

EXAMINATION OF PEER BULLYING DURING (BULLY-VICTIM-PASSIVE BULLY) PRESCHOOL PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine peer bullying observed during preschool education. The study group consists of 164 children receiving preschool education during the 2018-2019 academic year. Study data were collected through the “Bully and Victim Child’s Behavior Evaluation Form” and “Personal Information Form” developed by the researchers. Data were analyzed through the SPSS 20 software.

At the end of the study, it was observed that preschool aged children’s bully total scores significantly differ according to gender and age; passive bully total scores significantly differ according to gender.

Keywords: peer bullying, preschool education.

INTRODUCTION

In preschool education institutions children enter a social environment consisting of their peers without their family for the first time. Children’s need to be together with other children is met in these institutions and self-concepts of children are developed through group games. Children can learn something about themselves by entering in a friend group and become aware of their self beyond the family in a realistic manner by being together with their peers. They can discover their talents, see their contributions to the group in the social environment, become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and go through social experiences such as being accepted or excluded. Children will discover their real limits according to the skills they have gained from the games they play (Sevinç, 2004). Thus, preschool education institutions can be considered as starting points for peer relationships of children. Different types of peer relationships come up as a result of positive and negative interactions between peers, which are effective in all developmental areas of children. Peer bullying is one of these types of relationships (Gülay-Ogelman and Erten-Sarıkaya, 2016). As a sub-dimension of aggression, peer bullying is defined as the stronger child using violence repeatedly against the weaker child without any provocative agents (Olweus, 2003). It is observed that peer bullying is carried out in three different way named as physical violence, verbal violence and indirect violence (Sharp & Smith, 2003). Physical violence consists of behaviors such as; hitting, slapping, punching, poking, pinching, holding tightly, shaking, crashing, pulling one’s hair, fighting, kicking, pushing, pulling, tripping, getting or harming one’s belongings, pulling the chair, locking up in a room, biting, spitting etc. (Sharp & Smith, 2003; Uysal, 2011). Verbal violence consists of behaviors such as; mocking with, nicknaming, making angry, scolding, shouting, making fun of, using insulting words, teasing, saying bad words, swearing, provoking, slandering, making comments about one’s gender or body etc. (Sharp & Smith,

2003; Uysal, 2011). Indirect violence consists of behaviors such as; gossiping, excluding or ignoring one from the group on purpose (Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Being exposed to peer bullying (being a victim) refers to a child being exposed to negative actions more than once for a long time by one or more children. Children who carry out peer bullying (bully) are children who perform bullying systematically against a target group they select among their peers (Pellegrini, 1998). People who support but don't actively perform bullying are defined as "supportive-passive bully" (Olweus, 2003).

When studies on peer bullying (bullying) among preschool aged children conducted in or out of Turkey are considered, it is evident that there are researchers which examine; the density of peer bullying (Uysal, 2011; Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012; Gültekin-Akduman, 2012; Humphrey, 2013; Salı, 2014; Gülay-Ogelman & Erten-Sarıkaya, 2016; Yörük, 2016; Helgeland & Lund, 2017); the relationship between peer bullying and school orientation (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Seçer et al., 2014); relationships between parent-child and peer bullying (Ray, Cohen, Secrist, & Duncan, 1997; Ladd & Ladd, 1998); bullying roles (Monks, Smith & Swettenham, 2005; Perren & Alsaker, 2006); perceptions of preschool teachers on peer bullying (Şahin, Demirağ & Aykaç, 2009); game behaviors and bullying actions carried out during games by preschool students (Aslan-Metin, 2013); effects of the degree of being exposed to peer bullying on the natures of children (Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz, 2018) and the level of being exposed to peer bullying based on various familial characteristics (Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz, 2018). It is observed that the majority of the studies on this subject focus on primary school aged and elder groups and that studies on preschool period are relatively low. Gültekin Akduman (2012) conducted a study examining preschool bullying in Turkey. This study is different from the study conducted by Gültekin Akduman (2012) because it evaluates children as bully-victim-passive bully children. Negative experiences in social relationships during preschool period can lead to the main cause for violent behaviors seen during the school years and adolescence of a child (Perren, 2000). From this point of view, the importance of examining violence behaviors carried out during early childhood becomes more evident. Thus, preschool children should also be considered in studies carried out on violence. The need for research stems from this.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine peer bullying during preschool period according to various variables. With this respect, answer for the following question was sought; do preschool aged children's bully, victim and passive-bully total scores differ according to the age of the child, gender, parents' educational background, parents' marital status, number of siblings and type of family?

METHOD

Research Model

The relational screening model, which is one of the general screening models that examine the presence and/or level of change between two or more variables, was used in this study so as to examine peer bullying during preschool period based on various variables (Karasar, 2012).

Study Group

The study group consists of 164 children receiving preschool education during the 2018-2019 academic year. It is evident that 50.6% of these children are female (N=83) and 49.3% are male (N=81); 28% are in the 48-60 months group (N=46) and 72% are in the 61-69% months group (N=118); 6%'s mother is literate (N=10), 31.7%'s mother is primary school graduate

(N=52), 37.8%’s mother is high school graduate (N=62), 24.3%’s mother is university graduate (N=40); 4.8%’s father is literate (N=8), 32.9%’s father is primary school graduate (N=54), 32.3%’s father is high school graduate (N=53), 29.2%’s father is university graduate (N=48); 94.5%’s parents are together (N=155), 5.4%’s parents are divorced (N=9); 12.1% don’t have a sibling (N=20), 30.4% have one sibling (N=50), 36% have two siblings (N=59), 21.3% have three or more siblings (N=35); 88.4% have a nuclear type family (N=145) and 10.9% have an extended type family (N=18).

Data Collection

The “Personal Information Form” and “Bully and Victim Child’s Behavior Evaluation Form” were used to collect the study data. In the personal information form developed by the researchers, there are information about the child’s personal information (gender, age, mother’s educational status, father’s educational status, parents’ marital status, number of siblings and family type).

The “Bully and Victim Child’s Behavior Evaluation Form” developed by Özyürek & Kurnaz (2019) was used in the study to identify peer bullying levels of the children. The form is a 2 point Likert type evaluation scale and consists of 32 items graded as “Yes”(1) and “No”(2). The scale has three sub-dimensions about bully child behaviors (14 items), victim child behaviors (13 items) and passive-bully child behaviors (5 items). The KR-20 internal consistency coefficient for Bully Child Behaviors sub-dimension is 0.86, Victim Child Behaviors sub-dimension is 0.88 and Passive-Bully Child sub-dimension is 0.71. It was assumed that the evaluation instrument can be used as a valid and reliable evaluation instrument for identifying preschool aged children’s bully, victim and passive-bully behaviors by assessing the scores obtained from each sub-dimension (Özyürek & Kurnaz, 2019).

Data were collected via teachers from 164 children attending nursery classes in preschools and primary schools under the Ministry of National Education.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the study were analyzed through the SPSS 20.0 (Statistical Packages for The Social Sciences) software. The skewness score was considered to measure the skewness coefficient so as to see whether the data have a normal distribution. According to the analysis it was observed that the skewness coefficient for the bully total scores were 1.181, 1.236 for victim total scores was and 0.988 for passive-bully total scores. Scores were observed to have a normal distribution due to the results being close to ±1 limits and that there are no significant differences in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov scores. For this reason data were analyzed through the t-test and ANOVA (Büyüköztürk, 2012).

FINDINGS

Results of the study are given below in tables:

Table 1. Bully/ Victim/ Passive-Bully Total Score Averages, Standard Deviations and T-Test Results of the Children Participating in the Study Based on Gender.

Gender	Bully Total Scores			Victim Total Scores		Passive Bully Total Score	
	N	X	SS	X	SS	X	SS
Female	83	2.16	3.37	3.24	4.02	1.11	1.43
Male	81	3.78	4.00	3.06	3.84	1.69	1.62
T test	t	p		t	p	t	p
Results	-2.806	0.006		0.292	0.771	-2.446	0.016

According to Table 1, it is evident that bully total score averages ($t = -2.806$, $p < 0.05$) and passive-bully total score averages ($t = -2.446$, $p < 0.05$) of the children lead to a statistical and significant difference based on gender. When score averages are considered, it was observed that; bully total score averages of male children ($X = 3.78$) and passive-bully total score averages ($X = 1.69$) are higher. It was observed that victim total score averages ($t = 0.292$, $p > 0.05$) do not have a statistical and significant difference based on gender.

Table 2. Bully Total Score Averages, Standard Deviations and T-Test Results of the Children Participating in the Study Based on Month of Age.

Age of Child	Bully Total Scores			Victim Total Scores		Passive Bully Total S.	
	N	X	SS	X	SS	X	SS
48-60 months	46	1.72	2.06	2.98	3.57	1.30	1.09
61-69 months	118	3.44	4.17	3.22	4.06	1.43	1.70
T test Results	t	p		t	p	t	p
	-2.674	0.008		-.354	0.724	-.474	0.636

According to Table 2, it is evident that bully total score averages ($t = -2.674$, $p < 0.05$) of the children lead to a statistical and significant difference based on age. When score averages are considered, it was observed that; bully total score averages of 61-69 months old children ($X = 3.44$) and are higher.

It is evident victim total score averages ($t = -.354$, $p > 0.05$) and passive-bully total score averages ($t = -.474$, $p > 0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on age.

Table 3. Bully Total/ Victim Total/ Passive-Bully Total Score Averages, Standard Deviations and Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results of the Preschool Children Participating in the Study Based on Mother's Educational Background.

Score	Bully Total Score			Victim Total Score		Passive Bully Total		
	N	X	SS	X	SS	X	SS	
Literate	10	2.90	4.12	2.50	3.95	1.10	1.45	
Primary Sch.	52	2.37	3.45	3.42	4.41	1.23	1.48	
High school	62	3.97	3.87	2.53	2.92	1.53	1.60	
University	40	2.18	3.73	3.92	4.51	1.47	1.62	
Total	164	2.96	3.78	3.15	3.92	1.40	1.55	
Variance Analysis		Sd	F	p	F	p	F	p
Intergroup		3	2.549	0.06	1.215	0.306	0.509	0.677
Intragroup		160						
Total		163						

According to Table 3., it was observed that bully total scores ($F(3-160) = 2.549$, $p > 0.05$), victim total scores ($F(3-160) = 1.215$, $p > 0.05$) and passive-bully total scores ($F(3-160) = 0.509$, $p > 0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on the mother's educational background.

Table 4. Bully Total/ Victim Total/ Passive-Bully Total Score Averages, Standard Deviations and Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Results of the Preschool Children Participating in the Study the Father's Educational Background.

	Bully Total Score			Victim Total Score		Passive Bully Total Score	
	N	X	SS	X	SS	X	SS
Literate	8	4.75	5.55	2.50	4.41	1.12	1.36
Primary Sch.	54	2.37	3.35	3.15	3.98	1.13	1.30
High school	53	3.02	3.80	3.30	4.07	1.43	1.56
University	49	3.24	3.86	3.10	3.72	1.70	1.78
Total	164	2,96	3,78	3,15	3,92	1,40	1,55
Variance Analysis	Sd	F	p	F	p	F	p
Intergroup	3	1,138	0,336	0,101	0,960	1,233	0,299
Intragroup	160						
Total	163						

According to Table 4, it was observed that bully total scores ($F(3-160)= 1.138, p>0.05$), victim total scores ($F(3-160)= 0.101, p>0.05$) and passive-bully total scores ($F(3-160)= 1.233, p>0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on the father's educational background.

In addition, bully, victim and passive-bully score averages of the children were also examined based on the parent's marital status, number of siblings and family type. It was observed that bully total scores ($t=0.964, p>0.05$), victim total scores ($t=0.032, p>0.05$) and passive-bully total scores ($t=0.789, p>0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on the marital status of the parents. It was seen that bully total scores ($F(3-160)= 0.109, p>0.05$), victim total scores ($F(3-160)= 0.185, p>0.05$) and passive-bully total scores ($F(3-160)= 2.032, p>0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on the number of siblings. It was observed that bully total scores ($t=-1.422, p>0.05$), victim total scores ($t= - .283, p>0.05$) and passive-bully total scores ($t= -1.355, p>0.05$) of the children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference based on their family type.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine peer bullying during preschool period according to various variables. In the study, bully, victim and passive-bully total scores of preschool aged children were compared according to; the age of the child, gender, parents' educational background, parents' marital status, number of siblings and type of family. According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's bully total scores statistically and significantly differ according to gender and that bully total score averages of males are higher than females. This finding of the study is in line with the study findings of Craig & Pepler (1995), Perren (2000), Branscum (2001) and Yörük (2016). In the study conducted by Gültekin-Akduman (2012), it is stated that peer bullying is more common among male children. Gülay-Ogelman & Erten-Sarıkaya (2016) made four assessments in a year and observed that while there are no significant differences in resorting to peer violence at the beginning of the academic year based on gender, the remaining three assessments showed that resorting to peer violence scores are statistically and relatively higher among female children. It considered that the reason for why male children behave more despotically than

female may be due to the value judgements of the society as well as bullying behaviors of male children being reinforced.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's bully total scores statistically and significantly differ according to gender and that bully total score averages of 61-72 months old children are higher than bully total score averages of 48-60 months old children. It is stated that 6 is a rough and emotional age. The age group can be selfish and aggressive. A 6 year is not afraid of many things but is more worried about imaginary things than a five year old (Polat Unutkan, 2003). This finding observed at the end of the study is thought to be due to this. Yörük (2016) emphasizes that bullying behavior incidents among 3-6 year old children do not significantly differ according to age group. In Salı (2014)'s study, is stated that the age of children does not lead to a statistical and significant difference on score values of being exposed to peer violence. Findings in Akduman (2012)'s study point out that while physical violence is observed less in the 5-6 age group, in which violence is present in both ages, than in the 3-4 age group, verbal and relational violence rate increases.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's bully total scores do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to educational background of the parents. When scores are relatively compared, bully total score averages of children with university graduate mothers are lower than the averages of other groups. It can be stated that bullying behaviors in children decrease as the mother's educational level increases. Yörük (2016) states that bullying behavior incidents among 3-6 year old children significantly differ according to the educational background of the parents and this difference is in favor of parents with a higher educational status. According to a study conducted by Dizman (2003), it is underlined that mothers of male students who carry out a high level of physical violence in preschool have a low educational background.

Study results indicate that bully total scores of preschool aged children do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to the marital status of parents and number of siblings. When score averages are considered, it was observed that; bully total score averages of children with 3 or more siblings are higher than the averages of the other groups. This relative finding is in line with the finding stating that bullying increases as the number of siblings increase (Eslea & Smith, 2000). Less personal interest shown by parents and failing to meet children's needs immediately in families with a high number of children can lead to bullying behaviors and children can resort to bullying so as to protect their own rights, and this finding is thought to be due to these states.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's bully total scores do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to family type. While this finding is partly in line with study results found by Uysal & Dinçer (2013) and Özbey & Alisinanoğlu (2009) stating that physical and relational violence behaviors do not significantly differ according to the type of family, a new research with an equally distributed study group should be conducted so as to be able reach a final judgement.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's victim total scores do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to age. When score averages are considered, it was observed that; victim total score averages of 61-69 months old children are higher than victim total score averages of 48-60 months old children. Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz (2018a) conducted a study and found that being exposed to peer bullying scores decrease as the month of a child's age increases.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's victim total

scores do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to educational background of the parents. This finding is different from the study findings of Gültekin-Akduman (2007), Uluhurt (2012) and Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz (2018b) indicating that educational background of mothers lead to statistical and significant difference in being exposed to peer bullying levels and also from the study findings of Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz (2018b) stating that the educational background of fathers lead to a significant difference in being exposed to peer bullying levels of children. Uluhurt (2012) states that being exposed to peer bullying score decreases as the educational level of the father increases. Perren, Stadelmann & Von Klitzing (2009) emphasize that the risk of being exposed to bullying is higher in children with parents who have a low educational background.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's victim total scores do not lead to a statistical and significant difference according to marital status of parents, number of siblings and family type. Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz (2018b) underline that level of being exposed to peer bullying does not lead to a significant difference according to the number of children in the family. When score averages are considered, it was observed that; victim total score averages of children without a sibling are higher than the averages of the other groups. With respect to protecting oneself and own rights, it is considered that victim total scores of children without a sibling can be high due to a less number of experiences in other words, due to lack of experience.

When victim total score averages according to family type are considered, it was observed that; victim total score averages of children with a nuclear family are lower. In the study conducted by Özdemir, Gültekin Akduman & Gündüz (2018b), it is stated that score averages of being exposed to peer bullying in children with a nuclear family are lower than score averages of children with an extended family. The mother and the father are the people within the house that children with a nuclear family can take as a role model. It is highly possible for the mother and father to show similar attitudes when raising their child. However, different attitudes can be carried out about raising a child in extended families because children live together with their grandparents. With this respect, deficiencies in communicating with other children, having compatible relationships, solving conflicts and skills for adapting to rules can be observed more in children with an extended family than children with a nuclear family. This difference is thought to be due to this.

According to the study results, it was observed that preschool aged children's passive-bully total scores statistically and significantly differ according to gender and that passive-bully total score averages of males are higher than females. This finding of the study is in line with the study findings of Craig & Pepler (1995) stating that males resort to bullying more than females.

According to the study results, it was observed that there are no statistical and significant differences in preschool aged children's passive-bully total scores according to age/ educational background of parents/ marital status of parents/ number of siblings and family type.

When the related literature is considered, it is evident that peer bullying is present during preschool period. When previous studies are taken into consideration, it is true that the number of studies on preschool period is low and that studies on peer bullying focus more on primary school and higher level educational groups. That peer bullying involves early years sheds light on the importance of the subject. Thus, the number of studies on preschool children should be increased. It is assumed that violence incidences that are probable to arise

in future years can be prevented through preventive studies conducted during this period in which behaviors are shaped.

For future studies; it was observed in this study that bully and passive-bully total scores of male children are higher than female children. Extensive studies can be conducted on the relationship between gender and peer bullying. The relationship between gender, child raising attitudes and peer bullying can be examined. Training programs focusing on preventing bullying in preschool aged children can be developed.

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