can be accounted by the Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation, and Attacks on Property ($F = 26.99$; $p < .001$). Here Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, and Social Manipulation stood significant positive predictors of Demoralization.

DISCUSSION

Discussion

Current research intended to study the relationship between peer victimization, academic achievement, and demoralization among adolescents. The mediating role of demoralization between peer victimization and academic achievement was also seen. Further, certain demographics were also utilized to see the group variation on study variables i.e., age, gender, father's education and mother's education.

For this purpose, Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000) was used for measuring peer victimization. Demoralization Scale (DS-II; David Kissane, 2016) was utilized for measuring Demoralization and Academic Percentages of previous one year were used for measuring the academic achievement of the adolescents. The sample of the study consisted of 335 young male and female adolescents. Frequencies and percentages were also computed for demographic variables of the sample (see Table 1). Reliability of the subscales of MPVS were low, which can be justified by the low reliabilities of a previous study (Arif, 2016; see Table 2). Scales used were internally consistent. Skewness and Kurtosis were also computed (see Table 2) which provide evidence that the data is normally distributed.

First hypothesis of the present study was 'Peer victimization will be positively related with demoralization', which was confirmed by the study results (see Table 3). Results showed the significant positive correlation of peer victimization with demoralization. Moreover, all the subscales of peer victimization showed significant positive correlation with demoralization scale and its subscales. Past literature shows that Peer victimization with its deterrent effects are crucial to health of adolescents. There is an explicit documentation for negative consequences of peer victimization like anxiety and stress etc. (Barchia & Bussey, 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Hogland, 2007). Hawker and Bouton (2000) found that peer victimization was positively related with negative health outcomes including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Also, peer victimization has been negatively associated with self-esteem (Tsaousis, 2016). Bullying and victimization together has significant effect on hopelessness (Siyahhan Aricak, Acar, 2012).

Similarly, bully-victims are the most at risk for developing psychological problems such as, depression and suicidal thoughts (Ivarsson et al., 2005; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). In a similar way peer victimization and bullying has been found to have negative effects on adolescent's psychological health including increased anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and in some extreme cases, suicide (Baldry, 2004; Roland, 2002). Victims often experience depression, social anxiety, and low self-esteem (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Victimization and bullying is associated with depression, anxiety and somatic complaints (Baldry, 2004; Craig, 1998). In another study, it was found that indirect bully-victims reported higher levels of depression than bullies and uninvolved adolescents (Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & YLC-CURA, 2006). Hopelessness was positively associated with adolescent peer victimization (Shin et al., 2016). This all results in demoralization.

Second hypothesis of the present study was 'Peer Victimization and demoralization will be negatively related with academic achievement', which was also supported by the results (see Table 3). Peer Victimization and Demoralization had significant negative correlation with academic achievement. Two of the subscales of Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale had strong negative correlation with academic achievement. A longitudinal study has highlighted strong correlation among peer rejection, peer victimization and lower academic performances (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, & Toblin, 2005). Past research showed that peer victimization was negatively associated with both relative class-based, and absolute test-based measures of academic achievement and even temporary victimization was found to seriously impair student's academic outcomes (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2008). Schwartz, Farver, Chang, and Lee-Shin (2002) found that peer victimization was strongly associated with poor academic performance. With reference to demoralization and academic achievement it was found that students who experienced hopelessness during testing situations put forth little academic effort which then negatively affects their academic performance (Buric & Soric, 2012). In addition, hopelessness mediates the relationship between student volitional strategies like stress reducing strategies and self-encouragement and their academic achievement (Buric & Soric, 2012). Moreover, mastery goal orientations

precisely help to reduce the effects of hopelessness on academic outcomes in the classroom (Sideridis, 2005).

Third hypothesis of the present study was 'Demoralization will mediate in the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement' which was confirmed by the results (see Table 4). Results showed that Demoralization partially mediates the relationship between Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement. It was found that there was a significant indirect effect of Demoralization. It showed that Peer Victimization was not only directly affecting the Academic Achievement, but pathway was from Peer Victimization to Demoralization that further affected Academic Achievement. Research indicates that Peer Victimization can greatly hamper children's psychosocial functioning (Espelage, 2012; Espelage & Holt, 2007; Espelage, Low, & Rue, 2012; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). It also contributes negatively as far as school adjustment and academic performance is concerned (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Research in this area holds peer victimization as a major cause for poor grades and results in conciliation with the influences of internalizing behaviors (DeRozier & Mercer, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2005; Graham, Bellmore, & Juvonen, 2007).

Victims experience and often show signs of depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Many studies have been conducted focusing on the meditative role of depression as an internalizing behavior. It tends to mediate the relationship between peer victimization and academic progress. Juvonen, Nishina, and Graham (2000) found that self-perceived peer harassment significantly predicted depression, loneliness, and low self-worth, which in turn predicted students grade point averages and attendance. Schwartz et al., (2005) found mediating influence of depression between PV and low GPA. Coupled with bullying it is closely related to physical complains, depression, and anxiety (Baldry, 2004; Craig, 1998). Complementing the findings of the previous work another study found high levels of demoralization in victims of bully (Marini, Dane, & Bosacki, 2006).

Fourth hypothesis of the present research study proposes that 'Students of middle school years will report higher peer victimization as compared to students of secondary school years.' This hypothesis was confirmed by the results (see Table 7), where students belonging to middle school years (7th-8th grades) reported higher peer

victimization as compared to students of secondary school years (11th -12th grades). A number of studies advocated the increased prevalence of peer victimization in middle school years as compared to secondary school (Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 2001). The physical weakness of younger adolescents makes them prey of victimization. While with physical victimization; there is greater probability of verbal and relational victimization among middle age adolescents (Aviles & Monjas, 2005) as have been found in current study where 7th-8th graders reported higher Social Manipulation, Physical Victimization and, Attacks on property as compared to 11th -12th graders (see Table 7). Peer victimization intensifies during middle school years (Espelage & Home, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Adolescence is a difficult stage of development for an individual where one is progressing both physically and psychologically. This stage is noted for progressive changes in familial and social relationships (Lerner as cited in Carrick, Rush & Quas, 2013). No child should face the fears of victimization in order to excel academically.

Fifth it was hypothesized that 'Male students will report higher peer victimization as compared to female students.' Results obtained for gender differences on Peer Victimization and its subscales showed that there are significant gender differences on peer victimization scale (see Table 5). Male adolescents reported higher peer and physical victimization and higher attacks on property as compared to girls. Several studies have proved the variation in kinds of bullying when it comes to gender. Whereas boys engage in direct or physical bullying, girls are often exposed to indirect bullying which comprises of non-physical victimization such as gossiping (Baldry & Ferrington, 1999). In line with this, Shaikh (2013) reported higher peer victimization among male students than female students. Moreover, it has also been reported that physical bullying experienced by male students (57.0%) was significantly higher than female students (40.4%) and (Seals & Young, 2003). In a Turkish study a high percentage of both female and male victims (58.3 of girls and 67.0% of boys) reported verbal victimization (Kartal, 2009).

Further for exploration purpose, demographic variables were related with study variables. Table 3 showed the correlation between demographics, scales and subscales of study variables. Age was significantly negatively correlated with peer

victimization and two of its subscales. These studies are in resonance with past literature showing that peer victimization becomes less with increase in age. Tariq and Tayyab (2011) reported 77.14% peer victimized adolescents as compared to 57.14% peer victimized adults, it means young adolescents are more victimized by their peers as compared to older adolescents. About the age range in physical victimization is common in early adolescents and declines with increasing age. In order to explore further, t analysis was done to find group differences between segregated and co-education schools. Moreover, it has been indicated that students of co-education schools reported higher Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement (see Table 6). In co-education school system, high competitive environment can be the factor contributing to more Peer Victimization and high achievement among students.

Multiple linear regression analysis was done by taking domains of victimization as predictors for Academic Achievement. It showed that Physical Victimization was a negative predictor of Academic Achievement (see Table 8). In line with this, past literature found that children who were physically victimized were 6 to 9 months behind the non-victimized peers on measures of academic performance (Mundy et al., 2017).

Likewise, multiple linear regression analysis was utilized by taking domains of victimization as predictors for Demoralization. The results of the analysis showed that Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, and Social Manipulation were positive predictors of Demoralization (see Table 9). In agreement with the results, one study found that Verbal Victimization developed feelings of hopelessness among elementary school children. Their hopelessness eventually resulted in suicide attempts and death (Hanley & Gibb, 2011). Similarly, another study found that negative peer experiences contribute to the development of various forms of depressogenic cognitions in children (Gibb & Abela, 2008). Social Manipulation not only shatters the victim's social status and self-worth but also lead to serious maladjustment, post-traumatic stress symptoms (Mynard et al. 2000), depression (Hawker & Boulton, 2000) and suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Conclusion

The present study was intended to explore the role of Demoralization for the relationship between Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement among adolescents. Findings suggested that Peer Victimization negatively affected the academic achievement of the students. Demoralization was found to mediate in the relationship between peer victimization and academic achievement. Moreover, the present research was supported by the findings of past literature, age was significantly negatively related to Peer Victimization. Results showed peer victimization was greater during middle school years (7th-8th grade) and declined in secondary school (11th-12th). Results were consistent with past research, boys reported more physical and overall peer victimization than girls.

Limitations and Suggestions

Convenience sampling method was used for data collection. Only schools in Islamabad were included in the study which decreases the external validity of the study as it consists of a specific sample. For generalizing the result, it is recommended to work with larger sample from different parts of the country. As the measures used in the study were in English language, the study was done with students of private schools which also serve to limit generalizability. Also, the subscales of both the instruments had low reliabilities (see Table 2). Self-report method was used which further increases the concerns about the accuracy of results as socially desirable responses are often provided.

Implications

The present research study helped determine the mediating role of Demoralization between Peer Victimization and Academic Achievement among adolescents. It highlighted the importance of the developmental age of 'adolescence', a period where friendships and social support is essential. Peer Victimization during this stage can seriously damage physical and psychological functioning. The present research will be a source of awareness to parents and teachers to provide stimulating environment to their children, provide unconditional positive regard, social support and emphasize the importance of developing and maintaining good interpersonal relationships and negative consequences of hurting others physically or verbally.

The findings of study will be helpful to mental health professionals, educational, and counselling psychologists. This recommends promoting and providing safe and thriving environment for the healthy development of adolescents both socially and academically. Parents can be advised to encourage positive family engagement, social support, allow children to express themselves and teach children problem solving skills so that they are able to cope when faced with a stressful situation. Parents should report to the school authorities immediately if their child is victimized at school. This can help identify the bullies and save others from being victimized. Teachers can encourage group activities; teach good social behaviors like sharing, caring, and making friends and the consequences for bad behaviors. Teachers can maintain supportive relationship by encouraging students to share their problems and minimize behaviors that count as victimization.

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APPENDICES

Informed Consent

I am Verona, a student of psychology, at the National Institute of Psychology (NIP), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. The purpose of my research is to find the relationship between Peer Victimization, Academic Achievement and Role of Demoralization among adolescents (14-19 years old).

You are kindly requested to please participate voluntarily in this research study. It will only take up to ten minutes. The information you provide will be kept confidential (not shared with others) and will be used for research purpose only. You have the right to withdraw (leave) the study at any stage.

Your support and participation will be highly appreciated.

Thank You!

Please sign below if you agree to participate

Signature _____

Demographic Sheet

Age: _____

Gender: Boy _____   Girl _____

Class/ Grade: _____

School: Segregated _____   Co-education _____

Family System: Nuclear _____   Joint _____

Parental Education: Father _____   Mother _____

Academic Percentage of Previous Year: _____

Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale

Please underline/circle a word or phrase that you find difficult to understand. You can rate the difficulty level of each statement, starting from 1 indicating 'very difficult', 2 for 'difficult', 3 for 'neither easy nor difficult', 4 for 'easy' and 5 for 'very easy'.

		Very Difficult	Difficult	Neither Easy nor Difficult	Easy	Very Easy
1	Called me names					
2	Tried to get me into trouble with my friends.					
3	Took something of mine without permission.					
4	Made fun of me because of my appearance.					
5	Made fun of me for some reason					
6	Punched me					
7	Kicked me					
8	Hurt me physically in some way					
9	Beat me up					
10	Tried to break something of mine					
11	Tried to make my friends turn against me					
12	Stole something from me					
13	Refused to talk to me					
14	Made other people not talk to me					
15	Deliberately damaged some property of mine					
16	Swore at me					

Demoralization Scale-II

Please underline/circle a word or phrase that you find difficult to understand.

You can rate the difficulty level of each statement, starting from 1 indicating 'very difficult', 2 for 'difficult', 3 for 'neither easy nor difficult', 4 for 'easy' and 5 for 'very easy'.

		Very Difficult	Difficult	Neither Easy nor Difficult	Easy	Very Easy
1	There is little value in what I can offer others					
2	My life seems to be pointless					
3	My role in life has been lost					
4	I no longer feel emotionally in control					
5	No one can help me					
6	I feel that I cannot help myself					
7	I feel hopeless					
8	I feel irritable					
9	I do not cope well with life					
10	I have a lot of regret about my life					
11	I tend to feel hurt easily					
12	I feel distressed about what is happening to me					
13	I'm not a worthwhile person					
14	I would rather not be alive					
15	I feel quite isolated or alone					
16	I feel trapped by what is happening to me					

Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale

How often during the last school three years has another pupil done these things to you? Please mark your answers below with an "x". Example X.

		Not at all	Once	More than once
1	Called me names **(by odd/abusive names)**			
2	Tried to put me into trouble with my friends			
3	Took something of mine without my permission **(stole)**			
4	Made fun of me because of my appearance **(looks)**			
5	Made fun of me for some reason			
6	Punched me			
7	Kicked me			
8	Hurt me physically in some way			
9	Beat me up			
10	Tried to break something of mine			
11	Tried to make my friends become my enemy			
12	Stole something from me			
13	Refused to talk to me			
14	Made other people not talk to me			
15	Intentionally damaged some property **(belongings)** of mine			
16	Swore **(curse)** at me			

Demoralization Scale-II

For each statement below please indicate how much (or how strongly) you have felt this way over the last two weeks by circling the corresponding number.

		Never	Sometimes	Often
1	There is little value in what I can offer others. **(There is little I can do for others)**			
2	My life seems to be pointless **(useless)**			
3	My role in life has been lost.			
4	I no longer feel emotionally in control **(I have lost control over my emotions)**			
5	No one can help me			
6	I feel that I cannot help myself			
7	I feel hopeless			
8	I feel irritable **(moody/touchy)**			
9	I do not cope**(handle/manage)** well with life			
10	I have a lot of regret **(guilt)** about my life			
11	I tend to feel hurt easily			
12	I tend to feel distressed **(suffer from pain/worry)** about what is happening to me			
13	I'm not a worthwhile **(valuable)** person			
14	I would rather not be alive			
15	I feel quite isolated **(lonely)** or alone			
16	I feel trapped **(unable to escape)** by what is happening to me			

Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale

How often during the last school three years has another pupil done these things to you? Please mark your answers below with an "x". Example X.

		Not at all	Once	More than once
1	Called me names			
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4	Made fun of me because of my appearance			
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7	Kicked me			
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9	Beat me up			
10	Tried to break something of mine			
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13	Refused to talk to me			
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Demoralization Scale-II

For each statement below please indicate how much (or how strongly) you have felt this way over the last two weeks by circling the corresponding number.

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11	I tend to feel hurt easily			
12	I tend to feel distressed about what is happening to me			
13	I'm not a worthwhile person			
14	I would rather not be alive			
15	I feel quite isolated or alone			
16	I feel trapped by what is happening to me			

Permission to use your scale

Verona Wazir <veronawazir44@gmail.com>

Date: 10/25/17

to stephen.joseph

Respected Sir,

I am Verona Wazir, from National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Im currently doing my masters research, for that I need your kind permission to use your devised Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale. I will be eagerly waiting for your kind reply in earnest.

Regards,

Yours Sincerely

Verona

Stephen Joseph <Stephen.Joseph@nottingham.ac.uk>

Dated: 10/25/17

to me

Dear Verona,

You are welcome to use the scale.

Best wishes,

Stephen

Professor Stephen Joseph
School of Education
University of Nottingham
Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK

NEW BOOK: *Authentic. How to be yourself and why it matters*
www.authenticityformula.com

From: Verona Wazir <veronawazir44@gmail.com>
Sent: 25 October 2017 11:46:25
To: Joseph Stephen
Subject: permission to use your scale

Permission for usage of demoralization scale

Verona Wazir <veronawazir44@gmail.com>

10/25/17

to david.kissane

Respected Sir,

I am Verona Wazir, a student of National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. Im currently doing my masters research, for that I need your kind permission to use your devised scale "Demoralization Scale". Sir, I will be eagerly waiting for your kind reply.

Regards

Yours Sincerely

david.kissane@monash.edu

10/25/17

to me

You are most welcome to translate and validate it in your language.
With best wishes
David Kissane

Sent from my iPhone