Social Support as a Moderator of Peer Victimization and Anxiety Symptoms in School-Aged Children

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Introduction
• Four regression analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Field, 2013; Hayes, 2013). PV at T1 was included in all analyses. SS at T1 and T2 were included in predicting T1 and T2 outcomes, respectively.
• T1 Analyses: Main effects of PV (β = 18.24, p < .001) and SS (β = .1442, p < .05) were observed in predicting SA (R² = .23, F = 16.03, p < .001) and of PV (β = 16.05, p < .001) but not SS in predicting DEP (R² = .22, F = 15.79, p < .001). Interactions between PV and SS were not significant at T1.
• T2 Analyses: In predicting SA (R² = .12, F = 5.22, p < .01), PV (β = 7.52, p < .01) but not SS were significant, while an interaction between PV and SS was observed (β = -1.71, p < .01), such that PV was associated with SA in the context of high PV and low SS (see Figure 1). In predicting DEP (R² = .14, F = 6.48, p < .001), PV (β = 9.06, p < .01) and SS (β = -30, p < .01) were significant, and a marginally significant interaction was observed (β = -1.12, p < .10), such that PV was associated with DEP in the context of high PV and low SS (see Figure 2).

Methods
Participants: Children (ages 8-11; 53% males; 77% European American) from five suburban elementary schools in upstate New York completed questionnaires in school at baseline (T1; N=184) and one year later (T2; N=138)

Measures:
Schwartz Peer Victimization Scale (SPVS)
a) 5 items assessing PV over past two weeks
b) 4-point Likert scale from never to almost every day
c) Items assess overt and relational victimization
Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ-Revised)
a) 6 items assessing SS in children
b) Asks children to rate their satisfaction with different aspects of social support on a 6-point Likert scale from very unhappy to very happy
Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)
a) 47-item questionnaire, including 9-item social anxiety (SA) and 10-item depression (DEP) scales
b) 4-point Likert scale, ranging from never to always

Results

Discussion
• Findings suggest that SS may buffer the effects of PV on SP and DEP in children after one year. Limitations include the ethnically homogeneous sample and reliance on self-report measures.
• Additional study is needed, but it is possible that helping to expand children’s social networks and friendships may assist them in coping more successfully with their bullying experiences.

References