

The roles of clique status hierarchy and aggression norms in victimized adolescents' aggressive behavior

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The healthy context paradox indicates that in “healthy” contexts, with lower bullying or victimization norms, victimization experiences would unexpectedly exacerbate adolescents' adjustment difficulties, yet the underlying mechanisms remain unclear, particularly from the clique perspective. The current 2-year longitudinal multilevel study attempts to examine the conditional effects of both clique structure (i.e., status hierarchy) and clique norms (i.e., aggression norms) on the relationship between individual victimization and aggressive behavior. The sample consisted of 691 Chinese junior high school students (Mage=12.74, SD=0.43; 55.6% boys), who were identified to belong to 153 cliques with sizes varying from 3 to 12 students (Msize=5.08, SD = 1.89), according to the social cognitive map. Participants completed peer-nominated measures at two time points, two years apart. The multilevel models revealed that it was in less hierarchical cliques with lower aggression that victimized adolescents would exhibit more relational forms of aggression (rather than overt forms) two years later. More intriguingly, contrary results were found in all-girls cliques and all-boys cliques. Specifically, victimized girls' overt and relational aggression was higher in cliques with less hierarchy and lower aggression, whereas, in cliques with more hierarchy and higher aggression, victimized boys' relational aggression was higher, which conforms to the healthy context paradox and the peer contagion hypothesis, respectively. These findings highlight that egalitarian cliques with low aggression would promote aggressive behavior of victimized adolescents, especially for girls rather than for boys, which in turn has crucial implications for anti-bullying interventions [Figure 1].

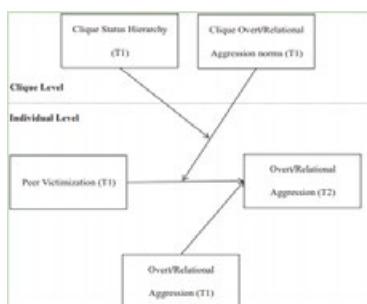


Figure 1. The proposed multilevel moderated model. T1=Time 1, T2=Time 2

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Biography

Qingling Zhao is a doctoral candidate at Shaanxi Normal University. Her major research interests include peer relationships and adolescent development.

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