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## Bullying and submissive behavior\*

Gökhan ATİK\*\* Onur ÖZMEN\*\*\* Gülşah KEMER\*\*\*\*

**ABSTRACT.** This study presents the prevalence and types of bullying and an examination of submissive behavior among Turkish high school students involved in bullying. Participants were 389 high school students (59.6% males, 40.4% females) from three high schools in Ankara, Turkey. The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996), Submissive Acts Scale (Gilbert & Allan, 1994), and a brief demographic data sheet were used as measures. Bullying and its verbal and indirect forms were found to be prevalent among the adolescents. Regarding gender differences, male students were more involved in bullying than female students. According to the ANOVA results, victims reported more submissive behavior than bullies. The findings were discussed in the light of the literature, with some implications for school counselors and educators.

**Keywords:** Bullying, victimization, submissive behavior, high school students.

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## ÖZET

**Amaç ve Önem:** Bu çalışmada, lise öğrencileri arasındaki zorbalık ve zorbalığa dahil olmuş öğrencilerin boyun eğicilik davranışlarının incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Elde edilen bulguların, lise öğrencileri arasındaki zorbalık olaylarının daha iyi anlaşılması ve bu tür olaylara dahil olan öğrencilerin sosyal davranışlarının ortaya konulması bakımından önemli katkılarının olacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Yöntem:** Çalışmaya Ankara'daki üç lisede eğitimlerine devam eden toplam 389 öğrenci katılmıştır. Bu öğrencilerin 232'sini (%59.6) erkek, 157 (%40.4) ise kız öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılar uygun örneklem yöntemi ile seçilmiştir. Katılımcıların yaşları 14 ile 19 arasında değişirken, yaş ortalaması yaklaşık olarak 16'dır. Zorbalığa ilişkin yaşantılar Revize Edilmiş Olweus Zorba/Mağdur Anketi (Olweus, 1996) ile değerlendirilmiştir. Boyun eğici davranışlar ise Gilbert ve Allan (1994) tarafından geliştirilen Boyun Eğici Davranışlar Ölçeği ile ölçülmüştür. Bu ölçme araçlarının yanı sıra, katılımcıların cinsiyetleri, yaşları ve sınıf düzeyleri hakkında bilgi almak amacıyla bir kişisel bilgi formu hazırlanmıştır. Katılımcılar arasındaki zorbalığın yaygınlığını ve gerçekleşen zorbalık ve mağduriyet davranışlarının türlerini belirlemek için frekans analizleri yapılmıştır. Zorbalığa dahil olmanın cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeylerine göre farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığını incelemek için iki-yönlü çapraz tablo analizlerinden faydalanılmıştır. Son olarak; zorba, mağdur, zorba/mağdur ve dahil olmayan öğrencilerin cinsiyete göre boyun eğici davranışlarının farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığını araştırmak için de İki-Yönlü Varyans analizi kullanılmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Sonuçlara göre toplam 389 öğrencinin %8'i zorba, %19.8'i mağdur, %7.7'si zorba/mağdur ve %64.5'i dahil olmayan şekilde dağılım göstermiştir. Zorbalık davranışının türü açısından, zorbaların kullandığı en yaygın zorbalık türünün ve kurbanların en çok maruz kaldıkları zorbalık davranışının sözel zorbalık ve dolaylı zorbalık ("gruptan ayrı tutma, dışlama, göz ardı etme" gibi) olduğu görülmüştür. Zorbalık davranışı ile ilgili olarak cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyi değişkenleri incelendiğinde, anlamlı cinsiyet farklılıkları bulunmuştur. Ancak, sınıf düzeyi açısından anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Bu sonuca göre, erkek katılımcılar kızlara göre zorbalık olaylarına daha çok dahil olmuştur. Varyans analizi sonucuna göre de, mağdur kategorisinde yer alan öğrenciler ile zorba kategorisindeki öğrencilerin boyun eğici davranış puanları anlamlı bir şekilde farklılık

göstermiş ve mağdur öğrencilerin daha fazla boyun eğici davranış gösterdikleri bulunmuştur.

**Tartışma ve Sonuçlar:** Elde edilen bulgulara göre, katılımcıların önemli bir kısmı (%35.5) zorbalığa farklı rollerde (zorba, mağdur ya da zorba/mağdur) dahil olmaktadır. Bu süreçte erkek öğrenciler kız öğrencilere göre daha fazla rol almaktadır. Öğrenciler arasında en yaygın kullanılan ve maruz kalınan zorbalık türü olarak sözel ve dolaylı türler olduğu görülmektedir. Boyun eğme davranışı açısından, mağdur öğrenciler zorbalara göre bu davranışı daha çok sergilediklerini belirtirken, zorba öğrencilerin boyun eğme davranış puanlarının düşük olması beklenen bir sonuçtur. Çünkü zorba öğrencilerin genellikle diğer öğrencilere göre daha saldırgan, sosyal ve popüler niteliklere sahip oldukları bulunmuştur (Perren, 2000). Öte yandan, akran gruplarında boyun eğme davranışı bir zayıflık ya da güçsüzlük olarak algılanmaktadır. Önceki araştırmalarda da belirtildiği gibi boyun eğme davranışı mağdur öğrencilerin diğer öğrencilere göre daha çok kullandığı bir özellik olup; bu özellik akran gruplarındaki zorbalık olaylarında bir risk faktörü olarak ele alınmaktadır (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Schwartz et al., 1993; Schwartz et al., 2002). Bu çalışmanın bulguları birçok araştırma bulgusuyla tutarlılık gösterirken, okullarda zorbalığa karşı geliştirilecek önleyici ve gelişimsel programlarda ve müdahalelerde bu özelliklerin dikkate alınmasının önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir.



## Zorbalık ve Boyun Eğme Davranışı \*

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**ÖZ.** Bu çalışmada, lise öğrencileri arasındaki zorbalığın yaygınlığı ve türleri ve zorbalığa dahil olan öğrencilerin boyun eğme davranışları incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya Ankara’da üç lisede eğitimlerine devam eden 389 (%59.6 erkek, %40.4 kız) öğrenci katılmıştır. Revize Edilmiş Olweus Zorba/Mağdur Anketi (Olweus, 1996), Boyun Eğici Davranışlar Ölçeği (Gilbert & Allan, 1994) ve kısa bir demografik bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, zorbalık ve zorbalığın sözel ve dolaylı biçimleri öğrenciler arasında yaygın bir şekilde görülmektedir. Cinsiyet farklılığı açısından, erkek öğrenciler kız öğrencilere göre zorbalığa daha çok dahil olmaktadır. Varyans analizi sonuçlarına göre, mağdur öğrenciler zorba gruptaki öğrencilere göre boyun eğici davranışları daha çok göstermektedir. Elde edilen bulgular alan yazın çerçevesinde tartışılmış ve okul psikolojik danışmanları ve eğitimciler için birtakım öneriler sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Zorbalık, mağdur olma, çekingen davranış, lise öğrencileri.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bullying has become one of the most considerable concerns of students, parents, educators, and mental health professionals in school settings. This concern especially appeared to stem from the negative influences of bullying on students' well-being. In the literature, it was well-documented that bullying had deleterious influences on students' health and led to some emotional, behavioral, social, and academic problems, such as posttraumatic stress (Mynard, Joseph, & Alexander, 2000), depression (Çetinkaya, Nur, Ayyaz, Özdemir, & Kavakcı, 2009; Sabuncuoğlu et al., 2006), hopelessness, loneliness, suicidal ideation (Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009), problem behaviors, less social competence (Haynie et al., 2001), and lower academic achievement (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2010). Moreover, higher prevalence of bullying in school settings seemed to be another concerning issue. For instance, in a comprehensive international study (Due, Holstein, & Soc, 2008) almost one-third of 13-15-year-old school children ( $N = 218,104$ ) were found to be bullied. Similarly, a high prevalence of bullying among elementary, middle (Atik, 2006; Kapcı, 2004; Özer & Totan, 2009; Pişkin, 2010), and high school students (Alikasifoglu et al. 2004; Kepenekci & Çınkır, 2006; Yöndem & Totan, 2008) were also found in the Turkish studies. Yöndem and Totan (2008) found that 27% of 584 ninth- through eleventh-grade students reported being involved in bullying. Kepenekci and Çınkır (2006) also reported that each student participated in their study ( $N = 692$ ) were bullied at least once during the academic year. Almost 36% of those students were bullied physically, 33% verbally, 28.3% emotionally, and 15.6% sexually. Using a modified version of HBSC (Health Behavior in School-Aged Children) survey with 4,153 high school students, Alikasifoglu and colleagues (2004) found that 19% of students bullied other students and 30% were bullied. Although the pervasiveness of bullying and victimization among Turkish adolescents was addressed in these studies, it was apparent that the generalizability of the findings was limited to some regions or students who participated in these studies. Moreover, the differentiation among the findings of these studies was considered to be related to sample characteristics or use of different instruments for assessment of bullying and victimization (Atik, 2011). Therefore, more studies were required to describe bullying and victimization among Turkish adolescents more precisely.

Bullying occurred in a number of typologies, such as physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, punching, taking belongings), verbal (e.g. teasing, taunting), social exclusion, and indirect (e.g. spreading nasty rumors, telling others not to play with someone) (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). Sexual and racial harassment (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004) and cyber-bullying (Kowalski &

Limber, 2007) were also regarded as different types of bullying. The most frequent types of bullying and victimization among Turkish adolescents were found to be verbal (Kepenekci & Çinkır, 2006; Pişkin, 2010; Totan & Yöndem, 2007) and physical forms (Kepenekci & Çinkır, 2006; Pişkin, 2010). Bullying and victimization both were associated with gender and age. They were more prevalent among boys than girls (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Haynie et al., 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Bullying peaked during 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades (Nansel et al., 2001) and decreased gradually during high school (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Also, while younger children tended to report more victimization (Kristensen & Smith, 2003), older students were mostly involved in bullying and delinquency (Baldry & Farrington, 2000).

The most widely used definition on bullying or victimization was provided by Olweus (1993, p. 9); “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students”. A subtype of aggressive behavior, bullying, was also described as a non-assertive behavior (Alberti & Emmons, 1970). According to the authors’ assertiveness theory, aggression and submissiveness were classified under the non-assertive behaviors. Aggressive persons were inclined to express themselves in hostile and coercive ways to meet their needs at expense of others, whereas submissive persons mostly behaved in non-hostile ways of hiding their actual feelings, allowing others to decide for them instead, ignoring their own needs (Alberti & Emmons, 1970). Considering this theory, it was expected that bullies displayed less submissive behavior than victims. Literature supporting this theory described social behavior characteristics of students involved in bullying. Initially, Olweus (1994) described a type of victim, namely passive-submissive, characterized as anxious, insecure, and not likely to revenge when attacked. Perry, Willard, and Perry (1990) found children’s perceptions regarding victimized peers’ reactions to the attackers as less likely to retaliate, more likely to reward bully’s behavior and suffer when they were bullied. Moreover, children displaying submissive and unassertive behaviors were found to be victimized more than the others (Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993; Schwartz, Farver, Chang, & Lee-Shin, 2002). In a similar vein, victimized children displayed more submissive, withdrawn behaviors and less assertive behaviors (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Tom, Schwartz, Chang, Farver, & Xu, 2010) as well as less cooperative, sociable, and more isolated behaviors (Perren & Alsaker, 2006). Although the association between victimization and submissiveness among children was well-documented in the literature, there was paucity of research with adolescents. In addition, Schwartz et al. (2002) claimed that the social

process underlying bullying was limited to the knowledge gathered from the Western cultural settings. Therefore, current study was expected to contribute existing literature with a different cultural perspective.

Briefly, present study aimed at investigating the prevalence and types of bullying as well as examining the differences in submissive behaviors in terms of gender (females and males) and bully categories (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not involved) among Turkish adolescents. Research questions of the study were as follows: “What is the prevalence and nature of bullying among Turkish adolescents?”, “Are there any gender and grade differences among students involved in bullying and not involved?”, and “Do the mean scores of submissive behaviors significantly differ according to gender and bully categories among high school adolescents?”

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants of the present study were 389 students, 232 males (59.6%) and 157 females (40.4%), from three high schools in Ankara, Turkey. Convenient sampling strategy was used to recruit the students. Age of the participants ranged from 14 to 19 years ( $M = 15.92$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) with grade levels of 9<sup>th</sup> (37.3%,  $n = 145$ ), 10<sup>th</sup> (33.7%,  $n = 131$ ), and 11<sup>th</sup> (29%,  $n = 113$ ).

### Measures

The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996), Submissive Acts Scale (Gilbert & Allan, 1994), and a brief demographic information form including questions about participants' gender, age and grade level were used to collect the data.

**Bullying and victimization.** The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (ROBVQ) developed by Olweus (1996) was used to assess participants' bullying and victimization experiences. It was a 40-item self-report questionnaire. Combinations of the items for being victimized or bullying others yielded higher internal consistencies ( $\alpha = .80$  to  $.90$ ). The items assessing being bullied or bullying others were correlated between  $.40$  -  $.60$  when analyzed with independent peer ratings (Olweus, 1994, 1996). The ROBVQ was translated into Turkish by Dölek (2002). Atik (2006) found the internal consistency coefficients of the questionnaire in a Turkish sample as  $.71$  for victimization items and  $.75$  for bullying items. Atik (2009)



also examined the questionnaire's validity and reliability in a small sample. The total scores of victimization items were found to be positively correlated ( $n = 29$ ;  $r = .47$ ;  $p < .05$ ) with the total scores of Kovacs' (1985) Children Depression Inventory whereas the total scores of bullying items were found to be positively correlated ( $n = 21$ ;  $r = .43$ ;  $p < .05$ ) with the total scores of Crick and Grotpeter's (1995) Children's Social Behavior Scale. One-week stability of the two global questions ("How often have you been bullied at the school in the past couple of months?" and "How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at the school in the past couple of months?") was checked with percentage agreement (69.6% for observed percentage agreement, 71.8% for expected percentage agreement).

In the present study, eight items pertaining to experience of being bullied, and eight items pertaining to bullying other students were used. The questionnaire begins with a required instruction as originally developed by Olweus (1996) including the definition and examples of bullying, and followed with two "global" questions. Following the instructions, seven specific questions about how often verbal, physical, indirect etc. forms of bullying were listed. Questions were responded on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "never" to "several times a week". Responses to the questions were mostly coded between the range of 0 and 4 or 1 and 5, according to their reported frequencies (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

In the current investigation, the participants were divided into two groups based on their responses to the two main (global) questions given above. Specifically, participants reporting "sometimes" or higher for the first question were defined as "victims", whereas those who reported "sometimes" or higher for the second question were classified as "bullies". Additionally, participants reported their involvement as at least sometimes or higher for both of the questions were identified as "bully-victims", while those who did not report higher frequencies than at least "sometimes" were defined as "not involved" group (non-victims/non-bullies). Groups were generated based on the cutoff point (at least sometimes) of the reported frequencies indicated by Solberg and Olweus (2003).

**Submissive behavior.** The Submissive Acts Scale (SAS) was used to assess students' submissive behavior. The SAS was originally developed for the study of Buss and Craik (1986). In their study, participants were asked to identify typical submissive behaviors. A 16-item scale of submissive behavior was defined by means of the responses (Gilbert & Allan, 1994). In the scale, frequencies reported on each of the items (e.g. "I let others criticize me or put me down without defending myself") ranged from "never" to "always", based on a five-point Likert-type scaling. The higher

scores indicate higher levels of submissive behavior. In the original study, alpha coefficient was found .89. Criterion validity assessments of the scale indicated that it was related to several constructs. For example, its correlation with Beck Depression Inventory was found as .73 (Gilbert, Allan, & Trent, 1995). In adaptation of the scale into Turkish (Şahin & Şahin, 1992), the internal consistency coefficient was found as relatively lower but still at the satisfactory level (.74). Correlation between Turkish version of the scale and Beck Depression Inventory was reported as .32. Moreover, Öngen (2006) examined the reliability coefficient of Turkish version of the scale on a high school sample as .74.

### **Procedure**

Data collection set (ROBVQ, SAS, and a brief demographic information form including gender, age and grade level) were administered to the volunteer students in their classrooms by the first and second authors. The participants were informed regarding the purpose of the study and ensured about confidentiality. In addition, detailed instructions were given to the participants concerning their response to each instrument. Data collection lasted about 15-20 minutes in each of the sixteen classrooms. The data were collected on May, 2009.

### **Analysis of Data**

To investigate prevalence and types of bullying and victimization, frequency analyses were performed. In order to test differences between involved and not involved groups in relation to gender and grade, two-way contingency table analyses were carried out. Lastly, a two-way factorial ANOVA were run to examine the mean differences in submissive behavior scores of participants. All analyses were utilized with using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 15.0).

## **RESULTS**

### **Prevalence and Types of Bullying and Victimization**

Of the total 389 students, 8% ( $n = 31$ ) were identified as bully, 19.8% ( $n = 77$ ) victim, 7.7% ( $n = 30$ ) bully/victim, and 64.5% ( $n = 251$ ) not involved. According to the descriptive analysis results, experiences of victims varied across the items related to being bullied. The most frequently mentioned item among victims was “being called names, teased in a hurtful

way” in which 48.1% of them reported at least two or three times in a month. Similarly, the item “being bullied with mean names or comments about gesture or speaking” was reported by 36.4% of the victims as occurring at least two or three times in a month. The third frequent item reported by the victims was “being told lies, spread false rumors, disliked”. This item was reported by 19.5% of the victims (again at least two or three times in a month).

The most frequently mentioned type of bullying behavior by bullies was “calling mean names, teasing in a hurtful way” (two or three times in a month by 25.8% of them). Similarly, 12.9% of the bullies reported “leaving out, excluding, ignoring” behavior at least two or three times in a month. Other reports of the bullies showed that they involved in most of the bullying behaviors at least once in a month, although their frequencies were relatively low (e.g. “taking away money or other things, or damaging”; “telling lies, spread of false rumors, disliking”).

#### **Gender and Grade Level Differences (Involved vs. Not Involved)**

Participants of the present study categorized as bully, victim, or bully/victim were regrouped as “involved” to balance the group distributions for involved and not involved groups. Furthermore, two contingency table analyses were conducted to evaluate gender and grade differences among the groups. Cramer’s  $V$  effect sizes were taken as statistical reference for the analyses to avoid misleading interpretation of the data (Green & Salkind, 2005). Statistically significant results were found for the involved vs. not involved groups in terms of gender (Pearson  $\chi^2$  [1,  $n = 389$ ] = 5.33,  $p = .02$ , Cramer’s  $V = .12$ ). Male students (67.4%) were higher in proportion in involved group than females (32.6%). On the other hand, no significant differences were found among the groups in terms of grade level (Pearson  $\chi^2$  [2,  $n = 389$ ] = 2.74,  $p = .25$ , Cramer’s  $V = .08$ ).

#### **Results of Factorial ANOVA**

Prior to the analyses, the assumptions of two-way ANOVA, namely normality, homogeneity of variance, and interval measure level were checked. Specifically, skewness and kurtosis values, Q-Q plots, histograms, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and Shapiro-Wilk’s tests were checked for the normality assumption. No value violating the normality assumption was observed. Similarly, homogeneity of variance was checked via Levene’s test for homogeneity of error variance. It was found to be insignificant [ $F(7, 381) = .88$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Therefore, homogeneity of variance assumption was met.

Lastly, since the scores of the dependent variable in the study were continuous, the interval measure level assumption was met as well.

A 2 (gender: female vs. male) x 4 (bully category: bully, victim, bully/victim, and not involved) factorial ANOVA was performed to examine mean differences in submissive behavior scores. Means and standard deviations for mean scores of submissive behavior in terms of gender and bully categories were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for submissive behavior scores in terms of gender and bully categories

	Submissive Behavior											
	Not Involved			Victim			Bully			Bully/Victim		
Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Female	112	36.7	9.4	22	38.4	10.1	15	33.7	6.7	8	44.5	11.9
Male	139	40.8	9.1	55	41.0	10.0	16	35.6	11.2	22	38.1	10.0
Total	251	39.0	9.4	77	40.3	10.0	31	34.7	9.2	30	39.8	10.7

As seen in Table 1, mean submissive behavior scores of females were higher than males for “bully/victim” category ( $M = 44.5$ ,  $SD = 11.9$ ), while the mean scores of submissive behavior for males were higher than females in the “not involved” ( $M = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 9.1$ ), “victim” ( $M = 41.0$ ,  $SD = 10.0$ ), and “bully” ( $M = 35.6$ ,  $SD = 11.2$ ) categories.

Results of the 2x4 factorial ANOVA indicated that main effect of the bully categories was significant [ $F(3, 381) = 2.68$ ,  $p < .05$ ], whereas the main effect of gender was found to be insignificant [ $F(1, 381) = .14$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Similarly, interaction effect of gender and bully categories was found as statistically insignificant [ $F(3, 381) = 2.22$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Table 2 showed the results of two-way factorial ANOVA in detail.

**Table 2.** Results of ANOVA for the effects of gender and bully categories on submissive behavior

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Gender	12.48	1	12.48	.14
Bully Categories	726.8	3	242.27	2.68*
Gender*Bully Categories	600.25	3	200.08	2.22

\*Note.  $p < .05$

The differences in mean scores of submissive behavior were examined with post-hoc analysis to find out which one of the bully categories caused statistically significant difference in submissive behavior scores. Tukey's test was utilized for further analysis of the data. Results showed that mean difference between victims and bullies ( $MD = 5.59$ ,  $SE = 2.02$ ) to be statistically significant. This difference indicated that victims reported more submissive behaviors than those of bullies.

## DISCUSSION

The premise for performing this study was to extend the existing literature by providing evidence for prevalence and types of bullying among Turkish high school students and submissive behavior characteristics of students involved in bullying. Initially, the findings regarding prevalence of bullying and victimization indicated that at least one third of the students (35.5%) were involved in bullying as bully, victim, or bully/victim. Among these involved students, victims had a higher proportion (19.8%). On the other hand, the proportion of bullies (8%) and bully/victims (7.7%) were relatively low. These ratios appeared to be very close to the findings of some earlier studies obtained from elementary, middle (Atik, 2006; Atik & Kemer, 2008; Dölek, 2002; Özer & Totan, 2009) and high school samples (Yöndem & Totan, 2008) in Turkey. This finding should be examined in light of the findings by Kert, Coddington, Tryon, and Shiyko (2010), which indicated that self-report measures including word of bully in the items and definitions underestimated bullying behaviors. The prevalence of bullying and victimization could be higher than was reported, which is an important consideration while dealing with bullying.

The most frequent types of bullying behaviors experienced by the victims and used by the bullies were verbal and indirect forms which were consistent with the previous studies in Turkey (Atik, 2006; Kartal, 2008; Totan & Yöndem, 2007). When gender and grade level differences were investigated in relation to bullying, only meaningful gender differences were found among the groups (involved vs. not involved). Male students had a larger percentage in involving bullying confirming the previous findings that bullying and victimization both were more prevalent among males than females (Nansel et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2009).

The results of the current study regarding submissive behavior were also consistent with the previous research findings. It was found that victims demonstrated more submissive behaviors than bullies. Past researchers concluded that victims were more submissive than the other students, and also, being submissive was an individual risk factor for victimization in peer

groups that perceived as a weakness and powerlessness (Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Schwartz et al., 1993; Schwartz et al., 2002). The lower submissive scores for bullies was an expected result, because bullies were more aggressive, social, and popular than other students (Perren, 2000).

Our findings could provide some implications for school counselors. Toblin, Schwartz, Gorman, and Abou-ezzeddine (2005) suggested that various intervention strategies should apply to students who involved in bullying in a different way (as bully, victim, or bully/victim) in schools. For example, teaching coping skills and anger management to aggressive victims and disproving social information processing biases of bullies might work much better. However, while counseling with submissive victims, designing an intervention strategy focused on assertiveness training and self-esteem building could help them.

Prevalence of bullying and victimization in the present sample were an indication of its seriousness. Therefore, besides individual intervention with victims or bullies, holistic school prevention strategies would be better. The other members of school community, such as teachers, parents, school personnel, and students at risk or not, should be involved in the intervention program. Peer counseling and mediation programs, peer support mechanisms, social skills training, conflict resolution, class and school rules against bullying could be applied to increase the effectiveness of intervention program while dealing with bullying at the school and class level (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004).

Educators could also benefit from the findings of this study. Bullying is a threat to school climate and could easily harm the feeling of belonging to a community. As discussed in Osterman's article (2000), being a part of a group or community provided an emotional support for productive learning. Also, feeling of belonging or relatedness including secure connection with others, feelings of worthy, and respect was a crucial psychological need in human development. Therefore, educators should focus on not only students' academic achievement, but also students' psychological needs. They should take the role for creating positive, safe, and supportive school climate. Concerning our results, students demonstrating submissive behaviors will need much support from their close environment, especially from their teachers. In this respect, designing class activities enhancing group cohesion and self-esteem could be a tool in creation of safer school climate.

There were certain limitations of the present study. Firstly, generalizability of the results was limited to this sample and these schools. Also, findings of the study were limited to data collected from self-reported questionnaires. However, as stated in the studies (Branson & Cornell, 2009; Chan, 2009), in identifying bullies, victims, and bully/victims various

assessment procedures such as peer and teacher nomination and behavioral observation could be used. Moreover, the present study focused on only submissive behaviors of students involved in bullying. However, the focus could be widened and the other constructs of social behavior (e.g. assertiveness, withdrawal, shyness, cooperation, competition) could be included in further research designs.

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