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The Chain, Consequences, and Care of Aggravated Bullying Victimization:
Based on a sequential process model

This dissertation comprehensively analyzes the reality of bullying in Japan, aiming to elucidate its progression, long-term effects, and the mechanisms underlying the bully-victim cycle. While research on bullying has increased in recent years, many aspects of its complex dynamics remain unclear. This study focuses on the occurrence, aggravation, coping mechanisms, and long-term effects of bullying victimization, clarifying its characteristics through data analysis.

Chapters 1 and 2 review previous studies and confirm the necessity of analyzing bullying in four stages: (1) occurrence, (2) aggravation, (3) resolution, and (4) persistent effects. Particular attention is given to the cycle in which victims become perpetrators, emphasizing that this cycle not only represents the lasting impact of bullying but also serves as a factor in generating new instances of bullying.

Chapter 3 distinguishes between the occurrence and persistence of bullying and examines its actual conditions. The results indicate that although the overall incidence of bullying has slightly declined, repetitive bullying occurring multiple times a week has not significantly decreased, warranting further analysis. Additionally, while there was no gender difference in the occurrence of bullying victimization, gender did influence its persistence. Furthermore, prior experience as a perpetrator strongly influenced the likelihood of experiencing victimization but was not necessarily related to its continuation.

Chapters 4 and 5 investigate the aggravation of bullying, the effectiveness of coping strategies, and long-term effects. A latent class analysis categorized different types of victimization, revealing that various forms of bullying frequently overlap, often co-occurring—victims commonly employed retaliatory actions, except in cases of relational bullying. However, as the severity of bullying

increased, the effectiveness of retaliation diminished, rarely leading to resolution. Additionally, an analysis of long-term effects showed that experiencing multiple forms of bullying significantly increased the risk of depression.

Regarding the persistent effects of bullying victimization, three main symptoms were identified: physical symptoms, reduced activity, and depression. The longer the victimization persisted, the higher the risk of physical symptoms and depression. Moreover, while the effects of bullying were primarily short-term, they could accumulate over time if not addressed, as confirmed through a cross-lagged panel model. While physical symptoms and reduced activity tended to improve once victimization ceased, depression often persisted regardless of resolution.

Chapter 6 examines the mechanisms of revenge, identifying a strong correlation between victimization and perpetration. Victims were more likely to engage in the same type of bullying they had experienced, suggesting that they may adopt the behaviors of their perpetrators as a form of learned retaliation. Furthermore, an analysis of revenge targets revealed that victims did not only retaliate against their bullies but also displayed aggression toward unrelated individuals. Justifying revenge as an acceptable response was found to mediate the bully-victim cycle.

Chapter 7 explores strategies to prevent victims from becoming perpetrators, focusing on the effects of self-distancing and forgiveness. The findings suggest that self-distancing helps regulate emotions in the short term, while forgiveness contributes to long-term recovery.

Based on these findings, this study emphasizes the importance of early intervention and the necessity of stopping bullying and providing support for recovery. Strategies that promote self-distancing and forgiveness are promising approaches for helping victims heal. Future efforts should focus on establishing intervention methods that can be effectively implemented in school settings.

The dissertation committee recognized the significance of this study in three key aspects. First, it conceptualizes bullying as a continuous process and clarifies the cyclic relationship between victimization and perpetration. Second, it highlights the long-term effects of bullying, demonstrating that simply stopping victimization is insufficient and that post-bullying care is essential. Third, it identifies key factors necessary for effective post-bullying care.

However, challenges remain in translating these findings into concrete support measures, and further verification of their effectiveness is required. Nevertheless, this study is highly original and valuable as it redefines bullying as a cycle and presents a novel theoretical framework with practical implications. Based on these considerations, the dissertation committee concluded that the author is qualified to be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree from Hokkaido University.