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## Ergenlerde Sosyal Başarı Hedefleri ve Akran Zorbalığı Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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### Öz

Araştırmanın amacı, sosyal başarı hedeflerinin akran zorbalığına etkisini kademeli bir şekilde incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemi 331 lise öğrencisidir. Araştırmanın verileri amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak online olarak elde edilmiştir. Katılımcıların 194'ü (%59) kadın, 137'si (%41) erkektir. 64 katılımcı 9. sınıf, 92 katılımcı 10. sınıf, 79 katılımcı 11. sınıf, 96 katılımcı 12. sınıf öğrencisidir. Araştırmada, Sosyal Başarı Hedefleri Ölçeği (Ölçek 3 alt boyut ve 5'li Likert tipinden oluşmaktadır) ve Akran Zorbalığı Ölçeği (Ölçek 10 maddeden ve bir alt boyuttan oluşmaktadır) kullanılmıştır. Sosyal başarı hedeflerinin alt boyutu ile; Performansa yaklaşma / Performanstan kaçınma ve akran zorbalığı. Ebeveyn tutumları ile akran zorbalığı davranışları arasındaki ilişki incelendiğinde, baskıcı ebeveyn tutumlarına sahip bireyler ile hoşgörülü ebeveyn tutumlarına sahip bireyler arasında anlamlı bir fark olduğu görülmüştür. Baskıcı ebeveyn tutumlarına maruz kalan bireylerin akran zorbalığı davranışlarının kendilerinin de zorba olma düzeyinin daha yüksek olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca ANOVA testi sonuçlarına göre bireylerin zorbalık davranışları babaların tutumlarına göre anlamlı farklılık göstermiştir. Ayrıca ergenlerin zorbalık davranışları, babalarının baskıcı tutumlarına karşı babalarının hoşgörülü tutumlarından giderek artmaktadır. Ayrıca akran zorbalığı davranışları da ergenlerin annelerinin tutumlarına göre farklılık göstermektedir. Annesi baskıcı tutum sergileyen ergenlerin zorbalık davranışları, annesi hoşgörülü tutum sergileyen ergenlere göre daha yüksektir. Öte yandan ergenlerin sosyal becerilerini olumsuz etkileyen performanstan kaçınma davranışlarının baba tutumları açısından göre anlamlı farklılık gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir. Koruyucu baba tutumuna sahip ergenlerin performanstan kaçınma davranışları, hoşgörülü baba tutumuna sahip ergenlerin performanstan kaçınma davranışlarından daha yüksektir. Araştırmanın bulguları literatür kapsamında

tartışılmıştır.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Sosyal Başarı Hedefleri, Akran Zorbalığı, Hiyerarşik Regresyon

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## Examining the Relationship Between Social Achievement Goals and Peer Bullying in Adolescents

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### Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of social achievement goals on peer bullying in a gradual manner. Participants of the study were 331 high school students. Data of the study were obtained from a web-based cross-sectional study by using a convenience sampling method. Of the participants, 194 were female (59%) and 137 were male (41%). 64 participants are 9th grade, 92 participants are 10th grade, 79 participants are 11th grade, 96 participants are 12th grade. Social Achievement Goals Scale (The scale consists of three sub-dimensions: 'Mastery', 'Performance Approach' and 'Performance Avoidance'. The items in the scale are answered between 1 and 5 as (1) not at all true, (2) sometimes true, (3) partly true, (4) often true, and (5) very true) and Peer Bullying Scale (The scale consists of a total of 10 items in 5-point Likert-type and a sub-dimension) were used. Positive relationship was found between with sub-dimension of social achievement goals; Performance-approach / Performance-avoid and peer bullying. When the relationship between parental attitudes and peer bullying behaviors was examined, it was observed that there was a significant difference between individuals with oppressive parent attitudes and those with tolerant parent attitudes. It has been concluded that the peer bullying behaviors of individuals who are exposed to oppressive parental attitudes are at a higher level of being bullies themselves. Also, according to the results of the ANOVA test, bullying behavior of individuals showed significant differences according to the attitudes of fathers. Also, adolescents' bullying behaviors gradually increase from their fathers' tolerant attitudes to fathers' oppressive attitudes. In addition, Peer bullying behaviors also differ according to the attitudes of the mothers of the adolescents. Bullying behaviors of adolescents whose mothers had an oppressive attitude were higher than those whose mothers had a tolerant attitude. On the other hand, performance avoidance behaviors, which negatively affect adolescents' social skills, were found to differ significantly according to fathers' attitudes. Performance avoidance behaviors of

adolescents with protective father attitude are higher than performance avoidance behaviors of adolescents with tolerant father attitude.

### Keywords

Social Achievement Goals, Peer Bullying, Hierarchical Regression

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## Introduction

### Social Achievement Goals

Social achievement goals comprise three dimensions: mastery, performance approach and performance avoidance. Social goals are goals which individuals set for themselves especially in order to be successful in social interactions. Getting together with friends or following class rules are examples of social behavior among students. Students with a high academic success rate are more likely to adopt a particular social goal, such as being responsible (Wentzel, 2000). The performance approach as a social success target is generally related to how an individual is seen or perceived socially, and for this reason, it often leads a person to want to make a positive impression on other people instead of establishing a real relationship. The social demonstration-approach goal can be expected to have both positive and negative implications for compliance (Ryan & Shim, 2006). Performance avoidance as a social achievement goal can be said to have the effect of reducing social cohesion (Ryan & Shim, 2006). It can cause negative behaviors to appear cool or good and attract the attention of peers (Shim et al., 2013). A social development goal includes the development of social competence and, in particular, the improvement of social skills in social relations, such as gaining an insight into friendships or being able to build good relationships with others. A social display-approach goal involves demonstrating social competence and, in particular, gaining positive feedback and social respect from others, for example by appearing cool or popular. A social display-avoidance goal also includes hiding a lack of social competence and avoiding negative judgments of others (for example, not appearing as incompetent (Shim et al., 2013). Social media use is becoming an increasingly common part of modern life, allowing for a wide variety of ways to interact with others (Akarsu & Demirpençe, 2022; Arslankara & Usta, 2020; Öner & Çakır, 2019; Türkel & Dilmaç, 2019; Üztemur & Dinç, 2022; Yılmaz & Kağan, 2022). In a study using achievement orientations goal theory, social development, social achievement -approach, and social achievement -avoidance goals were associated with different types of social media behaviors and social media usage, assessing the likelihood of social goal orientations engaging with a broader audience on social media. Findings indicated that social media provide ways for individuals to achieve a sense of social competence and connection consistent with their core goal orientation (Brinkman et al., 2020).

Social impression-approach goals correspond to academic performance approach goals, such as seeking to demonstrate competence by outperforming others, and they represent people's goal of demonstrating social competence by gaining both popularity and admiration from others. Social display-avoidance goals correspond to academic performance-avoidance goals, such as

wanting to avoid showing academic inadequacy, and represent the human effort to avoid negative evaluations in social interactions (Michou et al., 2016). Most individuals want to be socially competent regardless of whether they want to be intimate, have fun or both. From this point of view, individuals make an effort to show their social competencies and to want to improve them (Ryan & Shim, 2008). Individuals approach different social situations with different social goals and this includes very important actions as it will require individuals to adapt to social and social situations (Ryan & Shim, 2008). Social development goals are when students want to further develop their social competence and connect with others (Jones & Ford, 2014).

Students with social performance-approach goals are more likely to choose people or situations which they perceive as socially advantageous in their relationships. Unknown situations can cause errors and misunderstandings. Individuals with such goals are therefore likely to view new or challenging situations in which other people's social characteristics and/or social skills are not known as threatening rather than beneficial, and therefore try to avoid them. New or challenging situations can increase anxiety in such people because there is a possibility that they will not be positively evaluated by others. Social impression approach goals are generally related to how the individual is seen or perceived socially, and for this reason they often lead someone to make a positive impression on someone else instead of establishing a real relationship. In summary, a social demonstration-approach goal is expected to have both positive and negative implications for compliance (Ryan & Shim, 2006). Students who have a performance-approach goal strive to do their best in terms of their qualifications and to outperform other individuals. On the other hand, individuals with performance-avoidance orientation easily give up their work, if necessary, in order not to fail. Researchers have shown findings confirming this difference in attitudes to study and said that the performance-avoidance goal causes incompatible behaviors, whilst the performance-approach goal does not cause maladaptive behaviors (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996).

### **Peer Bullying**

Intentional aggressive behavior which occurs repeatedly over time in the case of a power imbalance between people is defined as bullying (Olweus, 1993a). According to Olweus (1993a), "... a student is bullied or victimized when he or she is regularly and over a period of time exposed to the negative behavior of one or more students". Bullying behavior can be physical (for example, hitting, kicking or pushing), verbal (for example, insulting and calling bad names) and social or relational aggression (for example, social exclusion, spreading rumors or online attacks) (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Students who show bullying act impulsively and act to gain dominance over others. They

usually do not empathize. If the bully is male, he is generally physically stronger than the victim. Although some students display bullying behavior, they might not actually be the ones who started the bullying. Olweus (1993a) defined these individuals as passive bullies, that is, followers and supporters of bullies. Bullies often have groups of friends around them who seem to support and like them. Victims are generally unpopular in their circle of friends, whereas bullies and passive bullies are the more popular individuals.

When family, peer and school factors are not favorable in an adolescent's life, s/he will tend to express emotional turmoil in negative ways, and one of these outward tendencies can be bullying (Jun, 2015). Bullies have a feeling of revenge or jealousy and a desire to dominate the victim by using physical or sexual force (Sekol & Farrington, 2016). In addition, bullies bully others to increase their popularity among their peers (Haraldstad et al., 2019). According to a UNICEF report (2017), 67% of 100,000 children in eighteen countries were exposed to bullying: 25% of them were bullied because of their physical appearance, 25% because of their gender, 25% because of their ethnic origin or country of origin, and 25% for other reasons. Being bullied can create negative psychological factors in the victim. A student who is a victim of bullying is more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety due to the fear of being bullied (Swearer et al., 2001; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). When students are verbally bullied, for example when they are mocked, for some the teasing behavior causes the victim to question his/her own identity and wonder what contributed to their victimization. As a result of this situation, the individual feels negative emotions such as depression or lack of self-confidence (Craig, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 2001; Rigby & Slee, 1993). Victims have been found to have more loneliness, truancy, suicidal ideation and low self-esteem levels compared with their non-victimized peers (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). In addition, being a victim of bullying has been associated with physical health problems such as headaches and stomach aches (Srabstein et al., 2006).

In line with these explanations and based on previous research results in the literature, the research aims to examine the relationship between social achievement goals and peer bullying.

## **Method**

### **Study Group**

Descriptive model was used in this study. The descriptive model is a model that aims to reveal whether two or more variables are related to each other and is also referred to as the relational model (Karasar, 2003). The descriptions in the relational model are made to reveal the relationships and differences between the determined variables, rather than determining the existing measures that comply with the established standards. Data of the study were



obtained from a web-based cross-sectional study by using a convenience sampling method. Of the participants, 194 were female (59%) and 137 were male (41%). 64 participants are 9th grade, 92 participants are 10th grade, 79 participants are 11th grade, 96 participants are 12th grade.

## **Measures**

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

This form, in which information about the research is given and questions about the characteristics of the participants (gender, age, parental attitudes etc.) are included, was developed by the researchers.

### ***Social Achievement Goals Scale***

Social Achievement Goals Orientation scale was developed by Horst et al. (2007). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Arslan et al. (2018). The scale consists of three sub-dimensions: 'Mastery', 'Performance Approach' and 'Performance Avoidance'. The validity of the scale was tested with its construct validity. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed and it was determined that the KMO test statistic coefficient was .726 and the Bartlett test  $\chi^2$  coefficient was 1272,522 ( $p < .001$ ). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed the results of the three-dimensional. The fit index values were found as  $RMSEA = .06$ ,  $CFI = .97$ ,  $SRMR = .50$ . In the reliability study of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was found to be .68. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients for the 'Mastery', 'Performance Approach' and 'Performance Avoidance' sub-dimensions of the scale were calculated as .71, .62 and .49 (Arslan et al., 2018). In this study, this coefficient was found .66.

### ***Peer Bullying Scale***

The Peer Bullying Scale developed by Shaw et al. (2013) to determine behaviors related to peer bullying. The scale consists of a total of 10 items in 5-point Likert type and a sub-dimension. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Arslan (2017). As a result of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .86. As a result of factor analysis,  $\chi^2=198.22$ ,  $SD = 33$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $RMSEA = .11$ ,  $NNFI=.93$ ,  $NFI=.94$ ,  $CFI=.95$ ,  $IFI=.95$ , and  $SRMR = .61$ . In this study, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was found to be .72.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

According to the results of the correlation analysis given in Table 1, a positive relationship was found between with sub-dimension of social achievement

goals; Mastery and peer bullying. A positive relationship was found between with subdimension of social achievement goals; Performance-approach / Performance-avoid and peer bullying. Dimensions of social achievement goals; Performance-approach ( $r = .34$ ;  $**p < .01$ ), Performance-avoid ( $r = .14$ ;  $**p < .01$ ) related positively to peer bullying; also sub-dimension of social achievement goals; Mastery ( $r = -.14$ ;  $**p < .01$ ) related negatively to peer bullying.

**Tablo 1.**

*Reliability Estimates, Correlations, and Descriptive Statistics*

	1	2	3	4
Performance-approach	–	.30**	–.01	.34**
Performance-avoid		–	.01	.14*
Mastery			–	–.14**
Peer bullying				–
M	6.29	4.94	22.53	15.91
SD	2.78	2.18	2.47	4.81

### Peer Bullying and Parental Attitudes

According to the results of the ANOVA test, bullying behavior of individual child maltreatment and peer bullying showed significant differences according to the attitudes of fathers [ $F(2, 326) = 4.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. Also, adolescents' bullying behaviors gradually increase from their fathers' tolerant attitudes ( $M = 15.49$ ,  $SD = 4.88$ ) to fathers' oppressive attitudes ( $M = 17.51$ ,  $SD = 4.60$ ). In addition, Peer bullying behaviors also differ according to the attitudes of the mothers of the adolescents [ $F(2, 327) = 6.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. Bullying behaviors of adolescents whose mothers had an oppressive attitude ( $M = 17.53$ ,  $SD = 5.10$ ) were higher than those whose mothers had a tolerant attitude ( $M = 15.25$ ,  $SD = 4.78$ ). On the other hand, performance avoidance behaviors, which negatively affect adolescents' social skills, were found to differ significantly according to fathers' attitudes [ $F(2, 326) = 3.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. Performance avoidance behaviors of adolescents with protective father attitude ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 2.11$ ) are higher than performance avoidance behaviors of adolescents with tolerant father attitude ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 2.28$ ).

### Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Analysis was carried out to detect which factors of Social Achievement Goals are the best predictors of peer bullying. Table 2 displayed the results of analysis.

**Tablo 2.**

#### *Regression Results for Variables*

Variables	<i>B</i>	Standard Error of <i>B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>
<b>Step 1</b>				
Performance approach	.588	.090	.340	6.549***
<b>Step 2</b>				
Performance approach	.569	.094	.328	6.027***
Performance avoid	.083	.120	.037	.688
<b>Step 3</b>				
Performance approach	.568	.093	.328	6.080***
Performance avoid	.081	.119	.037	.683
Mastery	-.276	.100	-.142	-2.76**

According to the results analysis, Performance-approach for 12% of the variance in peer bullying ( $R = .340$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .11$ ). Moreover, performance avoid included in the regression in Step 2, it was found to not increase the total variance ( $R = .341$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .11$ ). However, when mastery was included in the regression in Step 2, it was found to increase the total variance by 2% ( $R = .370$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .13$ ). The results show that all variables significantly predict peer bullying.

### Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

When the relationship between parental attitudes and peer bullying behaviors was examined, it was observed that there was a significant difference between individuals with oppressive parent attitudes and those with tolerant parent attitudes. It has been concluded that the peer bullying behaviors of individuals who are exposed to oppressive parental attitudes are at a higher

level of being bullies themselves. Studies have shown that bullies come from homes where corporal punishment is an accepted form of discipline and that this behavior is generational. Children who show bullying behavior at school are often victims of domestic violence of some kind at home (Olweus, 1993a). Interparental disharmony, domestic violence and child maltreatment have all been found to be associated with aggressive behaviors (Baldry, 2003; Christie-Mizell, 2003; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Baldry and Farrington (2000) reported that the parents of bully students were more authoritarian and used corporal punishment methods at home (Olweus, 1993b). Conversely, the parents of bullied students have been described as families with weak family ties and high levels of conflict (Olweus, 1993a; Stevens et al., 2002). Attachment styles to parents are very important for the emergence of bullying and victimization. In particular, children with insecure attachment to their mothers at eighteen months of age are more likely to bully at the ages of four and five, compared with children with secure attachment (Olweus, 1993a). Stevens et al. (1996) found that aggressive children with loving and caring mothers showed significant decreases in aggressive and irritating behavior (Stevens et al., 2002). In addition, the concern sub-dimension of parental attitude reduces the possibility of being a bully and bully/victim, the psychological autonomy sub-dimension reduces the possibility of being a victim and bully/victim, and the control sub-dimension reduces the possibility of being a bully/victim; Satisfaction of the need for relationship reduces the possibility of being a victim and bully/victim (Tuğran & Dost, 2022). In another study, according to the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was conducted to determine whether parents' democratic attitude scores differ according to whether their children display bullying behavior, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the variables and that this is in favor of parents whose children are included in the bullying group (Semiz & Lindberg, 2022).

Performance avoidance behavior differs according to tolerant and protective parental attitudes. It has been shown that the children of fathers with a protective attitude have higher performance avoidance behavior than the children of fathers with a tolerant attitude. A protective parental attitude is defined in the literature as over-protection by parents and over-control and care of the child (Yavuzer, 1999). Erdoğan and Uçukoğlu (2011) stated that the assertiveness scores of children who perceive their parents as rejecting and overprotective are low. Among the items in the performance avoidance sub-dimension of the scale in that study were 'My aim is to avoid doing things that will cause others to make fun of me' and 'When I'm out with people, I try not to dent my charisma by making a stupid mistake'. There is therefore an avoidance of doing things and this negatively affects the assertiveness and social skills of individuals.

There is a negative relationship between the mastery sub-dimension of the social achievement goals scale and peer bullying. In the mastery sub-dimension, the individual focuses on developing meaningful relationships with others and building well-grounded relationships. In this context, the level of peer bullying by an individual who strives to establish meaningful relationships and works to improve the quality of his/her relationship with friends will be low. The goals which an individual sets for developing positive relationships lead to behaving more harmoniously towards others, doing whatever is best for the relationship, being genuinely interested in peers and remembering important points for him/herself. It can therefore be thought that social achievement goals develop the individual in the context of social relations and lead him/her to act with a perspective towards solving the problems that arise in his/her social relations (Ryan & Shim, 2006). Those who exhibit behavior aimed at solving the problems which arise in their social relationships will probably do less or no peer bullying.

A positive and moderate relationship was found between the performance approach and peer bullying behavior. Items in the performance approach dimension of the social achievement goal scale included 'It is important for me to look like I have many friends', 'I want to be friends with popular people', 'It is important for me that others think I am popular' and 'My goal in most social situations is to impress others'. Considering this, it is thought that individuals engage in peer bullying in order to achieve these goals. As a matter of fact, similar studies were found in the literature review. Turhan et al. (2019) found that social achievement goals, especially in the performance avoidance dimension, predict rude behavior in the classroom. In other words, students resort to rude behavior in the classroom to avoid being mocked or rejected. Bully students often have high self-esteem and are also very popular with teachers and other students. The fact that bully students come from authoritarian and oppressive families and are victims at home can cause them to experience a sense of worthlessness and face depression. Students who try to cope with their feelings of depression are more likely to bully others because of their feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness (Swearer et al., 2001).

There was a weak positive correlation between performance avoidance and peer bullying behavior. Items in the performance avoidance dimension of the social achievement goal scale included 'My goal is to avoid doing things that will cause others to make fun of me' and 'When I'm out with people, I try not to dent my charisma by making a stupid mistake'. An individual might therefore bully someone else verbally in order to avoid being ridiculed. Avoidance behaviors such as not denting the charisma and not looking stupid might lead to bullying behavior. The need to prove dominance and the effort to be popular may be among the possible causes of bullying. In the results of the current study, it was found that some students who are bullies are among the most

popular students in the school environment and are admired by their friends. Although the processes of peer influence on individuals are quite complex, studies of how peers affect each other are very important in preventing bullying and victimization (Craig, 1998; Graham & Juvonen, 2001; Olweus, 1993a; Rigby & Slee, 1993). Individuals who focus on avoiding negative social consequences such as being rejected by others or teased by others are thought to adopt social performance avoidance goals (Ryan & Shim, 2006). In this context, the findings suggest that someone might be bullying others in order to avoid being rejected or mocked.

In this study of the status of being a bully and a victim among high school students, although important findings have been made about the levels of social achievement goals, the research also has some limitations. One of them is that the research was applied only to high school students. It is therefore suggested that conducting similar studies with larger sample groups and with students in different school types is very important in terms of the generalizability of the results. Also, the study used a self-reported, non-clinical sample, and therefore, there are well-known common method biases that may have influenced the findings. It is unclear to what extent these findings are generalizable beyond the current sample, and more studies on samples from different racial/ethnic populations and socio-economic levels are needed.

The findings show that especially psychological counselors and mental health professionals working in schools should review students' social achievement goals. There may be different psychological reasons behind the effort to be popular, the need for approval and the purpose of seeming to have many friends. According to the results, these situations can trigger bullying behavior in particular. In fact, the need for approval and the desire to be popular are negative automatic beliefs. Avoidance behaviors in the performance avoidance dimension, for example trying not to dent your charisma and avoiding behavior which might cause ridicule, are forms of behavior caused by negative automatic beliefs. The effort to be perfect also negatively affects the mental health of the individual. School counselors should therefore conduct individual and group counseling activities and classroom guidance activities in order to replace such negative automatic thoughts with healthy thoughts in students. Considering that parental attitudes also predict bullying and performance avoidance behavior, parental guidance studies also have an important place in future studies. It is very important for parent training to be provided by school psychological counselors. This study has several practical implications that might benefit teachers and school counselors. The results are essential to emphasize the developmental aspects of the school process related to cognitive skills and affective processes.

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