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Relations Of Peer-Victimization Exposure In Adolescents With The Perceived Social Support, Parental Attitude, School Success, School Change And Area Of Residence

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ABSTRACT

This study is made to determine the predictive powers of the perceived social support, parental attitude, school success, school change and living in different area of residences variables in the students of 8.grade who are exposed to peer-victimization. The data of the research has been procured from 550 students who are the eighth-grader in Diyarbakır and Kocaeli. The data related to the predicted variable has been collected by using Peer-victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000) and the data related to the predictor variables has been gathered by using the Perceived Social Support Scale – Revised Form (Yıldırım, 2004), the Parental Attitude Scale (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg & Dornbush, 1991) and the Personal Information Form prepared by the researcher. The statistical analysis of the gathered data has been performed in computer by using SPSS 11.5 packaged software. Multiple Regression Analysis is used in determining the variables predicting peer-victimization exposure which is the purpose of the study. On the other hand, the Stepwise Regression Analysis is implemented in order to determine the explanatory variables having high correlation coefficient and the predicted variable. The findings obtained by the research can be summarized as the following: School success, perceived social support and authoritarian parental attitude are the variables predicting the peer-victimization exposure. It has been found out that the other variables in the analysis do not predict the exposure of the students to the peer-victimization. The findings obtained in the research are discussed and commented and suggestions have been made based on the facts.

Keywords:

Peer-victimization, victim, exposure to peer-victimization, perceived social support, parental attitude.

1. Introduction

Bullying between children has been actually continuing from time immemorial despite increasing bullying attitudes in schools in recent years. Domination of a student or a group of students on another

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student or groups with aggressive or terrorizing behaviours has been subject for many books. The stories of the children who are bullying or peer-victimizing in well-known books such as *Oliver Twist* (Dickens, 1989), *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Hughes, 1993) and *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 2006) are the examples. The increasing number of the bullying students at schools gives way to increasing number of the children exposed to bullying. Many researchers underscore the resemblance of the children when they investigate the features of the bullying and victims and they qualify them as "risky children". The children who have negative features in terms of demographic variables, come from a lower socio-economical level of income, living in a stress-filled family environment, have problems in family functions, and living in negative conditions in terms of school lives and social interactions are considered as risky children. On the other hand, negative facts are observed when a comparison is made in terms of social skills and psychological structures of the risky children (Mash and Wolfe, 2002; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter and McWhirter, 2004; Vernon, 2004).

Despite risky children have similar features some of them may be "bullying" and some of them may be "victim". It is well understood in the research that is made in this field the individual differences as well as the personal skills play a determining role in being bullying or victim. While the children having lower self-respect and social skills are playing victim role, the children having lower empathy level and showing a tendency to psychoticism are playing bullying role (Rigby, 2003). While the families of the bullying children are rather controlled exhibiting repressive and violent attitudes the victims come from family environments that are excessive protective (Besag, 1995). The probability of exhibiting bullying behaviour of the children who are witnessing aggressive and bullying behaviours in the environments they live are increased (McWhirter and et.al, 2004). The risky children who attend a new school or live in a new environment and being with the children who are older than them have more probability of being a victim (Vernon, 2003). The bullying/victim children are depicted as the persons who are less popular, the least-loved, being easily provoked and provoking others (Stevenson and Smith, 1989). The children in this group are lonelier than the bullying children and have high probability of being rejected by their peers (Pekel and Uçanok, 2005).

The ecological environment in which children live is of significance in terms of being exposed to peer-victimization (McWhirter and et al., 2004). Family attitudes, characteristics of school environment, socio-economical characteristics of the region have significant role in being bullying or victim. Kocaeli and Diyarbakır provinces where the research has been made are different from each other in terms of their socio-cultural and economical textures. In the research in which socio-economic development 10 levels have been examined in terms of regions by Albayrak, Kalaycı and Karataş (2004) any province under the Turkey average in Marmara region which is the most developed region according to the socio-economic development is placed. On the other hand, the Southeast Anatolian Region is ranked in the sixth slot in the socio-economic development ranking and it is found out that all provinces in the region are under the country average. It is considered that the research in which school, family and social environment are taken together may be basis for the works for the protection of peer-victimization as the unfavourable behaviours such as bullying has multi etiologic according to the developing and ecological model. Starting from this point of view, the predictive powers of the factors arising from regional differences in the peer-victimization exposure have been examined by taking the schools in Diyarbakır and Kocaeli. The facts to be obtained from the research may be a benefit in point of emphasizing taking different precautions according to the regions in terms of giving support to the victim children. On the other hand, it is also considered that the results to be obtained from this study may contribute the preventive and corrective psychological consultation and guidance works in school by giving information about the characteristics of the victim students.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The individuals in the scope of the research are the students in 8.grade in the provinces of Diyarbakır and Kocaeli. One each class from three schools in the settlements where middle-income earner families

are in majority is elected by chance and the students in these classes are taken to the scope of the research. 277 students (50,6%) in the research scope are from the schools in Kocaeli and 273 students (49,4%) are from the schools in Diyarbakır. Totally 550 students comprise the research group.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

2.2.1. The Scale Determining the Victims of Peer Bullying

The scale determining the victims of peer bullying has been developed by Mynard and Joseph (2000). Adoption and standardization in Turkish have been made by Gültekin (2003). The scale is in self-rating type and implemented in individual or group forms.

The scale is comprised of 27 items and each item in the scale requests participants to mark one of the choices of "at no time", "once" and "more than one" which is the most appropriate for each of them. The answers are graded as (2) for "more than one", (1) for "once" and (0) for "at no time". The high point that is taken from 39 scales indicates that the person is targeted to the peer attack frequently, lower point indicates that the person is targeted to the peer attack rarely or nothing (Gültekin, 2003).

In the credibility study that is made by Gültekin (2003), it is found out that internal coefficient of consistence of the scale is 0.86 for the total point. It is 0.73 for terror, 0.68 for "mockery", and 0.72 for "relational aggression, 0.72 for "open aggression" and 0.67 for "personal effects" respectively for sub-factors.

2.2.2. Perceived Social Support Scale- Revised Form (PSSS-R)

The Perceived Social Support Scale has been developed by Yıldırım (1997) and revised by Yıldırım (2004). In this study, the version of the scale that has been revised in 2004 is used. The scale is comprised of three sub-factors and totally 50 items. The scale is comprised of three sub-factors as family, teachers and friends. The Cronbach alpha internal coefficient of the consistence is calculated for all scale as 0,93, as 0.94 for family dimension, as 0.93 for teacher dimension and 0.91 for friend dimension. 47 items in the scale consisted of positive statements and three items consisted of negative statements. Correspondingly, total points are obtained by calculating three items reversely.

In this study, the internal coefficient of the consistence of the scale is calculated and the factor structure of the scale is tested by the confirmatory factor analysis. Accordingly, Cronbach alpha internal coefficient of the consistence is calculated as 0,94 for all scale, as 0,89 for family dimension, as 0,89 for friends dimension, as 0,95 for teacher dimension. Fit indexes that are calculated after the confirmatory factor analysis that is made for the scale are calculated as $\chi^2/Sd = 2,49$, $RMSEA = 0,063$, $NNFI = 0,96$, $CFI = 0,96$, $IFI = 0,96$ and $AGFI = 0,74$. The findings indicate that PSSS-R is a credible and valid scale.

2.2.3. The Parental Attitude Scale

The original Parental Attitude Scale is developed by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbush (1991) and its adaptation studies for Turkey have been made by Yılmaz (2000).

The Parental Attitude Scale which is of 26 items is based on 3 factors. They are Acceptance-Interest, Control-surveillance and Psychological autonomy. There are 9 items in the Acceptance-interest dimension of the scale, 8 items in the Control-surveillance and 9 items in the Psychological-autonomy. Acceptance-interest dimension contains the perception of the children how they percept their parents as controlling and supervising, Psychological-autonomy dimension contains the fact that to what extent the parents implement the democratic attitude and to what extent they encourage the child in terms of his or her individuality.

Continuity (test again test) and internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) coefficients of the measuring agent for the children in primary education period respectively is .74 and .60 for Acceptance-interest sub-scale, .93 and .75 for Control-surveillance scale, .79 and .67 for Psychological-Autonomy. Four parental attitudes are distinguished from intersecting Acceptance-interest with Control-surveillance dimensions. It is accepted that the parents of the children who are graded over median in Acceptance-interest and Control-surveillance dimensions are "democratic", the parents of the children who are

graded under median are “negligent”. The parents of the children who are graded under median and the parents of the children who are graded over median in the acceptance-interest dimension are accepted as “authoritative”. The parents of the children who are graded above median in Acceptance-interest dimension and the parents of the children who are graded under median in Control-surveillance dimensions are accepted as “permissive”. Psychological-autonomy dimension is left out of the assessment as it is made categorically (authoritative-permissive-democratic-negligent). If the assessment is made based on dimension (autonomy, acceptance and control) psychological autonomy dimension is also included into the assessment (Yılmaz, 2000). Only first two items of the Control-surveillance dimension with seven degrees, other items with 3 degrees. The items in the other dimension are in Likert type. Nine items of the scale with numbers of 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17 form Acceptance-interest dimension, nine items of the scale with numbers of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 form Psychological-autonomy dimension and eight items of the scale with numbers 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 form Control-surveillance dimension.

In the assessment items with odd numbers are taken as they are (Acceptance-interest dimension). The items with even numbers are graded reversely in the Psychological-autonomy dimension. The only 12. item is not graded reversely. The first two items of Control-surveillance dimension are graded between 1 and 7: 7 for “no” answer, 1 for “until the hour I wish”. As for 21. Question 1 for “no effort”, 2 for “less effort” and 3 for “more effort” (Yılmaz, 2000).

2.2.4. Personal Information Form

Personal information form is regulated by the researcher in order to collect information about school success, province and continuing education at the same school which are predicting variables in this research.

2.3. Data Analysis

Prediction related to the peer bullying exposure of the individual participating in the research is made by the points they obtained from the peer-victimization scale and stepwise regression analysis that is made for the independent variables of the same individuals. In the regression analysis social supports perceived by the children, parental attitudes, school success, whether they change school and living in different socio-economical regions are investigated for finding out if they predict the peer-victimization.

3. Results

The election of the best model relating to the prediction of peer-victimization exposure point is researched by the stepwise regression analysis and finally four different regression models have been obtained. Multiple correlation (*R*), multiple determination coefficient (*R*²) and changing *R*² values to the next model are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Stepwise Regression Analysis in relation with prediction of points about Peer-victimization exposure

Model	R	R ²	Estimated standard error	Change in R ²	Change in F'	Sd ₁	Sd ₂	p Change in F'	r Double correlation	r Partial correlation
1	0,622	0,387	13,1499	0,387	328,188	1	519	0,000	-0,622	-
2	0,704	0,495	11,9509	0,108	110,360	1	518	0,000	-0,532	-0,419
3	0,733	0,538	11,4443	0,043	47,876	1	517	0,000	0,488	0,291

1 Predictors: (Fixed) , School Success

2 Predictors: (Fixed) , School Success, Perceived Social Support

3 Predictors: (Fixed) , School Success, Perceived Social Support , Authoritative Parental Attitude

As it is well seen in Table 1 it is observed that at the end of each steps R coefficient is found significantly from 0 (zero). In the first step dependent variable and perceived social support variable ($r=-0,622$, $R^2 = 0,387$) which have the highest correlation has come into the mode. The contribution of the predictors to the variability of the peer-victimization exposure points is seen Table 2.

Table 2. Contribution of the variables in the model to peer-victimization exposure points

Model	β	Standard Error	Standard β	t	p
Fixed	55,605	1,962		28,336	0,000
SCSUC	-5,197	0,416	-0,421	-12,491	0,000
SOCSUP	-0,177	0,018	-0,316	-9,724	0,000
PARAT (AUTHORITATIVE)	7,584	1,109	0,225	6,839	0,000

Dependent variable: Peer-victimization exposure

PEER-VIC = 55,605 - 5,197* SCSUC - 0,177* SOCSUP + 7,584* PARAT (AUTHORITATIVE)

As it is understood from the regression coefficients given in the plenary equation, as long as the points of the individuals that peer-victimization exposure points increase school success points show a tendency to be dropped or as long as the peer-victimization exposure points drop school success points show a tendency to increase. The average of the school success of the students forms 38,7 per cent of the total change explanation amount (38,7%) in the points of peer-victimization exposure ($\beta(\text{standard})=-0,421$). The related statistical is ($t= -12,491$, $p<0,001$). This value is significant.

As it is well seen Table 1, in the second step dependent variable and the social support variable perceived as having the highest correlation coefficient ($r= -0,532$; $R^2= 0,495$) entered in the model and it explains significantly the peer-victimization exposure in addition to the school success variable ($R^2\text{change}=0,108$; $F(1,518)$ $\text{change}= 110,360$; $p<0,000$). The partial correlation between the perceived social support and the dependable variable is observed as $r= -0,419$.

On the other hand, as long as the peer-victimization exposure points of the individuals increase social support points are dropped or as long as the peer-victimization exposure is dropped the perceived social support points increases. The perceived social support points contribute the explanatory amount of total change (10,8 %) in the peer-victimization exposure points in the rate of 10,8 per cent ($\beta(\text{standard})=-0,316$). The related t statistical is ($t= -9,724$, $p<0,000$). This value is significant (Table 2).

In the third step, parental attitude variable is included in the model. In this model $R= 0,733$; $R^2 = 0,538$. On the other hand, $R^2 \text{ change}=0,043$ and $F(1,517)\text{change}= 47,876$, $p<0,000$. Authoritative parental attitude variable owns the highest partial correlation together with the dependent variable ($r=0,291$). According to the parental attitude perceived by the students who are included in the research when the students who have authoritative parental attitude is taken into consideration $t= 6,839$, $p<0,00$. In other words, the points of the students who have authoritative parental attitude forms 22,5% of the total change in the points of peer-victimization exposure points (Table 2).

It is observed that the number of member in the family, school change and region variables cannot be included into the plenary model that is obtained by stepwise multiple regression analysis as being a significant predictor of the peer-victimization exposure.

4. Discussion

In the regression analysis related to the predicting peer-victimization exposure the prediction power of the perceived social support, authoritative parental attitude, school success, school change and living in different environments variables have been investigated. The dependent variable is found in the independent variables and school success is found out as the variable having the highest correlation. As long as the peer-victimization exposure increases the school success points drop or as long as the peer-victimization exposure drops the school success points increase.

Juvonen et. al. (2000) indicate that the living of the children who are exposed to peer-victimization is stressed and this living gives way to academic failure by specifying that psychological adaptation may be a mediator between peer-victimization exposure and school success. According to this point of view, the children who are targeted to bullying may experience various psychological problems due to the maltreating they experience. The psychological problems that they experience cause dropping in their academic success (Pekel, 2004).

The students who are exposed to peer bullying in school environment generally continue their education in a bad grace even the reject to go to school or they are not able to be motivated to the 53 activities in school (Olweus, 1993). In time school environment becomes a scene in which negative events are experienced as the victims are insulted and mocked by the bullying students and ostracized and even they are exposed to physical violence. Academic failure becomes inevitable for the victims.

In the independent variable of the research, the perceived social support is the variable having the highest second correlation. As long as the points of the students for peer-victimization exposure increase social support points drop or as long as the peer-victimization exposure drops the social support points increase.

When the research investigating the relation between the peer-victimization exposure and perceived social support is taking into consideration (Graham and Juvonen, 1998; Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner, 2002; Pekel, 2004; Pişkin, 2003) it can be said that the students whose social support level is low are lonelier students and to be lonely is a risk factor in the peer-victimization exposure.

School period is a rich environment for children and adolescents in terms of social relations. In this period friendship circle is of great importance for individuals. The lonely children who are not placed in any group or failed to make friendships have a high tendency to be exposed to bullying. On the other hand, there may be children experiencing some psychological problems such as depression due to being exposed to bullying or turning on himself or herself. In this sense, the social support given by teachers or others placed in an ecological cycle is of great importance in order to 54 establish adaptation in preventing exposure to bullying.

Another question in the research was whether authoritative parental attitude predicts the peer-victimization in the students of 8. grade. According the findings that have been obtained it can be said that the individuals who perceived authoritative parental attitude are exposed to the the peer-victimization.

In the researches explaining the relations between parental attitude and the peer-victimization exposure (Akgün, 2005; Finnegan, Hodges and Perry, 1998; Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd, 1998) it is found that the relations between authoritative parental attitude and the peer-victimization exposure is significant.

When it is noted that personality development of individual is originally formed within family it may be said that the individuals who are raised with authoritative attitude of parents may have some

problems in dealing with the problems they face in their childhood and adolescent periods. In this attitude it is very difficult to establish relations with children and rough rules and sanctions impose on them. As corollary children have difficulty to make decision for their own and have to behave according to the choice of their parents. Accordingly, the autonomy emotion in the children is not developed when it is compared to their peers.

When the school environment is taken into consideration in which social relations are experienced intensely it cannot be anticipated that children who are raised with this kind of parental attitude could develop healthy attitudes as it is necessary that the skills of the children must be developed in order to roll with punches against the peer-victimization exposure. The children who are raised with authoritative parental attitudes try to be obedient to the rules set by their parents. They cannot express themselves, they are insecure and they are suppressed easily. Accordingly, the children who are raised with this attitude appear as risk groups in the peer-victimization exposure as they lack the support to encourage them in defending themselves.

When the literature related to bullying is reviewed, it is well understood that ecological theory is very significant in explanation of the peer-victimization exposure and it is discussed in a theoretical framework. According to the ecological theory, the sociocultural characteristics of the region has an effect on the individual development and behaviour by interacting with the other units in the ecological cycle (Espelage and Swearer, 2003). On the other hand, McWhirter and et al (2004) specified that the reasons of negative behaviours in the adolescent period such as bullying, perpetration and ganged up can be dealt with the ecological point of view. The ecological factors such as family, peer groups, school and other social factors affect both individual characteristics and are affected by them. A part of the individual characteristics are the variables such as age, gender and ethnic origin. In most research that are made in abroad relations between peer-victimization exposure and ethnic origin is explained (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000; Moran, Smith, Thompson and Whitney, 1993; Seals and Young, 2003).

It can be said that provinces of Kocaeli and Diyarbakır are different settlements which accommodate different socio-cultural characteristics (Albayrak, Kalaycı and Karataş, 2004). When Diyarbakır is taken in terms of socio-economic conditions, it is placed in Southeast Anatolian Region in Turkey which is in a lower level in terms of regions. When it is taken specific conditions, it is seen that this has been continued in long years. Diyarbakır has been let in immigrants from near provinces, districts and villages in the last ten or fifteen years due to the terrorist incidents experienced in the region. The immigration movements causing rapid urbanization and rapid population growth as well as social and economic situations of the spaces which let in immigrations have subversive effects on all structures and establishments. On the other hand, these developments as well as changes in social living conditions and adaptation to the new conditions cause the development of substructure allowing crimes and perpetrators. Especially, unhealthy immigration and population growth made speed the cultural deflections in children and youngsters (Şimşek, 2006).

When differences between the two cities are taken in the ecological theory, it created a curious about if it created a different also on peer-victimization exposure or not. However, the findings obtained from the research living in different regions do not predict the peer-victimization exposure.

The characteristics of the schools that are elected (election of the school in middle socioeconomically level) make way to no differences between two cities in terms of peer-victimization exposure. On the other hand, not comparing family characteristics of the students in the elected school it can be given a way that the children can be placed in these school from the families who do not come from these regions. As both Kocaeli (after August 17 earthquake) and Diyarbakır (after the terrorist incidents) are placed in the provinces in which immigration is living intensely. When these features are taken into consideration, it can be beneficiary that this research finding must be investigated with the studies having larger samples. School change variable cannot be integrated with the plenary model obtained by the stepwise multiple regression analysis as a significant predictor of peer-victimization exposure.

Students come into a new environment by school change and during the adaptation period in the new environment may be considered as a risk factor for peer-victimization exposure during the period lasted

until having friendship relations. Pellegrini and Long (2002) obtained findings in the research they made in relation with the children between 11 and 14 ages supporting the school and environment change is related to the peer-victimization exposure. However, the finding obtained from the research is in the direction that school change does not predict peer-victimization exposure. When the data is examined obtained from the research the distribution of frequency of the students who participated in the research are similar. Accordingly, it can be easily obtained healthier results related with the predictive forces of these variables in the peer-victimization exposure by making larger samples.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this research, school success variable is determined as the first predictor of the peer-victimization exposure. According to the findings obtained from the research, as long as the peer-victimization exposure points of the individuals increase school success points drop or as long as the peer-victimization exposure drops the school success points increase.

On the other hand, the findings of the research on the perceived social support are in the direction that the perceived social support predicts peer-victimization exposure. On the other hand, authoritative parental attitude is another variable predictive peer-victimization exposure.

It is observed that school change and region variables are not included in the plenary model obtained by the stepwise multiple regression analysis as a significant predictor of the peer-victimization exposure variable.

When the findings obtained from the research are evaluated, it is well understood that the perceived social support predicts peer-victimization exposure. In this sense, in the research that is made in relation with the peer-victimization exposure in determining risk groups 61 it is significant whether students take social support or not. For this reason, social support training programs may be organized by psychological counselling and guidance services in which parents participate. Group activities to be made with the students and the activities to be made collectively (drama, sports, musical activities etc.) may be effective on the development of the friendship relations of the students.

The importance of the parental attitude on the students' development can be explained by benefitting from brochures and seminars and may be given weight to give consultation service for teachers and children.

Another aspect of peer-victimization exposure is the existence of the children who make peer victimization. In this subject, peer-victimization exposure may be decreased with the works directed to the teachers and administrators. Especially, peer-victimization behaviours may be decreased by directing children's energy to good practices by the administrators and to enhance their life qualities in the school surrounding. On the other hand, the children in the bullying group may be trained by anger management.

This research is made with the children in 8. grade elected from the provinces of Kocaeli and Diyarbakır. It may be beneficial to make these researches in a comparative manner with larger scope samples in terms of verifying the precautions to be taken.

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