

WCES 2014

An Examination of Bullying Tendencies and Bullying Coping Behaviors among Adolescents

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Abstract

The study aims to examine bullying tendencies and bullying coping behaviors among adolescents in terms of different variables such as gender, participation in social activities, watching violent movies, being submissive, and the presence of the school counselor's activities about prevention of bullying. The study was conducted with 402 high school students. The "Bullying Tendency Scale", "Coping with Bullying Scale," and "Personal Information Form" were used to obtain data. The collected data were analysed by MANOVA and t-test. The results of the study revealed that the scores for bullying, bullying tendency, and coping with bullying significantly differed with gender, participation in social activities, watching violent movies, being submissive, and the presence of the school counselor's activities about prevention of bullying.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of WCES 2014

Keywords: Bullying, Bullying Tendencies, Adolescents, Victim

1. Introduction

Bullying is a substantial research subject as it is currently a widespread phenomenon that constitutes a significant problem (Hotaman & Yüksel-Şahin, 2009). Current research results demonstrate that bullies are prone to psychiatric diseases (Koç, 2006). A relationship exists between psychological distress and bullying (Schneider et al., 2012). During adulthood, bullies are more commonly observed to commit crimes and abuse their spouses and children (Kartal & Bilgin, 2012). In the lack of proper action against bullies, they are known to lead antisocial lives progressing with unstable relationships (Cole, 1995). On the other hand, individuals who are exposed to bullying

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(victims) are adversely affected in terms of physical and psychological health (Koç, 2006). Solitude, diminishing self-esteem, psychosomatic complaints and depression are common among these individuals (Cook, et. al., 2010). And the most tragic outcome of victimization is suicide (Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). A person who engages in bullying behavior is called a bully, while a person who is exposed to bullying acts is called a victim (Kapçı, 2004). There are also others who are referred to as bully-victims. Such individuals sometimes engage in bullying acts themselves and are sometimes exposed to other people's bullying acts (Pişkin, 2002). It was Olweus who first studied bullying. Olweus labeled bullying with mobbing, meaning intimidation by a group (Swearer et al., 2010: as cited in Polanin, Espelage & Pigott, 2012). Olweus later noticed that the term mobbing does not fully correspond to bullying and therefore switched to the term bullying (Pişkin, 2002). Mobbing is often used for workplace environments, while bullying is a term that is used for the school environment and is relevant to young people (Furlong, et. al., 2010). Bullying is defined as "negative actions repeatedly perpetrated by one or more persons against another person who is relatively weaker. A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself (Olweus, 2008). Bullying encompasses hurtful and negative behaviors intentionally and persistently inflicted upon individuals who are too weak to defend themselves (Korkut, 2004). Such hurtful and negative behaviors range from verbal threats, insulting, name calling, mocking, excluding from a group, damaging the victim's belongings (İlhan-Alper, 2008; Koç, 2006; Pişkin, 2002), to behaviors such as intimidation for the purpose of extorting someone's money or belongings, racial bullying, sexual bullying, and cyber-bullying by phone or through the Internet (Olweus, 2008). They could also involve behaviors that require physical contact, such as hitting, kicking or pinching. Physical harm is classified within the first type of bullying, while social harm constitutes the second type of bullying (Çayırdağ, 2006; Olweus, 2008; Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). Involving observable actions, physical and verbal bullying are directly categorized as bullying. On the other hand, social exclusion is defined as indirect bullying. Also referred to as relational aggression, indirect bullying involves behaviors that are not directly observable, such as spreading gossip or threatening to end the friendship unless the victim complies (Alika, 2012; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; as cited in Kapçı, 2004; Kyriakides, Kaloyirou & Lindsay, 2006). Bullies have made a habit of such behaviors, which they will continue to perform unless there is counteraction (İlhan-Alper, 2008). Three main criteria are required for an action to be defined as bullying (Çalık et. al., 2009; Furlong et. al., 2010; Karataş & Öztürk, 2009; Olweus, 2008; Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007). Firstly, an action should be persistent, meaning that the bully needs to perform it continuously over a period of time. Secondly, there should be an unequal balance of power between the two parties. Thirdly, the final requirement is the presence of aggressive behaviors with the intention to deliberately cause harm. For instance; arguments or fights between two individuals with more or less equal physical or intellectual power cannot be defined as bullying, even though they are performed with aggressive intentions (Pişkin, 2002). However, when the same individuals are constantly harassed by certain others, this is called bullying. In a bullying case, a child is stronger than the other, whom he or she harasses using his or her power. And the other child is always weak and desperate (Çayırdağ, 2006). Certain pupils are clearly more at risk of being involved as bullies or victims, or sometimes both (bully/victims), by virtue of personality, family background factors, characteristics such as disability, and the nature and quality of friendships and peer-group reputation (Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). Individuals who perform bullying acts are most distinctly characterized by the fact that they exhibit aggressive behaviors toward their peers, teachers, and parents. They often choose younger and anxious individuals without friends as their victims. They tell lies very easily (Koç, 2006). They get angry very quickly, have low tolerance, and act impulsively. Individuals performing bullying actions often have parents with low educational and socio-economic levels (Çayırdağ, 2006). Most of these parents do not attend to their children, depriving them of their positive warm care and love. They fail to draw definite lines when their kids exhibit aggressive behaviors, thus allowing them to apply bullying behaviors to their siblings and friends (Olweus, 2008). Research has shown that children who perform bullying acts are often the victims of domestic violence (Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007). It has also been demonstrated that violence, aggression (Şahin, 1998), and bullying as a sub-dimension of aggression (Pişkin, 2002) are learnt during the early stages of life. Therefore, family members who are modeled by a child in every respect and the family circle as the environment for the first years of life play a critical role in the formation and development of a child's personality. Children of parents who treat them in a domineering manner, punish them physically or verbally, lay down strict rules, and impose prohibitions are often found to exhibit unfriendly, hostile, aggressive (Demiriz & Öğretir, 2007), and bullying behaviors. Such children do not display

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