

THE ORETICAL FRAMEWORK REGARDING THE CAUSES OF PEER BULLYING

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ABSTRACT

Peer bullying is a form of aggressive behavior with one or more students intentionally perpetuating against another, dominated by the imbalance power. Peer bullying has many negative effects on bullying children and adolescents as well as victims of such behavior. In this article, the definition of peer bullying and the different theoretical views about the causes of bullying are discussed. These different approaches are briefly summarized below. Although bullying has not been emphasized directly in some theories, it has been found appropriate to address these theoretical views because they deal with aggression and it is accepted that bullying is a form of aggression.

Keywords: peer bullying, bullying, aggression, theoretical approaches



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Introduction

Education is seen as a means of transferring the culture, values and experiences of a society that has been developed since its existence to the new generations (Karip, 2017).¹

Schools have been of the most important environments in which children communicate and interact. Also, school has been one of the most important environments in which the child learns and develops social life and social relations after his family. The aim of the education is to make individuals a harmonious member of the society in which they live and to become individuals with the knowledge and skills required by the present age. Schools are the institutions where students gain academic knowledge and professional skills as well as social responsibilities, self-control and respect towards other individuals. Every child and young person has the right to education in a safe school environment (Leach, 2005). Although the main goals of the school are to develop communication and problem solving skills, the relationships that students have established with their peers may not always develop in the desired direction. Talking about bullying and violence in school contradicts with the above-mentioned school objectives.

One of the most common problems among students in school environment is peer bullying. Bullying has always existed from the past to the present, which means that the strong constantly disturb the weaker. Studies on aggression date back to quite a long time in the literature.

¹ Karip. E. (2017). *Eğitim Bilimine Giriş*. (8. Baskı)
Ankara: Pegem Akademi.

However, the issue of bullying, especially peer bullying in schools and the issues that concern it, has only been the subject of various researches for the last 25-30 years. Although peer bullying is a familiar topic in schools, especially with educators, the systematic involvement of researchers in this issue has started with Dan Olweus' research (Atalay, 2014). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in bullying research around the world, and especially school staff and students are being informed about the peer bullying. Peer bullying is one of the most important problems that affect the school age children, which the whole world has to deal with today. There are different reasons behind the neglect of bullying, especially among children. One of the most important reasons is that perpetration of bullying among children is perceived by adults as normal social behaviors, seen as a natural part of growth and development, play, joking and other perceptions. Another reason is to cover up the problem and easily hide it from teachers, administrators and other adults. Another reason is that it is not known how to identify the traits that distinguish bullies and victims, and that there are no clear definitions.

Despite the fact that bullying has been neglected and ignored for many years, the fact that it is now very common in all countries has reached an undeniable level and researchers in many countries are conducting scientific research on this issue.

As seen in the world today, in our country, it is seen that bullying behaviors, which are a kind of aggression, are exhibited in a widespread manner in addition to the aggression events among school age children and youth. It has a negative impact on the academic achievement of students who are exposed to bullying and witnesses, as well as severely damaging their emotional, social and personality development. It is seen that students have negative attitudes towards school and have problems in attendance, low self-esteem, loss of self-confidence, and lack of social

skills due to lack of emotional and social needs. On the other hand, it was found that the students who bullied and made it habit during school years continued their behaviors in the following years, this negatively affected their ability to establish and develop positive relations with other people and even involved in various crime events. Many people who live as adults today, perhaps during his school years he had experienced bullying as a bully, victim or bully / victim, or by witnessing this process. (Pişkin, 2002).

Peer bullying is a frequent and continuous common situation in schools. Peer bullying is generally considered as a subdimension of aggression (Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Definition of peer bullying

Peer bullying is a form of violence that can cause significant harm to children in school settings. When searched in the literature, it is seen that the first studies related to bullying started in Scandinavian countries. The first researcher of the peer bullying in the 1970s, the Norwegian researcher Olweus, described bullying as “one student / students exposed to negative effects more than once”. (Olweus, 2004).

When the dictionary meanings of bullying are examined, Bully in the Turkish Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association; it is defined as “anyone who is obedient, opposing, despot, dictator who does not grant the right to speak and freedom of conduct to those under his authority by relying on his power”, (<https://sozluk.gov.tr/?word==bully/zorba>), while in another dictionary site, it is defined as alan taking the rights of others by relying on its power (<http://www.dildernegi.org.tr/>).

Since the first studies on bullying were made by Olweus in the 1970s, the most commonly used definition in international studies is

accepted his. According to Olweus (1993), bullying is negative behavior that one or more people do to other weaker than themselves and continuously.² Later this definition was developed by other researchers.

The most comprehensive definition of bullying belongs to Olweus, who made the first scientific studies on this subject. Olweus (1993) described bullying as an individual's chronic physical or psychological harm. Later, he elaborated this definition and mentioned some of its components.

For a better understanding of the concept of bullying, it is useful to consider some of the basic criteria of bullying. According to Olweus (1999), an action must have three basic criteria in order to be considered as bullying. These:

- Aggressive behavior intended to cause intentional harm to the victim or individuals,
- Continuity of behavior and
- There is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim.

Bullying according to Arora and Thomson (1987); is the process of establishing and sustaining social dominance over individuals who lack self-defense skills, unable to interact with peers, and unable to form peer subgroups through open aggression.

Roland and Munthe (1989) described bullying as being systematically subjected to psychological or physical violence by

² Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What we Know and What we Can Do*. Cambridge MA: Blackwell.

another person or persons against those who cannot defend himself or herself for a long time.

Smith and Sharp (1994), on the other hand define bullying as when a student says unpleasant words to another student whom he has chosen as a victim; pushing, kicking, threatening, shutting him down and/or never talking to him.

Furniss (2000) describes bullying as any behavior that causes one person to hurt another person ". In addition, Furniss (2000) states that bullying is repetitive and that the victim has difficulty in self-defense or stress.

Bullying, a subspecies of aggression, is defined as the behavior of one or more children, in other words, a group that aims to harm or disturb another child who is perceived as unable to defend himself (Glew, Rivara and Feudtner, 2000).

According to Salmon and West (2000) bullying are "the deliberate, unprovoked behavior of one or more children, including painful, repetitive and force-causing behavior to another. " The most common types of bullying are naming the victim with bad names, physical assault, threatening and gossiping, respectively.

Pişkin (2002) examined many definitions of bullying and as a result of bullying; "A type of aggression in which one or more students are intentionally and consistently disturbing weaker students, and the victim is unable to protect himself". According to Pişkin (2002), school bullying; may occur as "physical gibi, such as kicking, slapping, pushing, pulling; ridiculing, annoying, naming them with bad names, disparaging remarks; "indirect gibi such as gossiping and spreading rumors; "behavioral" such as forcibly taking money and possessions,

threatening to take them and damaging their belongings”.

In addition to the definitions of bullying, Pişkin (2002) also mentioned the following concepts:

Bully: Students or groups of students who are intentionally and constantly disturbing their peers who are physically or psychologically weak (Pişkin, 2002).

Victim: Students or groups of students who are subjected to bullying words and actions of more powerful students (Pişkin, 2002).

Bully-victim: It is a student or a group of students who are involved in bullying words and actions and are also exposed to bullying (Pişkin, 2002).

Theoretical approaches in peer bullying

Many different theoretical views on the causes of bullying. Here, these different approaches are briefly summarized. Although some theories have not emphasized directly bullying doğrudan directly, they have been found suitable for addressing aggression.

1. Psychoanalytic theory

In this theory, aggression is defined as the reaction to the frustrations of trying to fulfill the pleasure or the wishes of libido. In other words, aggression is caused by blocked libido. When libido is prevented from seeking pleasure, a “primitive reaction tepki is created to attack that obstacle (Burger, 2006).

The instinct of aggression may be directed towards the individual in the form of suicide or other self-destructive behaviors or in other words, as well as towards the individual in the form of aggression towards others (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1999). According to Freud, we have a subconscious desire

to attack some people or groups of people. In the act of bullying, there is a pleasure in the bullying of all situations in which the victim is attacked or humiliated in front of everyone, which can be described as sadism. It is possible to describe bullying as joyful rituals of sadistic torture (Minton and Minton, 2004).

Horney, on the other hand, rejected Freud's instincts of aggression and interpreted aggression as an individual's response to basic anxiety. According to him, basic anxiety is the main motive of all tendencies (Yalçın, 2004). In other words, individuals develop different interpersonal interaction styles to cope with basic anxiety in their childhood. These are: approaching to people, being away from people and being against people (Burger, 2006). Horney describes individuals who are opposed to people as aggressors and states that the world is hostile and that people do not think they are honest. These aggressive individuals show their reactions by fighting. They even act beyond revenge with the motive of revenge associated with sadism. In other words, an individual who does not feel happy in essence, is jealous of the happiness of other people and seeks to make them suffer (Yalçın, 2004).

2. Biological Theories

These theories acknowledge that a biological mechanism in the organism inevitably leads to aggressive behavior. In these theories, it is stated that the brain and nervous system cause aggression and the existence of a chemical, hormonal and genetic process is advocated in aggression (Bilgin, 1995). In other words, it has a fighting instinct as a genetic heritage, which makes people prone to violence. After anger and violent emotions emerge, they are very difficult to stop, resulting in devastating effects (Köknel, 1999).

According to James Lange's theory, which explains biological structure and emotions, there are four steps in the formation of anger experience: (1) Recognizing a situation; (2) the stimulation of the central nervous system into the muscles, skin and internal organs; (3) Sensitivity returned to the brain through changes in body parts; (4) Returning stimulation is perceived by combining the original stimulus with the cortical structure and transforming the object into an emotionally felt message (Köknel, 1999). The formation of aggression occurs in this way.³

3. Social Learning Theory:

Social learning theorists have stated that human beings are not innate aggressors and that aggression occurs as a result of socialization. According to Bandura, with the exception of basic reflexes, people do not have an innate repertoire of behavior and therefore have to learn behavior. Like all other behaviors, aggression is a learned behavior and individuals learn this behavior by observing similar behaviors of others and imitating them through sampling. In short, aggressive behaviors are the responses learned through modeling, imitation, identification and reinforcement in terms of expression (Köknel, 1999).

According to Bandura's social learning theory, bullying behaviors are formed by the interaction of individual and environmental factors and therefore, the social environment has direct and indirect effects on the formation of bullying. Direct impact; children learn the aggressive behavior model from their

³ Köknel, Ö. (1999). *Kaygıdan mutluluğa kişilik*. (15. Baskı). İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi.

peers and adults; perceptions, norms and trends and self-property (Natvig et al. 2001,365).

In a study conducted by Schwartz et al. (1997), it was found that boys' early life in the family was the determinant of their being aggressive and bully at school (Greenbaum et al., 1988; Horne and Socherman, 1996). In another study, when the role of social learning in the tyrant-victim cycle was examined, it was found that the abused victims exhibited more harsh, challenging, aggressive and disruptive behaviors than those who were not abused. In other words, victims of extreme bullying are also the most aggressive bullies. This reveals that bullying behaviors are the result of social learning (Ma, Stewin & Mah, 2001).

4. Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theory aims to link emotion-behavior-cognition. Unlike other theories, it attaches importance to developmental issues and examines differences in interpreting some forms of aggressive behavior (Durkin, 1995)

Cognitive psychologists have very different perspectives on aggressive behavior. They are based on the process of aggressive people processing information. According to the proponents of this theory, the response to a situation is related to how it is perceived. For this reason, some people react calmly to an event, while others may exhibit aggressive behavior. In other words, the cognitive approach suggests that some people may interpret uncertain conditions as more threatening than others. These people are likely to exhibit aggressive and bullying

behavior (Burger, 2006).

CONCLUSION

As a result, all the theories mentioned here consistently explain aggression in itself and all have truthfulness. Theories do not often contradict each other, but they focus and emphasize different points in explaining aggression. It is important that all approaches contribute to a clearer understanding of aggression and the underlying dynamics. It is difficult to say that aggression is the result of purely biological or purely social learning. Studies of theories reveal the emergence of aggression and the initiating role of basic physiological processes in expression discovery. Then the intensity of aggression is determined by the contribution of cognitive and affective processes

Research findings show that peer bullying seriously threatens the physical and psychological health of children and adolescents. Therefore, it is very important to identify the factors leading to peer bullying, which is a major problem for bullies, victims and witnesses and their families, as well as for school management and teachers. While some of the risk and protective factors lie in the individual characteristics of the adolescent, others occur as a result of the adolescent's interaction with the people and the environment. Learning the risk and protective factors of peer bullying will help us develop sensitive and effective intervention programs. These programs should be designed considering the developmental characteristics of children and adolescents as well as the family structure, cultural values and the dynamics of the education system. At the same time, social policies on peer bullying awareness and prevention programs involving all schools in Northern Macedonia, not only at the individual school level, but at the macro level, need to be established.

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