

VICTIMIZATION AND DEFENDING: EXPLORING HOW ANXIETY SHAPES BYSTANDER INTERVENTION USING VIRTUAL REALITY

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Figure 1.
 Screenshot of Cyberball-VR



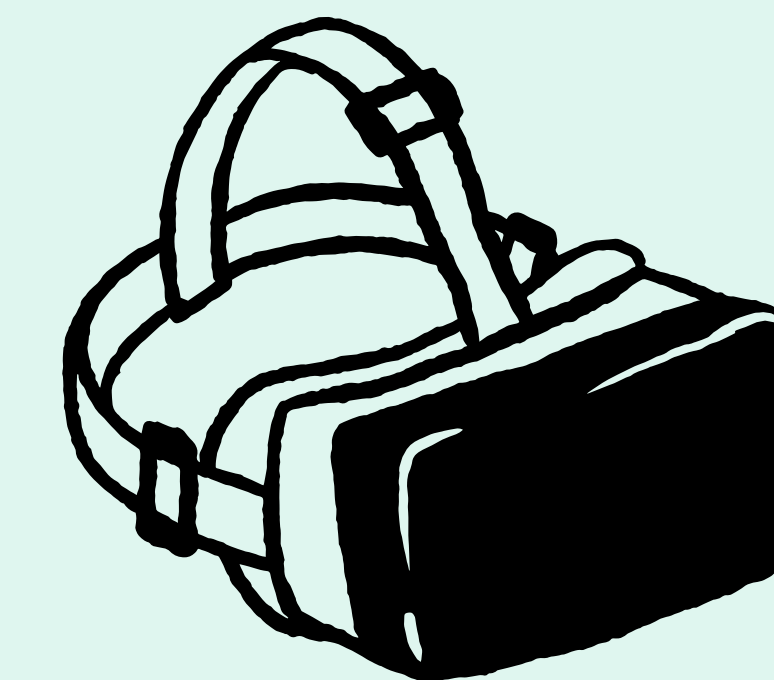
References, contact info,
and more

INTRODUCTION

- Bullying is among top threats facing youth¹ and emerging adults²
- Bystander intervention effectively stops bullying and its consequences³, but occurs infrequently⁴
- **Previous victimization** impacts defending⁵, and also anxiety⁶
- **State anxiety** is in the moment distress⁷ and it might motivate defending by amplifying the urgency of the situation.
- **Anxiety sensitivity** is a baseline tendency to fear anxiety symptoms⁸ and it might inhibit defending by overwhelming the individual.

OBJECTIVE

Examine how previous victimization, state anxiety, and anxiety sensitivity interact to influence defending behaviours while witnessing social exclusion in a virtual reality environment.

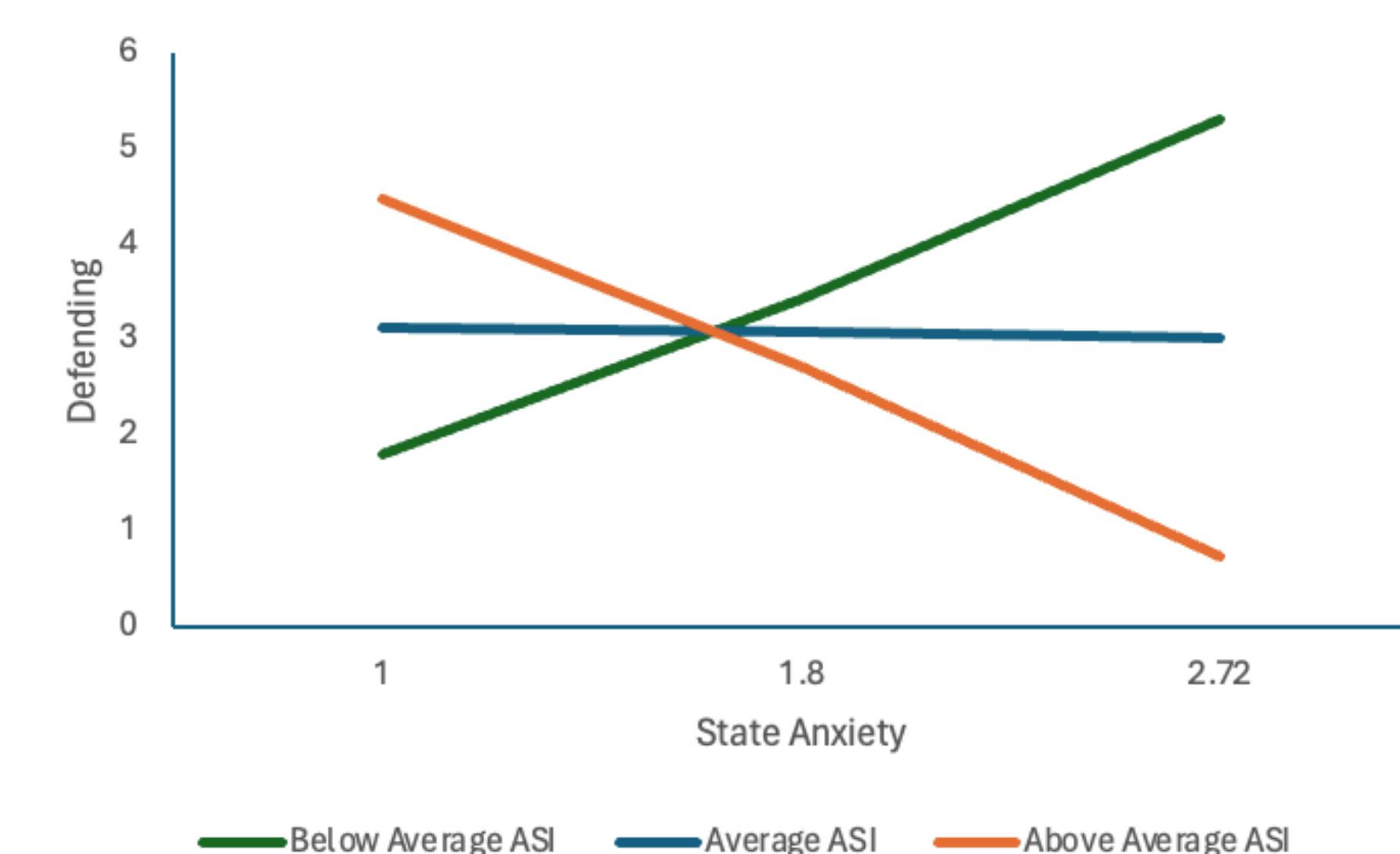


HYPOTHESES

1. Previous victimization will be positively associated with state anxiety and with bystander intervention behaviours in virtual reality.
2. Anxiety sensitivity will moderate the effect of state anxiety on bystander intervention.
3. The indirect effect of previous victimization on defending through increased state anxiety will be moderated by anxiety sensitivity.

A BYSTANDER'S ANXIETY CAN BOTH MOTIVATE OR INHIBIT DEFENDING, DEPENDING ON THEIR ANXIETY SENSITIVITY

Figure 3.
 The relationship between state anxiety and defending moderated by anxiety sensitivity



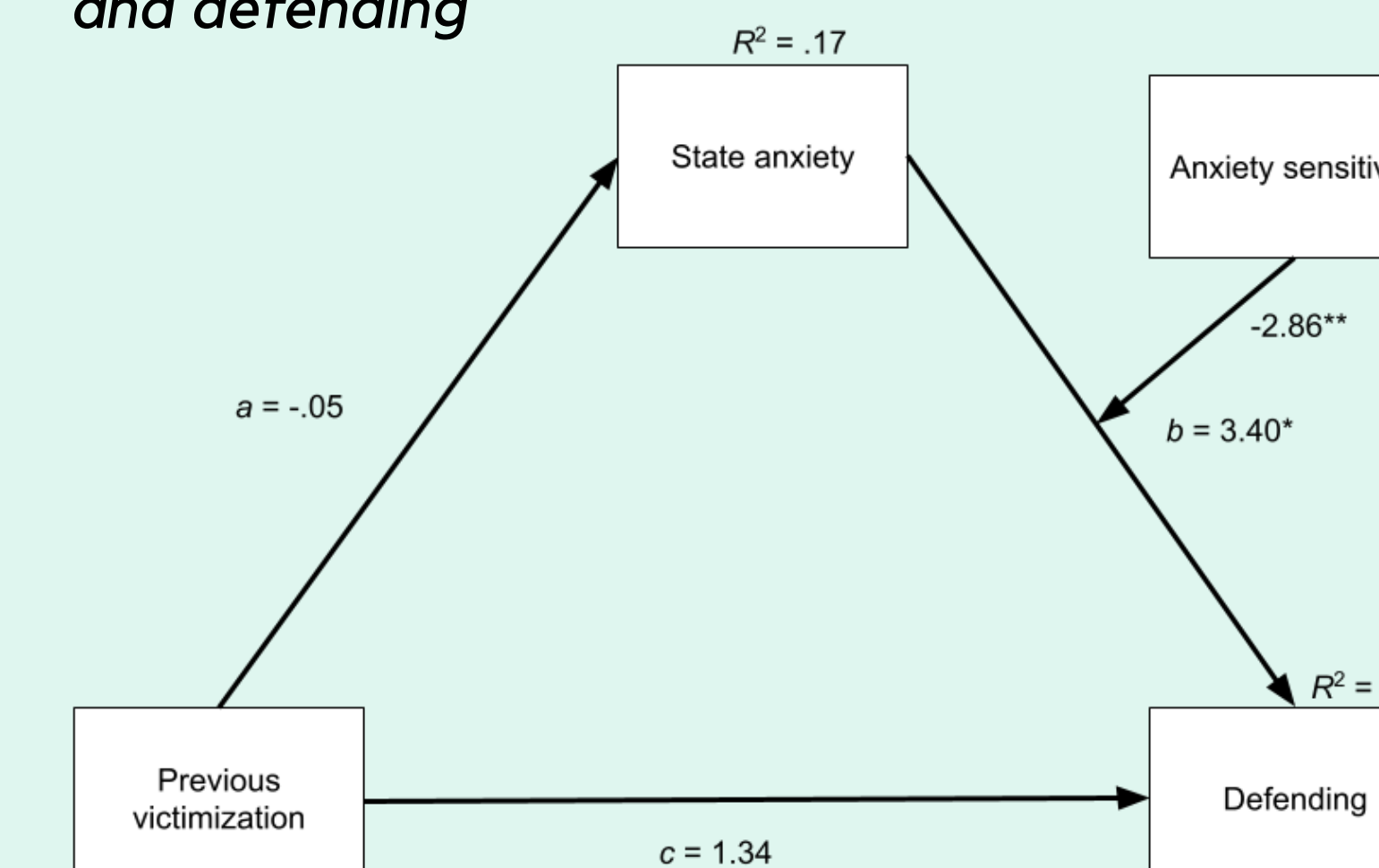
Low anxiety sensitivity → state anxiety positively predicted defending
 High anxiety sensitivity → state anxiety negatively predicted defending

METHODS

Participants	N = 40 Age 17-22 ($M = 19.17$) 63.8% women, 34% men
Measures	Demographics Bullying and Victimization ⁷ Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3 ⁸ Discrete Emotions Questionnaire (DEQ) ⁹ Defending behaviours during Cyberball-VR ¹⁰
Procedure	Pre game survey Cyberball-VR • Round 1: Inclusion round & DEQ • Round 2: Vicarious exclusion, DEQ & verbal observations • Round 3: Inclusion round & DEQ Manipulation check & debriefing

RESULTS

Figure 2.
 The relationship between previous victimization, anxiety and defending



- No significant moderated mediation effect.
- State anxiety was positively associated with defending.
- Anxiety sensitivity moderated the effect of state anxiety on defending.

CONCLUSION

- Anxiety sensitivity influences whether state anxiety facilitates or inhibits bystander intervention.
- Individuals with high anxiety sensitivity may struggle to intervene in anxiety-inducing situations like bullying.
- Findings contribute to understanding of psychological factors influencing bystander intervention during bullying, highlighting the need to consider individual differences in anxiety.
- Exploring strategies to help individuals with high anxiety sensitivity overcome this during high-stress situations like bullying could help increase bystander intervention rates and reduce bullying.