



PERCEPTION OF PEER BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parental attitudes and bullying and victimization among young adolescents in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus. A total of 149 adolescents (85 girls, 64 boys) (mean age of 12.9 years, range of 12–15 years) were recruited from middle schools. The ages of the students were between 12 (47.7%) to 15 (8.1%) years old. The study included a demographic information form and four questionnaires, which are The Adolescent-Family Process Measure (mother form), Multidimensional Peer Victimization Questionnaire, Peer Bullying Questionnaire and Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Questionnaire (CPIC). Results showed that gender was indicated for in school bullying among adolescents. The quality of Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict on bulling was studied, and it was found that adolescents generally thought like their parents even if they have conflicts with them.

Key Words: Bullying, Victimization, Parental Style, Inter-parental Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the word "bully" can be attributed as far back as the 1530s, when it meant "sweetheart", in Middle Dutch "boele" (lover), or a protective "brother". However, bully takes on the meaning of "blusterer" in 17th century (Harper, 2008). In different areas, there are types of bullying which are cyber bullying, disability bullying, gay bullying, legal bullying, military bullying, sexual bullying, workplace bullying, and school bullying. In the literature, different forms of bullying were seen. Leymann introduced the concept of "*mobbing*" in Sweden in 1972. Leymann was interested in what children can do each other at school in 1972, and he used *mobbing* (cited in Leymann, 1996). The concept of mobbing comes from the root of the word "*mob*". Mob means an unstable crowd that tends to do violence in the community. Mobbing also means surging around, collectively pitching in or making trouble (Tinaz, 2006, pp.7). Leymann identifies mobbing as one or more people in business life who are systematically using hostile and unethical communication to create psychological terror (Leymann, 1996, p. 165). Especially in Anglo-Saxon law, bullying is used instead of mobbing in the same meaning (Erdem and Parlak, 2010, p. 265). *Bullying* is used as swaggering toughness and tyranny; *mobbing* is also used as mass attack (Redhouse, 2002). As mentioned above, mobbing is used in the concept of business life, but bullying is used for schools. In contrast, the psychological abuse done by employers is defined as *bossing* (Erdem, Parlak 2010, pp. 267). Olweus, (1993) defined bullying as intentional, repeated negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behaviour by one or more person directed against another person who has difficulty defending himself/herself. Also, Smith and Sharp, (1994) referred to bullying as repeated aggressive behaviours toward a victim. Further, they concluded that the child is doing the bullying in order to be perceived as stronger.

The first study on school bullying was conducted by Dan Olweus in the 1970's which is well known in Scandinavian countries. He did concurrent research in Sweden, Norway and Finland; since the 1990's, he has researched peer bullying in school in Japan, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, USA, and Spain (Olweus, 2001). Bullying has been recognized as a worldwide problem (Olweus, 1993).



Peer bullying defined as a subtype of aggression (Wang, Iannotti, and Nansel, 2009) that has or has not been seen as interpersonal violence in an education centre or school, (Pellegrini, 2002). A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and overtime, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons (Olweus, 1991, p.413; Kaplan, 2007). Furthermore Hawker and Boulton (2000) defined victimization as being exposed to aggressive behaviour from other children. Olweus (1995, p. 197) described victims as anxious and insecure, cautious, sensitive, and quiet, with a negative view of themselves and their situation. Victimization may occur everywhere in schools, such as classroom, school corridors, cafeterias, and also common areas, such as school buses during home-school-home journeys (Juvenonen and Graham, 2001).

As results of some studies, some characteristics of victims have been determined; victims tend to be worried (Schuster, 1996). In addition some victims have low self-esteem and are often rejected by his/her friends (Kochenderfer and Ladd, 1997). They do not demand their rights, have insufficient social behaviours and rarely engage in school activities (Schwartz, Dodge, Coie, 1993; Yıldırım 2001); they may be withdrawn, depressed and anxious (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, Toblin, 2005). Olweus (1991; 1993) proposed two different victim types as '*passive*' or '*provocative*'. Whether a victim is labelled as a passive/submissive or a provocative victim both are defined as a victim based on their reactions to a bully (Whitehouse, 2006, p. 10). According to Olweus (1991) a passive victim is anxious, socially withdrawn, and submissive. Passive victims, who are depressed and have poor self-esteem, represent the largest victimized group.

Gender differentiation is an important value in defining bullying/victimization. Various epidemiological studies (Boulton and Underwood, 1994), have found that bullying is more frequent among boys than among girls, and that boys are more likely to become bullies compared to girls (Boulton and Smith, 1994). Family influences, marital conflict and peer relationships can be indications of the characteristics of bullies and victims (Hill, et al., 2007).

Avcı (2006) infers that peer bullying and victimization are related to harmful relations with and behaviours of parents. He emphasized that parents who have marital conflict and problems reflect these on their children as physical bullying or hostile attitudes; thus, occurrence of these behaviours is not surprising in the social relations of their children. Children learn their aggressive response patterns from hostile parents, who physically abuse them, for example, slapping or hitting them or from witnessing parental violence (Hill, et al, 2007). Victimized boys have bad parent-child relationships characterized by intense closeness, especially with their mothers (Olweus, 1980).

Mitchell and Ziegler (2007) indicated that children who grow up in authoritarian family may have low self esteem. If the family has permissive attitudes, the child shows a careless attitude and does not show sensitivity toward other people. However, if the parents have authoritative/democratic attitudes, the child is treated as an individual capable of understanding. Also, victim students may have some common family characteristics, such as parents who are not very involved in their children's lives, who lack warmth and positive involvement. Some parents may not have set clear limits on their children's aggressive behaviour and may have allowed them to act out aggressively toward their siblings and other children.

In social learning theory, adolescent attitudes are affected by their group of friends, so even adolescents who normally would not behave aggressively might begin to bully because of peer pressure from their group of friends. In other words, adolescents may act aggressively in order to be accepted by their group of friends. Because of this, they use their peers as models of behaviour (Burks, etc., 1999). Imitation or modelling occurs because of observational learning (Isom, 1998).



Method

The research includes peer bullying and victimization in early adolescence in middle school students in İskele and Famagusta in TRNC. This research examines the link between the adolescents' perception of parenting styles and inter-parental relationships and their relations with peer bullying and victimization among early adolescence. The study is approved by The Eastern Mediterranean University, and the data collection occurred in spring, 2011.

Participants

Participants of the present research are 149 students, 64 males (43.0%) and 85 females (57.0%), from three middle schools in Famagusta and İskele, Northern Cyprus ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .49$). All adolescents came mainly from middle income families. They are both Cypriots and Turkish. The ages of the students are between 12 to 15 years old ($M = 12.92$, $SD = 1.02$). The participants in the age groups of 12 is 71 (47.7%) and 15 is 12 (8.1%).

Material

The research includes a demographic information form and four questionnaires which are *The Adolescent-Family Process Measure* (mother form), *Multidimensional Peer Victimization Questionnaire*, *Peer Bullying Questionnaire* and *Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Questionnaire* (CPIC).

Procedures

Questionnaires are administered to students in classrooms in the spring of 2010–2011 school years. Questionnaires took approximately 45 minutes to complete. The researcher explains the purpose of the research to the adolescents and asked them to complete the instrument if they agreed to participate. The research received formal approval from the middle schools, and the Middle School Ministry of Education, TRNC. These students also participated in this research with their parents' permission. In addition, schools are coded as A, and B, (from İskele), C, and D (from Famagusta) because of ethical rules and confidentiality requirements.

Data Collection and Analyses

To investigate the percentage and types of bullying and victimization, frequency analyses were performed. All analyses were utilized by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0.

To measure participants' demographic information, frequency tables were used. The independent sample t-test was used to analyze percentage, types of bullying and victimization. T-tests were also used to determine whether bullying and victimization differs significantly between males and females. Chi-square scores used to identify percentages and frequencies of some bullying and victimization questions according to the gender of the respondent and the response to the bullying and victimization. The correlation between interrelations with mother and bullying, and mother and victimization behaviour are analysed with Bivariate analyses. A hierarchical regression analysis is conducted to predict whether bullying and victimization differs according to age, gender, mother and father's education level, economic level, and inter-parental conflict. In addition, a significance level of 0.05 determines whether findings are significant or not.

Findings

The t-test measures bullying reports in Table 1. The t-test is conducted to analyze the bullying level between males and females. Table 3 shows that the independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze whether bullying differs significantly between males and females.

**Table 1. T-test in accordance with bullying and gender**

| Gender | n | M | Sd | df | t | p* |
|--------|----|-------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| Female | 85 | 40.53 | 6.56 | 147 | - | 0.000 |
| Male | 64 | 46.01 | 12.65 | | 3.48 | 0.000 |

* If Chi-Square $p \leq 0.05$, value is evaluated as significant

Table 1 shows the difference between boys and girls in bullying others. The number of female who participated in the survey is about n=85 while males are about n=64. The result shows that among males generally about 26.6% (n=17) admit having bullied others, and females about 5.9% (n=5) admit having bullied others.

T-test results indicate that males' bullying level ($m=46.01$, $sd=12.65$) is significantly higher than females ($m=40.53$, $sd=6.56$) [t ($df=147$) = -3.48 $p=0.000$]. These results suggest that male participants have more bullying behaviours.

The number of female who gave answers to physical bullying questions in the survey is about n=83 while males are about n=55. According to their answers, 4.8% (n=4) of females and 34.5% (n=19) of males have physical bullying behaviours. Furthermore, the number of female who gave answers to relational bullying questions in the survey is about n=84 while males was about n=56. The results of their answers shows that 7.1% (n=6) of females and 17.9% (n=10) of males relationally bullied their peers.

The percentage of types of bullying with gender shows with independent sample t-test results in Table 4. As results of t-test, two types of bullying scales' points are differentiated as gender, but teasing bullying is not significantly different between the genders.

All questions asked the students if they had ever bullied others at school. A look at the averages shows that males' physical bullying ($mean=19.10$, $sd=6.41$) [t ($df=136$) = -4.61, $p<0.000$] and relational bullying ($m=18.34$, $sd=4.80$) is significantly higher than females' physical bullying ($m=15.38$, $sd=2.94$) and relational bullying ($m=16.68$, $sd=1.46$) [t ($df=138$) = -2.51, $p<0.000$]. However, teasing bullying is not shown to be significantly different in the score for females ($m=8.19$, $sd=2.57$) and males ($m=8.95$, $sd=2.88$).

The variables cross tabulation are listed along the top and down the side of the table; each cell represents a different category combination defined by the gender of the respondent and the response to the bullying questions. In addition chi square scores define the identification of percentages and frequencies.

Table . T-test in accordance with victimization for gender

| Gender | n | mean | sd | df | t | p |
|--------|----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Female | 85 | 42.45 | 8.02 | 147 | -3.22 | 0.000 |
| Male | 64 | 48.30 | 13.95 | | | |

If Chi-Square $p \leq 0.000$, value is evaluated as significant

The independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze whether victimization differed significantly between males and females. According to the results, the bullying scale points differentiated as gender [t ($df=147$) = -3.22, $p<0.000$]. When the averages are examined, the t-test result indicated that the males' victimization level ($mean=48.30$, $sd=13.95$) was significantly higher than females ($mean=42.45$, $sd=8.02$).



What the averages show is that the males' physical victimization level (mean=15.20, sd=4.59) [t (df=142) = -3.27, $p=0.001$] teasing victimization (mean=10.20, sd=4.03) [t (df=143) = -2.24, $p=0.003$] and attack on property (mean=15.20, sd=10.20) [t (df=143) = -2.24, $p=0.009$] are significantly higher than females' physical bullying (mean=13.22, sd=2.63) and teasing victimization (mean=8.99, sd=2.44) and attack on property (mean=5.55, sd=1.15).

The first hypotheses of this study is "Genders would have differences for the types of bullying and victimization during these ages, and boys would be more likely to have experienced physical bullying and victimization compared to girls who would be more likely to have more relational bullying and victimization". The study results show that males' physical bullying and victimization, and relational bullying and victimization are significantly higher than females' physical bullying and relational bullying behaviours.

The second hypothesis is "mother and adolescent relations would have an effect on bullying and victimization among adolescents in middle school.

Table . Interrelation with the mother

| Gender | n | mean | sd | df | t | p |
|--------|----|-------|-------|-----|------|--------|
| Female | 85 | 83.68 | 11.11 | 147 | 5.66 | 0.000* |
| Male | 64 | 69.26 | 19.70 | | | |

* $p=.000$

The independent sample t-test is conducted to analyze whether interrelation with adolescent and mother differs significantly between males and females. According to the results, the mother scale points differentiated as gender [t (df=147) = 5.66, $p<0.000$]. When the averages are examined, the t-test result indicates that females (mean=83.68, sd=11.11) are significantly higher than males (mean=69.26, sd=19.70).

The correlation is generated in order to determine which relationship is significant among the variables. The correlation between interrelations with mother and bullying behaviour are analysed with bivariate analyses. In bivariate analyses, there is a significant correlation between bullying behaviour and relations with mother ($r = -.244$, $p = 0.003$).

There are negative correlation between bullying behaviour and relations with the mother. In addition, there are significant relations between monitoring by mother and bullying behaviours of adolescents ($r = -.356$, $p = 0.000$), communication and bullying behaviours ($r = -.264$, $p=0.002$), conflict with mother and bullying behaviours ($r = .319$, $p=0.000$), peer acceptance and bullying behaviour ($r = -.243$, $p=0.005$), proximity with mother and bullying behaviours ($r = -.460$, $p=0.000$). However, the correlation between interrelations with the mother and victimization behaviours is not significant in accordance with bivariate analyses.

A hierarchical regression analysis is conducted to predict whether bullying differs according to age, gender, mother and father's education level, economic level, and inter-parental conflict.

ANOVA results show that gender ($\beta = .26$) is significant related to predicting bullying behaviour ($p<0.001$). The model is significant $F_{\beta}=0.05$ [$F (4.77) = 266$, $p<.05$; $R^2 = .071$]. In the second step, the mother's education and the father's education level and the economic level are entered. The parent's education level is not significant predictors of bullying behaviour. In the third step, inter-marital conflict is entered. The model is significant. Gender ($\beta = .23$), and inter-parental conflict ($\beta = -.33$) are significantly related to predicting bullying behaviours. If the marital conflict increases, bullying behaviours also increases $F_{\beta}=0.000$ [$F (4.56) = 429$, $p< .000$; $R^2 = .184$].



A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to predict whether victimization differs according to age, gender, mother and father's education level, economic level, and inter-parental conflict. In the first step, age and gender are entered. ANOVA results show that gender ($\beta = .23$) is significant related to predicting being a victim ($p < 0.005$). The model is significant $F_{\beta} = .05$ [$F(3.56) = 232$, $p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.054$]. In the second step, the mother's education and the father's education level and the economic level were entered. The parent's education level and economic level were not significant predictors of victimization. In the third step, inter-marital conflict was entered. The model is significant. Gender ($\beta = -.11$), and inter-parental conflict ($\beta = -.13$) are significant related to predicting victimization [$F(2.22) = .315$, $p = 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.099$].

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to carry out a test of the perception of parental styles by adolescents and bullying/victimization among adolescents.

In the previous chapter an exploration of differences in the level of bullying and victimization across the gender was completed. The result indicates that, in general, boys think they are significantly more involved in bullying than girls. Girls seem more often to take part in verbal bullying (e.g. calling names, teasing) than boys and took part less than boys in other forms of concrete bullying (isolating, physical bullying, isolating others, etc.). It was also indicated that girls were more often victimized than boys. The findings show that gender was a significant determiner of bullying and victimization, and males show more bullying behaviour than females.

Previous studies (Smith and Sharp, 1994) have shown that boys are more often involved in physical bullying while girls are more involved in psychological and social/relational bullying or spreading nasty rumours. Also, Panayiotis and colleagues (2010) shows that boys score significantly higher on the bullying sub-scale, but there are no significant differences in terms of the victimization. Pişkin (2002) stated that children's exposure to bullying occurs at a rate of 35% and 6% children experience both being a bully and exposure to bullying. Pişkin (2002) also stated that for boys bullying occurred with 34% of violence.

In addition, adolescents' bullying behaviours may be related to marital conflict. Furthermore, according to this research, analysis of children's perception of inter-parental conflict shows that bully adolescents have a stronger perception of inter-parental conflict.

According to results of this research, if monitoring by mother, communication with mother, peer acceptance by mother, and proximity of mother are increased, bullying behaviours of adolescents may decrease. However, if conflict with mother increases bullying may increase. A major risk factor is parenting style, in particular harsh and inconsistent parenting, which research has shown is associated with child behaviour problems (Scott, 2008). Furthermore, Baltes (1997) indicates the families of bully and victims are uniquely characterized by inconsistent discipline and poor parental monitoring.

The findings in the related literature indicated that relational bullies exhibit bullying behaviours, such as social manipulation, gossiping, social exclusion, and threatening (Rose, Swenson and Waller, 2004).

Also, if we think of human like a photograph machine to learning new things, the human starts take photos of everything in his/her mind from his/her birth to death. For example, a child always observes his/her parents' behaviours, postures, reflexes, etc. From a very young age, and this child imitating his/her parents' behaviours, postures, reflexes, etc, without attaching any meaning to them. People give meaning to these actions in their mind. However, experiences occur which require that humans attach meaning to them, and these experiences require a social atmosphere.



The present research may help set fundamental rights for adolescents within schools where awareness of these rights would spare oppression for victims of bullying in middle schools of TRNC. Social policy programs may raise awareness about the effects of bullying and victimization and help to improve relations between peers, between family members, and increase school success for adolescents. Because the constitution of the Turkish Republic of Cyprus protects the safety of young people, the government may provide programs to help young people to grow and develop into knowledgeable, healthy, strong, and wholesome members of society. The goals of such programs are to prevent, to intervene in and to cope with bullying behaviours of adolescents. Specifically, prevention programs, which include effective communication skills, control of anger, problem solving skills and control of behaviours, may be created by civil society organizations (non-government organization), and by psychological counselling and guidance services of schools. Ability education programs may be arranged to increase adolescents' ability for healthy coping and controlling of anger. Psychological counsellors may organize personal psychological counselling applications for aggressive adolescents, and they may include their parents in this process. Guidance councils could be constituted with the purpose of helping and guiding adolescents' parents. These councils could prepare some courses, seminars and meetings, and also brochure and books could be prepared to give parents the information that they need.

Future research could be developed using open ended questions and interviews to measure the relationships between parents and adolescences that would improve parenting programmes in order to reduce the bullying behaviours of their children.

In this research, only the perceived parental relation with the mother was measured; however, future research could use questionnaires which measure parental attitudes to both the mother and the father.

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IOJPE

International Online Journal of Primary Education

ISSN: 1300 – 915X

www.iojpe.org

2017, volume 6, issue 1

IOJPE