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NEWSLETTER

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## **Longitudinal Associations between Physical and Relational Victimization and Student Academic Achievement in Early Adolescence: A Cross-lagged Panel Study**

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**A**CADEMIC adjustments and peer relationships are two crucial aspects of adolescent school adaptation. Peer victimization is a risk factor in student academic achievement; at the same time, poor academic performance can potentially cause peer victimization. With peer victimization, individuals experience aggressions from peers, which can be physical or relational. Physical victimization refers to their being physically attacked by peers, such as being hit, pushed, and kicked; in relational victimization, they are subjected to non-physical attacks, such as social exclusion and rumor dissemination.

This study adopted cross-lagged panel research design, using self-reported physical and relational victimization as the indicator of peer victimization and terminal examination results as that of academic performance, to examine the interplay of peer victimization and academic achievement in adolescents between the fifth and eighth grades. Research results showed that: (i) relational victimization occurring in the fifth grade significantly and negatively predicted student academic performance; (ii) the sixth and seventh grade academic achievement significantly and negatively predicted physical and relational victimization in the ensuing year, with no noticeable difference in its effects on the two forms of peer victimization; (iii) there was no prominent gender difference in the longitudinal associations between academic results and the two forms of peer victimization; (iv) The effect of academic performance on physical victimization varied in different phases, tending to aggravate with age.

The article proposed academic level-specific suggestions for peer victimization mitigation. In the primary stage, the focus should be placed on detecting peer victimization (especially relational victimization) and administering timely intervention to avoid the vicious cycle of academic adjustment difficulty and peer victimization in pupils. In the junior secondary stage, educators must instruct students not to judge peers by their current academic results and help low-performing students to establish positive peer relationships and gain positive peer experience in order to protect low-achieving

teenagers from physical and relational harm induced by academic underperformance.

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