ABSTRACT

A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF PARENT SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR
PEER-VICTIMIZED CHILDREN

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Marquette University, 2026

Peer-victimization/bullying (PVB) is a common adverse childhood experience associated with significant psychosocial consequences including mental health concerns (e.g., internalizing problems, anxiety, depression), behavioral problems, and poorer academic outcomes. Although existing research has established that parental social support serves as a protective factor for victimized children, little research has explored how parents provide support over time, how their internal experiences shape their provision of support, and how parents make decisions about the support they are delivering.

This dissertation uses Constructivist Grounded Theory to explore the process through which parents provide social support to children experiencing PVB. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine parents of children who had experienced PVB. All participants identified as female. Racially/ethnically, six participants identified as White, one identified as Black/African American, one identified as Hispanic, and one identified as Asian. They reported a range of times since PVB occurred, with two participants reporting PVB was current and one participant reporting a maximum of PVB seven years prior to the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to review and suggest additions to transcripts prior to data analysis. Data were analyzed using constant comparative methods through stages of initial, focused, and theoretical coding.

The *Balancing Support for PVB Theory* emerged through the stages of data analysis and review of memo-writing. The emergent theory describes a chronological, iterative process through which parents (1) learn about PVB, (2) reconcile uncertainty, (3) reach an activation point, (4) implement support strategies tied to specific intentions, (5) evaluate support effectiveness, (6) adapt support, and (7) reach periods of maintenance and stability. Parents' own emotional and cognitive experience as well as a variety of external factors influenced the provision of support through all stages of the model. Additionally, findings also clarify how parental intentions translate to specific types of social support within the context of social support theory.

Implications for the field of counseling psychology include supporting parents in the reduction of uncertainty, promoting parents' self-efficacy, and the implementation of interventions in clinical and school settings to strengthen support for families. Finally, limitations and future directions are discussed.