The Effect of Secondary School Students' Sports Activity on Bullying Tendency

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the effect of secondary school students' sports activity on their bullying tendencies. This descriptive study was conducted with the participation of 996 students from four secondary schools in a city located in the Central Anatolia Region. The data in the study were collected by using the "Child Descriptive Information Form", "Sports Activity Assessment Form", "Peer Relationships Question Form" and "Bullying Tendency Scale". The average age of secondary school students participating in the study is 12.21 ± 1.24, 51.1% of them are female and 94.8% live in the city. 91.5% of the students stated that they do team sports, 89.0% of them do individual sports, while 13.0% of them stated that they do martial arts. The scores of students' individual sports affected the using force sub-dimension while doing martial arts significantly affected the scores of the sub-dimensions of negative reflection, justification, upsetting others, and using force ($p < 0.05$). It was concluded that individuals who do individual sports have a high tendency to establish superiority based on individual force, and those who do martial sports have a high tendency to direct their negative emotions to those who are weak, to exhibit attitudes of justifying their bullying behaviors, to enjoy bullying and upsetting others, and to establish superiority based on individual force.

Keywords: Child, Sports, Bullying

Introduction

Peer bullying is a common behavior among children in schools, which has destructive effects and aims to harm the target child or children (Gökkaya & Sütcü, 2018). This type of bullying occurs when one or more students deliberately, excessively, and constantly threaten, tease, humiliate, nickname other weaker students as well as when they ignore them as friends or while playing in groups or when they use physical force such as kicking, beating or pinching (Olweus, 2005; Pişkin, 2002). It has a wide range of negative effects on the child who is exposed to these behaviors in peer bullying (Bridge, 2003). A child who is being bullied has problems such as losing motivation to attend school, experiencing fear and anxiety throughout life, absenteeism to avoid school, and a decrease in academic success. When children fail to fight against bullying, they tend to resort to dangerous methods such as carrying guns and knives to defend themselves. Such situations have psychological implications (Gökler, 2009). As students being bullied direct their attention to the subject of how to avoid being the target of bullies, their attention and interest in lessons decrease, and thus, their success in school decreases (Whitted & David, 2005; Furniss, 2000).

Developing appropriate strategies to prevent peer bullying and reducing its prevalence and effects through prevention programs is vital for the mental health of the child (Gökler, 2009). However, the source of the problem must be determined while developing the strategy. Children who have experience of violence in the family, have a weak relationship with their parents and have been exposed to negative behaviors or rejected have low self-esteem due to many reasons may tend to bully. These children can use aggressive behaviors as a way of attracting attention from others and making the people around them feel strong (Ayas, 2008).

Being an educational activity, sports develops the skills of setting common goals, appreciating the success of other athletes, being tolerant, taking responsibility, showing a collaborative approach, and creating a sense of belonging to a social group and society (Çiriş, 2014). Participation in sports activities supports the social development of individuals by contributing to their social interactions with their environment (Aytan, 2010). Due to the predictive effect of the attitude towards violence, sports activities are important in terms of developing the correct attitude towards violence and thus, preventing school bullying. For this reason, planned sports activities are among the important activities that change the attitudes towards violence (Ünalmış & Şahin, 2012). According to the results of the study conducted by Mahoney and Stattin (2000), it is estimated that being considered by adolescents as a leisure activity, sports enables them to reach their satisfaction, leading to fewer anti-social behaviors called peer bullying. In another study conducted by Forbes et al. (2006), it is stated that students who regularly participate in sports activities show less bullying behavior than their peers (Forbes et al., 2006). A sports activity has great importance in the lives of individuals, as it has a positive effect on psychological well-being, increasing success in school and the enjoyment of life by making life meaningful (Ardahan, 2013). On the other hand, studies report that students who bully are physically strong, aggressive, and angry as well as generally want to have power and control, like to inflict pain on others, and believe that the victim deserves punishment (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Andreou, 2000; Rigby, 2004; Olweus, 2005). This suggests that the tendency to bullying can change positively or negatively depending on the type of sports. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the effect of secondary school students' sports activities on their tendency to bully.

Material and Method

Research Model

The general survey model, which is one of the descriptive survey research models, was used. Descriptive research is carried out to enlighten a given situation, make evaluations, and reveal possible relationships between events (Çepni, 2018). General survey models are studies conducted with the aim of making a general judgment about the population which consists of a large number of elements, or studies on a group or sample taken from it (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013).

Population and Sample

The population of the research consisted of 2596 students selected from four secondary schools within the Provincial Directorate of National Education in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey through the sortition. The sample of the study consisted of the voluntary students whose families' consent was received to approve the participation of the students. For the sample size of the research, firstly, the sample size was determined by power analysis aimed at reaching at least 176 children to have 95% of a confidence interval and 80% power. However, the sample size of the study consisted of 996 secondary school students. For the institutions where the research was conducted, approvals were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education, school administrators, students, and parents.

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected between February and April 2016. In the study, "Child Descriptive Information Form", "Sports Activity Assessment Form", "Peer Relationships Question Form" and "Bullying Tendency Scale" were used as data collection tools.

Child Introductory Descriptive Form

Prepared by the researchers, this form includes questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of the child and his/her family.

Sports Activity Assessment Form

Prepared by the researchers in line with the literature (Janzen, 2016; Gano-Overway, 2013; Öz et al., 2011), this form contains items for evaluating the status of the sports of the students and the types of sports they do.

Peer Relationships Question Form

Containing items about children's experiences of bullying in their relationships with their peers, this form was developed by the researchers in line with the literature to evaluate children's exposure to and display of bullying-related behaviors such as pushing-hitting, teasing, and nicknaming (Olweus, 2005; Gökler, 2009; Whitted & David, 2005); Rigby, 2004; Swearer et al., 2008).

Bullying Tendency Scale

This scale, developed by Dölek in 2002, can be applied individually or as a group (Dölek, 2002). The scale consists of 6 sub-dimensions containing 26 items. These are negative reflection (5 items), lack of emotional sharing (6 items), justification (4 items), upsetting others (4 items), using force (6 items) and not being disturbed (1 item). There are reverse scoring items in the sub-dimensions of the scale including lack of emotional sharing, upsetting others, and not being disturbed. The high score obtained from the scale indicates that the bullying tendency is high, while the low score indicates that the bullying tendency is

low. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the internal consistency reliability of the scale is 0.67 (Dölek, 2002). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.87 with the data obtained from this study.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data obtained from the research was carried out with the SPSS 21.00 package program. Descriptive statistics and independent t-test were used in the statistical evaluation of the data. In the statistical analysis of the study, the level of significance was accepted as $p<0.05$.

Findings

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the students

	Characteristics	Number	%
Gender	Female	509	51.1
	Male	487	48.9
Residence	City	944	94.8
	District	41	4.1
	Village	11	1.1
Perceived Income Level	We can meet our needs	957	96.1
	We cannot meet our needs	39	3.9
Whether there are older students than the participants	Yes	670	67.3
	No	326	32.7
Whether there is any sort of punishment	Yes	127	12.8
	No	869	87.2
Education Level of Mother	None	19	1.9
	Primary-Secondary School	732	73.5
	High School	147	14.8
	University	97	9.7
	Graduate	1	0.1
Education Level of Father	None	11	1.1
	Primary-Secondary School	494	49.6
	High School	260	26.1
	University	231	23.2
	Total	996	100

The average age of secondary school students constituting the research group is 12.21 ± 1.24, and the average number of siblings is 1.88 ± 1.23. It was determined that 51.1% of the students are female and 94.8% live in the city. When asked about their perceived income level, most of the children stated that they could meet their needs (96.1%). Most of them stated that they had friends older than themselves in the classroom (67.3%), they did not receive any school punishment (87.2%), and the education level of their mothers (73.5%) and fathers (49.6%) was at the primary school-secondary school level (Table 1).

Table 2. Distribution of information about whether students do sports or not

Characteristics	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
Team sports	911	91.5	85	8.5
Individual sports	886	89.0	110	11.0
Martial arts	129	13.0	867	87.0
Whether families support students with doing sports	866	86.9	130	13.1

It was determined that 91.5% of the students do team sports, 89.0% do individual sports and 13.0% do martial arts, while 86.9% of the students believe that they are support from their families when doing sports (Table 2).

Table 3. Distribution of mean scores of the sub-dimensions of the bullying tendency scale

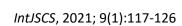| Sub-dimensions of the bullying tendency scale	Mean	SS	Lowest and Highest Scores
Negative Reflection	8.38	3.55	5-20
Lack of Emotional Sharing	9.88	3.23	6-24
Justification	8.78	2.97	4-16
Upsetting Others	6.78	2.32	4-16
Using Force	10.06	3.75	6-24
Not Being Disturbed	1.85	1.06	1-4

The students' mean scores of the sub-dimensions of the Bullying Tendency Scale including lack of emotional sharing, justification, upsetting others, using force, and not being disturbed are 8.38±3.55, 9.88±3.23, 8.78±2.97, 6.78±2.32, 10.06±3.75, and 1.85±1.06, respectively (Table 3).

Table 4. Peer bullying tendencies according to whether students do sports or not

Characteristics		Negative reflection	Lack of emotional sharing	Justification	Upsetting others	Using force	Not being disturbed
Individual sports	Yes	8.43	9.85	8.78	6.79	10.14	1.85
	No	7.99	10.11	8.73	6.68	9.40	1.85
Test and p value		t: 1.247	t: -0.809	t: 0.175	t: 0.479	**t: 1.972**	t: -.0.001
		p: 0.213	p: 0.419	p: 0.861	p: 0.632	***p: 0.049**	p: 0.999
Team sports	Yes	8.40	9.83	8.82	6.79	10.09	1.84
	No	8.25	10.4	8.38	6.65	9.76	1.92
Test and p value		t: 0.354	t: -1.542	t: 1.281	t: 0.511	t: 0.769	t: -0.679
		p: 0.723	p: 0.123	p: 0.201	p: 0.61	p: 0.442	p: 0.497
Martial sports	Yes	9.17	10.16	9.72	7.43	11.35	1.89
	No	8.27	9.84	8.64	6.68	9.87	1.84
Test and p value		**t: 2.709**	t: 1.054	**t: 3.899**	**t: 3.431**	**t: 4.228**	t: 0.424
		*p: 0.007	p: 0.292	***p: 0.000**	***p: 0.001**	***p: 0.000**	p: 0.672

t: Independent t test; *: $p < 0.05$

It was determined that the students of the research group who do individual sports got significantly higher scores from the using force sub-dimension of the bullying tendency scale ($p < 0.05$) and that there was no statistically significant difference between the scores obtained from other sub-dimensions of the bullying tendency scale according to the individual sports ($p > 0.05$). It was also determined that there was no statistically significant difference between

the mean scores of the sub-dimensions of the scale according to the team sports (p> 0.05). Students doing martial arts were found to have significantly higher scores in terms of the sub-dimensions including negative reflection (p<0.01), justification (p<0.001), upsetting others (p<0.01), and using force (p<0.001). Besides, no significant difference was found between the scores of lack of emotional sharing (p>0.05) and not being disturbed (p>0.05) according to the martial arts (Table 4).

Discussion

Today, bullying is an alarming maladaptive behavior that students in primary and secondary schools often encounter around the world (Peguero, 2008). The findings obtained from this study, conducted to evaluate the effect of secondary school students' sports activity on the bullying tendency, are discussed in this section in line with the relevant literature.

According to the findings, it was determined that the students who do individual sports got significantly higher scores in terms of the using force sub-dimension of the bullying tendency scale. Although it was observed that there was no statistically significant difference between the scores obtained from other sub-dimensions of the bullying tendency scale according to the individual sports, the levels of negative reflection, justification, and upsetting others were higher in students who do individual sports than do not. It is suggested that participation in individual sports activities can have an enormous, far-reaching, and positive effect on the general health and well-being of individuals (Gano-Overway, 2013). On the other hand, in the study conducted to evaluate the aggression levels of athletes engaged in team sports and individual sports, it was concluded that players who do individual sports are more aggressive than players who do team sports (Tutkun et al., 2010). The competitive nature of sports can unwittingly create a supportive environment for bullying incidents and bullying behaviors can also be displayed among athletes (Çelik & Demir, 2016).

It is stated that female adolescents who adopt masculine behavior are more associated with bullying and victimization (Young & Sweeting, 2004). The results also show that the attitudes of using force against others and self-esteem based on the force are significantly higher in children who do individual sports. Individual sports, by their nature, include tactical attempts, physical contacts, purposeful movements, frustration by the opponent and anger in an attempt to win. These attempts of the winner player to get points can serve as a reinforcing stimulus by making individual sports children experience a sense of success. During the development of attitudes towards using force, it is thought that those doing individual sports struggle and take responsibility alone in winning or losing, which leads to an increase in the tendency of using force to achieve or not to achieve the expected scores.

In the study, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the bullying tendencies sub-dimension mean scores of the students according to the team sport. However, the tendency levels of the sub-dimensions of negative reflection, justification, upsetting others and using force were higher in students doing team sports. Lack of emotional sharing and the tendency not to be disturbed is lower in students interested in team sports. It is thought that sports can be effective in ensuring the physical, psychological, and social development of children/young people and preventing them from heading towards negative behaviors (Janzen, 2016). In a study, it was stated that team sports increases the cooperation between students, provides opportunities for them to interact with each other in a positive and comprehensive manner, and helps create harmony and compassion among students (Swearer et al., 2008). On the other hand, physical and verbal interventions, obstructions, referee attitudes, social pressure, the tension that may arise from time to time in organized team sports can lead children to aggression that can harm both sides (Peguero, 2008). In addition,

some team trainers' approaches to reward aggression in order to motivate the athletes or to reduce the motivation of the opponent team and these trainers' attitudes of maneuvering the athletes into slogans such as "no pain, no gain", "play hard or go home" show that aggression is learned in a sports environment (Çobanoğlu, 2005). In a study conducted with male professional footballers, the athletes stated that they were excluded and psychologically abused by their teammates before, during, and after the match (Iyem, 2013).

It was found that students engaged in martial arts got significantly higher scores from the negative reflection, justification, upsetting others, and using force sub-dimensions of the bullying tendency scale. According to this finding of the study, students who do martial arts tend to direct their negative emotions to people who are less powerful than those who do not; they have the attitude of believing that the victim deserves the punishment and assert their righteousness in bullying and enjoying making others upset and they use force against others and have self-esteem based on the force. On the other hand, it was found that although there was no statistically significant difference, the students' lack of emotional sharing and the tendency not to be disturbed were higher in those who were engaged in martial arts. Martial arts especially attracts children and adolescents with aggression tendencies and therefore makes contact with them easier (Keçici, 2018).

In a study conducted with female karate athletes in Tehran, it was concluded that as the lack of social security increases, the sense of aggression increases, the masculine behavior increases, the social class increases, the family support increases, the resistance to gender stereotypes increases, and the orientation towards karate increases (Seifi & Mahdavi, 2015). In a study examining the violence tendency levels of kickboxing trainers, it was revealed that female trainers are slightly more prone to violence than male trainers (Karadağ, 2018). In another study conducted on the aggression levels of physical education and sports college students, the physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility and anger average scores of individuals who watched sports with fighting content for more than 4 hours per week were found to be approximately half a score higher than those who never watched (Dever & Bulut, 2017). This finding suggests the effect of social learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been concluded that individual sportsmen have a high tendency to establish superiority based on individual force, and those who do martial sports have a high tendency to direct their negative emotions to those who are weak, to exhibit self-righteous attitudes in bullying behaviors, to enjoy bullying and upsetting others, and to establish superiority based on individual force.

In this direction, the students should be directed to appropriate sports branches by considering their psychological characteristics and bullying tendencies. It is recommended to follow the tendencies of students who do individual sports to establish force-based superiority.

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