

Who Gets in Trouble? Office Disciplinary Referrals and Bullying Behavior

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Introduction

- Office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) are a reliable measure used by school personnel to monitor student behavior (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000).
- Five types of bully role behaviors have been identified (Demaray et al., 2014): bullying others, being victimized, defending the victim, assisting the bully, and observing bullying but ignoring it (outsider behavior).
- Bullying involvement has been associated with externalizing problems (Sigurdson et al., 2015), however, less is known about associations between ODRs and complex bully role behaviors.

Research Questions

- How do ODRs and bully role behaviors differ by gender? It was predicted that boys would have more total ODRs than girls, and that boys would report more engagement in all bully role behaviors than girls.
- What are the associations among bully role behaviors and total number of ODRs for middle school boys and girls? It was predicted that all bully role behaviors would be significantly and positively associated with ODRs.

Method

Participants	N = 726	
Grade	n	%
Sixth Grade	217	29.9
Seventh Grade	286	39.4
Eighth Grade	223	30.7
Gender	n	%
Male	390	53.7
Female	336	46.3
Ethnicity	n	%
African American	99	13.6
Asian American	4	.6
White	322	44.4
Hispanic /Latino	173	23.8
Bi/multi-racial	99	13.6
Other	29	4.0

Measures

The Bully Participant Behavior Questionnaire (BPPQ; Demaray et al., 2014) was used to assess student self-report of the bully role behaviors (bullying, assisting, being victimized, defending, and being an outsider). Records data including ODRs were obtained from the school.

Procedure

Student self-report survey data were collected using the online Qualtrics platform. Data were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of NIU.

Results

Gender Differences in ODRs

To investigate whether ODRs differed for males and females, a t-test was conducted.

- Significant gender differences were present for total ODRs, $t(724) = 3.194, p < .001$.
- Specifically, males ($M = 1.63$) had more ODRs than did females ($M = .88$) in the fall semester.

Gender Differences in Bully Role Behaviors

To investigate differences in the bully role behaviors by gender, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on bullying, assisting, being victimized, defending, and outsider behavior by gender.

- The MANOVA was not significant for gender, Wilks' Lambda = .992, $F(5, 713) = 1.176, p = .319$.
- No significant differences were found between girls' and boys' reports of bully role behavior.

Association of Bully Role Behaviors and ODRs

A hierarchical regression was conducted to investigate the association of bully role behaviors and gender with total semester ODRs. All bully role variables were centered.

- The R^2 in the first step was not significant, indicating that collectively, the five bully role behaviors were not associated with ODRs.
- However, both Step 2, $R^2 = .243$, and the change in $R^2 = .043, p < .001$, were significant (see Table 1).
- In Step 2, Gender was significantly and negatively associated with ODRs, meaning that males were associated with higher ODRs (0 = Males, 1 = Females) ($\beta = -.656, p < .01$).
- In Step 2, there were two main effects:
 - Bullying was significantly and positively associated with ODRs ($\beta = 2.643, p < .001$).
 - Outsider behavior was significantly and negatively associated with ODRs ($\beta = -.684, p = .008$).
- Three gender by bully role interactions were significant (see Figures 1, 2, and 3):
 - Assisting X Gender ($\beta = -4.434, p < .001$). For boys, the association was positive and significant, but for girls the association was nonsignificant.
 - Defending X Gender ($\beta = -.750, p = .003$). For boys, the association was positive and significant, but for girls the association was nonsignificant.
 - Victimization X Gender ($\beta = 1.020, p = .001$). For girls, the association was positive and significant, but for boys the association was nonsignificant.

Results Continued

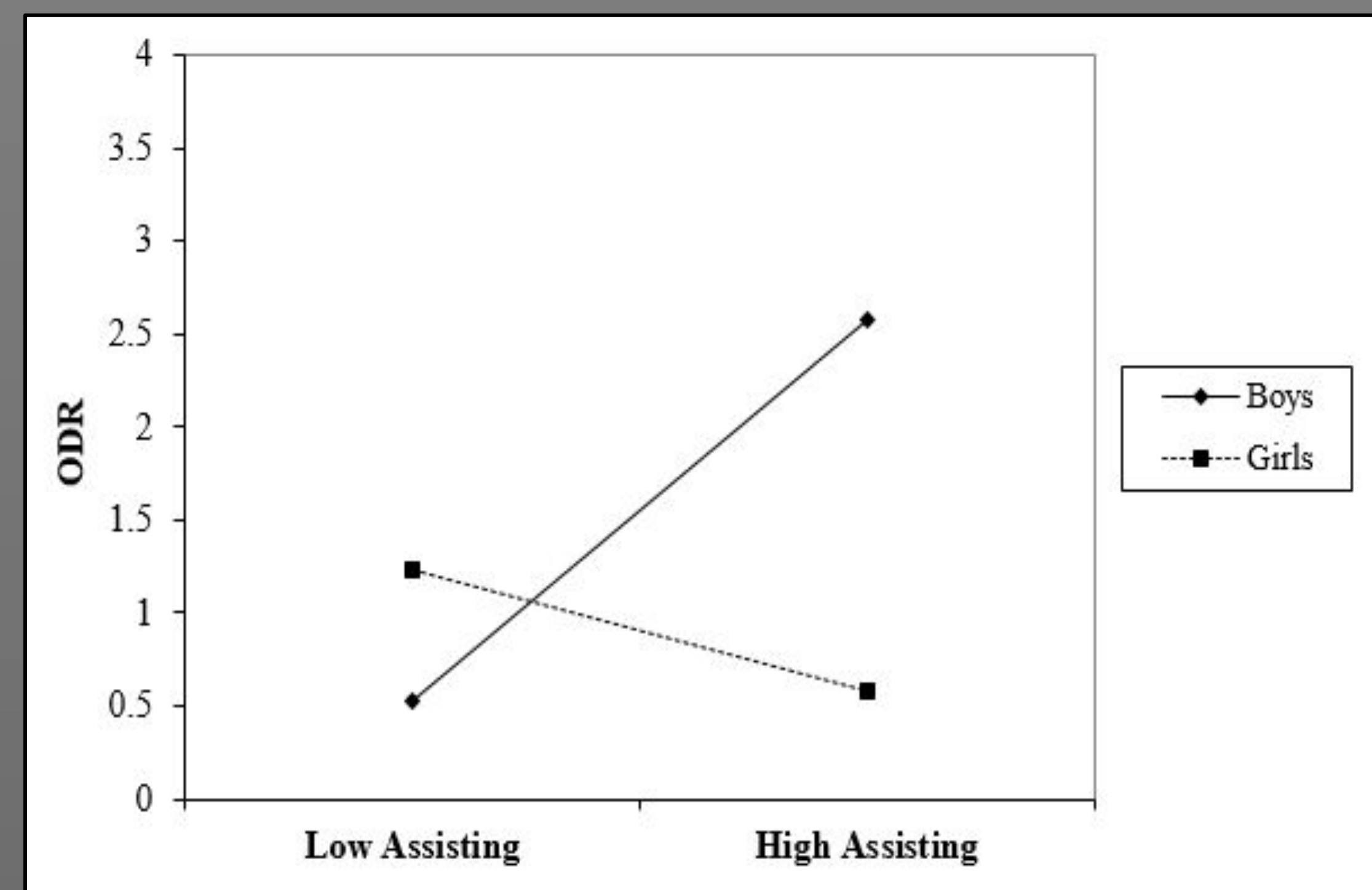


Fig. 1 Association between ODRs and assisting behavior for boys and girls

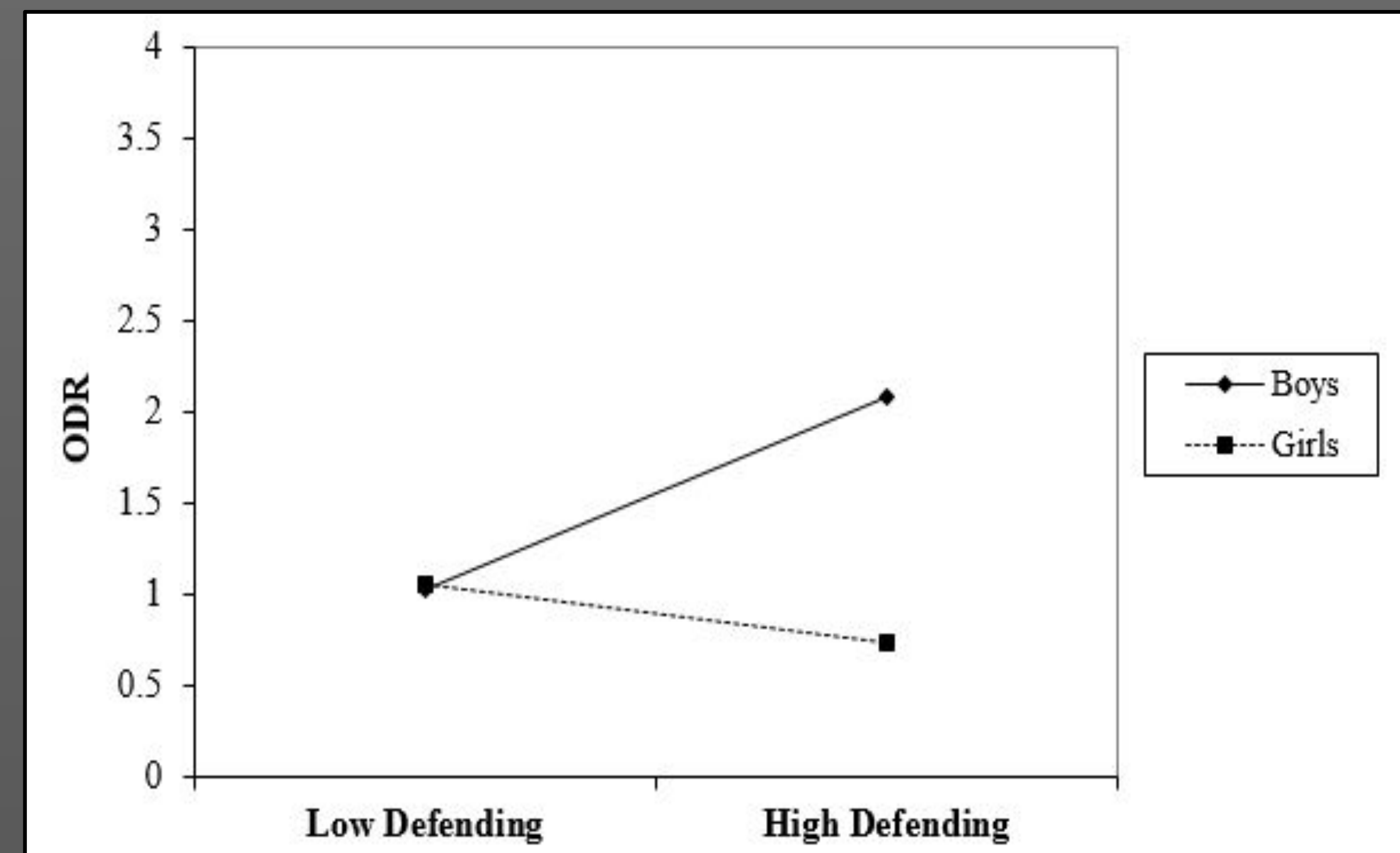


Fig. 2 Association between ODRs and defending behaviors for boys and girls

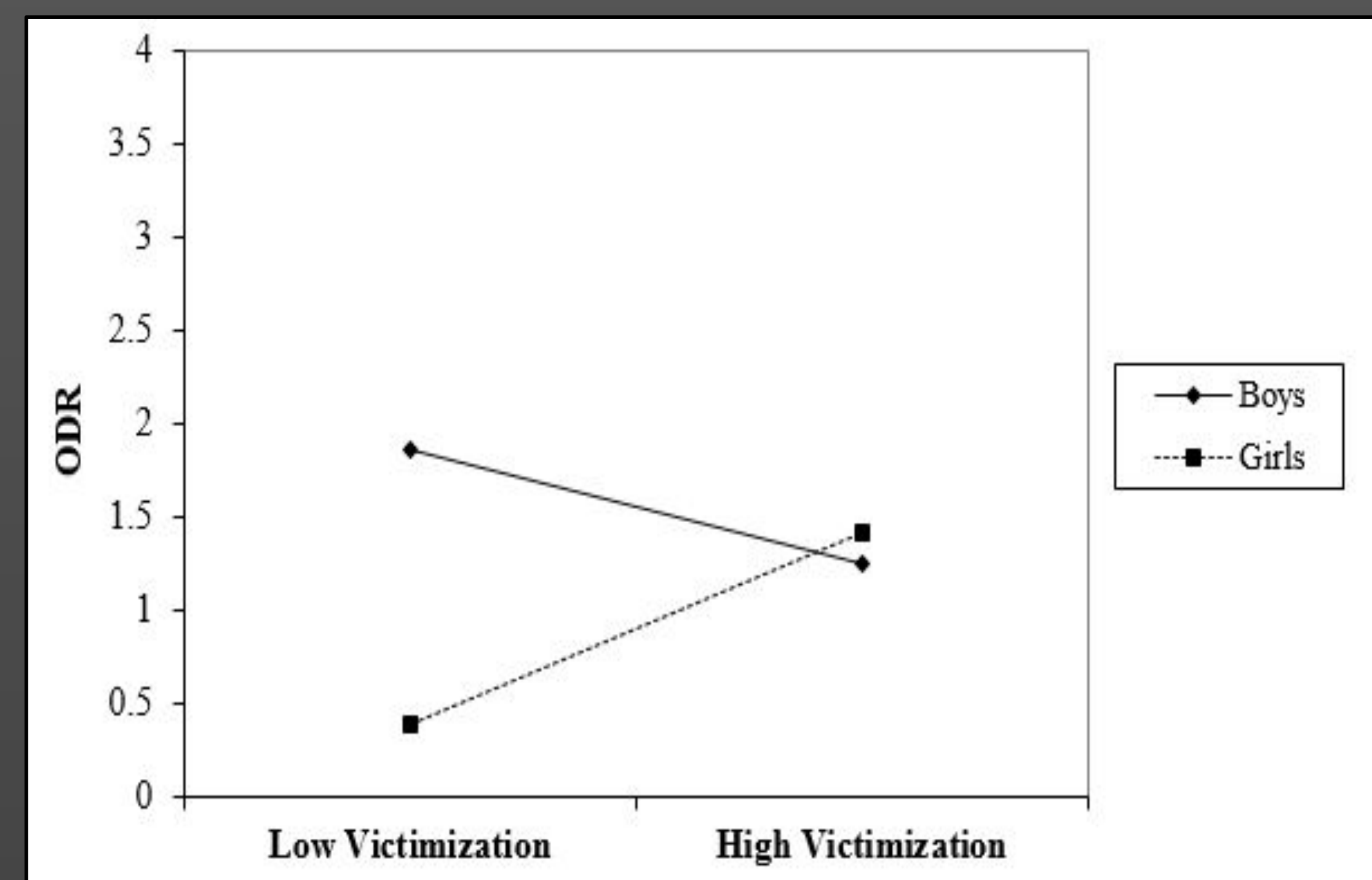


Fig. 3 Association between ODRs and victimization for boys and girls

Table 1

Associations among bully role behaviors and office disciplinary referrals between genders

Independent Variables	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1					
Gender	-.637	.213	-.101	.043	.199
Bully	2.445	.335	.348		
Assistant	1.264	.474	.122		
Victim	.024	.158	.006		
Defender	.312	.128	.090		
Outsider	-.434	.206	-.079		
Step 2					
Gender	-.656	.208	-.104	.243	.043
Bully***	2.643	.392	.376		
Assistant***	3.349	.619	.324		
Victim	-.382	.207	-.098		
Defender**	.577	.170	.166		
Outsider**	-.684	.258	-.124		
Bully X Gender	.077	.729	.008		
Assistant X Gender***	-4.434	.995	-.317		
Victim X Gender**	1.020	.314	.183		
Defender X Gender**	-.750	.254	-.149		
Outsider X Gender	.190	.421	.021		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

- Results were consistent with previous findings indicating that boys are more likely to receive ODRs compared to girls (Kaufman et al., 2010).
- Contrary to our prediction, there were no differences in bully role behaviors by gender.
- Bullying behavior was positively associated with ODRs, unlike outsider behavior which was negatively associated, suggesting that ignoring or being uninvolved with bullying is associated with less frequent problem behavior.
- For boys, there was a significant association between ODRs and assisting and defending behavior, indicating that boys may be assisting or defending in more physical or visible ways, resulting in more ODRs.
- For girls, there was a significant positive association between ODRs and victimization, suggesting that girls who are victimized are more at risk for externalizing behaviors that lead to ODRs.

Limitations & Future Research

- We did not look at specific types of referrals such as fighting or tardies, so we are unsure what types of referrals make up total ODRs.
- This was one sample of middle schools students so we are unsure how these results will generalize to a broader populations.
- Future research should explore the association between ODRs and bully role behaviors with a focus on the specific types of referrals for boys and girls.