



# DYNAMICS OF PEER VICTIMIZATION AND SELF-ESTEEM IN BRAZILIAN ADOLESCENTS: A FOCUS ON GENDER MINORITY YOUTH

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## Purpose

The impact of victimization on self-esteem can be exacerbated among gender minority adolescents, due to the importance of their relationships with peers (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Gender minority youth, while navigating complex social norms, may face distinct challenges in maintaining their self-esteem amidst victimization experiences. In the current study, we examined how peer victimization impacts self-esteem within these groups using a large Brazilian sample of youth.

## Method

A total of 22,480 Brazilian middle and high school students were surveyed for the current study, out of which an analytical sample of 10,556 youth (Mage = 14.78, SDage = 1.63) and a subset of 272 gender minoritized youth were further selected according to their age, if they answered the questions about their sex assigned at birth as well as current gender identity, and if they were truthful in their answers. Data were collected on a wide range of topics, including self-reported self-esteem and peer victimization. Structural equation modeling was employed to test the moderating effect of gender minority status and gender at birth on the link between peer victimization and self-esteem.

## References

Lerner, R. M., & Steinberg, L. (2009). Handbook of adolescent psychology: Individual bases of adolescent development (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479193>

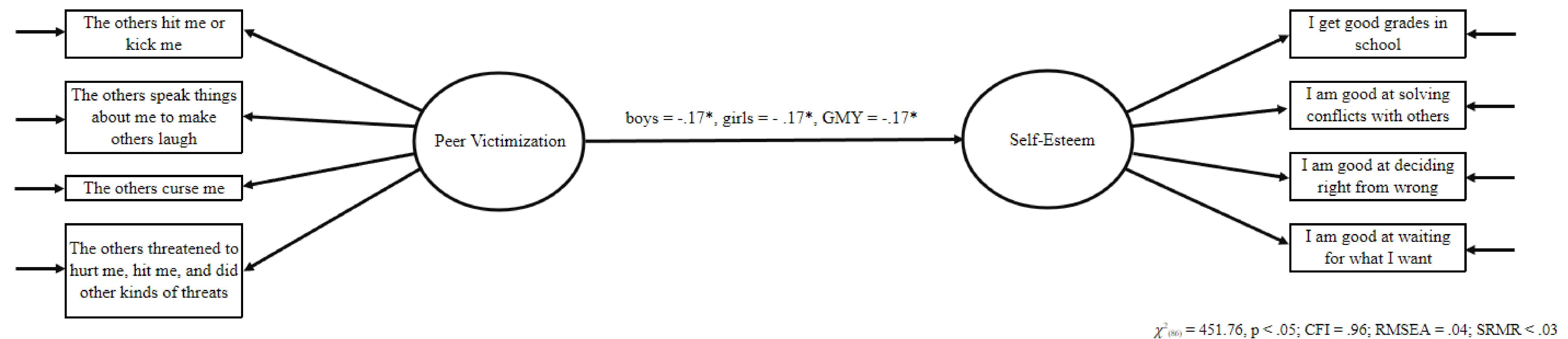


Figure 1. Model of the association between latent constructs of peer victimization and self-esteem as a function of gender groups.

## Results

First, a latent factor of self-esteem was modeled. Although the factor loadings were lower than ideal, the resulting model was a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2(2) = .22, p > .05; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .01; SRMR < .01$ ) and the latent factor was negligibly reliable ( $\omega = .53$ ). Then, the latent factor of peer victimization ( $\omega = .79$ ) was added as a correlate of self-esteem, again with acceptable fit ( $\chi^2(19) = 115.81, p < .05; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02; SRMR = .01$ ). As expected, more reports of victimization were related to lower self-esteem ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ). Finally, the model was split by group to test for differences in the effect of peer victimization between gender minority youth and cisgender boys and girls with no significant differences emerging. The final models tested for mean differences between the groups. Most notably, gender minority youth reported significantly more victimization and significantly lower self-esteem.

## Discussion

Higher rates of peer victimization indicated lower self-esteem in gender minority and cisgender youths. Addressing bullying concerns for all children is essential, regardless of their gender, as it has a significant impact on their self-esteem. Due to the lower reliability of the measure of self-esteem in the current study, future research should establish clearer measures and explore other mediating factors.