Adolescent loneliness and social anxiety as predictors of bullying victimisation

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\section*{Introduction}

Close relationships with peers take on an increasing importance in early adolescence. Early adolescents devote a greater amount of time and energy to relationships with peers than with parents. The peer group serves as a primary source of support, and contributes in important ways to adolescents’ self-concept and well-being (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001; Youniss & Smollar, 1989). As a result of this importance, peer rejection causes considerable distress among early adolescents. Not surprisingly, this developmental phase has been associated with high rates of internalising aspects of mental health such as loneliness and social anxiety (Junttila, Laakkonen, Niemi, & Ranta, 2010; La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Rapee & Spence, 2004). Research on peer victimisation suggests that victimisation increases adolescents risk for a variety of psychosocial adjustment including loneliness and social anxiety (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Storch, Masia-Warner, & Brassard, 2003). However, little is known about the association between loneliness and social anxiety and victimisation. Even less is known about the links between social and emotional loneliness and victimisation. This study examined the associations of two unique aspects of adolescents’ loneliness (social loneliness and emotional loneliness) and social anxiety with victimisation. A better understanding of the relations of social loneliness, emotional loneliness and social anxiety to victimisation can contribute to theory development and to the development of preventive interventions for victimisation.
Peer victimisation

Victimisation is a deliberate, repeated negative action towards children or adolescents who are unable to defend themselves due to an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1991). Studies with children and adolescents show that victims tend to be more depressed, anxious, lonely and insecure than other students (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1997). Victims also display lower levels of self-esteem, and usually are cautious, sensitive and quiet (Craig, 1998; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; Ladd et al., 1997; Olweus, 1995). Storch et al. (2003) found among 9th- and 10th-grade students that overt and relational victimisation were positively associated with fear of negative evaluation, physiological symptoms, social avoidance, and loneliness. They also found that prosocial forms of behaviour from peers moderated the effects of overt and relational victimisation on loneliness. Several other studies have confirmed the variety of psychosocial adjustment problems associated with peer victimisation (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Hodges & Perry, 1999; Ranta, Kaltiala-Heino, Fröid, & Marttunen, 2013).

Considering that victimisation places children and adolescents at high risk for a variety of adjustment difficulties, it is critical to understand the causes of victimisation. However, longitudinal research on the correlates and determinants of victimisation has produced inconsistent results. While some studies have demonstrated that psychological maladjustment predicts increases in peer victimisation (Hodges & Perry, 1999), others reported no such associations (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). In addition, investigations into the association between psychosocial problems and peer victimisation, albeit limited (Hodges & Perry, 1999), have focused on internalising indicators such as withdrawal, depression and anxiety with little attention paid to loneliness. Even more limited are studies that have used measures of loneliness that assesses the dual model of loneliness that includes social loneliness and emotional loneliness (Junttila & Vauras, 2009; Junttila, Vauras, Niemi, & Laakkonen, 2012; Weiss, 1973). As a result, the potentially important relationship between loneliness and peer victimisation has yet to be fully understood. In addition, research on adolescents’ social anxiety, particularly, those focusing on the links between social anxiety and victimisation has often used child samples (Hodges & Perry, 1999). Thus, less is known about this issue in adolescence. Of major interest to us was how loneliness (both social and emotional) and social anxiety are associated with victimisation in early adolescence. The following section will review the literature on loneliness and social anxiety and how they may affect adolescents’ risk of victimisation.

Loneliness and social anxiety in adolescence

Loneliness has been described as the unpleasant experience of a lack of desired interpersonal relationships (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Rotenberg, 1999; Weiss, 1973). It is pervasive and can cause distress to the individual (Weiss, 1973). Around a quarter of children and adolescents experience feeling lonely daily (Koening & Abrams, 1999; Larson, 1999). However, adolescents report higher levels of loneliness than children (Margalit, 2010; Perlman & Landolt, 1999) mainly because of the increasing importance of peer acceptance during this developmental period (La Greca & Prinstein, 1999; Rapee & Spence, 2004). It is plausible that the pressure to gain peer acceptance and status may be related to an increase in loneliness.

Weiss (1973) distinguished two dimensions of loneliness – emotional loneliness and social loneliness. Social loneliness has been conceptualised as the lack of social networks or affiliations with a peer group, while emotional loneliness on the other hand refers to the lack of close, intimate attachment to another person (Weiss, 1973). Research in the last two decades has supported the existence of these two dimensions of loneliness (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, & Williams, 1990; Clinton & Anderson, 1999; Hoza, Bukowski, & Beery, 2000; Junttila & Vauras, 2009; Junttila et al., 2012; Qualter & Munn, 2002). However, their links with peer victimisation remain largely unexplored.

Social anxiety is the combination of fear, apprehension and worry that people experience when they anticipate being unable to make a positive impression on others (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). It is
characterised by a strong fear of humiliation, embarrassment and the perception that one may be negatively evaluated by others in social contexts (Essau, Conradt, & Petermann, 1999). Research has shown that socially anxious adolescents tend to have low self-esteem and evaluate their own behaviour negatively, show signs of avoidance in stressful performance situations, and to withdraw from peer interactions (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Junttila et al., 2012; Stein & Stein, 2008). They also tend to be least liked by their peers and have less chances to establish positive peer relationships (Blöte & Westenberg, 2007; Miers, Blöte, Bögels, & Westenberg, 2008).

Prior research on the behavioural correlates of victimisation suggests that victimised children may contribute to their maltreatment by behaving in ways that serve to provoke or reinforce attacks against them. Among the behaviours identified in the literature are internalising behaviours such as social withdrawal, depression and social anxiety (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997; Hodges & Perry, 1999; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). Interpersonal difficulties or lack of friends has also been found to be associated with victimisation (Bukowski, Sippola, & Boivin, 1995; Hodges et al., 1997). Internalising tendencies interfere with an individual’s ability to defend and assert themselves against aggressors and friendlessness places children at danger of being victimised because prospective bullies prefer to attack peers who lack supportive and protective friends as they can do so without fear of retaliation. Children and adolescents who display such internalising and externalising behaviours are likely to be singled out for abuse by peers (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Pellegrini & Long, 2002).

In light of these findings and the well-established connections between internalising problems, friendlessness and victimisation, it is plausible that feelings of loneliness, specifically, social loneliness may increase the likelihood of early adolescents being bullied. Such a hypothesis however has not yet been given sufficient attention in the literature. Furthermore, it is possible that low self-esteem and withdrawal from peer interactions may increase adolescent’s victimisation. This study sought to extend and build on prior research by examining the relationship of social loneliness, emotional loneliness and social anxiety in the first semester of the school year with peer victimisation in the subsequent semester among early adolescents. The following questions guided this research:

1. Do social loneliness and emotional loneliness separately predict peer victimisation among lower secondary school adolescents?
2. Does social anxiety predict peer victimisation among lower secondary school adolescents?

**Method**

**Participants**

The data for this study was drawn from two age cohorts from two schools in the district of south-western Finland. Of the two age cohorts, 390 students from a total pool of 427 (response rate 91%) who had started their lower secondary school in 2006 and 2007 were followed through seventh grade (aged = 12–13) to ninth grade (aged = 15–16). The data were gathered as a part of a longitudinal research project, Social and Emotional Learning and Well-Being in Lower Secondary School. Participation in the study was voluntary for all students. Written informed consent was obtained from both the parents and the adolescents. Permission to conduct the study was given by the Health Care Centre and Educational Council of Lieto Municipality. The study plan was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Hospital District of south-west Finland and local school authorities. Confidentiality of participant responses within schools was assured as teachers and school personnel had no access to the completed questionnaires which were completed during a regular school day, under the supervision of a researcher.

**Measures and procedures**

A detailed description of the procedure and methods used in the data collection and preparation are detailed elsewhere (Junttila et al., 2012). Each variable of the study was measured at three time points and all the data came from the same group of students. Loneliness and social anxiety were measured
during the fall semester of each of the three years under study while bullying-victimisation was measured in the subsequent spring semester of every year.

**Peer victimisation**

The dependent variable was the single-item question: ‘How often have you been bullied during this semester?’ The responses to this were ‘Never’; ‘Sometimes’; ‘Once per week’; and ‘Several times per week’. In this study, being bullied sometimes was considered frequent bullying.

**Loneliness**

Adolescents’ loneliness was examined using a translated and modified version of the Peer Network and Dyadic Loneliness (PNDL) scale (Hoza et al., 2000). The PNDL scale measures loneliness associated with lack of involvement, both in the social network and in the absence of close dyadic friendships. Participants rated their own feelings of loneliness against paired statements such as, ‘Some students feel like they really fit in with others but some students don’t feel like they fit in with others’ for social loneliness, and ‘Some students don’t have anybody who is really a close friend but some students have someone who is a really close friend’ for emotional loneliness. Respondents were first asked to select which of these two types of students they were most like, and then to specify whether the chosen description fitted her/him ‘very well’ or ‘quite well’. Item scores varied between 1 (very low loneliness) and 4 (very high loneliness) (Hoza et al., 2000). The Finnish version that was used included five items for social loneliness and five items for emotional loneliness (see Junttila & Vauras, 2009; Junttila et al., 2010).

**Social anxiety**

Social anxiety was evaluated using the Social Anxiety Scale for Children developed by La Greca and Stone (1993) and modified for use with adolescents (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). The Finnish version validated by Ranta et al. (2012) included three factors measuring adolescents’ Fear of Negative Evaluation (e.g. ‘I am afraid that others will not like me’), Social Avoidance and Distress in General (e.g. ‘It is hard for me to ask others to do things with me’) and Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (e.g. ‘I worry about doing something new in front of others’). The item scores varied between 1 = not at all and 5 = all the time.

**Analyses**

Prior to the main analyses, data were analysed for descriptive statistics for the main study variables. To understand the interrelations among the variables of this study, bivariate correlations were conducted. The interrelations between social loneliness, emotional loneliness, social anxiety and bullying were examined by conducting path analyses. Due to the considerable number of parameters to be estimated vs. the sample size, we executed the analyses separately for each of the three years under study. In all analyses, we allowed the errors of the consecutive variables to correlate with each other. The differences in the number of cases in a few analyses can be explained by the Expectation Maximisation method (McKnight, McKnight, Sidani, & Figueredo, 2007, pp. 164–166).

Path analyses models were fitted to the covariance matrix using the Maximum Likelihood Robust method with Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). The fit of the models was evaluated using chi-square, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Chi-square evaluates the distance between the sample covariance matrix and the fitted covariance matrix. The CFI indicates how much better the model fits than the independence model. The CFI index varies between 0 and 1 – the value should be above .90 for the model to be suitable (Bentler, 1990). Values between .85 and .90 are considered to be mediocre according to Little, Card, Preacher, and McConnell (2009). The TLI, developed by Tucker and Lewis (1973) indicates how much better the model fits than the independence model. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), the value for the TLI should be above .95 for the model to be suitable. RMSEA is an index of discrepancy per degree of freedom (Steiger, 1990). According to
Hu and Bentler (1999), a cut-off value above .06 for RMSEA indicates a good fit. The SRMR index is the average of the standardised residuals between the observed and the predicted covariance matrix; a cut-off value above .8 indicates a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Results**

**Descriptive statistics**

During the three-year survey period, 26% \((n = 99)\) of participants reported being bullied sometimes while in grade 7, with roughly equal proportions reporting being bullied in their eighth \((22.3%; n = 83)\) and ninth \((22.5%; n = 83)\) years, respectively. 6% \((n = 21)\) of participants reported being bullied once per week while in grade 7, with some 3% \((n = 11)\) and 2% \((n = 9)\) reporting bullying victimisation in eighth and ninth grade, respectively. 1.3% \((n = 5)\) participants reported being bullied several times per week across the three years of the study.

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis for social and emotional loneliness, social anxiety and bullying measured at three time-points within a three-year period. The estimates of skewness and kurtosis were within reasonable limits, that is, the statistics were all well below 2.0 for skewness and 7.0 for kurtosis (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996).

**Associations among variables**

Table 2 shows the correlations between social loneliness, emotional loneliness, social anxiety and bullying (only correlations significant at \(p < .01\) are marked). All the predictor variables (social and emotional loneliness and social anxiety) were interrelated. Adolescents’ social loneliness increased over time. Social loneliness in the first year of secondary school was associated with higher levels of social loneliness in the second and third years of secondary school. Similarly, emotional loneliness increased over time. In addition, the association between emotional loneliness and social loneliness increased over the school years. Except for the correlations between emotional loneliness in seventh grade and bullying in eighth grade and social anxiety in eighth grade and bullying in ninth grade, all psychological well-being variables significantly correlated with bullying, albeit moderately.

**Relationship between loneliness, social anxiety and bullying**

To examine the relationship between psychological well-being (social loneliness, emotional loneliness and social anxiety) in the first semester of each year and bullying in the second semester of the same year, we modelled the interrelations among mental health problems and bullying victimisation. The results of the analyses are presented in Figure 1. The fit indices estimated a good fit for the model of social loneliness (\(\chi^2 (15, n = 390)=72.987, CFI = .93, TLI = .85, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .09\), emotional
Table 2. Correlations between loneliness (Social and Emotional), social anxiety and bullying measured at the three time points.

|                     | Social loneliness | Emotional loneliness | Social anxiety | Bullying |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------|
|                      | Semester 1 year 1 | Semester 1 year 2 | Semester 1 year 3 | Semester 1 year 1 | Semester 1 year 2 | Semester 1 year 3 | Semester 2 year 1 | Semester 2 year 2 | Semester 2 year 3 |
| Social loneliness   |                   |                      |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 1   | 1                 |                      |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 2   | .59***            | 1                    |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 3   | .49***            | .68***               | 1              |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Emotional loneliness|                   |                      |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 1   | .53***            | .35***               | .31***         | 1        |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 2   | .38***            | .63***               | .57***         | .40***   | 1        |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 3   | .25***            | .44***               | .66***         | .35***   | .66***   | 1        |               |               |               |
| Social anxiety      |                   |                      |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 1   | .52***            | .45***               | .41***         | .36***   | .29***   | .26***   | 1              |               |               |
| Semester 1 year 2   | .40***            | .55***               | .47***         | .16**    | .36***   | .29***   | .56***         | 1              |               |
| Semester 1 year 3   | .34***            | .44***               | .52***         | .16**    | .31***   | .34***   | .47***         | .64***         | 1              |
| Bullying            |                   |                      |                |          |          |          |               |               |               |
| Semester 2 year 1   | .27***            | .37***               | .28***         | .19***   | .27***   | .18***   | .22***         | .24***         | .20***         |
| Semester 2 year 2   | .18***            | .33***               | .29***         | .07      | .27***   | .22***   | .16   | .18* | .21** | .53*** | 1 |
| Semester 2 year 3   | .19***            | .17**                | .19***         | .16**    | .19***   | .19***   | .11  | .08  | .13*  | .29*** | .46*** |

*Pearson Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
**Pearson Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
***Pearson Correlation is significant at the .00 level (2-tailed).
loneliness ($\chi^2 (15, n = 390) = 30.836$, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06) and social anxiety ($\chi^2 (15, n = 390) = 19.692$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .03, SRMR = .02) as predictors of bullying victimisation. As indicated by the path coefficients (Figure 1), all aspects of mental health problems (social loneliness, emotional loneliness and social anxiety) were significantly associated with adolescents’ bullying victimisation. Adolescents who reported being socially lonely, emotionally lonely and socially anxious in the first semester of any year during their secondary school career reported being bullied in the second semester of the same year. The results were consistent for each year under study.

In addition, the path coefficients for loneliness (social and emotional) and social anxiety in seventh grade were significantly stronger than that calculated for in eighth and ninth grades (Figure 1), suggesting that bullying victimisation as a consequence of adolescents’ loneliness and anxiety from previous semester decreased with years. Moreover, the statistics displayed in Figure 1 indicate that social loneliness was a stronger predictor of bullying victimisation in eighth and ninth grades than emotional loneliness. Similarly, social anxiety was found to be a stronger predictor of adolescents’ bullying victimisation than loneliness (social and emotional) across the three years of this study.

**Discussion**

This study found that 22.3–26% of early adolescents had been victimised sometimes across the three years of this study. These prevalence rates are consistent with reported rates in the US (Wang et al., 2009) and Canada (Craig et al., 2009). However, they are greater than would have been anticipated based on rates reported previously among 14–16-year-old Finnish adolescents (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, 2000). They are also higher than those reported in several European countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and England (Craig et al., 2009), but lower than rates reported in Germany, Belgium, Austria and Greece (Craig et al., 2009). The higher rates found compared to those of previous research in Finland (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000) may be due to the measurement and the different categorisation of bullying. The present study used ‘sometimes’ as a classification for bullying, whereas Kaltiala-Heino et al. used ‘once per week’. Regarding the current rates being lower than those of other national samples in Germany, Greece and Austria, showing higher rates of victimisation, while we cannot find immediate explanations for this, it may be due, in part, to the well-publicised anti-bullying campaign in Finland (Ahtola, Haataja, Kärnä, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2012).
With regard to the frequency and persistence of victimisation, our findings largely concur with those of previous studies (Craig et al., 2009; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Ranta et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2009) and suggest that victimisation peaks and intensifies around mid-childhood to early adolescence. This reinforces the importance of social and peer support in the role of maintaining social well-being during early adolescence.

The findings suggest that early adolescents’ social loneliness (i.e. lack of social networks or affiliations with a peer group) was associated with peer victimisation. Early adolescents who reported being socially lonely in the first semester of each year studied also reported increased levels of victimisation in the subsequent semester. Previous work with child samples has shown that children who face interpersonal problems such as peer rejection are more likely to be victimised (Hodges et al., 1999; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). The current data extend this body of research by demonstrating that exclusion or rejection by desired social groups may contribute to adolescents’ victimisation. This finding supports and confirms prior research that suggests that the peer group may serve as a protective factor against peer victimisation (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Consistent with other studies with child and adolescent samples (Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006; Hodges et al., 1999; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Wang et al., 2009), the present data demonstrated that lack of a close friend at the beginning of the school year was associated with victimisation later that year. This suggests that intimate relations with close friend may serve as a protection against victimisation. For early adolescents, close intimate attachment to another person is a sought-after experience. Nearly all early adolescents want to have intimate attachment with their peers. It is plausible that difficulties in establishing satisfactory friendships with peers may lead to emotional loneliness, which in turn precipitates victimisation. Intervention programmes targeting at reducing victimisation in early adolescence should encourage friendship formations and provide support for friendless students.

The finding that social loneliness and emotional loneliness were both associated with victimisation is important because although previous research on the causes of victimisation had found internalising problems (Hodges & Perry, 1999) and friendlessness (Bukowski, Sippola, & Boivin, 1995; Hodges et al., 1997) to be strongly associated with victimisation, this study may be the first to show convincingly that social and emotional loneliness may lead to peer victimisation. In addition, this study adds a layer to our understanding of the risk factors for peer victimisation. Early adolescence is a period of rapid and qualitative changes in social affiliations, orchestrated by processes related to the onset of puberty, changes in institutions, and a desire for relationships with peers, as well as the opposite sex (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). These disruptions in peer affiliations place adolescents at an increased risk of experiencing internalising mental health problems such as loneliness, depression and social anxiety (La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Rapee & Spence, 2004; Wang et al., 2009). By demonstrating a link between social and emotional loneliness and peer victimisation during a period when many youngsters are at risk of experiencing loneliness, the present study points to a grave potential risk for being vulnerable to peer victimisation.

Perhaps, of the most interesting in the present study was the revelation that social loneliness, more than emotional loneliness, was strongly associated with higher levels of peer victimisation. The data showed that early adolescents who were socially lonely at the beginning of the school year also experienced increased levels of peer victimisation in the subsequent semester of the same school year more than those who reported emotional loneliness. This finding lends some support for previous studies that have shown that being liked or accepted by peers was a more potent buffer against victimisation than the number of reciprocal friendships that a child may have (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Wang et al., 2009). It may be that a lack of peer affiliations or networks (social loneliness) may be a more potent factor than a lack of a close friend (emotional loneliness) in understanding environmental correlates of victimisation. This result demonstrates the importance of peer acceptance to adolescents’ social development and well-being (Prinstein et al., 2001). It also has implications in the assessment of loneliness in youth. Specifically, it emphasises the importance of assessing both dimensions of loneliness in the study of the relations between loneliness and adjustment problems.
Our study demonstrated a significant association between social anxiety and peer victimisation. This association appeared to be linear and inverse to each new semester attended. Specifically, reports of anxiety in the first semester of the school year was associated with increased bullying victimisation in the second semester for seventh graders, with significant but lower levels for eighth graders and ninth graders. This finding adds to the accumulating evidence that shows that social anxiety places children and adolescents at elevated risk for peer victimisation (Egan & Perry, 1998; Fekkes et al., 2006; Hodges et al., 1997; Ranta et al., 2013). A number of explanations can be offered for this. Anxious or shy behaviours make an individual seem vulnerable to prospective bullies and thereby make such a person an easy target for victimisation. Children and adolescents who display weakness, submissiveness, low self-worth, anxiety and who lack friends serve as ideal targets for the bully because the likelihood of retaliation from peers is very low (Craig, 1998; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Egan & Perry, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 1998). This result corroborates other findings from this data that indicate that emotional loneliness (not having intimate close friends) may exacerbate victimisation (see previous discussion). Together, these findings suggest that personal and interpersonal problems may co-occur, and that, in fact, children and adolescents with internalising mental health problems also tend to face interpersonal difficulties, and these together contribute to becoming victimised.

This study has several strengths. The measurement scales used to assess social loneliness and emotional loneliness (Junttila et al., 2010), and the social anxiety scale (Ranta et al., 2012) were previously validated. No information was available on attributes in the home environment which may have confounded the relationship between the independent variables and bullying. Information on the socio-economic status of the households from which the participants came could have also been of value as social inequality has been found to be associated with bullying victimisation. It is possible that variations in social and emotional loneliness may be related to socio-economic inequalities. Furthermore, the main outcome measure, victimisation, was based on a single item and did not refer to the power imbalance and repetition of bullying and the study is based on data from a relatively small sample in one region. The study also captures information only upon entry of secondary school and did not ask about prior or lifetime victimisation. This potentially obscures previous factors which may have been influential in modifying underlying risk of the participants.

There are implications for research and intervention programmes highlighted by the present study. The finding that feelings of loneliness (social and emotional), independently increased adolescents’ risk of peer victimisation demonstrate the importance and usefulness of these dimensions in understanding the correlates of loneliness. Future investigations into the association of loneliness and victimisation should consider using these two dimensions. Such a data would facilitate the drawing of cogent conclusions and help to develop empirically based interventions for victimisation.

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