

Research Article

Prevalence of Peer Bullying among Adolescents in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Determination of Affecting Factors*Veli Abiç¹, Nurcan Bilgiç²***Abstract**

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of peer bullying among adolescents in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the factors affecting it. The research is descriptive type research. The target population of the study comprises 3016 students who study in the Famagusta district of TRNC during 2018-2019 academic year. A sample of this research was detected by using the stratification sample method. In this study used, peer bullying scale was used for students developed by Olweus. It was detected that male students are both victims and bullies in peer bullying more than female students; vocational high school students are more victims of peer bullying than other students; 6th and 7th grade students and students who do not live with their parents are more victims. The study found that students who had bad relationships with their parents were more likely to become bullies. Nurses must observe the main reason for this problem by visiting both victim and bully students' houses.

Key Words: Peer-bullying, adolescent, bully, victim.

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Araştırma Makalesi

Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde Ergenler Arasında Akran Zorbalığının Yaygınlığı ve Etkileyen Faktörlerin Belirlenmesi

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ndeki (KKTC) ergenler arasında akran zorbalığının yaygınlığını ve bunu etkileyen faktörleri araştırmaktır. Araştırma tanımlayıcı tipte bir araştırmadır. Araştırmanın hedef evrenini 2018-2019 eğitim-öğretim yılında KKTC'nin Gazimağusa ilçesinde öğrenim gören 3016 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın örnekleme tabakalandırma örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak oluşturulmuştur. Bu çalışmada Olweus tarafından geliştirilen Öğrencilere Yönelik Akran Zorbalığı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulgularında, akran zorbalığında erkek öğrencilerin kız öğrencilere göre daha fazla hem mağdur hem de zorba oldukları; meslek lisesi öğrencilerinin diğer öğrencilere göre daha fazla akran zorbalığı mağduru olduğu; 6. ve 7. sınıf öğrencilerin ve ebeveynleri ile birlikte yaşamayan öğrencilerin daha fazla mağdur olduğu saptandı. Çalışmada ebeveynleriyle kötü ilişkileri olan öğrencilerin daha çok zorba oldukları tespit edildi. Hemşireler hem mağdur hem de zorba öğrencilerin evlerini ziyaret ederek bu sorunun temel nedenini gözlemlemelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akran zorbalığı, adölesan, zorba, mağdur.

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1.Introduction

Considering the development process of human beings, adolescence, which is one of the most critical phases, starts psychosocial maturation, which is grounded in biological and psychosocial changes, and ends when the gains autonomy, identity and social productivity (Sarı, Arslantaş., 2018). One of the places where adolescents interact most with their peers is school (Ozdemir et al.,2012). Since adolescents spend most of their daily lives in school; as well as where they receive education and training, it has become a place where they interact with their peers. School is like a test stand for socializing (Kuçukkaragoz 2018).

In this period, adolescents are exposed to both positive and negative behaviors in their interpersonal relationships in school. One of the negative behaviors students are exposed to is peer bullying (Sampson, 2016). The prevalence of peer bullying in childhood varies widely according to age, region, town, or country, and peer bullying is a kind of violence that affecting the future of exposed student in a bad way (Sezen, Murat., 2018). Although peer bullying is a new problem, researchers stated that it has been more investigated by people since the 1970s. In more studies on this subject has started to be done in 2000s. Peer bullying become prevalent day by day in all countries around the world, and it is developing on the basis of power imbalance among adolescent students. -It was detected as a violent type, which contains different behaviors such as repetitive nicknaming, mocking, humiliating, threatening, excluding, and/or exposing to physical violence (Mercan, Sarı., 2018; Drubina et al.).

According to Olweus (2013), bullying acts defined as “deliberate, repetitive, persistent negative behaviors of one or more adolescents towards a weaker adolescent” (Çivilidağ, Cooper, 2013; Delprato et. al., 2017). Traditional bullying typically occurs face-to-face and includes physical, verbal, and relational forms of interaction (Şahin, Ayaz-Alkaya.,2023). Physical bullying involves actions that lead to injury or distress such as hitting, kicking, and damaging property. The verbal form of bullying includes the usage of verbal threats and name-calling to intentionally harm another. The relational type of bullying involves isolation from groups and/or spreading rumors (Şahin, Ayaz-Alkaya.,2023). Peer bullying is also defined as peer damage, peer pressure, peer victim, or peer abuse in some studies. Peer bullying is when one or more adolescents of the same age and education level consciously menace, make pressure, and want to control to other adolescent (Sarı, Arslantaş.,2018).

Bullying comprises verbal attacks (e.g., name-calling, threats), physical behaviors (e.g., hitting, kicking, damaging victim’s property), and relational/social aggression (e.g. social exclusion, rumor spreading) up to the most recent forms of attacks (Menesini, Salmivalli., 2017). Bullying behaviors are specific and complex. Bullying is comprised of aggressive behavior(s) aimed at a target by another youth or group of youths and involves (a) an imbalance of power that is real or perceived, (b) repeated aggressive behavior or a likelihood of repeated aggressive behavior, and (c) physical and/or psychological harm, characterized by feelings of embarrassment, intimidation, and powerlessness as a result (Dorio et al. 2019). Direct bullying contains behaviors such as mocking, nicknaming, teasing, injustice, threatening, wrongly criticizing, intimidating looks, obscene acts, kicking, hitting, stealing stuff and harming with wounding tools (Cox, 2014). Indirect bullying contains secret situations such as causing others to nickname and mock, spreading gossip, consciously excluding someone, provoking others to beat someone and revealing someone’s secrets (Peker et al., 2012; Drubina et al.).

Bullies have bad attitudes, such as cheating on exams in educational institutions and skipping school. Their academic standings are low, and bullies are insufficient to make school tasks good, obey the school rules, and do homework. They are also insufficient to wish to be good in school, be happy in school, and take school seriously (Küçükkaragöz, 2018). It is stated that victims are generally adolescents who are kind, emotional, clever, and able to socially communicate well with their parents (Lucas et. al., 2016).

It is an emerging reaction that children who encounter bullying, may be concerned and fearful in this bullying environment. Victims do not love the school due to those disturbing actions, and they want to escape from places where bullying is emerging. These victim adolescents feel anger, concern, and desperation. Moreover, chronic diseases may appear, and this situation leads them to suicide (Şahin, Ayaz-Alkaya., 2023).

In the study made in South Cyprus, Panayiotis and others (2010) detected that 5.4% of the students are bullies, 7.4% are victims, and 4.2% are bully-victims (Panayiotis et al.2010). In the study made in Turkey (2013), Çivilidağ and Cooper stated that students were bullied 44.0% verbally, 30.0% physically, 18.0% emotionally, and 9.0% sexually (Çivilidağ, Cooper, 2013). In the study of Alikışıfoğlu made in Turkey among primary and secondary school students (2011), it was detected that 65.2% of the students were bullied in the last few months, and 58.0% of them were bullied at least once a week (Alikışıfoğlu, 2011). Studies on peer bullying have shown that peer bullying is a significant problem for adolescents and that studies have led to the development of lot of programs oriented to prevent bullying in all countries in more common situations (Olweus, 2013). The contents of prevention programs and programs for age groups to be implemented are determined to be active (Beane, 2010). Aggressive acts cause adolescents to sustain violent and criminal behaviors in their advancing adulthood too. It is suggested to implement peer bullying programs in the early years of adolescence (Yurtal, Cenkseven, 2016).

2. Material and Method

Research is a descriptive type research. Research data was comprised of totally 3016 students who are studying during the 2018-2019 academic year at Namık Kemal High School (854), Dr. Fazıl Küçük Industrial Vocational High School (345), Famagusta High School of Trade (128), Famagusta Vocational High School (239), Çanakkale Secondary School (720), and Canbolat Secondary School (730), all of which are located in the Famagusta district of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). A sample of this research was done in accordance with the stratification sample method and the voluntary participation of the students. According to the WHO report (2012), the incidence rate of bullying has been changing between 1.0% and 32.0%. In this study, considering 95% confidence interval $\alpha=0.05$ and the 32.0% incidence rate, the sample size is 895 and it was planned to reach 994 students with a 10.0% backup.

Research questions are determined as follow:

1. What is the incidence of peer bullying among adolescents?
2. Do peer bullying roles in adolescents differ significantly according to socio-demographic variables?
3. What are the factors affecting peer bullying in adolescents?

Research data was collected between 19.02.2018 and 19.05.2018 with face to face interview method by applying the Personal Information Form and Olweus Peer Bullying Questionnaire for Students to students studying in the Famagusta district of TRNC during

the 2018-2019 academic year. Voluntary students who have speaking, perceiving, expressing, and visual skills have been involved in the research.

The Olweus Peer Bullying Questionnaire for Students was created by Dan Olweus (1996) in order to scale peer bullying among primary and secondary school students (Olweus, 1996). This questionnaire whose validity and reliability were assessed by Tırdamaz Sipahi, H. T., in 2017 comprises 39 items (Tırdamaz, 2018). In the Olweus Peer Bullying Questionnaire for Students, there are multiple-choice questions. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was stated to be over 0.80. Whether there is a victim, bully, victim/bully peer bullying happens twice, three or more times a month. Being a bully, victim, or bully/victim is detected based on the answers of the students; answers to 4-13th questions determine victim status, answer to 24-33rd determine bully status and answering both of the sections determines victim/bully status. Those who did not participate in both sections are counted as nonparticipants.

Research data was evaluated using the program SPSS (24.0). As a descriptive value, frequency and percent values; arithmetic average \pm standard deviation values in quantitative data, the statistical limit of significance is considered to be 0.05 during the evaluation of the data. Cronbach's Alpha was used as an internal consistency analysis of the scale. The T tests were used in independent groups, and the Chi Square and T test was used in comparison of intergroups.

3.Results

Two-thirds of students are in the 14-17 age group, 48.2% are male, 41.1% have a good academic standing perception, 35.4% are in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, one fourth of them study vocational high school, 73.7% were born in TRNC, and only 8.1% live in TRNC for less than 5 years. In the study of the determination of peer bullying prevalence and the risk factors, which was done with 2137 secondary school students in TRNC, it was stated that 37.0% of students are in the 6th grade, 50.1% are male, and 56.9% were born in TRNC (Gençoğru, Kumcağız & Ersanlı, 2014). In the study made in Izmir with 400 students, peer bullying among 6th and 7th grades and factors affecting peer bullying were investigated, and it was detected that students' ages were between 11-15; 48.1% of the students are female and 51.9% are male (Patel et al., 2017) (Table 1).

Table 1. Students' Demographic Features (n=991)

Variables	n= 991	% (100)
Age		
11-13	221	22.3
14-17	770	77.7
Gender		
Female	507	51.2
Male	484	48.2
Birthplace		
TRNC	730	73.7
TR	205	20.7
Other	55	5.5
Lifetime in TRNC		
5 years and below	80	8.1
6-10 years	64	6.5
11-15 years	616	62.2
16 years+	231	23.3
School		

Regular High School	409	41.3
Vocational High School	232	23.4
Secondary School	348	35.1
Academic Standing Perception		
Very good	118	11.9
Good	407	41.1
Middle	409	41.3
Bad	47	4.7
Grade		
6	68	6.9
7	109	11.0
8	173	17.5
9	396	40.0
10	143	14.4
11	34	3.4
12	62	6.3

n=991 %=100

Students have stated that their teachers thought that 41.7% of the students' academic standings were better than the other students in the class.

Table 2. Prevalence of Students' Peer Bullying Status according to the Age, School, Gender, School Success and Class Variables

Student School Features	Victim		Bully		Victim / Bully	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
11-13 years	30	13.6	12	6.3	4	13.3
14-17years	55	7.1	56	7.9	6	10.9
	$\chi^2=9.059^{**}$		$\chi^2=0.535$		$\chi^2=0.110$	
	p=0.003*		p=0.465		p=0.740	
Female	31	6.1	26	5.5	2	6.5
Male	54	11.2	42	9.8	8	14.8
	$\chi^2=8.030$		$\chi^2=6.038$		$\chi^2=1.327$	
	p=0.005*		p=0.014*		p=0.249	
	t= 1.867 ***		t= 2.650		t= 2.981	
Regular High School	18	4.4	29	7.4	3	16.7
Vocational High School	29	12.4	12	5.9	3	10.3
Secondary School	38	10.9	26	8.4	4	10.5
	$\chi^2=15.965$		$\chi^2=1.095$		$\chi^2=1.131$	
	p=0.000*		p=0.578		p=0.770	
Very good	12	10.2	6	5.7	0	0.0
Good	29	7.1	24	6.4	6	20.7
Middle	31	7.6	26	6.9	3	9.7
Bad	13	22.8	12	27.3	1	7.7
	$\chi^2=16.741$		$\chi^2=32.383$		$\chi^2=4.163$	
	p=0.001*		p=0.000*		p=0.244	
6 th Grade	12	17.6	2	3.6	4	33.3
7 th Grade	17	15.6	5	5.4	0	0.0
8 th Grade	10	5.8	19	11.7	0	0.0
9 th Grade	28	7.1	22	6.0	3	10.7
10 th Grade	12	10.6	14	22.0	2	18.2
12 th Grade	5	8.1	4	7.0	1	20.0
	$\chi^2=18.488$		$\chi^2=10.097$		$\chi^2=9.801$	
	p=0.005*		p=0.121		p=0.133	

*p<0.05

**Chi Square Test

***T test

There is a significant relationship between the 11-13 age group and the 14-17 age group. Those in the 11 - 13 age group are more victims of peer bullying than those in the 14 -17 age group ($p=0.003$). Male students are both victims and bullies in peer bullying more than female students. A significant relationship was found between male and female students. Male students are both victims ($p=0.005$) and bullies ($p=0.014$) of peer bullying compared to female students. Compared to plain high school and middle school students, students studying in vocational high school have more victims in peer bullying ($p=0.000$). There is a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school success and students' classmates. It has been determined that students with bad school lessons are both victims ($p=0.001$) and bullies ($p=0.000$). When peer bullying situations and the classes they read were compared; it was found that there was a significant relationship between different classes. Younger, 6th and 7th grade students are more likely to be victims ($p=0.005$) (Table 2).

Table 3. Prevalence of Students' Peer Bullying Status according to Family Features Variables

Family Features	Victim		Bully		Victim / Bully	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Female	31	6.1	26	55	2	6.5
Male	54	11.2	42	9.8	8	14.8
	$\chi^2=8.030^{**}$		$\chi^2=6.038$		$\chi^2=1.327$	
	p=0.005*		p=0.014*		p=0.249	
School						
Regular High School	18	4.4	29	7.4	3	16.7
Vocational High School	29	12.4	12	5.9	3	10.3
Secondary School	38	10.9	26	8.4	4	10.5
	$\chi^2=15.965$		$\chi^2=1.095$		$\chi^2=1.131$	
	p=0.000*		p=0.578		p=0.770	
Academic Standing Perception						
Very good	12	10.2	6	5.7	0	0.0
Good	29	7.1	24	6.4	6	20.7
Middle	31	7.6	26	6.9	3	9.7
Bad	13	22.8	12	27.3	1	7.7
	$\chi^2=16.741$		$\chi^2=32.383$		$\chi^2=4.163$	
	p=0.001*		p=0.000*		p=0.244	
Working Status of Mother						
Do not work	35	7.8	33	8.0	3	8.6
Private Sector	37	8.3	33	8.1	3	8.1
Public Sector	11	11.7	2	2.4	3	27.3
	$\chi^2=12.319$		$\chi^2=3.444$		$\chi^2=3.703$	
	p=0.006*		p=0.179		p=0.295	
Working Status of Father						
Do not work	2	2.9	10	14.9	0	0.0
Private Sector	60	8.1	48	7.1	7	11.7
Public Sector	21	12.4	10	6.7	2	9.5
	$\chi^2=6.276$		$\chi^2=5.561$		$\chi^2=0.323$	
	p=0.043*		p=0.062		p=0.851	
Relationship with Parents						
Good	76	8.5	53	6.5	9	11.8
Middle	9	11.8	15	41.4	1	11.1
	$\chi^2=2.655$		$\chi^2=15.915$		$\chi^2=0.004$	
	p=0.265		p=0.000*		p=0.949	
Relationship with Siblings						
Good	67	8.0	44	6.5	8	11.9

Middle	18	42.2	18	37.2	2	16.7
.	$\chi^2=14.447$		$\chi^2=10.354$		$\chi^2=,1.080$	
	p=0.001*		p=0.035*		p=0.583	

*p<0.05

** Chi Square Test

According to the mothers' working status, a relationship was determined to be a victim ($p=0.006$). Children of mothers working in public institutions are victims. In addition, when the father's working status is analyzed, it is seen that fathers working in public institutions ($p=0.043$), like mothers working in public institutions, are also victims of their children. Children of parents who work in the public sector and children who do not live with their parents are more victims of peer bullying. It has been determined that students with bad parental relationships play the role of bullies. It has been determined that students with bad sibling relationships are both victim and bullies ($p=0.001$, $p=0.035$) (Table3).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In the study of Tırdamaz (2018), when students were asked about teachers' opinions on students' academic standing, 49.5% of the students stated that they are good and 21.6% stated that they are very good (Özdemir et al., 2012). The perspective on life and future plans of students with high levels of self-esteem are more clarified during adolescence. Academic standing is increasing in adolescents with this consciousness.

It was detected that 8.6% of the students who participated in the study are victims, 7.9% are bullies, and 1.0% are both victims and bullies. A study has been done with 1003 students in India, Cashmere with a view to investigating the prevalence and characteristics of peer bullying. It was determined that 25.8% of the students are victim, 14.0% are bully, 15.7% are both bullies and victims, and 44.5% are neither bully nor victim (Panayiotis et al., 2010; Patel et al., 2017).

In the study, it was determined that there is a significant relationship between female and male students, and male students are both victims and bullies of peer bullying more than female students.

In the study made in Southern Cyprus with 1645 high school students, it was determined that peer bullying is more prevalent among male students than female students, but there is no intersexual difference in terms of victim (Lucas et al., 2016). It is considered that the reason for this situation is the upbringing of boys who are more aggressive than girls, and the toleration of parents toward their children aggressive behaviors.

In this study, it was determined that vocational high school students are more victims of peer bullying than regular high school and secondary school students. A study on the investigation of grade and school type of peer bullying among high school students was made with 600 students. It is stated in the study that industrial vocational high schools are exposed to bullying more than other school types, and Anatolian high schools are the least exposed to bullying. It was also stated that the most bullying was done by private high school students and the least bullying by Anatolian high school students (Serin, 2012).

According to the results of this study, it was detected that 6th and 7th grades students are more victims. In the research Olweus conducted with 83.330 students between 2nd and 9th grade, it was stated that bullying is decreasing in upper classes. This downward tendency most clearly happens between 2nd and 6th grades, whereas it happens slowly and is less observable between 7th and 9th grades (Delprato et al., 2017).

Children of parents who work in the public sector are more victims of peer bullying. In the research which investigates the factors related to bullying among adolescents between 11-15 aged, it was detected that is a significant statistical difference between the working status of mothers and the victim level of students (Tıprıdamaz, 2018).

It was detected in the research that students who do not live with their parents are more victims. In the research aimed at investigating high school students' feelings, thoughts, and attitudes against bullying and bullies, it was detected that there is a significant difference between parents' living together and students' being victims of peer bullying (Smith, 2016). In the research of Ergun (2011), it was detected that there is a significant difference between students whose parents are living together and whose parents are living apart. It is considered that boys living with their parents are more likely to get into bullying because they feel the support of their parents (Peker, 2012).

In the study, it was detected that students who have bad relations with their parents are bullies. In the study on the investigation of victimization in Turkish schools, it was determined that students with divorced parents are bullies (Tural, Yeşilova., 2015). In terms of peer bullying, it was anticipated that being negatively affected by their peers might increase bullying in students with insufficient family relationships and discipline, and it is important for parents to know who their child's friends are, how and where he/she hangs out with what friends.

It was determined that students who have bad relations with their siblings are both victim and bully. Number of family members affects inter-family communication dynamics and communication between the child and the parents reduces in crowded families. It was determined that the child has difficulty to get support from his/her family and when needed he/she is not able to deal with the troubles healthily enough (Tural, Yeşilova., 2015).

Peer bullying is an important subject that has become relevant in 21st century in Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Since the existence of schools, peer bullying has been a problem among students. It is suggested that to be healthy and beneficial individuals for society, it is important to lay the foundation of healthy relationships in the school environment, where the students receive education and training and spend lots of their time. It was detected that students have bullied one or more students in a year, some of them are victims, bullies or bully/victims, and male students are more bullies. The following recommendations are offered based on the results of the studies. Measures should be taken to provide security in the areas, where peer bullying happens in school and is detected by school administrators and teachers.

Education on peer bullying should be given to all students, their parents, and school personnel within the scope of primary security. Children should be observed by their teachers, nurses, and parents for an early detection. Long-term programs oriented towards reasons and solutions of peer bullying among students should be conducted, and these programs should be evaluated by teachers, school nurses, and parents.

The main reason for this problem should be investigated closer by nurses by visiting to houses of students who were determined to be victim and a bully. Necessary healthcare should be planned and implemented in order to reduce health and identity risks by detecting the reasons of bullying, and psycho-social problems victims have faced. New solution-oriented studies should be conducted by searching for the reasons for the types the types of bullying that happen among students.

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