

## Peer victimization and social information processing in young adolescents

**By:** Inbal Yehoshua – Leibovich, MA, the Education Faculty, Department of Counseling and Human Development, University of Haifa.

**Supervised by:** Prof. Zipora Shechtman, Dr. Yair Ziv, University of Haifa.

There is now a growing body of research exploring the role that social information processing (SIP) plays in the development of maladaptive social relationships in childhood (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994). However, this large body of research focuses mainly on children who are in danger of developing aggressive and antisocial behaviors. On the other hand, there is only scarce evidence regarding the processing of social information in children who are the victims of bullying behaviors in school (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005).

In our study, we aimed to close this gap by examining the SIP patterns of young adolescents characterized by their teachers as victims of bullying behavior, and compare them to those of aggressors and normative adolescents. Our sample of 105 adolescents (ages 13 -14 years) comprised of three roughly equal social status groups (victims, aggressors, and neither). We found distinctive SIP patterns for each of these groups: victims tended to avoid challenging social situations while interpreting others as being purposefully hostile or ignoring; aggressors tended to interpret others as purposefully hostile and stated their desire to retaliate against them; and those who were neither victims nor aggressors tended to view the same social situations as non-hostile and with better prospects to end up well for them.

Our findings may provide a unique look into the mental processes that characterize victimized teens when facing challenging social situations. These findings have a potential to add to the understanding of the types of interventions that could be adopted with victimized adolescents.

### Bibliography:

Camodeca, M., & Goossens, F. A. (2005). Aggression, social cognition, anger and sadness in bullies and victims. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46, 186-197 .

Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information-Processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 74-101.

**Keywords:** Social Information Processing, peer relationships, violence, victimization.

**Corresponding author:** Inbal Yehoshua – Leibovich, Email: Inbal311@gmail.com