GUHES

Peer Bullying and Motivational Interviewing In Adolescents

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Abstract

Peer bullying is an increasingly important public health problem all over the world. Bullying behaviours are exhibited mostly during adolescence and continue to increase throughout this period. Bullying can cause problems such as physical and emotional wear, decrease in social relations, tendency to depression, suicide attempt, decrease in self-esteem, weakening in peer relations and increase in depression level. Adolescents, who are the future of the community, should be protected from negative behaviours such as peer bullying in order to be healthy. New interventions/strategies would be beneficial to prevent peer bullying in adolescents, and to ensure the healthy development of adolescents. Motivational interviewing is generally an appropriate approach to use for individuals who are reluctant to change or have conflicting feelings. Motivational interviewing is seen as a new, practical and effective method in providing behavioural change in adolescents and preventing peer bullying.

1. Introduction

The adolescense is characterised by physical, social and spiritual developmental changes, and covers the age range of 10-19 years, which is the transition from childhood to adulthood. In this period, biological development is determined by sexual maturation and rapid growth in the skeletal system, while mental development is determined by identity development and cognitive development (World Health Organization, 2022). Especially in this period when social relations are important, if the individual cannot feel belonging to a group, he/she tries to meet this need in a different way, and this attitude causes him/her to develop negative behaviours (Sezen & Murat, 2018). While an individual's social relationships in adolescence support physical, emotional and cognitive development and being a healthy and productive individual, the lack of acceptance in the social environment leads to the emergence of aggressive behaviours and bullying situations (Haşimoğlu & Aslandoğan, 2018; Talu, 2020).

Bullying behaviours are exhibited mostly during adolescence and continue to increase throughout this period (Waseem & Nickerson, 2019). Therefore, new intervention strategies are needed to prevent peer bullying by observing individuals in terms of peer bullying in adolescence (Avşar & Alkaya, 2017; Waseem & Nickerson, 2019). Motivational interviewing technique, which is a collaborative approach that provides intrinsic motivation by revealing the individual's own reason for change, can be an effective and practical approach to change

negative behaviours in preventing bullying situations (Cross, Runions, Resnicow, Britt, & Gray, 2018). Thus, it is thought to contribute to the prevention and reduction of peer bullying in adolescents and thus to the healthy development of adolescents. The aim of this review is to reveal the importance of peer bullying and motivational interviewing in adolescence.

2. Peer Bullying

Peer bullying is an important public health problem that is frequently encountered worldwide (Garmy, Hansson, Vilhjálmsson, & Kristjánsdóttir, 2019). Peer bullying is defined as "undesirable behaviours that one or more peers apply to another peer through communication devices or face-to-face, regardless of location" (Olweus, 2012). The prevalence of bullying was 37% in the United States (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry, & Green, 2018), 26.7% in Japan (Hamada et al, 2018), 27% in the United Kingdom (Przybylski & Bowes, 2017), and 22.4% in Turkey (Eyuboglu et al., 2021). In the literature conducted with adolescents, bullying rates vary between 2.2% and 42.9% (Chen, Chen, Zhu, Chan, & Ip, 2018; Zhang, Zhou, & Tao, 2019).

Peer bullying is a type of violent aggressive behaviour. The most important feature of bullying behaviours is that they aim to harm continuously and intentionally (Dikbıyık & Yılmaz, 2016). These negative behaviours, which are considered as bullying even when they are applied only once, are usually performed more than once by the bully. The power imbalance perceived or actually existing by

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individuals is one of the most important causes of bullying (Olweus, 2012; Maïano, Aime, Salvas, Morin, & Normand, 2016; Smith, 2016). Age, gender, family and friend relationships are commonly identified as risk factors for peer bullying (Ayaz-Alkaya & Avşar, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019; Qian et al., 2022). Accordingly, it has been reported that boys are more involved in bullying than girls (Ayaz-Alkaya & Avşar, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019) and adolescents with poor family and friend relationships (Ayaz-Alkaya & Avşar, 2017; Qian et al., 2022). However, it is stated that peer bullying reaches its peak in early adolescence and gradually decreases with age (Holt et al, 2017; Waseem & Nickerson, 2019).

Peer bullying has roles defined as bully, victim, and peer bystander (Goldbach, Sterzing, & Stuart, 2018; Callaghan, Kelly, & Molcho, 2019). The individual who can use verbal, social or physical bullying types continuously assumes the role of a bully. These individuals with psychosocial problems express themselves through bullying behaviour, and need support to change their behaviour. The person who is subjected to bullying is called the victim and is the target of bullying behaviour. Problems such as physical and emotional wear and tear, decrease in social relationships, tendency to depression, suicide attempt, decrease in self-esteem, weakening in peer relationships and increase in depression level are observed in the victim adolescents (Ayaz-Alkaya & Avşar, 2017; Waseem & Nickerson, 2019). Therefore, adolescents exposed to bullying often need help to combat bullying behaviours (Goldbach et al., 2018; Mark, Värnik, & Sisask, 2019). The person who sees and witnesses the bullying assumes the role of a bystander (Callaghan et al., 2019). Since peer bullying affects not only the victims but also all the adolescents, including bullies and bystanders, it is obvious that appropriate measures should be taken, and interventions should be delivered.

Intervention efforts to prevent or reduce peer bullying may be more effective in early adolescence (Kennedy, 2021; Buils, Miedes, & Oliver, 2020). However, adolescents may often be resistant and reluctant to stop or reduce negative behaviours involving bullying. For this reason, the motivational interviewing technique, which is a collaborative approach that supports self-efficacy by considering the autonomy of the client, may be valuable as a method to be considered first in bullying intervention (Cross et al., 2018).

3. Motivational Interviewing Technique

Motivational interviewing is a counselling approach, which is increasingly used all over the world. The fact that it has a humanistic approach makes it easy to apply this method in today's conditions. Miller and Rollnick (2009) defined motivational interviewing technique as "a client-centred, directive method for increasing intrinsic motivation for change by exploring and resolving ambivalence". Motivational interviewing requires the use of four basic principles: developing discrepancy, expressing empathy, supporting self-efficacy and rolling with resistance (Miller & Rollnick, 2009; Magill & Hallgren, 2019). Showing empathy facilitates identification with the experiences of the individual by providing an approach that respects, supports and cares for the client. Supporting self-efficacy increases the individual's belief and confidence in change and the capacity to succeed (Çelik Örücü, 2020).

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Motivational interviewing is an appropriate approach for individuals who are generally reluctant to change or have conflicting feelings. In this method, it is important for individuals to recognise and define their ambivalence. Providing motivation for change plays an important role in discovering and resolving ambivalent feelings (Özcan & Çelik, 2021). However, it encourages the individual to explore obstacles and encourages the evaluation of new ideas. Thus, motivational interviewing rolls with the resistance instead of directly opposing it (Miller & Rollnick, 2009; Ceylan & Kılıçarsalan Törüner, 2020).

Motivational interviewing consists of two phases. In the first phase, it is aimed to gain intrinsic motivation for the individual to bring about change. Identifying alternatives that will ensure change is more important than reasons. In this way, it is to ensure that ambivalence feelings are resolved and motivation for change is formed in the individual. In the second phase, it is aimed to create a strong commitment to change and to create a change plan for success. Then, a plan should be made to ensure the continuity of the change (Miller & Rollnick, 2009; Özcan & Çelik, 2021).

4. Peer Bullying in Adolescents and Use of Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing requires skills and a set of values defined as "motivational interviewing spirit". These values include acceptance, partnership, evocation and compassion (Miller & Rollnick, 2012; Cross et al., 2018). Therefore, the motivational interviewing technique respects the individual characteristics, autonomy and perspectives of adolescents. Since autonomy is an important issue especially in adolescents, it is appropriate to apply motivational interviewing in a complex transition phase, such as adolescence (Idalski Carcone et al., 2016).

Motivational interviewing provides motivation for change by accepting the ambivalent thoughts and individual preferences of the adolescent. It supports change in undesirable risky behaviours by accepting the individual's developmental changes, autonomy and positive behaviours. At the same time, it reduces negative behaviour by setting achievable and real goals and increases compliance with change (Yıldız & Bayat, 2018; Binning, Woodburn, Bus, & Barn, 2019). Studies show that motivational interviewing technique has positive results in providing behaviour change in adolescents (Wu et al., 2017; Binning et al., 2019; Caccavale et al., 2019; Ceylan & Kılıçarslan Törüner, 2020).

In order for adolescents, who will form the society of the future, to be healthy, they need to establish positive communication and be protected from negative behaviours, such as peer bullying. In this context, nurses have an important position in identifying situations that negatively affect the health and learning of adolescents, providing appropriate and effective health services, and providing safe and supportive environments. By using their roles as educator, counsellor, and change agent, nurses guide interventions to prevent peer bullying (Avşar & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2017; Avşar & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2018). Therefore, motivational interviewing approach is thought to be a practical and effective approach in combating peer bullying.

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5. Conclusion

Peer bullying is an important problem that is commonly seen in adolescence and causes physical and psychosocial trauma. In order to prevent bullying behaviours, it is necessary to make plans to improve communication and social relations of adolescents. In recent years, motivational interviewing technique has been frequently used to provide behavioural change in adolescents. The use of motivational interviewing technique in behaviour change to reduce and prevent peer bullying in adolescents can provide effective results. Future studies would be designed to evaluate the effectiveness of motivational interview techniques on changing bullying behaviours.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or other conflicts of interest with this study.

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