Bullying victimization has been a prolonged public concern for school safety and mental health (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), with a growing number of studies recognizing its impact on various domains, such as academic achievement, mental health, and social relationships (Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010). Aggression, delinquency, substance use and conduct problems, as well as low academic achievement and school engagement (Reijntjes et al., 2011; Arseneault, Flitton, & Mash, 2010; Kamphuis, Boulton, & Koperski, 2005).

Many school-wide bullying prevention programs have included elements of SEL competencies and achieved notable success on preventing bullying (e.g., Heuchan, Edebohm, Frey, Snell, & Mankeka, 2007).

However, few studies have identified which core factors in SEL competency framework are most effective in preventing bullying. Meanwhile, limited evidence has shown which factors/factors are most effective on preventing a certain type of bullying victimization when implemented in a bullying prevention program.

To address this need, the current study aims to examine:

- The impacts of social-emotional competencies (i.e., responsible decision-making, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) on bullying victimization.
- The moderating effects of grade level in the association above.

### Methods

**Sample**
- 23,532 students in grades 4–12 in 114 public schools (71 elementary, 26 middle, and 11 high schools)

**Outcome Measures: School Engagement**
- Measured by two scales of the Delaware School Survey-Student (DSS-S)
- Delaware Social Emotional Competency Scale (DSCS)

**Predicting Variables**
- Measured by two scales of the Delaware Social Emotional Competency Scale (DSCS)

**Predictive Variables:**
- Responsible Decision-making
- Social Awareness
- Self-management
- Relationship Skills

**Analytic Procedure**
- Two-level hierarchical linear regression models were estimated to examine (1) the concurrent main effects of student and school-level demographic factors on bullying victimization, and (2) the moderating effect of grade level in the association between social-emotional competencies (i.e., responsible decision-making, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) on bullying victimization.

**Results**

#### Effects of Grade Levels Between Social Awareness and BV

**Interactive Effects: Gender x Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male vs. Female</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Caucasian vs. African American</th>
<th>Hispanic vs. African American</th>
<th>Asian vs. African American</th>
<th>Multiracial vs. African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.05 (0.02)**</td>
<td>0.00 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.17 (0.07)**</td>
<td>-0.17 (0.07)**</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.05)*</td>
<td>0.08 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Conclusion and Practical Implications

- The strengths of the association between all four types of SEL Competencies and BV did not vary significantly across elementary and middle schools.
- BV’s associations with Social Awareness and Relationship Skills, but not with Responsibility and Self-management, varied significantly across middle and high schools.
- The negative (risky) effect of Social Awareness on BV was stronger in middle schools than in high schools.
- The positive (protective) effect of Relationships Skills on BV was stronger in middle schools than in high schools.

**Practical Implications:**
- Social-emotional learning is often a function of various demographic factors at both individual and school levels. Thus, it is important for educators and policy makers to fully recognize the different functions of SEL competencies in preventing BV.