



A comparison of two approaches to the study of negative peer treatment: General victimization and bully/victim problems among German schoolchildren

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Studies of children who are the frequent targets of peers' aggressive acts have been guided by two differing research traditions, namely the 'bully/victim' and the 'general victimization' traditions. Although the terms 'bullying' and 'victimization' are often used interchangeably, these constructs represent approaches that differ in terms of conceptual definitions of negative peer treatment, research methodologies, and relative interest in group-versus individual-level phenomena. The present study was designed as a first step towards the integration of these diverse literatures. Our specific goals were: to validate the relational victimization construct with a German sample of early adolescents ($N = 217$) through replication of previously published findings, and to examine systematically the relations among constructs derived from the two approaches. Our results showed that relational victimization, physical victimization, and bully/victim experiences were moderately correlated. The non-overlapping properties of the constructs, however, are best understood in the context of gender differences.

The last two decades have been marked by increasing international concern over the problems of aggression and victimization among school-aged children (Olweus, 1995; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988; Schafer, 1996; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Although estimates vary, studies report that approximately 2–15% of children are victimized by peers, depending on the method of data collection and the criteria used to classify children as victims (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1991; Perry *et al.*, 1988; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Schafer, 1996; Sharp & Smith, 1991; Smith *et al.*, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

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