Cross-cultural Analysis of Attributions About Peer Victimization in US and Korean Adolescents
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Introduction

- Youth's attributions about peers' behaviors have been widely examined as a mechanism that may explain how and why victimization and internalizing problems are associated in the United States (e.g., Graham et al., 2009; Abramson et al., 1989).
- Based on the causal dimensions in Weiner's Attribution Theory (1986), the following three types of attributions are typically considered: characterological self-blame (CSB), behavioral self-blame (BSB), and externalization of the blame (EXT).
- Findings in the U.S. suggest that youth who are more highly victimized by peers report more CSB (e.g., "I should have been more careful; I didn't deserve it"; Schacter et al., 2015; Graham & Juvonen, 1998).

Method

Participants

- Participants were 732 adolescents in 7th-8th grades from South Korea and the United States (82.8% Korean, 44.3% male, Mage=13.64, SD= .01).

Procedure

- Participants read hypothetical vignettes depicting them as targets of peer victimization and then rated how much they would make certain attributions on a likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>χ² (df)</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA (CI)</th>
<th>ΔCFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Configural invariance</td>
<td>175.712 (42)</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.093 (.079-.107)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full metric invariance</td>
<td>183.951(49)</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.086 (.073-.100)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial scalar invariance</td>
<td>220.791 (54)</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.091 (.079-.104)</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. df= degree of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI= confidence interval.

Results

- The following items were allowed to covary with each other because they loaded onto the same factor:
  - "This happened to me because I'm poorer than my classmates" & "If I were a cooler kid, this wouldn't happen to me"
  - "I was at the wrong place at the wrong time" & "I shouldn't have been there"

- The results of multigroup confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) showed that the attribution model fit the data well and that the loadings were equivalent between the two countries without significantly decreasing the model fit (ΔCFI < .01).

- Findings in the U.S. suggest that youth who are more highly victimized by peers report measure of peer victimization (The Children's Social Experiences Questionnaire-Self Report (CESQ-SR); Crick & Grotpeter, 1996, α=.995).
- Partial scalar invariance (Intercorrelated items) was allowed to invariance in the model fit the data well; factor loadings were equivalent between the two countries and the model met criteria for partial scalar invariance, demonstrating that the items' intercepts were partially invariant across countries (see Table 1).
- Findings of the latent mean comparison between countries showed that Korean adolescents had significantly lower rates of CSB, BSB, and EXT compared to American adolescents (see Table 2).

- The path from victimization to CSB and EXT could be constrained to be equal across groups and the model met criteria for partial scalar invariance, demonstrating that the items' intercepts were partially invariant across countries (see Table 1).

- There also may be more moderators involved in the link between victimization and CSB in Korea. For instance, if the victimizer has a reputation of being deviant, the link between victimization and self-blame may not be as strong.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributions</th>
<th>Latent Mean Comparison: US vs. Korean Adolescents</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSB</td>
<td>- .339**</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB</td>
<td>- .176*</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXT</td>
<td>- .283**</td>
<td>.084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01

Implications

- Overall, the multigroup CFA results indicate that how Korean and American conceptualize the three attributions are similar.
- However, there are cross-cultural differences in how victimization is linked with different attributions about victimization and also differences in how much the groups indicate they would be making these attributions.
- Although the results are concurrent with past findings of the victimization-CSB link in the US sample, the same link was not present in the Korean sample, suggesting that victimization experiences have different implications for attributions about the self in Korea and the U.S.
- It may be that being a victimizer is considered more deviant than being a victim, resulting in a different distribution of attributions about victimization in Korea. Therefore, if the victimizer has a reputation of being deviant, the link between victimization and self-blame may not be as strong.