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## The Impact of Peer Victimization on Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of African-Born Adolescents

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Oluyemi Adejinmi

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

The Impact of Peer Victimization on Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of  
African-Born Adolescents

by

Oluyemi Adejinmi

MS, Walden University, 2017

MS, University of Lagos, 2005

BSc, University of Calabar, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

November 2020

## Abstract

Peer victimization is aggressive behavior, a school stressor, and a social problem that could have significant adverse outcomes on adolescents' psychological, social, and physical well-being. Some of the adverse outcomes of peer victimization in the adolescent population include externalizing and internalizing problems. More insight is needed on the impact of peer victimization on the well-being of adolescents, especially those who belong to minority groups. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of peer victimization on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents in the United States by using Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping. The research questions centered on ascertaining how exposure to different types of peer victimization predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents and which combination of the different types of peer victimization is the best predictor of the selected outcome. A quantitative correlational design with logistic regression was used to analyze secondary data collected from 282 African-born adolescents between 12 and 18 years who participated in the National Center for Education Statistics' 2015 School Crime Supplement. The findings showed that physical assault and intimidation (PAI), verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors (RUB) significantly predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of African-born adolescents while the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted PFA. The findings of this study may promote positive social change by facilitating school leaders' and clinicians' knowledge of the impact of this aggressive behavior on adolescents and selection of appropriate interventions for victims.

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## Dedication

This research work is dedicated to the Almighty God, the giver of life who makes all things beautiful in his time. To my lovely wife and children who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. To my immediate and extended family for their prayers. To everyone who aspires to be of help to humanity and make the world a better place.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Peer victimization involves harmful actions directed at an individual by peers through physical, verbal, or relational unfriendly behaviors (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). Tsaousis (2016) indicated that peer victimization is a significant school stressor as well as a social problem that could be responsible for the display of psychological maladjustments by the victims. The outcomes and consequences of peer victimization negatively impact victims' mental, emotional, and physical well-being, which often manifests in the form of social avoidance, depression, anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and suicidal ideation (Maynard, Vaugh, Salas-Wright, & Vaugh, 2016). Fullchange and Furlong (2016) indicated that there is a significant relationship between peer victimization and decreases in the overall well-being of individuals.

Although peer victimization could occur in several settings, it is worth noting that a considerable portion of this aggressive behavior happens in school settings (Ross, 2002). In this study, I examined the impact of peer victimization on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents in the United States. It was essential to conduct this study because the findings could be useful in identifying how these individuals are affected by peer victimization and how they cope and adjust to this significant stressor. This understanding may help clinicians and researchers in designing interventions for adolescents who encounter this aggressive behavior to ensure that their well-being in different aspects of life is not compromised.

This first chapter contains the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study, followed by the research questions and hypotheses. Other sections in this chapter include the theoretical framework for the study, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms, and the assumptions associated with the study. This chapter also contains the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study and a summary.

### **Background**

Several studies have shown that peer victimization could have significant outcomes on the physical, social, and psychological well-being of adolescents. Tsaousis (2016) mentioned that adolescents and children who experience bullying and peer victimization have an increased risk for mental health problems. Similarly, Sulkowski, Bauman, Wright, Nixon, and Davis (2014) noted that peer victimization could lead to reductions in school attendance, diminished emotional well-being, poor self-esteem, and elevated risks for depression and anxiety. Moon, Karlson, and Kim (2015) stated that there is a significant direct link between peer victimization and suicidal behavior. In line with these views, Rueger and Jenkins (2014) established that peer victimization experiences could adversely affect students' grades, school attitudes, and attendance as well as their academic adjustment and overall achievement due to higher susceptibility of the victims to depression, anxiety, and lower self-esteem. Perren, Ettekal, and Ladd (2013) noted that peer victimization is a predictor of elevated internalizing and externalizing problems in both childhood and adolescence.

Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) established that peer victimization could occur through physical, verbal, and relational unfriendly behaviors while Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) reported that these behaviors could be exhibited either directly or indirectly. In other words, direct peer victimization includes physical assault and intimidation as well as verbal aggression through which the perpetrators intend to cause physical and emotional harm to the victim. On the other hand, indirect peer victimization includes relational unfriendly behaviors that are directed towards damaging individuals' social relationships. Espelage and Swearer (2003) suggested that the existence of an imbalance of power in a peer relationship could be a factor that increases peer victimization experiences. In a similar view, Sulkowski et al. (2014) indicated that immigrant adolescents are prone to peer victimization due to their ethnicity, religion, race, family income, socioeconomic status, and other factors associated with their immigrant identity.

Some researchers have focused on the impact of peer victimization on the psychological functioning of adolescents in several populations, but no researcher has focused on adolescents of African origin in the United States, according to my review of the literature. I conducted this study to help fill the gap in understanding of how peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning of individuals in the selected population. I also wanted to extend knowledge of how African-born adolescents in the United States cope with and adjust to this aggressive behavior.

### **Problem Statement**

Peer victimization is aggressive behavior, a social problem, and a significant school stressor that adversely impacts the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of

the victims (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Tsaousis, 2016). Moon et al. (2015) described adolescence as a critical developmental phase during which individuals are challenged to develop healthy responses to stress. During this developmental stage of life, adverse situations such as peer victimization that tamper with the social, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of an individual could have a lasting negative impact into adulthood (Fanti & Kimonis, 2012). Fanti and Kimonis (2012) further established that peer victimization is most pervasive during adolescence, while Sulkowski et al. (2014) indicated that adolescents from immigrant families are more likely to report victimization by their peers when compared to their nonimmigrant counterparts.

Plenty and Jonsson (2017) indicated that adolescence is characterized by a significant developmental need for social acceptance and peer affiliation. Therefore, stressors such as peer victimization and social exclusion during this period of life could adversely impact the mental health of these individuals as well as their psychological adjustment and functioning. These findings reinforce the need for more insight into the impact of this aggressive behavior on the well-being of individuals in the adolescent population, especially those who belong to minority groups such as U.S. adolescents of African origin.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine how peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of U.S. adolescents who are immigrants of African origin. I focused on the social and psychological impact of peer victimization on the members of this target population as well as the consequences of this



aggressive behavior on their well-being. The independent variable in this study was peer victimization, which could occur in the form of physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors. The dependent variable in this study was psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This quantitative study required the generation of research questions (RQs) and hypotheses to gain insight into the impact of peer victimization on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population and to examine the relevance of the transactional theory of stress and coping to the study. The RQs and hypotheses in this study included

RQ1 Quantitative – Does exposure to physical assault and intimidation predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>1*: Exposure to physical assault and intimidation does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>1*: Exposure to physical assault and intimidation significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ2 Quantitative – Does exposure to verbal aggression predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>2*: Exposure to verbal aggression does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>2*: Exposure to verbal aggression significantly predicts psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ3 Quantitative – Does exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>03</sub>*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>13</sub>*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ4 Quantitative – What model of the combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors best predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>04</sub>*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>14</sub>*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

The theoretical framework for this study was Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that the concepts of appraisal and coping are central to most psychological stress theories. Appraisal refers to individuals' evaluation of the significance of what is happening to their well-being while coping relates to people's efforts to manage the situations around them either in action or thought (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Peer victimization is a social problem, as well as a

significant school stressor (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). In line with this view, Vaillancourt (2018) described prolonged peer victimization as a toxic stressor that chronically activates the body's neuroendocrinal and stress response systems, thereby leading to a cascade of events and outcomes which jeopardize the well-being of individuals. The relationship between adolescents' appraisal of peer victimization events and their psychosocial responses in the form of functioning and adjustment that result from their coping efforts made the transactional theory of stress and coping relevant to the present study.

Danielson and Emmers-Sommer (2017) established that individuals' appraisal of stressful events is relevant to the psychological and social outcomes of such events. In other words, when adolescents appraise specific situations as irrelevant to their well-being, they tend not to experience psychological and social stress responses. On the other hand, when adolescents appraise situations as stressful, their stress responses are triggered, which subsequently mobilizes them to respond to the stressful situation through several coping mechanisms that could be beneficial or harmful. Therefore, this theoretical framework was appropriate for examining how peer victimization impacts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. Also, this theoretical framework helped in knowing which type of peer victimization or the model of the combination of physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors is the best predictor of the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of these individuals. In Chapter 2, I provide additional details on Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of

stress and coping as well as describe appraisal as the pivotal construct in the conceptualization of stress and coping.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was a quantitative study with a correlational design. I conducted the study to examine the relationship between peer victimization and the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population, African-born adolescents residing in the United States. The study involved a deductive approach through the generation of hypotheses as well as analysis of numeric data to test the transactional theory of stress and coping in the selected sample and population. I selected a correlational research design because it was more applicable than an experimental design in that I wanted to determine the relationship between the selected variables without manipulating them. The key variables in this study included peer victimization and psychosocial functioning and adjustment, which were the independent and dependent variables, respectively.

I analyzed secondary data from the National Center for Education Statistics' 2015 School Crime Supplement (SCS), which is a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The data were collected from individuals between 12 and 18 years of age who were enrolled in either private or public schools in the United States and did not receive any aspect of their education through homeschooling. I used the multiple logistic regression method in analyzing the data for this study.

### **Definitions**

*African-born adolescents*: Individuals of African origin in the developmental phase between childhood and adulthood.

*Externalizing problems:* Maladaptive behaviors that an individual directs toward his or her external environment (Hodges & Perry, 1999).

*Immigrant:* An individual who moved from his or her country of birth to live in another country.

*Internalizing problems:* Maladaptive behaviors that affect an individual's internal psychological environment instead of the external world (Hodges & Perry, 1999).

*Peer victimization:* Aggressive behaviors that involve harmful actions directed at an individual by his or her peers through physical, verbal, or relational unfriendly behaviors (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996)

*Psychosocial functioning and adjustment:* A concept that entails how well people harmonize with their psychological, social, and physical environments and situations (Ro & Clark, 2013).

*School engagement:* The formative features of students' educational experiences such as motivations, feelings, and behaviors they adopt towards school (Ladd et al., 2017).

### **Assumptions**

One of the assumptions of this study was that the questionnaires (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012) used in the data collection process were both valid and reliable. Additionally, I assumed that factors that could negatively impact the validity and the reliability of the data such as potential interviewers' bias, as well as participants' potential inattentiveness and social desirability, would be addressed adequately before the conclusions were drawn from the original data set (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2012). Therefore, I deduced that these data could be used in predicting the impact of peer victimization on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. It was also assumed that the data selected for secondary analysis in this study were a true representation of the target population, which could promote the generalizability of the findings.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Ross (2002) described peer victimization as the most common form of aggressive behavior that takes place in U.S schools. Therefore, the scope of this study encompassed the different types of peer victimization that occur in school settings with a focus on adolescents of African origin who are 12 to 18 years old. Incidents of cyberbullying and occurrences of peer victimization outside school settings were not included in this study. To be included in this study, participants needed to be enrolled in Grades 6 through 12 in public or private educational programs in the United States. In other words, individuals who were enrolled in fifth grade and lower were excluded from the study. Additionally, adolescents who had received or were currently receiving any aspect of their education through homeschooling, as well as those who did not report any incidence of peer victimization, were not included in this study.

### **Limitations**

The present study involved a secondary analysis of data that were collected from the National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS. No changes were made to the original data collected during the main study. Therefore, because the data were not collected primarily for this present study, this study is limited

to the information contained in the original data set. Wade and Brannigan (2010) mentioned that one of the inherent limitations of secondary data analysis is that individuals who primarily collected the data set may not have specifically defined information for some variables and categories that are of interest to other researchers. Wade and Brannigan indicated that such omission or lack of specificity could be because the original data collectors did not need the information for their specific purposes, or the information was not considered as an issue of importance at the time of data collection.

### **Significance**

This study was worth conducting because its intent was to add to the knowledge of the field of psychology by promoting the understanding of the impact of peer victimization on African-born adolescents. I also wanted to clarify possible healthy and unhealthy responses of these individuals to this aggressive behavior, particularly when it could span into adulthood. I expect that this study will provide useful information regarding effective psychological interventions for African-born adolescents facing peer victimization to promote their social and mental well-being and favorable integration into society.

### **Summary**

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development that is characterized by challenges to the development of healthy responses to stress (Moon et al., 2015). Therefore, adverse situations such as peer victimization that tamper with the overall well-being of individuals at this developmental stage could lead to deleterious outcomes with lasting negative impacts into adulthood. Using the transactional theory of stress and

coping as the theoretical framework, I examined how peer victimization impacts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents of African origin in the United States. Although the number of African-born adolescents has been increasing in the United States, Harushimana and Awokoya (2011) noted that curriculums and educational planning in the nation's schools do not reflect the presence of these individuals. Therefore, most school curriculums are oblivious to the needs and experiences of these individuals, including experiences of peer victimization. Harushimana and Awokoya also stated that African-born children and adolescents are disadvantaged in Western societies because of how their people and cultural heritages are portrayed. These perspectives make African-born adolescents vulnerable to peer victimization in schools, thereby justifying the importance of studying the impact of this aggressive behavior on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of this population. The discussion in this chapter focused on the significant aspects of the introduction to the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of the existing literature, which sheds more light on the constructs and variables of this study and further establishes the need for this present study and its relevance to the body of knowledge.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine how peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of U.S. adolescents who are immigrants of African origin. Moon et al. (2015) described adolescence as a critical developmental phase during which individuals are challenged to develop healthy responses to stress. During this developmental stage of life, adverse situations such as peer victimization that tamper with the social, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of an individual could have a lasting negative impact into adulthood (Fanti & Kimonis, 2012). Although Fanti and Kimonis (2012) established that peer victimization is most pervasive during adolescence, Sulkowski et al. (2014) indicated that adolescents from immigrant families are more likely to report victimization by their peers when compared to their nonimmigrant counterparts.

It was essential to review prior research to gain an adequate understanding of the impact of peer victimization on the psychosocial functioning of adolescents, especially those who belong to minority groups such as African-born adolescents. Studies have shown that peer victimization is aggressive behavior, which involves harmful actions directed at an individual by peers through physical, verbal, or relational unfriendly behaviors (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). According to Tsaousis (2016), peer victimization is a significant school stressor as well as a social problem that could lead to the display of psychological maladjustments by the victims. In line with this view, Maynard et al. (2016) noted that the outcomes and consequences of peer victimization

impact negatively on the victims' mental, emotional, and physical well-being which manifests in the form of social avoidance, depression, anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and suicidal ideation. Moon et al. (2015) emphasized that there is a significant direct link between peer victimization and suicidal behavior. Similarly, Sulkowski et al. (2014) noted that peer victimization could lead to reductions in school attendance, diminished emotional well-being, poor self-esteem, and elevated risks for depression and anxiety.

This literature review includes a description of the theoretical framework for the study, followed by the description of peer victimization and factors that promote this aggressive behavior as well as its adverse effects on the selected population. Additionally, I discuss psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents, as well as racial and ethnic disparities in the occurrence of peer victimization. The synthesis of theories and findings regarding peer victimization and psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents highlights the rationale for this study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I located relevant journal articles needed to implement the literature review through search engines and databases, which included PsycINFO, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar. The keywords used in the literature search included *peer victimization*, *bullying*, *adolescents*, *African-born adolescents*, *psychosocial functioning*, and *psychosocial adjustment*. Most of the materials used for this literature review were current peer-reviewed journals published within the past 5 years. I also included some older seminal journal articles with information relevant to the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two concepts which are central to most psychological stress theories: appraisal and coping. Appraisal refers to individuals' evaluation of the significance of what is happening to their well-being while coping relates to individuals' efforts to manage the situations around them either in action or thought (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman described psychological stress as a relationship that exists between individuals and their environment when events are appraised as mentally or physically demanding or exceeding their resources to cope, thereby jeopardizing their well-being. Groomes and Leahy (2002) indicated that the transactional theory of stress and coping focuses on explaining the way people manage themselves when they are faced by external and internal demands that exceed their available resources.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) indicated that their theoretical perspective emanated from an effort to increase understanding regarding individual differences in stress and coping. According to Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath (2015), the conceptualization of stress as a transaction between individuals and external stressors in the environment began in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, Lazarus (1966) suggested that the core concept of the transactional perspective is that different individuals could appraise similar events differently, and individuals' appraisals are strong predictors of how events or situations would affect their functioning, adjustment, and coping. In other words, this theoretical perspective is premised on the notion that the impact of the transaction

between individuals and environmental stressors could be attenuated or exacerbated by the appraisal of the situation.

Based on the significance of appraisal in the transactional theory of stress and coping, Lazarus and Folkman highlighted two types of appraisals, which include primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. According to Lazarus and Folkman, primary appraisal of a situation entails an individual's evaluation to determine whether the event is stressful, threatening, positive, or irrelevant. On the other hand, secondary appraisal involves an individual's evaluation of the controllability of an event that had been judged as stressful and threatening through a primary appraisal. In other words, when an event is perceived as positive or irrelevant through primary appraisal, individuals experience no significant threat to their well-being. Conversely, when the situation is viewed as stressful, individuals utilize secondary appraisal to assess the resources at their disposal to control, manage, or cope with the situation. Lazarus and Folkman emphasized that actual coping strategies are mediators of the functional and emotional effects of people's primary and secondary appraisals.

Van Ryzin and Roseth (2018) described peer victimization as an extremely stressful experience that adversely affects up to a third of all adolescents in North America and Europe. Van Ryzin and Roseth further indicated that the stress induced by peer victimization contributes significantly to several adverse outcomes in the adolescent population. These negative outcomes include increased incidence of depression, anxiety, delinquency, and substance abuse as well as reduced school attendance, academic achievement, and self-esteem. Danielson and Emmers-Sommer (2017) utilized the

transactional theory of stress and coping in a study that focused on the outcomes of cyberbullying, specific coping strategies, and support sources of adolescents. The findings of this study showed that individuals' appraisal of stressful events is relevant to the psychological and social outcomes of such events. Additionally, Danielson and Emmers-Sommer indicated that coping efforts focused on regulating stress could either lead to positive outcomes that reduce stress or adverse outcomes that aggravate stress. The relationship between adolescents' appraisal of peer victimization events and their psychosocial responses (in the form of functioning and adjustment) that result from their coping efforts made the transactional theory of stress and coping relevant to this present study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Scientific studies related to aggressive peer relationships feature several terms such as *harassment*, *bullying*, and *victimization* to describe the experiences of the affected individuals (Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005). Additionally, these terms are used in describing aggressive behaviors that are repeatedly and intentionally directed towards causing harm to the victims when there is a power imbalance in a peer relationship (Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005). Although Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) established that peer victimization could occur through physical, verbal, and relational unfriendly behaviors, Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) indicated that these behaviors could be classified as either direct or indirect. In other words, direct peer victimization includes physical assault and intimidation (such as kicking, hitting, and pushing) as well as verbal aggression (such as taunting, teasing, threatening, and name-calling) through which the perpetrators intend to

cause physical and emotional harm. On the other hand, indirect peer victimization includes relational unfriendly behaviors such as social exclusion, rumor spreading, and gossip that are directed towards damaging individuals' social relationships (Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005; Plenty & Jonsson, 2017).

The concept of psychosocial functioning and adjustment is essential when considering the impact of peer victimization on the adolescent population. Freitas et al. (2017) indicated that peer victimization has adverse effects on adolescents' psychosocial functioning. According to Freitas et al. (2017), individuals' psychosocial functioning and adjustment when faced with peer victimization could be measured by evaluating the presence of certain factors which are known to be associated with this aggressive behavior. These factors include internalizing problems (such as suicidality, anxiety, and depression), externalizing problems (such as attention problems, aggression, and conduct problems), and diminished physical health. Peer victimization is also associated with decreased levels of cognitive functioning, optimism, self-efficacy, persistence, self-esteem, and perception of support, as well as increased levels of loneliness (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016; Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014).

Although Ross (2002) described peer victimization as the most common form of aggressive behavior which takes place in U.S schools, Sharkey et al. (2015) emphasized that the significance of an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim should not be overlooked when considering peer victimization as a social problem. Espelage and Swearer (2003) indicated that the existence of imbalance of power in a peer relationship could make it challenging for the victims of peer victimization to defend

themselves and put an end to the aggressive act. Immigrant status of adolescents creates power imbalance and disadvantage which could predispose them to peer victimization (Plenty & Jonsson, 2017; Sulkowski et al., 2014;). Similarly, Sulkowski et al. (2014) established that adolescents are prone to peer victimization because of their ethnicity, religion, race, family income, socioeconomic status, and other factors associated with their immigrant identity.

In conjunction with the view of Sulkowski et al. (2014), the conceptual framework utilized in the study conducted by Sharkey et al. (2015) regarding the relationship between peer victimization and the psychosocial functioning of adolescents was beneficial to this current study. The findings of this study revealed that adolescents who reported frequent and repeated victimization, as well as the perception of power disadvantages, exhibited impaired psychosocial functioning and adjustment. Plenty and Jonsson (2017) mentioned that the period of adolescence is characterized by a significant developmental need for social acceptance and peer affiliation. Therefore, peer victimization and social exclusion at this stage of development could adversely impact adolescents' mental health and social functioning. Wright, Giammarino, and Parad (1986) established that peer affiliation is essential for immigrant adolescents because it enhances their integration into the host culture, and it promotes their mental well-being as well as the opportunities for language skills development. However, these benefits associated with peer affiliation are hindered when adolescents experience rejection and victimization because they are different from others due to their immigrant identity.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables**

In line with the purpose of this present study in examining how peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents, this literature review considered and synthesized studies related to the constructs of interest as well as the methodologies used by previous researchers. Additionally, the key variables and concepts related to this research problem were reviewed. The approaches used by researchers within the field of psychology in studying this problem were considered without leaving out the strengths and limitations of such approaches. This review of literature helped in justifying the rationale for the choices of the variables, constructs, and population of this present study based on identifiable gaps in the literature.

#### **Peer Victimization**

Peer victimization is aggressive behavior, a social problem, and a significant school stressor which adversely impacts the victims' mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Tsaousis, 2016). According to Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996), peer victimization could be categorized as direct or indirect based on the experience of physical, verbal, relational hostile behaviors. It is noteworthy that several studies have linked this aggressive behavior with many adverse outcomes in the adolescent population. Vaillancourt (2018) described prolonged peer victimization as a toxic stressor which chronically activates the body's neuroendocrinal and stress response systems, thereby, leading to a cascade of events and outcomes which jeopardize the psychological, social, and physical well-being of individuals. Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar,



and Heim (2009) established that there is an increase in the prevalence of different forms of psychopathology such as anxiety and depression during adolescence because the human brain is significantly sensitive to elevated levels of stress hormones at this developmental stage of life. Therefore, heightened stress caused by peer victimization during adolescence could predispose these individuals to adverse outcomes regarding their physical and psychosocial functioning and adjustment.

The study conducted by Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, and Ruan (2004) focused on determining whether there is consistency in the relationship between peer victimization and psychosocial functioning across countries based on standard methods and measures. The data collection for this collaborative study was implemented in 25 countries within North America and Europe with adolescents as the target population. The findings of this study indicated that the relationship between peer victimization and adverse psychosocial functioning and adjustment was similar across countries, which led to the conclusion that peer victimization is a crucial international issue regarding the adolescents' health and well-being. It is noteworthy that the strength of this study was based on its large sample size with a good representation of individuals of ages across the adolescent years. However, this study had limitations because the countries involved were in Europe and North America. This limitation made it unrealistic to generalize the findings of the study to other parts of the world due to differences in culture and social norms (Nansel et al., 2004).

## **Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment**

Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) stated that the psychosocial consequences of peer victimization are significant for adolescents. Ro and Clark (2013) described psychosocial functioning as a broad construct which encompasses other constructs that are more specific to the quality of individuals' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and fundamental functioning. Trevisan, Bass, Powell, and Eckard (2017) mentioned that one of the constructs related to psychosocial functioning is adjustment which entails how well people harmonize with their psychological, social, and physical environments and situations. Additionally, Ro and Clark (2013) established that another significant element of psychosocial functioning is individuals' well-being because it is conceptualized as a subjective measure of this construct. This literature review examined the different aspects of psychosocial functioning and adjustment as this construct is related to peer victimization in the adolescent population.

**Self-efficacy, self-awareness, and overall well-being.** The study conducted by Fullchange and Furlong (2016) focused on exploring the relationship between victimization and factors that contribute to the social and emotional well-being of adolescents such as belief in self, belief in others, and engaged living. According to Fullchange and Furlong, belief in self encompasses self-efficacy, self-awareness, and persistence, while belief in others is a measure of peer support, family coherence, and school support. Engaged living encompasses optimism and gratitude (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016). This study examined whether there is a link between being a victim of peer victimization and diminished overall well-being of adolescents. Additionally, the

study focused on finding out the level of victimization at which the factors related to individuals' overall well-being would diminish significantly. Fullchange and Furlong concluded that there is a significant relationship between peer victimization and decreased overall well-being of the participants. This conclusion was drawn from the evidence of decreased motivation for engaged living, belief in self, and belief in others reported by the participants, even when victimization occurred at low frequencies such as less than two or three times per month. This finding indicated that even at low frequencies, peer victimization adversely impacts individuals' psychosocial functioning and well-being. It is noteworthy that the strength of this study was based on the utilization of a complete mental health perspective related to positive psychology to examine the effects of peer victimization on adolescents' psychological, social, and emotional well-being.

**School engagement and academic achievement.** Totura, Karver, and Gesten (2014) established that peer victimization is a significant national and international problem which contributes to several social, emotional, and behavioral consequences in adolescence. Totura et al. (2014) used the structural equation modeling in testing a theoretical model which suggested that student engagement and psychological distress are mediating factors in the relationship between victimization experience and contemporaneous academic achievement. The findings of this study revealed relationships among peer victimization, psychological distress, and student engagement as well as academic achievement. In other words, Totura et al. (2014) established that

peer victimization is a significant predictor of psychological distress, which consequently impairs students' engagement processes, thereby, leading to poor academic achievement.

The approach used by Ladd, Ettekal, and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2017) focused on determining the relationship between patterns of peer victimization and students' academic achievement. Although previous studies have associated peer victimization with decreased academic achievements, Ladd et al. (2017) suggested that achievement should not be considered as the most sensitive or proximal indicator of the adverse outcomes of peer victimization. Instead, Ladd et al. (2017) emphasized that the formative features of students' educational experiences such as motivations, feelings, and behaviors they adopt towards school as well as the perceptions they have regarding their academic abilities may be more sensitive measures in evaluating the impact of peer victimization on school adjustment and outcomes. Additionally, Ladd et al. (2017) indicated that students' academic learning and achievement are strictly related to three forms of school engagements which include emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagements. According to Ladd et al. (2017), emotional engagement involves student's attitudes towards school, which is linked with their feelings about their peers, the school environment, and teachers.

On the other hand, cognitive engagement entails the levels of effort which students put into learning tasks while behavioral engagement involves cooperative participation in tasks, persistence, taking initiatives, and efforts made towards the adoption of classroom rules. It is noteworthy that in line with the chronic stress hypothesis, the findings of the study conducted by Ladd et al. (2017) revealed that high

and chronic peer victimization were significantly related to prolonged lower school engagements, decreased students' academic self-perception, and poor academic achievements. The strength of this study was in its approach in determining how different trajectories of peer victimization are related to students' academic achievements across the formal school years.

The conclusion drawn from a short-term longitudinal study conducted by Rueger and Jenkins (2014) was like that of Ladd et al. (2017) regarding academic performance and adjustment. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the frequency of peer victimization on the academic and psychological adjustments of students from schools with remarkable socioeconomic and ethnic diversified populations during early adolescence. Rueger and Jenkins established that peer victimization experiences could have adverse effects on affected students' grades as well as school attitudes and attendance due to their higher susceptibility to depression, anxiety, and lower self-esteem. According to Rueger and Jenkins, the direct effects of peer victimization on individuals' psychological adjustment could mediate the impact of this aggressive behavior on their academic adjustment and achievement. Similarly, Wormington, Anderson, Schneider, Tomlinson, and Brown (2016) stated that because a considerable portion of peer victimization occurs in school settings, it is reasonable to expect that adolescents who face this type of victimization will likely exhibit maladaptive school adjustment and poor academic functioning. The findings of the study conducted by Wormington et al. (2016) revealed that peer victimization had a significant negative association with academic performance and a positive association with adolescents' rate of truancy.

**Adolescent alcohol-drinking behavior.** Davis et al. (2018) carried out a study which examined the longitudinal links between peer victimization, academic achievement, depression, and problematic drinking in a racially diverse adolescent population. Davis et al. (2018) described peer victimization as a notable contributor to the formation and escalation of alcohol-consuming behavior among adolescents. By using the interpersonal risk model in this study, Davis et al. (2018) established that elevated distress in peer relationships as a result of victimization constitutes a severe life stressor which subsequently results in both short and long-term adverse outcomes. In other words, adolescents who encounter peer victimization have the increased likelihood of developing poor self-esteem, depression, and negative self-evaluation of their academic competence which could lead to problematic drinking when alcohol consumption is utilized as a coping mechanism in dealing with stress.

**Sleep difficulties.** Some studies have linked peer victimization with sleep difficulties in the adolescent population (Chang, Chang, Lin, Wu, & Yen, 2018; Lepore & Klierer, 2013; Tu, Erath, & El-Sheikh, 2015). Tu et al. (2015) mentioned that sleep problems have a significant relationship with a wide range of adjustment problems in adolescents which could predict the extent to which peer victimization impacts the adaptation of these individuals. Further, Tu et al. (2015) suggested that sleep could play a moderating role in the relationship between peer victimization, externalizing, and internalizing problems during the developmental stage of adolescence. Using a psychosocial approach with a focus on the interplay among psychological, social, and bioregulatory factors, the findings of the study conducted by Tu et al. (2015) established

that peer victimization contributes significantly to the development of sleep problems in adolescents. Additionally, optimal sleep has a direct association with positive psychosocial adjustments while sleep difficulties exacerbate adolescents' externalizing and internalizing problems when dealing with stressful situations such as peer victimization (Tu et al., 2015). In line with this view, Chang et al. (2018) indicated that rumination and fear associated with peer victimization could produce traumatic stress responses which hinder adolescents' ability to relax, fall asleep, and have a high-quality sleep.

**Internalizing and externalizing problems.** The findings of the study carried out by Perren, Ettekal, and Ladd (2013) established that peer victimization is a predictor of increases in internalizing and externalizing problems in childhood and adolescence. Jensen-Campbell, Boyd, Arana, and Lee (2017) described peer victimization as a social stressor with many adverse outcomes. According to Jensen-Campbell et al. (2017), the plasticity of the human brain enables it to adapt to changes based on the inputs it receives from the environmental. In other words, when stimulations from the environmental are hostile or harmful, plasticity could cause an adolescent's brain to be at risk of incorporating stressful information into its social, biological, and psychological development. Subsequently, these alterations adversely affect the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the individual (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2017). Studies have shown that peer victimization is associated with internalizing problems which include depression, loneliness, anxiety, negative affect, and poor self-concept, as well as suicidal ideation and behaviors (Geoffroy et al., 2015; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2017; Schneider,

O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Takizawa et al., 2014). Stewart, Valeri, Esposito, and Auerbach (2018) indicated that peer victimization is significantly related to increased suicidal thoughts and behaviors in adolescents both concurrently and over time.

Similarly, Crepeau-Hobson and Leech (2016) indicated that adolescents who face victimization frequently, and those who are victims of several forms of aggression are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors as well as depression.

Cohen, Shahar, and Brunstein Klomek (2019) identified self-blame and aggression as some of the adolescents' ways of coping with peer victimization. In a study conducted to examine the role which adolescents' self-blame and aggression play in the development of depression and suicidal ideation, Cohen et al. (2019) found out that self-blame had a significant relationship with depression and suicidal ideation when adolescents encounter peer victimization. In other words, adolescents who blame themselves for their victimization experiences were more likely to develop depression and suicidality when compared to those who did not use self-blame as a coping style. However, Cohen et al. (2019) did not find a direct effect of aggressive coping on the relationship between peer victimization and depression or suicidal ideation. Hong, Voison, Kim, Allen-Meares, and Espelage (2019) emphasized that depression is a crucial indicator of emotional adjustment in adolescents, and individuals in this population who experience peer victimization display poorer psychosocial functioning when compared to unaffected adolescents. Additionally, studies have identified depressive symptoms as significant predictors of substance use (Diego, Field, & Sanders, 2003; King, Iacono, &



McGue, 2004) as well as mediators of the relationship between peer victimization and risk-taking behaviors (Hong et al., 2019; Luk, Wang, & Simons-Morton, 2010).

Storch, Nock, Masia-Warner, and Barlas (2003) reported that peer victimization has a significant relationship with social avoidance, fear of negative evaluation, loneliness, and social anxiety in Hispanic and African American adolescents. According to Storch et al. (2003), adverse peer experiences are usually internalized by the victims leading to increased incidences of depression, anxiety, and rumination over how other individuals evaluate them. Additionally, when adolescents affected by peer victimization try to cope with this stressor, they avoid social interactions that could create conducive environments and opportunities for further victimization. This social avoidance could limit their opportunity of engaging in potentially positive relationships and the development of social skills (Storch et al., 2003).

Some externalizing problems associated with peer victimization based on findings from related studies include aggression, conduct disorders, delinquency, oppositional disorders, challenges with school adjustment, and impaired social satisfaction. (Fanti & Kimonis, 2012; Hodges & Perry, 1999; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2017; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Peer victimization is positively associated with both proactive and reactive aggression in adolescents (Camodeca, Goossens, Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002; Fung et al., 2019). Fung et al. (2019) described proactive aggression as a narcissistic, callous, and reward-driven type of aggression which overestimates the positive results of utilizing aggression and underestimates the negative consequences associated with such actions. On the other hand, reactive aggression is characterized by impulsivity, easily infuriated

responses, and poor regulation of emotions (Fung et al., 2019). Similarly, Hodges and Perry (1999) indicated that victimized children and adolescents exhibit personal and externalizing problems such as argumentativeness, disruptiveness, dishonesty, and aggression, all of which adversely impact their social relationships and worsen their victimization experiences over time. The longitudinal study conducted by Boyes, Bowes, Cluver, Ward, and Badcock (2014) focused on investigating the prospective relationship between peer victimization, externalizing, and internalizing symptoms in South African adolescents. Boyes et al. (2014) concluded that multiple exposures to victimization experiences are predictors of conduct problems and psychosocial maladjustments in affected adolescents.

### **African-Born Adolescents**

African-born adolescents are individuals of African origin in the developmental phase between childhood and adulthood. Akinsulure-Smith, Mirpuri, Chu, Keatley, and Rasmussen (2016) mentioned that the migration of Black immigrant families had been increasing in the United States over the past few decades. Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2016) further stated that 11% of Black children in the United States belong to immigrant families while Sub-Saharan Africans have contributed significantly to the number and growth of Black immigrant families in the United States.

During the developmental phase of adolescence, Arnett (2007) emphasized that individuals undergo exploration of identity, and there are notable changes in the relationship between children and parents. In other words, these individuals desire to spend more time with their peers compared to their parents, and they choose to make

lesser disclosures to their parents. This view indicates that African-born adolescents regard positive peer relationships and social inclusion as beneficial because these factors contribute significantly to their well-being and psychosocial development. On the other hand, Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2016) stated that African parents in the United States often express concerns about external and peer influences on their children due to cultural differences. Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2016) reported that African-born adolescents make efforts in managing their parents' fears and concerns regarding their peer relationships by minimally disclosing issues such as their victimization experiences while at the same time striving towards establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with their peers.

Harushimana and Awokoya (2011) mentioned that African-born immigrants come from diverse cultures that are not thoroughly known internationally, and some of these cultures are misrepresented publicly. Therefore, African-born adolescents in the United States usually have a sense of social marginalization, and they encounter unequal opportunities. Also, African-born adolescents are intellectually intimidated by their peers because their educational abilities and experiences are considered as inferior (Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011). In line with this view, Traore and Lukens (2006) mentioned that African-born immigrant students in middle schools and high schools in the United States could have a sense of shame when their peers victimize them because they are viewed as primitive, and their countries of origin are classified as underdeveloped and backward. Harushimana and Awokoya suggested that misrepresentation of the cultural identity of African-born adolescents could make them

vulnerable to peer victimization, which is detrimental to their overall psychosocial well-being and integration into the dominant society.

The rationale for selecting the variables and concepts of this present study was justifiable from the literature due to the impact of peer victimization on the well-being of adolescents in the previously studied population while little was known about how the target population of this study responds and adjusts to the different forms of peer victimization.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Based on the findings of previous literature, peer victimization is a stressor that could adversely impact the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents as well as the physical and mental health of these individuals. Peer victimization is a significant school stressor as well as a social problem that could lead to the display of psychological maladjustments by the victims (Tsaousis, 2016). According to Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996), peer victimization involves harmful actions directed at an individual by peers through physical, verbal, or relational unfriendly behaviors. It is noteworthy that adolescence is a critical developmental phase during which individuals are challenged to develop healthy responses to stress (Moon et al., 2015). Also, adolescence is characterized by a significant developmental need for social acceptance and peer affiliation (Plenty & Jonsson, 2017). Therefore, it could be concluded based on the findings of previous studies that stressors such as peer victimization and social exclusion during adolescence could adversely impact the mental health of these individuals as well as their psychological adjustment and functioning.

A review of the literature also revealed that peer victimization in adolescence could lead to impaired self-efficacy, self-awareness, and overall well-being. Other possible adverse outcomes of peer victimization as indicated by the literature include diminished social and school engagement, reduced academic achievement, sleep difficulties that could exacerbate stress responses, adolescent alcohol-drinking behavior, and risk-taking behaviors, as well as internalizing and externalizing problems.

Ross (2002) identified peer victimization as the most common form of aggressive behavior which takes place in schools. Similarly, Hong et al. (2019) indicated that in 2013, 22% of students between 12 and 18 years reported peer victimization experiences in public schools in the United States. Although some studies had shown that peer victimization is prevalent during adolescence, Sulkowski et al. (2014) established that adolescents from immigrant families are more likely to report peer victimization experiences when compared to their nonimmigrant counterparts. Sulkowski et al. (2014) further suggested that this increased likelihood of victimization could be due to factors associated with adolescents' immigrant identity as well as power imbalance between the perpetrators and the victims (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Notably, it is not yet known if these conclusions apply to African-born adolescents because most previous studies on this aggressive behavior and its impact on the well-being of adolescents had focused on Western and Eastern populations. Therefore, this present study will fill the gap in understanding how peer victimization (that is, physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors) affects African-born adolescents, and to know the role which their cultural

backgrounds and other factors could play in their coping and adjustment to this aggressive behavior. Additionally, this present study will extend knowledge in the discipline by providing findings that are specific to the target population, thereby minimizing generalizations from studies that focused on populations from other cultures.

It is noteworthy that individuals in this selected population could be exposed to multiple types of peer victimization. This study will examine the impact of each type of peer victimization independent of other types on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Additionally, the effect of exposure to combinations of the different types of peer victimization will be examined to determine which of the combinations is the best predictor of psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine how peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. In this chapter, I focus on the methodology and research design that I used in carrying out the study. This chapter includes sections on the study variables, identification of the research design and its link with the RQs as well as the resource and time constraints associated with the research design. Additionally, this section will include the rationale for the choice of the research design and its consistency with the advancement of knowledge in the field of psychology. Other major sections covered in this chapter include the descriptions of the target population, sampling procedures, instrumentation and data collection procedures, operationalization of the variables, and data analysis plan as well as the reliability of the data, threats to validity, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The independent variable in this study was peer victimization, which could take different forms such as physical, verbal, or relational unfriendly behaviors, while the dependent variable was the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Through secondary data analysis, I examined whether these different forms of peer and the combinations of the different types of peer victimization could predict the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

Burkholder, Cox, and Crawford (2016) mentioned that research designs convey how researchers plan to answer the RQs associated with their studies. In other words,

elements such as measurement of variables, strategies for sampling, and other specific structural features of studies help in linking the RQs with the data collected by researchers. I used a correlational design to examine the relationship between peer victimization and the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. The study involved a deductive approach regarding the generation of hypotheses as well as the collection and analysis of numeric data to test the transactional theory of stress and coping in the selected sample and population.

The rationale for selecting a correlational research design was because it was more applicable than experimental designs in that I wanted to determine the relationship, if any, between the selected variables without manipulating them. The chosen research design was appropriate for this study because of its connection with the RQs in finding out how peer victimization could predict the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. The different types of peer victimization that were examined in this study included physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors. Individuals in this selected population could be exposed to multiple types of peer victimization. Therefore, I examined the impact of each type of peer victimization independent of other types on psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Additionally, the effect of exposure to combinations of the different types of peer victimization was examined to determine which of the combinations is the best predictor of psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. Through the use of a correlational design, I sought to answer the RQs which focus on determining whether the different types of peer victimization, as well as



the combinations of different types of peer victimization, would predict the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. Multiple logistic regression was used for data analysis in this study. Burkholder et al. (2016) suggested that multiple regression analysis is the method of choice when there are two or more predictor variables in a study.

Singleton and Straits (2005) established that a quantitative approach helps researchers in applying the findings of their studies to the entire population from which a representative sample was drawn. This view indicates that the research method chosen for this study may help in advancing knowledge in the field of psychology regarding how the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents could be affected by peer victimization.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

The target population for this present study was African-born adolescents. The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2018) established that ethnic and racial diversity is higher in the child population when compared to the adult population in the United States, and this diversity is increasing among adolescents. The United States Census Bureau (2014) indicated that approximately 1.6 million African-born immigrants lived in the United States in 2012, and 25% of all children under the age of 17 in the United States are first- or second-generation immigrants with one or both parents born outside of the United States. Based on these data, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics projected that by 2020, children and adolescents

from immigrant families who belong to ethnic minority groups will comprise half of the population of individuals below the age of 18. I drew the sample for this study from the adolescent immigrant population of African origin in the United States.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

Burkholder et al. (2016) mentioned that the goal of sampling in research is to maximize the generalizability of the findings and minimize the possibilities of sampling errors. In devising the sampling techniques for this study, I focused on selecting a sample from the target population that served as its optimal representation. I analyzed secondary data from the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS for this study. A stratified, multistage cluster sampling design was the approach used by researchers involved in SCS and NCVS.

Babbie (2017) described stratification as a way of grouping units that make up a population into homogenous groups before sampling is implemented. According to Babbie, a multistage cluster sampling involves the initial sampling of groups of elements or clusters, after which there are selections of elements within each of the selected clusters. Babbie indicated that this sampling design ensures adequate representativeness of a sample drawn from a population because it improves and refines the selected sample. Additionally, Babbie noted that homogeneity is the primary goal of stratification. Therefore, a notable justification for utilizing this sampling procedure is that it reduces sampling error and helps in making inferences about the population.

National Center for Education Statistics' researchers used stratified multistage cluster sampling in dividing the United States into four regions, that is, Northeast,

Midwest, South, and West. Subsequently, these regions are stratified into states, counties, and locale within which eligible households are identified. Individuals who are 12 years and older are drawn from the selected households to complete the NCVS questionnaire (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Afterward, those who are between 12 and 18 years of age are counted as eligible to complete the SCS over 6 months (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria.** For individuals to be eligible to participate in this study, they must have been between 12 and 18 years of age and be identified as adolescents of African origin. Additionally, the participants must have been currently enrolled in public or private educational programs that lead to obtaining a high school diploma. To be included in this study, participants needed to be enrolled in Grades 6 through 12. Individuals who were enrolled in fifth grade and lower were excluded from the study. Adolescents who had received or were currently receiving any aspect of their education through homeschooling were also excluded from this study. Students who did not report incidents of any incidence of bullying or peer victimization were also excluded from this study.

**Sample size determination.** Jones, Carley, and Harrison (2003) described power and sample estimations as measures of determining the number of participants that are needed in a study to avoid a Type I or a Type II error. According to Jones et al. (2003), a Type I error refers to the occurrence of rejecting the null hypothesis incorrectly, while a Type II error occurs when the null hypothesis is accepted incorrectly. Therefore, an accurate sample size estimation is essential to ensure that the right inferences are made

about the population through the analysis of data collected from the sample. Kadam and Bhalerao (2010) mentioned that several methods could be used in calculating sample size depending on the type of study design and data. This study was a quantitative study with correlational design in which the multiple logistic regression method was utilized for the analysis of data.

Green (1991) suggested that in sample size estimation, the rule of thumb is that no less than fifty participants will be needed in studies (involving correlation or regression) that focus on examining the relationships between variables. Additionally, Green noted that the required number of participants in such studies increases as the number of independent variables increases. Therefore, Green recommended that a minimum of  $N \geq 50 + 8k$  will be needed for sample size estimation for tests of multiple R (where N is the number of participants and k is the number of independent variables) while a minimum of  $N \geq 104 + k$  is needed for tests of significance of individual predictors. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) emphasized that the ratio of the sample size to the number of independent variables needs to be substantial for a regression model to produce believable results. Therefore, the larger of the two minimum sample sizes recommended by Green (1991) was used in deciding the sample size for this study. Using the three different types of peer victimization (that is, physical intimidation and assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors) as independent variables in this study indicated that the minimum sample size for the study was  $N \geq 104 + 3 = 107$ .

Selya, Rose, Dierker, Hedeker, and Mermelstein (2012) stated that Cohen's  $f^2$  is suitable for calculating the effect size in a multiple regression model. According to Cohen

(1988), the effect size is represented by  $(f^2) = R^2/1-R^2$ . This formula was used in calculating the effect size in this study. Based on the guideline given by Cohen (1988),  $f^2 \geq 0.02$ ,  $f^2 \geq 0.15$ , and  $f^2 \geq 0.35$  stand for small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively. The power level for the data analysis in this study was 0.8 (Cohen, 1992), while the alpha level was 0.05. Aron and Aron (1999) mentioned that a significance level of 0.05 gives 95% confidence to researchers that the results of their studies represent a non-chance finding.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The data for secondary analysis in this study were collected from the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS. Individuals recruited for the main study were adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age who were enrolled in both public and private schools without receiving any part of their education through homeschooling. At the time of the recruitment and data collection, these participants were in Grades 6 to 12 in programs leading to obtaining a high school diploma and must have attended school during the school year within which the surveys and interviews were conducted.

The researchers involved in NCVS and SCS utilized a mixed mode of data collection. In other words, data were collected through a sample survey and telephone interview by trained personnel from National Center for Education Statistics. The sample survey, which involved in-person interviews with individuals from sampled households, was used as the first mode of data collection. Subsequently, telephone interviews via both cell phones and landlines were used as the second mode of data collection from the

sampled households. It is noteworthy that the data collection process for individuals from newly sampled households was conducted through face-to-face interviews while telephone and computer-assisted interviewing were used for individuals from recurring households. The data collection process for the main SCS study lasted for six months, that is, from January to June of the data collection year. The questions answered by respondents covered issues such as their perceptions and experiences with victimization that happened at different locations in their school, their reports of the frequency of peer victimization, occurrence of different types of bullying or victimization, their attitudes about fears of victimization (such as avoidance behaviors), and the adverse effects of this aggressive behavior.

I downloaded the SCS data from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Therefore, to gain access to the data for this study, it was a requirement that I needed to register with this organization by creating an online user account (see Appendix A). The creation of this account involved disclosing that I am a doctoral student from Walden University as well as agreeing to the terms of the repository that the data will be strictly used for dissertation purposes. An agreement with the responsible use of data from ICPSR also involved ensuring that the downloaded data are not redistributed to other individuals and organizations without the permission of the agency.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

The instruments used in the data collection process for the main study included NCVS-1, NCVS-2, and SCS-1 questionnaires. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018)

described NCVS as the United States' primary source of information on criminal victimization. It is noteworthy that the NCVS questionnaires were used in determining the eligibility of the respondents to participate in the SCS survey and interview. The SCS was jointly designed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Center for Education Statistics as a supplement to NCVS so that additional information regarding school crimes and victimization, as well as students' characteristics could be collected nationwide. The SCS was first administered in 1989 as an annual data collection process, but the frequency changed to a biennial data collection process since 1999 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). This data collection instrument was relevant to this study because the SCS questionnaire contains questions whose responses could be analyzed and used in answering the RQs.

Burkholder et al. (2016) described validity as the ability of an instrument to measure what it was designed to measure while reliability at the data collection stage refers to the consistency of responses when the same sampling strategy is used over time. The SCS questionnaire utilized in the data collection process of the main study had been used with the adolescent population and proven to be valid and reliable due to its pretesting, standardization, national representation, and use over many years by several studies. Therefore, it could be deduced that this present study benefited from extracting and analyzing the data sets collected through this instrument.

**Operationalization of constructs.** Operationalization refers to the process by which a concept that may have different meanings based on people's perspectives is translated into a variable that has a measurable attribute and could be tested empirically

(Burkholder et al., 2016). The concepts related to this study are operationalized in terms of the independent and dependent variables.

***Independent variable.*** The independent variable in this study was peer victimization, which could take the form of physical, verbal, and relational unfriendly behaviors. In this study, these forms of peer victimization are measured as categorical variables. In other words, aggressive behaviors such as kicking, pushing, and hitting were categorized as physical assault and intimidation while taunting, teasing, threatening, and name-calling were categorized as verbal aggression. Additionally, actions such as social exclusion, rumor spreading, and gossips were categorized as relational unfriendly behaviors. Responses related to individuals' experiences with these different forms of peer victimization were further categorized into two groups, that is, Yes or No.

***Dependent variable.*** The dependent variable in this study was psychosocial functioning and adjustment. Ro and Clark (2013) identified psychosocial functioning and adjustment as a broad construct that encompasses other constructs that are more specific to the quality of individuals' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and fundamental functioning. For the purpose of this study, responses related to the dependent variable were categorized into two groups (Yes or No.). These responses examined the presence of the outcomes and effects of peer victimization on the well-being of these adolescents. Therefore, the dependent variable in this study was measured as a categorical variable.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The software platform used for the analysis of data in this study was IBM SPSS Statistics, and the multiple logistic regression method was used to examine the effects of



the independent variables on the dependent variable. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered in extracting the data for analysis in this study.

The RQs and hypotheses for this study included

RQ1 Quantitative – Does exposure to physical assault and intimidation predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>1*: Exposure to physical assault and intimidation does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>1*: Exposure to physical assault and intimidation significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ2 Quantitative – Does exposure to verbal aggression predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>2*: Exposure to verbal aggression does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>2*: Exposure to verbal aggression significantly predicts psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ3 Quantitative – Does exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>3*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>3*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ4 Quantitative – What model of the combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors best predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>0</sub>4*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>1</sub>4*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

The multiple logistic regression method was the statistical test utilized in testing these hypotheses. Field (2013) described logistic regression as a multiple regression that has a categorical outcome variable with predictor variables that are continuous or categorical. In other words, logistic regression is a statistical test that could be used in predicting categorical outcomes from either categorical or continuous predictor variables. Additionally, this method of analysis could be used in evaluating the level of significance of the contribution of predictor variables to the occurrence of a dichotomous outcome variable. Therefore, in this study, logistic regression was used in analyzing the relationship between the different forms of peer victimization and psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population.

The results associated with the independent variables were reported as odds ratios (ORs) with a confidence interval (CI) of 95%. Stoltzfus (2011) stated that odds ratios indicate the strength of the contribution of the independent variable to the outcome and

could be described as the odds of the occurrence of the outcome ( $Y$ ) versus nonoccurrence ( $1 - Y$ ) for each independent variable. Field (2013) noted that values for odds ratios vary between 0 (nonoccurrence of outcome) and 1 (occurrence of outcome). That is, when a value is close to 0, this means that  $Y$  is very unlikely to have occurred, whereas a value that is close to 1 indicates that  $Y$  is very likely to have happened. According to Stoltzfus, 95% confidence intervals are usually reported with odds ratios as indications of precision regarding whether the findings are likely to be true in the larger population that was not measured.

The R-statistic, which varies from -1 to 1 will be used to explain the partial correlation between the dependent variable and each independent variable in the model. Field (2013) mentioned that a positive R-statistic value shows that as the independent variable increases, the likelihood of the occurrence of the outcome also increases. On the other hand, a negative value implies that as the predictor variable increases, the probability of the occurrence of the outcome decreases. Additionally, a small value of R-statistic indicates that the associated variable contributes minimally to the model. The z-statistic will reveal whether the  $b$  coefficient for a specific predictor is significantly different from zero (Field, 2013). In a case whereby the  $b$  coefficient is significantly different from zero, it could be assumed that the independent variable is making a significant contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable. Based on the significance of the chi-square statistic when compared with the set alpha level, it will be determined whether the null hypothesis will be accepted or rejected.

The alpha ( $\alpha$ ) level for the statistical analysis in this study was set at 0.05 level. Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2015) described alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as the level of probability (that is determined in advance) at which the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, the null hypothesis will be rejected when the p-level is less than or equal to 0.05, and the alternative hypothesis will be accepted. On the other hand, the null hypothesis will be accepted, while the alternative hypothesis will be rejected when the p-level is greater than 0.05.

### **Threats to Validity**

Stoltzfus (2011) described internal validity as replicability within the same data set, while external validity refers to the generalizability of the findings beyond the current sample. It is noteworthy that internal validity related to a study is also based on the consideration of the extent to which the outcome of the study could be explained by the effects of the predictor variables on the dependent variable without the use of alternative explanations. One notable factor that could be a threat to the validity of this study is the timeline of the data collection process. Burkholder et al. (2016) described this factor as the history threat or the likelihood that other events might have happened during the period of the study that could affect the outcome. It is worth noting that the data collection process for the main study lasted for six months regarding the information on victimization that occurred within a school year. Due to this timeline, there were possibilities that some of the participants may not totally recollect the details of their victimization experiences. Therefore, this situation could lead to under or overestimation of the impact of peer victimization on their psychosocial functioning. Additionally, due to

the sensitive nature of peer victimization as a topic, participants might want to give socially acceptable responses on the questionnaires to avoid being viewed as victims or individuals who are physically and emotionally weak. This perception could promote incorrect responses, thereby introducing bias that could threaten the internal validity of the study.

In addition to social desirability, McKibben and Silvia (2016) identified inattentiveness as another factor that could pose a threat to the validity of a study because they add noise to the data. According to McKibben and Silvia (2016), social desirability refers to the situation whereby individuals present themselves in an excessively positive manner while inattentiveness occurs when people respond without regard for the content of data collection instruments. Because this study utilized secondary data for analysis, these factors mentioned above could pose threats to the validity of the study.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The secondary data for this study was the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS, which is available in the public domain and was accessed through the ICPSR. Therefore, all information that could be used in identifying the participants involved in the main study, such as the names, date of birth, and telephone numbers, had been removed to maintain confidentiality. Additionally, informed consent was provided by the researchers to the selected household, and information regarding the purpose of the data collection, as well as how the data will be used were thoroughly highlighted. Therefore, these individuals participated voluntarily in the data collection process without any forms of coercion, and

they were aware that they had the right to withdraw from the data collection process at any time. Because it is essential to eliminate the risk of harm to the participants, National Center for Education Statistics (2012) mentioned that the components of the survey questionnaires were pretested through pilot tests and field tests, and the results of these tests were adequately analyzed and revised before the implementation of the full-scale survey. In this study, the original data from the main study were analyzed without modifications or alterations to ensure that the integrity of the data is preserved to promote the accuracy of the findings and conclusions.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on highlighting the details of the research design and methodology for the present study, including the sampling method and procedures, the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, as well as instrumentation and operationalization of constructs associated with the study. Additionally, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, data analysis plan, threats to the validity of the study, and the relevant ethical procedures were described in this chapter. The data analysis and results for this study will be presented in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how exposure to peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. I examined the impact of exposure to each type of peer victimization independent of other types on psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents in the United States. I also examined which combination of exposure to the different types of peer victimization best predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1 Quantitative - Does exposure to physical assault and intimidation predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

$H_01$ : Exposure to physical assault and intimidation does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

$H_11$ : Exposure to physical assault and intimidation significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ2 Quantitative - Does exposure to verbal aggression predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

$H_02$ : Exposure to verbal aggression does not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

$H_12$ : Exposure to verbal aggression significantly predicts psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ3 Quantitative - Does exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>03</sub>*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>13</sub>*: Exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

RQ4 Quantitative - What model of the combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors best predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents?

*H<sub>04</sub>*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors do not predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

*H<sub>14</sub>*: The combination of exposures to physical assault, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predict psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

In this chapter, I present the data cleaning efforts and analysis and the descriptive statistics characterizing the sample. I also present the results obtained from the data analysis, the summary of the statistical findings, and answers to the RQs.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Data Cleaning and Merging**

The secondary data analyzed for this study was the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS. As stated in Chapter 3, I



used IBM's SPSS software in the data analysis. Base variables from the original data set were combined to form the model variables relevant to this study.

**Independent variables.** The independent variables in this study included physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors. Based on a researcher's intended use of the variables in a data set, Wagner (2017) mentioned that it might be necessary to reorganize the way the data were initially recorded before performing statistical analysis. In other words, researchers can collapse or combine some variables containing information related to a new variable they consider suitable for data analysis. Wagner further identified computing variables as one way a researcher could produce a new variable from existing information in a data set when the relevant information is not contained solely within one variable. Therefore, to maximize the relevant information on the original data set as suggested by Wagner, the variables from the original data set that contained the responses related to the different types of peer victimization were selected and combined to form the independent variables for this study. I took this step to ensure that relevant information not contained solely within one variable in the original data set regarding the types of peer victimization was included in the analysis. The variables from the original data set considered in forming the independent variables for this study included physical assault and intimidation (PAI), verbal aggression (VAR), and relational unfriendly behaviors (RUB). Physical assault and intimidation (PAI) included the following:

- VS0075: During this school year, has another student: threatened you with harm?

- VS0076: During this school year, has another student: pushed you, shoved you, tripped you, or spit on you?
- SCS194: Was any of the bullying physical - that is, did it involve hitting, shoving, tripping, or physically hurting you in some way, or the threat of hurting you in some way?

Verbal aggression (VAR) included the following:

- VS0073: During this school year, has another student: made fun of you, called you names, or insulted you in a hurtful way?
- SCS193: Was any of the bullying verbal - that is, did it involve making fun of you, calling you names, or spreading rumors about you?

Relational unfriendly behaviors (RUB) included the following:

- VS0074: During this school year, has another student: spread rumors about you or tried to make others dislike you?
- VS0078: During this school year, has another student: excluded you from activities on purpose?
- SCS195: Was any of the bullying social - that is, did it involve ignoring you or excluding you from activities on purpose to hurt you?

**Dependent variable.** The dependent variable in this study was the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population. I selected and combined the variables from the original data set that contained the responses related to the psychosocial functioning and adjustment in the form of the negative effects of peer victimization to form the dependent variable for this study. This step was taken to ensure

that relevant information not contained solely within one variable in the original data set regarding the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the target population was included in the analysis. The variables from the original data set considered in forming the dependent variable for this study included negative effects on schoolwork and attendance (NSA), negative effects on relationships (NRL), negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY), and avoidant behavior (ABH). Negative effects on schoolwork and attendance (NSA) included the following:

- SCS196: This school year, how much has bullying had a negative effect on your schoolwork?
- VS0121: Did you avoid any activities at your school because you thought someone might attack or harm you?
- VS0122: Did you avoid any classes because you thought someone might attack or harm you?
- VS0123: Did you stay home from school because you thought someone might attack or harm you?

Negative effects on relationships (NRL) included the following:

- SCS197: This school year, how much has bullying had a negative effect on your relationships with friends or family?
- VS0146: Would you agree there is an adult at school who... really cares about you?
- VS0148: Would you agree there is an adult at school who... listens to you when you have something to say?

- VS0149: Would you agree there is an adult at school who... tells you when you do a good job?
- SCS186: There is a student at school who... really cares about you.
- SCS187: There is a student at school who... listens to you when you have something to say.
- SCS188: There is a student at school who... believes that you will be a success.

Negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY) included the following:

- SCS198: This school year, how much has bullying had a negative effect on how you feel about yourself?
- VS0139: Thinking about the future, do you think you will: attend school after high school, such as a college or technical school?
- VS140: Thinking about the future, do you think you will: graduate from a 4-year college?

Avoidant behavior (ABH) included the following:

- VS0114: Did you stay away from any of the following places: the entrance into the school?
- VS0115: Did you stay away from any of the following places: any hallways or stairs in school?
- VS0116: Did you stay away from any of the following places: parts of the school cafeteria?

- VS0117: Did you stay away from any of the following places: any school restrooms?
- VS0118: Did you stay away from any of the following places: other places inside the school building?
- VS0119: Did you stay away from any of the following places: school parking lot?
- VS0120: Did you stay away from any of the following places: other places on school grounds?

### **Variable Recoding**

Based on the labeling of the responses in the original data set, the variables used in forming the independent and dependent variables for this study have four classes of labels (see Appendix B) that were subsequently recoded into “Yes” = 1 or “No” = 0 responses. It is noteworthy that participants who experienced exposure to peer victimization and the different negative outcomes of exposure to peer victimization were categorized as “1”. In contrast, individuals who were not exposed to peer victimization or reported any of the negative outcomes were categorized as “0”. The questions in Class 1 generally have a negative tone which suggested that positive responses indicated negative occurrences or effects (that is, 1 = Yes, 2 = No, 8 = Residue, 9 = Blank, 98 = Refused, and 99 = Don’t Know). Therefore, in this class, “1” was kept as “1”, while “2” was recoded as “0” and other values were considered as missing. The questions in Class 2 generally have a negative tone which suggested that positive responses were indicative of negative occurrences or effects (that is, 1 = Not at all, 2 = Not very much, 3 = Somewhat,

4 = A lot, 8 = Residue, 9 = Blank, 98 = Refused, and 99 = Don't know) . Therefore, in this class, "1" was recoded as "0", while "2", "3", and "4" were recoded as "1", and other values were considered as missing. The questions in Class 3 generally have a positive tone that suggested that negative responses were indicative of negative occurrences or effects (that is, 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree, 8 = Residue, 9 = Blank, 98 = Refused, and 99 = Don't know). Therefore, in this class, "3" and "4" were recoded as "1," while "1" and "2" were recoded as "0", and other values were considered as missing. The questions in Class 4 generally have a positive tone that suggested that negative responses were indicative of negative occurrences or effects (that is, 1 = Yes, 2 = No, 8 = Residue, 9 = Blank, 98 = Refused, and 99 = Don't Know). Therefore, "2" was recoded as "1" while "1" was recoded as "0", and other values were considered as missing.

### **Merging of Recoded Variables**

The recoded variables were finally merged to form the independent and dependent variables for this study. When merging the recoded variables, if any of the recoded variables contains a "1", then the merged variable was coded as "1". If the recoded variables do not contain at least a "1", then the merged variable was coded as "0".

## **Results**

### **Descriptive and Demographic Characteristics of the Sample**

In line with the inclusion and exclusion criteria highlighted in Chapter 3, the total number of cases selected for this study was 282 participants between 12 and 18 of age.

These individuals identified as African-born adolescents who were enrolled in Grades 6 through 12 in educational programs leading to a high school diploma. Additionally, the participants reported incidents of exposure to peer victimization. The descriptive statistics showed that the youngest of the participants was 12 years old, while the oldest was 18 years old, with a mean of 14.53. Among the participants, 27 were 12 years old, which represented 9.6% of the participants. Sixty-three of the participants were 13 years old, which represented 22.3% of the participants. The number of individuals who were 14 years old was 44, representing 15.6% of the participants. The number of participants who were 15 years was 35, which represented 12.4% of the participants. Forty-four of the participants for the study were 16 years old, representing 15.6% of the participants. The number of participants who were 17 years old was 40, which represented 14.2% of the participants, while 24 of the participants were 18 years old, representing 11.3% of the participants.

Regarding the participants' grade levels, the descriptive statistics showed that 4.6% (n=12) of the participants were in 6th grade, while 19.1% (n=54) of the participants were in 7th grade. Also, 17.7% (n=50) of the participants were in 8th grade, while 15.6% (n=44) were in 9th grade. The descriptive statistics also showed that 36 of the participants were in 10th grade, representing 12.8% of the participants, while 37 were in 11th grade, representing 13.1% of the participants. The number of the study's participants in 12th grade was 46, which represented 16.3% of the total participants.

Out of the total number of participants, 27 reported that they were exposed to physical assault and intimidation, while 255 did not report that they were exposed to

these aggressive behaviors. Also, sixty-one of the participants reported that they were exposed to verbal aggression, while 221 did not report that they were exposed to verbal aggression. Additionally, 47 participants reported incidents of exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors, while 235 did not report that they were exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors. The descriptive statistics characterizing the sample are presented in Table 1.



Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics Characterizing the Sample*

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
12	27	9.6
13	63	22.3
14	44	15.6
15	35	12.4
16	44	15.6
17	40	14.2
18	24	11.34
Grade level		
6	12	4.3
7	54	19.1
8	50	17.7
9	44	15.6
10	36	12.8
11	37	13.1
12	46	16.3
Peer victimization exposure physical assault and intimidation		
Yes	27	9.6
No	255	90.4
Verbal aggression		
Yes	61	21.6
No	221	78.4
Relational unfriendly behaviors		
Yes	47	16.7
No	235	83.3

## Results of Analysis

I conducted simple logistic regression analyses to examine how exposure to each type of peer victimization, that is, physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors, predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of African-born adolescents. Additionally, I conducted multiple logistic regression analyses to examine how exposure to the combinations of the different types of peer victimization predicts the PFA of the sample and which model of the combination would be the best predictor of PFA.

In this study, the alpha ( $\alpha$ ) level for the statistical analysis was set at .05. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected when the  $\alpha$  level was less than or equal to .05, and the alternative hypotheses were accepted. On the other hand, the null hypotheses were accepted, while the alternative hypotheses were rejected when the  $\alpha$  level was greater than .05. The results of the logistic regression analyses are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

**Physical assault and intimidation and psychosocial functioning and adjustment.** To answer RQ1, I conducted simple logistic regression analyses to examine whether physical assault and intimidation (PAI) as a type of peer victimization predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of African-born adolescents. The components of PFA considered in the analysis included negative effects on schoolwork and attendance (NSA), negative effects on relationships (NRL), negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY), and avoidant behavior (ABH). The results of the simple logistic regression analyses were compiled and shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Results of Simple Logistic Regression Analyses of PAI and the Components of PFA*

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
NSA	PAI	2.337	0.447	27.267	1	.000	10.347	4.304	24.872
	Constant	-2.411	0.228	112	1	.000	0.090		
NRL	PAI	1.98	0.428	21.410	1	.000	7.245	3.131	16.762
	Constant	-1.906	0.187	104.388	1	.000	0.149		
NAY	PAI	1.698	0.422	16.181	1	.000	5.465	2.389	12.503
	Constant	-1.624	0.173	88.165	1	.000	0.197		
ABH	PAI	1.755	0.549	10.212	1	.001	5.786	1.971	16.980
	Constant	-3.008	0.296	103.478	1	.000	0.049		

*Note.* PAI = physical assault and intimidation; NSA = negative effects on schoolwork and attendance; NRL = negative effects on relationships; NAY = negative effects on how you feel about yourself; ABH = avoidant behavior; CI = confidence interval.

The results of the simple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 2 indicated that PAI significantly predicted the PFA of the participants. The Wald statistic, used in assessing the contribution of predictor variables to statistical models (Field, 2013) showed in Table 2 that PAI made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of the PFA of the participants.

Additionally, the results showed that when a participant was not exposed to PAI, the odds of experiencing NSA were 0.090. However, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased by a factor of 10.347 ( $B = 2.337$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 10.347$ , 95% CI [4.304, 28.872]). In other words, the odds of a participant exposed to PAI to experience NSA were 10.347 times higher than the odds of

a participant who was not exposed to PAI. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased from 0.090 to 0.931 (that is,  $0.090 \times 10.347$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.082 (that is,  $0.090/1 + 0.090$ ) to 0.482 (that is,  $0.931/1 + 0.931$ ).

The results also showed that when a participant was not exposed to PAI, the odds of experiencing NRL were 0.149. However, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased by a factor of 7.245 ( $B = 1.980$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.245$ , 95% CI [3.131, 16.762]). In other words, the odds of a participant who was exposed to PAI to experience NRL were 7.245 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to PAI. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased from 0.149 to 1.080 (that is,  $0.149 \times 7.245$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.130 (that is,  $0.149/1 + 0.149$ ) to 0.519 (that is,  $1.080/1 + 1.080$ ).

The results in Table 2 also indicated that when a participant was not exposed to PAI, the odds of experiencing NAY were 0.197. However, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY increased by a factor of 5.465 ( $B = 1.698$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 5.465$ , 95% CI [2.389, 12.503]). That is, the odds of a participant who was exposed to PAI to experience NAY were 5.465 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to PAI. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY increased from 0.197 to 1.077 (that is,  $0.197 \times 5.465$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.165 (that is,  $0.197/1 + 0.197$ ) to 0.519 (that is,  $1.077/1 + 1.077$ ).

The results also indicated that when a participant did not experience PAI exposure, the odds of experiencing ABH were 0.049. However, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased by a factor of 5.786 ( $B = 1.755$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 5.786$ , 95% CI [1.971, 16.980]). In other words, the odds of a participant who was exposed to PAI to experience ABH were 5.786 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to PAI. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to PAI, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased from 0.049 to 0.284 (that is,  $0.049 \times 5.786$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.047 (that is,  $0.049/1 + 0.049$ ) to 0.222 ( $0.284/1 + 0.284$ ).

Notably, the confidence interval limits associated with the logistic regression analyses were above the value of 1 which indicated that the direction of the relationship observed in the sample was true. Therefore, based on the simple logistic regression results, which showed that  $p < .001$ , the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that exposure to physical assault and intimidation significantly predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

**Verbal aggression and psychosocial functioning and adjustment.** To answer RQ2, I conducted simple logistic regression analyses to examine whether verbal aggression (VRA) predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of African-born adolescents. The components of PFA considered in the analysis included negative effects on schoolwork and attendance (NSA), negative effects on relationships (NRL), negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY), and avoidant behavior

(ABH). The results of the simple logistic regression analyses were compiled and shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Results of Simple Logistic Regression Analyses of VRA and the Components of PFA*

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
NSA									
	VRA	2.616	0.416	39.471	1	.000	13.686	6.051	30.958
	Constant	-3.049	0.324	88.773	1	.000	0.047		
NRL									
	VRA	2.077	0.348	35.530	1	.000	7.981	4.031	15.800
	Constant	-2.308	0.234	96.860	1	.000	0.100		
NAY									
	VRA	2.010	0.336	35.842	1	.000	7.460	3.864	14.402
	Constant	-2.042	0.217	88.609	1	.000	0.130		
ABH									
	VRA	1.653	0.499	10.955	1	.001	5.221	1.962	13.891
	Constant	-3.282	0.360	83.045	1	.000	0.038		

*Note.* VRA = verbal aggression; NSA = negative effects on schoolwork and attendance; NRL = negative effects on relationships; NAY = negative effects on how you feel about yourself; ABH = avoidant behavior; CI = confidence interval.

The results of the simple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 3 indicated that VRA significantly predicted the PFA of the participants. The Wald statistic showed in Table 3 that VRA made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of the PFA of the participants. The results also showed that when a participant was not exposed to VRA, the odds of experiencing NSA were 0.047. However, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased by a factor of 13.686 (B = 2.616, Exp (B) = 13.686, 95% CI [6.051, 30.985]). In other words,

the odds of a participant who was exposed to VRA to experience NSA were 13.686 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to VRA. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased from 0.047 to 0.643 (that is,  $0.047 \times 13.686$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.045 (that is,  $0.047/1 + 0.047$ ) to 0.391 (that is  $0.643/1 + 0.643$ ).

Based on the results shown in Table 3, when a participant was not exposed to VRA, the odds of experiencing NRL were 0.100. However, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased by a factor of 7.981 ( $B = 2.077$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.981$ , 95% CI [4.031, 15.800]). This result showed that the odds of a participant who was exposed to VRA to experience NRL were 7.981 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to VRA. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased from 0.100 to 0.798 (that is,  $0.100 \times 7.981$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.091 (that is,  $0.10/1 + 0.10$ ) to 0.441 (that is,  $0.79/1 + 0.79$ ).

Additionally, the results in Table 3 showed that when a participant was not exposed to VRA, the odds of experiencing NAY were 0.130. However, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY increased by a factor of 7.460 ( $B = 2.010$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.460$ , 95% CI [3.864, 14.402]). In other words, the odds of a participant who was exposed to VRA to experience NAY were 7.460 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to VRA. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY

increased from 0.130 to 0.970 (that is  $0.130 \times 7.460$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.115 (that is,  $0.13/1 + 0.13$ ) to 0.492 (that is,  $0.970/1 + 0.970$ ).

The results also indicated that when a participant was not exposed to VRA, the odds of experiencing ABH were 0.038. However, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased by a factor of 5.221 ( $B = 1.653$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 5.221$ , 95% CI [1.962, 13.981]). Therefore, it could be inferred that the odds of a participant who was exposed to VRA to experience ABH were 5.221 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to VRA. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to VRA, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased from 0.038 to 0.198 (that is,  $0.038 \times 5.221$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.037 (that is,  $0.038/1 + 0.038$ ) to 0.165 (that is,  $0.198/1 + 0.198$ ).

It is worth noting that the confidence interval limits associated with the logistic regression analyses were above the value of 1 which indicated that the direction of the relationship observed in the sample was true. Therefore, based on the results of the simple logistic regression which showed that  $p < .001$ , the null hypothesis related to RQ2 was rejected, and it was concluded that exposure to verbal aggression significantly predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

**Relational unfriendly behaviors and psychosocial functioning and adjustment.** To answer RQ3, I conducted simple logistic regression analyses to examine whether exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors (RUB) predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of African-born adolescents. The components of PFA considered in the analysis included negative effects on schoolwork and attendance



(NSA), negative effects on relationships (NRL), negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY), and avoidant behavior (ABH). The results of the simple logistic regression analyses were compiled and shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Results of Simple Logistic Regression Analyses of RUB and the Components of PFA*

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
NSA									
	RUB	2.140	0.396	29.138	1	.000	8.496	3.907	18.475
	Constant	-2.616	0.259	102.078	1	.000	0.073		
NRL									
	RUB	2.000	0.361	30.730	1	.000	7.392	3.644	14.994
	Constant	-2.128	0.212	101.188	1	.000	0.119		
NAY									
	RUB	1.415	0.349	16.453	1	.000	4.118	2.078	8.159
	Constant	-1.715	0.186	84.793	1	.000	0.180		
ABH									
	RUB	2.037	0.506	16.184	1	.000	7.669	2.842	20.691
	Constant	-3.346	0.360	86.491	1	.000	0.035		

*Note.* RUB = relational unfriendly behaviors; NSA = negative effects on schoolwork and attendance; NRL = negative effects on relationships; NAY = negative effects on how you feel about yourself; ABH = avoidant behavior; CI = confidence interval.

The results of the simple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 4 indicated that RUB significantly predicted the PFA of the participants. The Wald statistic showed in Table 4 that RUB made statistically significant contributions to the prediction of the PFA of the participants. The results showed that when a participant was not exposed to RUB, the odds of experiencing NSA were 0.073. However, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased by a factor of 8.496 ( $B = 2.140$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 8.496$ , 95% CI [3.907, 18.475]). That is, the odds of a participant who was exposed to RUB to experience NSA were 8.496 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to RUB. Therefore, when a

participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NSA increased from 0.073 to 0.620 (that is  $0.073 \times 8.496$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.068 (that is,  $0.073/1 + 0.073$ ) to 0.383 (that is,  $0.620/1 + 0.620$ ).

Similarly, the results showed that when a participant was not exposed to RUB, the odds of experiencing NRL were 0.119. However, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased by a factor of 7.392 ( $B = 2.000$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.392$ , 95% CI [3.644, 14.994]). In other words, the odds of a participant who was exposed to RUB to experience NRL were 7.392 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to RUB. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NRL increased from 0.119 to 0.880 ( $0.119 \times 7.392$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.106 (that is,  $0.119/1 + 0.119$ ) to 0.468 (that is,  $0.880/1 + 0.880$ ).

Additionally, the results showed that when a participant was not exposed to RUB, the odds of experiencing NAY were 0.180. However, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY increased by a factor of 4.118 ( $B = 1.415$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 4.118$ , 95% CI [2.078, 8.159]). That is, the odds of a participant who was exposed to RUB to experience NAY were 4.118 times higher than the odds of a participant who did not experience exposure to RUB. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing NAY increased from 0.180 to 0.741 (that is,  $0.180 \times 4.118$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.153 (that is,  $0.180/1 + 0.180$ ) to 0.426 (that is,  $0.741/1 + 0.741$ ).

The results of the logistic regression also showed that when a participant was not exposed to RUB, the odds of experiencing ABH were 0.035. However, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased by a factor of 7.669 ( $B = 2.04$ ,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 7.669$ , 95% CI [2.842, 20.691]). In other words, the odds of a participant who was exposed to RUB to experience ABH were 7.669 times higher than the odds of a participant who was not exposed to RUB. Hence, when a participant experienced exposure to RUB, the odds in favor of experiencing ABH increased from 0.035 to 0.268 (that is,  $0.035 \times 7.669$ ) which implied that the probability changed from 0.034 (that is,  $0.035 / 1 + 0.035$ ) to 0.211 (that is,  $0.268 / 1 + 0.268$ ).

It is noteworthy that the confidence interval limits associated with the logistic regression analyses were above the value of 1 which indicated that the direction of the relationship observed in the sample was true. Therefore, based on the results of the simple logistic regression which indicated that  $p < .001$ , the null hypothesis related to RQ3 was rejected, and it was concluded that exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predicts psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

**Combination of the different types of peer victimization and psychosocial functioning and adjustment.** To answer RQ4, I conducted multiple logistic regression analyses to examine which model of the combination of peer victimization would best predict the PFA of African-born adolescents. Also, the components of PFA considered in the analysis included negative effects on schoolwork and attendance (NSA), negative effects on relationships (NRL), negative effects on how you feel about yourself (NAY),

and avoidant behavior (ABH). The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses are shown below in Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

Table 5

*Results of Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of Combination of Peer Victimization and Negative Effects on Schoolwork and Attendance (NSA)*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PAI	1.297	0.511	6.436	1	.011	3.659
VRA	2.237	0.448	24.979	1	.001	9.363
Constant	-3.122	0.328	90.720	1	.001	0.044
Odds of PV combination						1.507
PAI	1.673	0.498	11.275	1	.001	5.328
RUB	1.670	0.435	14.756	1	.001	5.313
Constant	-2.767	0.272	103.673	1	.001	0.063
Odds of PV combination						1.783
VRA	2.139	0.463	21.346	1	.001	8.490
RUB	1.13	0.464	5.931	1	.015	3.094
Constant	-3.181	0.335	90.422	1	.001	0.042
Odds of PV combination						1.103

*Note.* PAI = physical assault and intimidation; VRA = verbal aggression; RUB = relational unfriendly behaviors; PV = peer victimization.

The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 5 indicated that the combination of the different types of peer victimization significantly predicted NSA which is a component of PFA with  $p < .05$ . The results also indicated that the odds in favor of the occurrence of NSA due to the combination of PAI and VRA were 1.507 (that is  $0.044 \times 3.659 \times 9.363$ ). The odds in favor of the occurrence of NSA due to the combination of PAI and RUB were 1.783 (that is,  $0.063 \times 5.328 \times 5.313$ ), while the odds in favor of the occurrence of NSA due to the combination VRA and RUB were 1.103

(that is,  $0.042 \times 8.490 \times 3.094$ ). Therefore, it was inferred from this result that the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the occurrence of NSA.

Table 6

*Results of Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of Combination of Peer Victimization and Negative Effects on Relationship (NRL)*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PAI	1.099	0.485	5.142	1	.023	3.002
VRA	1.762	0.378	21.703	1	.001	5.826
Constant	-2.360	0.237	98.805	1	.001	0.094
Odds of PV combination						1.644
PAI	1.317	0.478	7.580	1	.006	3.733
RUB	1.65	0.389	18.007	1	.001	5.208
Constant	-2.225	0.219	103.301	1	.001	0.108
Odds of PV combination						2.100
VRA	1.558	0.394	15.641	1	.001	4.748
RUB	1.255	0.416	9.120	1	.003	3.509
Constant	-2.450	0.246	99.287	1	.001	0.086
Odds of PV combination						1.433

*Note.* PAI = physical assault and intimidation; VRA = verbal aggression; RUB = relational unfriendly behaviors; PV = peer victimization.

The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 6 indicated that the combination of the different types of peer victimization significantly predicted NRL which is a component of PFA with  $p < .05$ . The odds in favor of the occurrence of NRL due to the combination of PAI and VRA were 1.644 (that is  $0.094 \times 3.002 \times 5.826$ ). The odds in favor of the occurrence of NRL due to the combination of PAI and RUB were 2.100 (that is,  $0.108 \times 3.733 \times 5.208$ ), while the odds in favor of occurrence of NRL due to the combination VRA and RUB were 1.433 (that is,  $0.086 \times 4.748 \times 3.509$ ).

Therefore, it was inferred from these results that the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the occurrence of NRL.

Table 7

*Results of Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of Combination of Peer Victimization and Negative Effects on How You Feel About Yourself (NAY)*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PAI	0.798	0.481	2.755	1	.097	2.222
VRA	1.785	0.362	24.319	1	.001	5.962
Constant	-2.078	0.219	89.991	1	.001	0.125
Odds of combination of PV						1.655
PAI	1.248	0.460	7.375	1	.007	3.484
RUB	1.063	0.381	7.778	1	.005	2.895
Constant	-1.803	0.192	87.753	1	.001	0.165
Odds of combination of PV						1.664
VRA	1.790	0.377	22.58	1	.001	5.991
RUB	0.525	0.416	1.594	1	.207	1.690
Constant	-2.091	0.222	88.795	1	.001	0.124
Odds of combination of PV						1.255

*Note.* PAI = physical assault and intimidation; VRA = verbal aggression; RUB = relational unfriendly behaviors; PV = peer victimization.

The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 7 indicated that only the model with the combination of PAI and RUB had both variables significantly predict NAY with  $p < .05$ . Although the models of the combination of PAI ( $p > .05$ ) and VRA ( $p < .05$ ) and the combination of VRA ( $p < .05$ ) and RUB ( $p > .05$ ) did not have both variables statistically significant, the odds in favor of the occurrence of NAY due to the combination of PAI and VRA were 1.655 (that is  $0.125 \times 2.222 \times 5.962$ ),

while the odds in favor of occurrence of NAY due to the combination of VRA and RUB were 1.255 (that is,  $0.124 \times 5.991 \times 1.690$ ). However, the odds in favor of the occurrence of NAY due to the combination of PAI and RUB were 1.664 (that is,  $0.165 \times 3.484 \times 2.895$ ). Therefore, it was concluded from the results that the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the occurrence of NAY.

Table 8

*Results of Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis of Combination of Peer Victimization and Avoidant Behavior (ABH)*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
PAI	1.051	0.626	2.816	1	.093	2.860
VRA	1.279	0.566	5.097	1	.024	3.592
Constant	-3.336	0.364	84.07	1	.001	0.036
Odds of combination of PV						0.369
PAI	0.938	0.621	2.278	1	.131	2.554
RUB	1.729	0.558	9.607	1	.002	5.634
Constant	-3.413	0.366	87.039	1	.001	0.033
Odds of combination of PV						0.475
VRA	0.876	0.6	2.134	1	.144	2.401
RUB	1.570	0.6	6.855	1	.009	4.805
Constant	-3.505	0.389	81.024	1	.001	0.030
Odds of combination of PV						0.346

*Note.* PAI = physical assault and intimidation; VRA = verbal aggression; RUB = relational unfriendly behaviors; PV = peer victimization.

The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses shown in Table 8 indicated that the models of the combination of the different types of peer victimization did not have both variables statistically significant in predicting ABH (that is, one variable had  $p > .05$ ). However, the odds in favor of the occurrence of ABH due to the combination of



PAI and VRA were 0.369 (that is  $0.369 \times 2.860 \times 3.592$ ), while the odds in favor of the occurrence of ABH due to the combination of VRA and RUB were 0.346 (that is,  $0.030 \times 2.401 \times 4.805$ ). The odds in favor of the occurrence of ABH due to the combination of PAI and RUB were 0.475 (that is,  $0.033 \times 2.554 \times 5.643$ ). Therefore, based on the higher odds in favor of the occurrence of ABH associated with the combination of PAI and RUB, it was concluded from the results that the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the occurrence of ABH.

Overall, based on the results of the multiple logistic regression analyses, the null hypothesis related to RQ4 was rejected, and it was concluded that the model of the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the PFA of African-born adolescents.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, I reported the statistical analysis results used in examining how exposure to peer victimization in the form PAI, VRA, and RUB predicts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment (PFA) of the sample. Additionally, I reported the results of the statistical analysis used in examining how exposure to the combinations of the different types of peer victimization predicts the PFA of the sample. The results of the simple logistic regression analyses showed that PAI, VRA, and RUB significantly predicted the PFA of African-born adolescents. Therefore, the null hypotheses related to RQs 1, 2, and 3 were rejected while the alternative hypotheses were accepted. The results of the multiple logistic regression analyses showed that the combination of PAI and RUB best predicted the PFA of African-born adolescents when compared to other models of combinations. Consequently, the null hypothesis related to RQ4 was rejected while the

alternative hypothesis was accepted. In Chapter 5, I focus on interpreting and discussing the findings of this study by considering the existing literature. Additionally, I discuss the study's limitations, the implications for social change, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this quantitative study with a correlational design was to examine how exposure to peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. I analyzed secondary data from the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS, which is a supplement to the NCVS. The data provided information about 282 individuals who identified as African-born adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age. In this chapter, I focus on interpreting and summarizing the study's relevant findings, and I discuss how exposure to the different types and combinations of peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the participants. Additionally, I discuss the limitations of the study and its implications for positive social change and offer recommendations for future research.

This study's key findings showed that peer victimization in the form of physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors significantly predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Additionally, the study's findings revealed that the model of the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors best predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents when compared with the other combinations of this aggressive behavior. Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress and coping, the findings of this study showed that African-born adolescents appraise peer victimization as a significant stressor that adversely affects their psychosocial functioning and adjustment.

## **Interpretation of the Findings**

I summarize and interpret the main findings of this study in this section. The findings are highlighted under subheadings related to the RQs and the corresponding hypotheses. Also, the study's findings are interpreted in the context of existing literature to provide detailed descriptions of how this study corroborated, disconfirmed, and extended the previously established knowledge in the field of psychology.

### **Finding 1: Physical Assault and Intimidation Significantly Predicted the Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of African-born Adolescents**

In this study, 9.6% of the participants reported their exposure to physical assault and intimidation. In other words, these individuals reported incidents of being threatened with harm, kicked, shoved, hit, tripped, physically hurt, and spat on by the perpetrators. Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) classified physical assault and intimidation as direct peer victimization through which the perpetrators focus on causing physical harm to the victims.

This study's findings showed that African-born adolescents exposed to physical assault and intimidation had a 48.2% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance compared to an 8.2% likelihood for those who were not exposed to this aggressive behavior. This outcome confirmed the view established by Wormington et al. (2016) that a considerable portion of peer victimization occurs in school settings. Therefore, adolescents who face direct peer victimization are more likely to exhibit maladaptive school adjustment and lower academic functioning. Wormington et al. (2016) further stated that direct peer victimization had a significant negative

association with academic performance and a positive association with adolescents' truancy rate.

This study's findings showed that African-born adolescents exposed to physical assault and intimidation had a 51.9% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their relationships compared to a 13% likelihood for those who did not experience physical assault and intimidation. This finding was similar to the outcome of the study conducted by Fullchange and Furlong (2016). Fullchange and Furlong found that adolescents who are victims of peer victimization tend to have less cohesive family structures and they perceive reduced social support from their teachers and peers.

Additionally, this study's findings revealed that adolescents exposed to physical assault and intimidation had a 51.9% likelihood of experiencing negative feelings about themselves compared to a 16.5% likelihood for those who were not exposed to this aggressive behavior. In line with this finding, Fullchange and Furlong (2016) established that peer victimization victims usually exhibit reduced belief in self, including reduced self-efficacy, self-awareness, persistence, and optimism.

Another finding of this study related to the impact of physical assault and intimidation showed that participants exposed to this aggressive behavior had a 22.2% likelihood of exhibiting avoidant behaviors compared to a 4.7% likelihood for those not exposed to physical assault and intimidation. This finding confirmed that of Storch et al. (2003) that peer victimization has a significant relationship with social avoidance, fear of negative evaluation, loneliness, and social anxiety in Hispanic and African American adolescents. Storch et al. (2003) indicated that victims usually internalize adverse peer

experiences which leads to increased incidences of depression, anxiety, and rumination over how other individuals evaluate them. Additionally, when adolescents who are affected by peer victimization try to cope with this stressor, they avoid social interactions that could create conducive environments and further victimization opportunities (Storch et al., 2003).

Most previous researchers (e.g., Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005; Storch et al., 2003; Wormington et al., 2016) have examined the impact of peer victimization on the adolescent population as a broad construct. However, this study's findings extended the body of knowledge by explicitly showing that physical assault and intimidation as a type of peer victimization significantly predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents with reference to specific probability levels. This study's findings confirmed those of previous studies regarding the adverse impact of peer victimization in the form of physical assault and intimidation on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents, including African-born adolescents.

### **Finding 2: Verbal Aggression Significantly Predicted the Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of African-born Adolescents**

In this study, 21.6% of the participants reported their exposure to verbal aggression. That is, these participants reported incidents of being called names and being insulted in hurtful ways as well as incidents of teasing and others making fun of them. Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) classified verbal aggression as direct peer victimization through which the perpetrators focus on causing emotional harm to the victims.

The findings of this study showed that participants exposed to verbal aggression had a 39.1% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance compared to a 4.5% likelihood for those who did not experience exposure to verbal aggression. Ladd et al. (2017) indicated that peer victimization targeted at causing emotional harm impacts adolescents' emotional engagement with school, including their attitudes towards school and their feelings about their peers, teachers, and the school environment. Ladd et al. (2017) further established that chronic peer victimization is significantly related to prolonged lower school engagements, decreased academic self-perception, and poor academic achievement of the victims.

This study's findings showed that participants exposed to verbal aggression had a 44.1% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their relationships compared to a 9.1% likelihood for those who did not experience verbal aggression exposure. Fullchange and Furlong (2016) reported that peer victimization adversely affects victims' emotional competence. The researchers also found that individuals exposed to verbal aggression tend to exhibit impaired ability to interpret others' emotions and intentions compared to those who did not experience this aggressive behavior (Fullchange & Furlong, 2016).

In this study, participants who reported exposure to verbal aggression had a 49.2% likelihood of experiencing negative feelings about themselves compared to an 11.5% likelihood for those who did not experience verbal aggression exposure. From this result, I inferred that the participants' psychosocial functioning and adjustment were adversely affected when they were called names, insulted in hurtful ways, and when perpetrators teased them. This finding confirmed the view of Traore and Lukens (2006)

that African-born immigrant students in middle schools and high schools in the United States could have a sense of shame when their peers victimize them because they are called and viewed as primitive and their countries of origin are classified as underdeveloped and backward.

This study's findings also showed that participants exposed to verbal aggression had a 16.5% likelihood of exhibiting avoidant behavior compared to a 3.7% likelihood for those without incidents of exposure to verbal aggression. Participants who exhibited avoidant behaviors due to verbal aggression exposure reported that they stayed away from specific areas of their school on purpose and avoided social interactions to minimize their exposure to victimization experiences. In line with this finding, Storch et al. (2003) reported that when adolescents affected by peer victimization try to cope with this stressor, they avoid social interactions that could create conducive environments and opportunities for further victimization. According to Storch et al. (2003), this social avoidance could limit adolescents' opportunity of engaging in potentially positive relationships that could enhance the development of their social skills.

I inferred that the findings of this study regarding African-born adolescents confirmed the views established by previous studies regarding the adverse impact of peer victimization in the form of verbal aggression on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents.



### **Finding 3: Relational Unfriendly Behaviors Significantly Predicted the Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of African-born Adolescents**

In this study, 16.7% of the participants reported exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors. Eisenberg and Aalsma (2005) stated that actions such as social exclusion, rumor spreading, and gossips are categorized as relational unfriendly behaviors. Eisenberg and Aalsma also described relational unfriendly behaviors as indirect peer victimization directed towards damaging individuals' social relationships.

The outcome of this study revealed that the likelihood for participants exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors to experience negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance was 38.3% compared to a 6.8% likelihood for participants not exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors. In line with this finding, Harushimana and Awokoya (2011) established that African-born adolescents in the United States usually encounter unequal opportunities, and they have a sense of social marginalization. Additionally, Harushimana and Awokoya mentioned that African-born adolescents are intellectually intimidated by their peers because their educational abilities and experiences are considered inferior. Similarly, Rueger and Jenkins (2014) established that peer victimization experiences could have adverse effects on the victims' grades, school attitudes, and attendance due to their higher susceptibility to lower self-esteem and lower self-efficacy.

This study's findings also showed that participants exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors had a 46.8% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their relationships compared to a 10.6% likelihood for those who did not experience these

unfriendly behaviors. These participants indicated that relational unfriendly behaviors negatively affected their relationships with their families, friends, and adults at school. The participants also had perceptions that no one cares about them, listens to them, or believes they will be successful, which consequently caused negative affect, social withdrawal, and loneliness. These findings are in line with the view established by Takizawa et al. (2014) that peer victimization is associated with internalizing problems which include anxiety, negative affect, withdrawal, and loneliness. Plenty and Jonsson (2017) described adolescence as a period characterized by a significant developmental need for social acceptance and peer affiliation. Therefore, social exclusion at this stage of development adversely impacts adolescents' mental health and social functioning. In line with the conclusion drawn by Wright et al. (1986), the findings of this study confirmed that social exclusion makes it difficult for African-born adolescents to integrate into the host culture, and it could limit their opportunities for language skills development.

The outcome of this study also showed that participants exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors had a 42.6% likelihood of experiencing negative feelings about themselves compared to a 15.3% likelihood for those who were not exposed to these unfriendly behaviors. This finding showed that African-born adolescents who experience relational unfriendly behaviors have poor self-concept and low self-efficacy, causing negative self-evaluation and the belief that they cannot make significant academic achievements in the future. This finding of this current study reinforced the outcome of the study conducted by Fullchange and Furlong (2016) that victims of peer victimization

usually experience diminished belief in self, impaired engaged living, and they exhibit lower levels of optimism.

The findings of this study also showed that participants exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors had a 21.1% likelihood of exhibiting avoidant behavior compared to a 3.4% likelihood for those who did not experience exposure to relational unfriendly behavior. This finding indicated that the participants exposed to relational unfriendly behaviors took actions that helped them escape from difficult feelings and thoughts about their victimization experiences. In addition to staying away from certain school areas, the affected individuals avoided activities that could enhance their academic and social development. In other words, exposure to relational unfriendly behaviors cause African-born adolescents to deprive themselves of experiences that promote their social, emotional, and psychological functioning. Davis et al. (2018) identified problematic drinking as an avoidant behavior associated with peer victimization. In other words, adolescents who encounter peer victimization such as relational unfriendly behaviors have an increased likelihood of developing low self-esteem and negative self-evaluation of their competence which could lead to problematic drinking when alcohol consumption is used as a coping mechanism in dealing with stress.

I inferred that the findings of this study confirmed the views established by previous studies regarding the adverse impact of peer victimization in the form of relational unfriendly behaviors on the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of adolescents, including African-born adolescents.

**Finding 4: The Model of the Combination of Physical Assault and Intimidation and Relational Unfriendly Behaviors Best Predicted the Psychosocial Functioning and Adjustment of African-born Adolescent**

Although the findings of this study revealed that the different types of peer victimization solely predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the participants significantly, it is noteworthy that the model of the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors was shown by this study to be the best predictor of the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. That is, across the different components of psychosocial functioning and adjustment analyzed in this study, the model of the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors stood out as the best predictor of the outcome variable. In other words, when compared to other models of the combination of peer victimization, this current study showed that when the participants experienced exposure to the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors, they were more likely to significantly experience negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance, negative effects on their relationships, and negative effects on how they feel about themselves. They are also more likely to exhibit avoidant behavior.

The findings of this study showed that individuals exposed to the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors had a 64.1% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance, a 67.7% likelihood of experiencing negative effects on their relationships, a 62.5% likelihood of

experiencing negative feelings about themselves, and a 32.2% likelihood of exhibiting avoidant behavior. Therefore, it was inferred from these findings that exposure to the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors, increased the likelihood of adverse outcomes experienced by the victims. It is worth noting that most previous studies focused on examining the impact of each type of peer victimization on several outcomes independently. However, this study added to the knowledge in the field of psychology by examining the impact of the combination of the different types of peer victimization and finding out the model of the combination of this aggressive behavior that best predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study had some limitations. The study involved analyzing secondary data collected from the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS. Therefore, because the data were not collected primarily for this present study, this study was limited to the information contained in the original data set. For example, some constructs related to psychosocial functioning and adjustment such as adolescent risk-taking behaviors and sleep difficulties were not included in the original data set. Consequently, this study did not examine the impact of peer victimization on these components of psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Brannigan (2010) indicated that such omission could occur because the original data collectors did not need the information for their specific purposes, or the information was not considered an issue of importance at the time of data collection. Additionally, the

information in the original data set was primarily collected with focus on the different types of peer victimization that occurred in the school setting. Therefore, cyberbullying and occurrences of peer victimization outside the school settings were not included in this study.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study showed that peer victimization adversely impacts the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. In this study, African-born adolescents were handled as a homogenous population, whereas Africa as a continent comprises many countries and diverse cultures. Therefore, future studies should be designed to examine how adolescents' cultural backgrounds and individual differences could affect their responses and adjustment to peer victimization. It is also essential for future studies to examine how African-born adolescents' length of stay in the United States and their acculturation level might affect their coping and adjustment to peer victimization. Fanti and Kimonis (2012) mentioned that adverse situations such as peer victimization that tamper with adolescents' social, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being could have a lasting negative impact until adulthood. In line with this view, this study's findings showed that African-born adolescents affected by peer victimization were worried about their future outcomes. Therefore, longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to gain insight into the long-term impact of peer victimization on African-born adolescents' well-being, achievements, engaged living, life satisfaction, and quality of life.

## **Implications**

This study is significant because of the contribution of its findings to the literature regarding an understudied population by showing that the different types of peer victimization significantly predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. The findings also indicated that the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors is the best predictor of African-born adolescents' experience of negative effects on schoolwork and attendance, negative effects on relationships, negative effect on how they feel about themselves, and exhibition of avoidant behavior. It is noteworthy that this study has significant positive implications on the psychological, social, and emotional well-being of African-born adolescents due to its contribution to individuals' knowledge at different levels of society.

The findings of this study may help individuals exposed to peer victimization to better evaluate what has happened or is happening them, understand what it means for them as individuals, and assess how they are managing, coping, or responding to stressful situations. This study's findings may also help immigrant families understand the dangers of peer victimization exposure, identify the signs of exposure of their children to peer victimization, and seek professional help on time to mitigate the long-term effects of peer victimization.

Additionally, these findings may provide insight for schools to know the likely signs and outcomes of exposure to different types of peer victimization reported by this population. These findings may also guide schools and clinicians in designing interventions for this population that could foster healthy coping styles, positive attitudes

toward schoolwork and school attendance, improved interpersonal and social relationships skills, and enhanced self-efficacy and self-concept.

### **Conclusion**

This quantitative study examined how exposure to peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Data collected from a sample of 282 African-born adolescents who participated in the 2015 National Center for Education Statistics' SCS were analyzed. The four RQs for this study focused on finding out whether exposure to the different types of peer victimization would predict the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents or not, and which combination of the types of peer victimization would be the best predictor of this outcome.

The findings of the study showed that the different types of peer victimization which included physical assault and intimidation, verbal aggression, and relational unfriendly behaviors, significantly predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents. Additionally, this study found out that the model of the combination of physical assault and intimidation and relational unfriendly behaviors best predicted the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of the participants.

Despite this study's limitations, the findings contributed to literature because the RQs were adequately answered through the research design and statistical analysis. It was concluded that peer victimization affects the psychosocial functioning and adjustment of African-born adolescents adversely and significantly due to its predictive association with negative effects on their schoolwork and attendance, negative effects on their



relationships, negative effects on how these individuals feel about themselves, and exhibition of avoidant behavior. In line with the Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping, this study's findings showed that African-born adolescents appraise peer victimization as a significant stressor that adversely impacts their psychosocial functioning and adjustment.

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## Appendix A: Data Access Registration

← → ↻ icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/36354 ☆

# ICPSR Find & Analyze Data

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FIND DATA SEARCH/COMPARE VARIABLES DATA-RELATED PUBLICATIONS RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS HELP

## National Crime Victimization Survey: School Crime Supplement, 2015 (ICPSR 36354)

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**Principal Investigator(s):** [United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

**Series:**

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Version V1

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At A Glance Data & Documentation Variables Data-related Publications Export Metadata

### ▼ Project Description

Alternate Title [?](#)  
SCS 2015

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Downloads \*  
[Usage Report](#)  
\* past three years

**19**  
[Data-related Publications](#)

**Notes**

- The public-use data files in this collection are available for access by the general public. Access does not require affiliation with an ICPSR member institution.

## Appendix B: Classes of Variable Labels

**Class 1**


---

<b>Value</b>	<b>Label</b>
1	Yes
2	No
8	Residue
9	Blank
98	Refused
99	Don't Know

---

[VS0075, VS0076, SCS194], [VS0073, SCS193], [VS0074, VS0078, SCS195],

[VS0121, VS0122, VS0123], [VS0114, VS0115, VS0116, VS0117, VS0118, VS0119,  
VS0120]

**Class 2**


---

<b>Value</b>	<b>Label</b>
1	Not at all
2	Not very much
3	Somewhat
4	A lot
8	Residue
9	Blank
98	Refused
99	Don't Know

---

[SCS196], [SCS197], [SCS198]

**Class 3**


---

<b>Value</b>	<b>Label</b>
1	Strongly Agree
2	Agree
3	Disagree
4	Strongly Disagree
8	Residue
9	Blank

---

---

98	Refused
99	Don't Know

---

[VS0146, VS0148, S0149, SCS186, SCS187, SCS188]

#### **Class 4**

---

<b>Value</b>	<b>Label</b>
1	Yes
2	No
8	Residue
9	Blank
98	Refused
99	Don't Know

---

[VS0139, VS0140]