

Background and Significance

Background

- Experiences of racial discrimination within online contexts are common among youth of color and have been found to relate to poorer mental health (Tynes *et al.*, 2008).
- Given the increased use of technology during the pandemic, both *vicarious* online discrimination, witnessing same-race individuals being victimized, and *individual* discrimination, one's own experiences, are particularly relevant for youth (Kneale & Bécars, 2021).
- Ethnic-racial identity and self-compassion are aspects of self-concept that could potentially help youth cope with these negative online experiences (Tynes *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, youth who feel positive about their identity (ethnic-racial identity (ERI) affirmation) and are more compassionate towards oneself may be less impacted by online experiences.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

- Utilizing data collected during the pandemic, we examined the prevalence of individual and vicarious online discrimination among Latinx youth and examined whether both forms of online discrimination related to greater anxiety and depressive symptoms.
- We also examined the promotive and protective role of ERI affirmation and self-compassion, hypothesizing that these individual resources would relate to fewer anxiety/depressive symptoms and buffer the impact of online racial discrimination on youths' depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Method

Participants: The current study utilized data from a larger study focused on Latinx parent-adolescent dyads living in the US Southwest ($n = 293$). Youth's data were collected from Aug 2020 to May 2021.

Sample characteristics

Age: Participants were between 11 and 15 years old ($M = 13$; $SD = 1.41$).

Nativity:

US Born: 279 (95%)

Born outside of US: 14 (5%)

Gender:

Girl/Female: 139 (47%)

Boy/Male: 148 (51%)

Trans Girl/Female: 1 (.3%)

Non-Binary: 5 (1.7%)

Measures

Online Racial Victimization. Online Victimization scale for Adolescents (Tynes, Rose, Williams, 2010).

- 2 subscales; 7 items.
 - Individual (4 items; "People have said mean or rude things about me because of my race or ethnic group online") ($\alpha = .69$).
 - Vicarious (3 items; "People have cracked jokes about people from my race or ethnic group online") ($\alpha = .87$).
- Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never happened*) to 5 (*occurs on a daily basis*).

Method Contd.

Ethnic Racial Identity Affirmation. The Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS) (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015)

- 3 items: (e.g., "I feel negatively about my race/ethnicity." (reverse coded)).
- Responses were coded on a Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*Does not describe me at all*) to 4 (*Describes me very well*). ($\alpha = .85$).

Self-Compassion. Neff's Self-Compassion scale (short form) (Raes *et al.*, 2010).

- 6 subscales; 12 items. ($\alpha = .75$)
 - Example subscales:
 - Self-Kindness (2 items; "When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the care and tenderness I need.")
 - Mindfulness (2 items; "When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.")
- Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (Almost always).

Anxiety Symptoms. The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale (GAD-7; Spitzer, 2006)

- 7 items (e.g., "Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge").
 - Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*nearly every day*). ($\alpha = .91$).

Depressive Symptoms. The Center for Epidemiological Studies- Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)

- 20 items (e.g., "I did not feel like eating. "I felt that people disliked me.") Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*rarely or none of the time*) to 4 (*most of the time*). ($\alpha = .84$).

Results

Table 1. Online Discrimination and Mental Health

	Anxiety			Depressive Symptoms		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Individual						
Intercept	1.18	0.40	< .01**	1.50	0.49	< .01**
Age	0.01	0.03	0.79	0.01	0.03	0.82
Nativity	0.05	0.17	0.76	0.02	0.17	0.90
Gender	-0.32	0.08	< .001***	-0.34	0.08	< .001***
Individual OV	0.27	0.07	< .001***	0.32	0.08	< .001***
Self-Compassion	-0.63	0.06	< .001***	-0.61	0.06	< .001***
ERI Affirmation	-0.22	0.09	< .05*	-0.24	0.11	< .05*
Individual OV x ERI Affirmation				0.06	0.12	0.64
Individual OV x Self-Compassion				0.23	0.12	0.06
Vicarious						
Intercept	1.47	0.41	< .001***	1.52	0.40	< .001***
Age	0.01	0.03	0.60	-0.02	0.03	0.58
Nativity	0.04	0.17	0.81	0.04	0.17	0.80
Gender	-0.31	0.08	< .001***	-0.32	0.08	< .001***
Vicarious OV	0.18	0.04	< .001***	0.19	0.04	< .001***
Self-Compassion	-0.59	0.06	< .001***	-0.60	0.06	< .001***
ERI Affirmation	-0.28	0.09	< .05*	-0.27	0.09	< .05*
Vicarious OV x ERI Affirmation				0.09	0.09	0.30
Vicarious OV x Self-Compassion				0.12	0.05	< .05*

Note. Nativity was coded 0 = US born and 1 = Foreign born. Gender was coded 0 = Girls and 1 = Boys. OV = Online Victimization; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

- Descriptive analyses showed that 17% of adolescents reported one or more experience of individual online discrimination and 50% reported one or more experience of vicarious online discrimination in the past year.
- Individual and vicarious online discrimination related to greater anxiety and depressive symptoms (Table 1).

Results Contd.

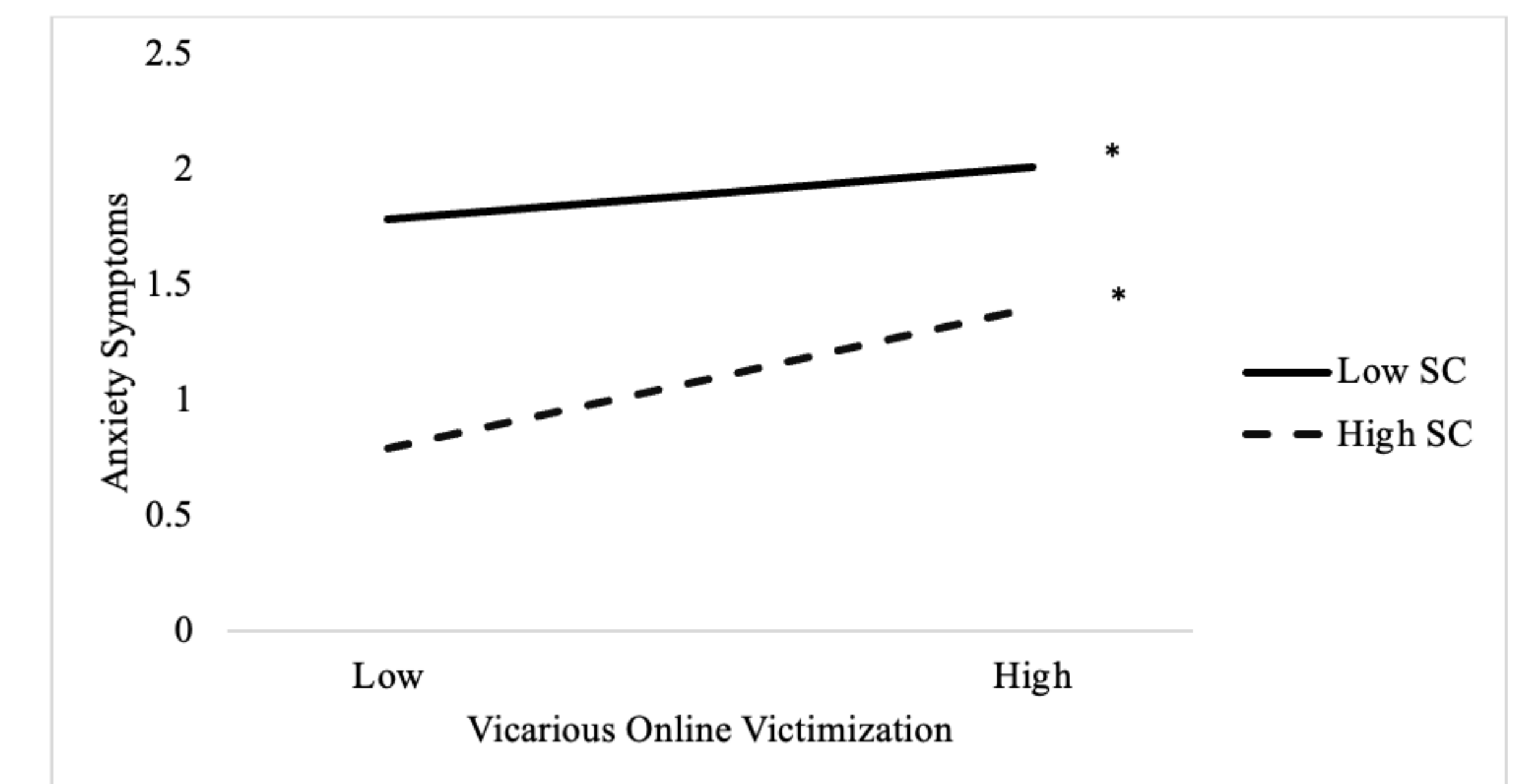


Figure 1. The moderating role of self-compassion in the association between vicarious online discrimination and Latinx youths' anxiety symptoms. The slopes of the lines are significant, $p < .05$. A similar moderating relationship was seen for depressive symptoms.

- Both ERI and self-compassion related to fewer anxiety and depressive symptoms. ERI and self-compassion did not moderate the relations between individual online discrimination and mental health outcomes (Table 1).
- Self-compassion, however, interacted with vicarious discrimination to predict both anxiety and depressive symptoms. As seen in the figure, the interaction revealed that that at high levels of self-compassion, there were a stronger association between anxiety and depressive symptoms and vicarious online racial discrimination. At low levels of self-compassion, the association was weaker.

Conclusions and Implications

- Results suggest that online racial discrimination, particularly vicarious discrimination is very prominent among Latinx youth.
- Although results showed that youth who reported higher self-compassion reported lower anxiety and depressive symptoms, when faced with vicarious online discrimination, the relationship to anxiety and depressive symptoms becomes stronger. Therefore, youth who are more compassionate towards oneself, may be vulnerable towards the observation of online discrimination of others. Perhaps mindfulness, an aspect of self-compassion, is behind this interaction. Mindfulness, a state of awareness, is positively related to self-compassion (Birmie *et al.*, 2010; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011).
- Thus, being aware of racial discrimination that happens to others, may make those individuals particularly vulnerable, thus increasing anxiety and depressive symptoms.

- More research, however, is needed in order to fully understand the complexities surrounding experiences of racial discrimination via different contexts.

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