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# The Relationship between Bullying, Family Functions and Perceived Social Support Among High School Students

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## Abstract

This study aimed to determine the relationship between bullying attitude, family functions and perceived social support. The sample of study is composed of 683 high school students. Data were collected by using Students Relations Attitude Scale, Family Assessment Device and Perceived Social Support Scale. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, ANOVA and Independent Samples t Test were used in data analysing. According to the results of the study, there is a statistically significant relationship between Students Relations Attitude's subscales which is "bully personality" and all of the subscales of Family Assessment Device and Perceived Social Support. Students Relations Attitude's subscales which are self-confidence" and "avoidance of bullying" are related to all of the subscales of Family Assessment Device except "affective involvement" and all of the subscales of Perceived Social Support. It was found that, students who stated that they bully others, have high level of bully personality, family dysfunction and low level of avoidance of bullying, family and teacher support. Moreover, students who stated that they are bullied, have high level of bully personality, family dysfunction (except behavior control) and low level of family, teacher and peer support.

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## 1. Introduction

Bullying, one of the sub-dimension of aggressive behavior that affect negatively the academic, social, emotional and psychological development, is an important problem especially during childhood and adolescence. Olweus (1995) defines bullying as the repeated, intentional and harmful behaviors of one or more students against to weaker students.

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Researches related with effect of bullying showed that bullying affected negatively physical, social and psychological life and built up risk for future life. The relationship between bullying and depression, suicide, social anxiety, loneliness, peer rejection, low self-esteem, delinquency, psychological stress, substance abuse, academic failure and school drop-out was found in many studies (Baldry, & Farrington, 2000; Davidson, & Demaray, 2007; Estevez, Musitu, & Herrero, 2005; Friedman, Koeske, Silvestre, Korr, & Sites, 2006; Kapçı, 2004; Kuntsche, Knibbe, Engels, & Gmel, 2007; Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & Cura 2006; Pişkin, 2002; Rigby, 2000; Tutura, Green, Karver, & Gesten, 2008).

Familial factors have an important role both occurrence of bullying behavior and prevention of bullying. Researches indicated that families of children who bully other have insufficient family relationship, inconsistent discipline, unsecure attachment between parent and child, inadequate familial activity and ineffective parental supervision. Also it was found that they use psychical punishment and don't let to their children to express themselves. Moreover child rejection and child maltreatment could be seen in this families (Akgün, 2005; Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Curtner-Smith, 2000; Dekovic, Janssens, & Van, 2003; Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Idsoe, Solli, & Cosmovici, 2008; Kim, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999; Reid, Patterson, & Snyder, 2002; Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, & Van Oost, 2002; Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007; Turgut, 2005). In sum, it could be said that, bullying behavior related with parent attitudes, familial relationship, and violence in family, parental supervision, discipline methods and behavior control.

Another factor related with bullying and negative outcomes of bullying is perceived social support. Social support is a knowledge and feeling that a person is cared for, is respected and belongs to social network of concerned people (Davidson and Demaray, 2007). The availability of ones who provide psychical, social and psychological support and knowledge in times of crisis ensure positive effects such as feeling of security and self-worth. In addition to main positive effect, social support has a "buffering effect" which can buffer the negative effect of stress and problematic situation. In other words, social support can improve the coping ability and reduce the harmful consequences of stressful events like bullying (Cohen, Underwood and Gottlieb, 2000; Holt and Espelage, 2007).

As a reason of providing a basis for intervention and prevention program this study aims to investigate the relationship among bullying, family functions and perceived social support.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The study group consisted of 683 high school students, 355 (52%) female and 328 (48%) male, from 6 different school of randomly selected 6 different district of Istanbul. Of the students, 215 (31,5%) were from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 243 (35,6%) were from 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 225 (32,9%) were from 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

### 2.2. Measures

*Personal Information Form* included questions aim to acquire demographic information and bullying behavior in school.

*Student Relationship Attitude Scale (SRAS)* developed by Koç (2006) is comprised 21 items and 3 subscales which are "bullying personality", "self-confidence" and "avoidance from bullying". High score of subscale means that one has bullying personality, one has self-confidence and one can avoid from bullying. Result of factor analysis showed that the scale explained the 43% of total variance. Cronbach alpha for internal consistency was .86 for bullying personality, .69 for self-confidence, .57 for avoiding from bullying and .82 for total of scale.

*Family Assessment Device (FAD)* developed by Epstein, Baldwin and Bishop (1983) is made of 60 items and 7 subscales which measure Problem Solving, Communication, Roles, Affective Responsiveness, Affective Involvement, Behavior Control and General Functioning. High scores of scale show that family dysfunctions. Family Assessment Device was adapted to Turkish culture by Bulut (1990). The internal consistency of subscale varied between .72 and .92. The Turkish version of Family Assessment Device's internal consistency was found as .38 and .86, test-retest reliability was found as .62 and .90.

*Perceived Social Support Scale-Revised (PSSS-R)* was developed and revised by Yıldırım (2004). It is composed

of 50, 3-point Likert-type, item measuring perceived social support from family, peers and teachers. Higher scores from scales show higher perceived social support. The internal consistency of the scale was .94 for family support, .91 for peer support and .93 for teacher support.

### 2.3. Procedure

This study was conducted by approval of National Ministry of Education and scales were administered during the class sessions. As for data analysis correlation techniques and independent sample t test were used.

## 3. Result

### 3.1. Prevalence of bullying behavior

According to answers from Personal Information Form related to bullying behavior 20,1% (137) of the students stated that they bully other and 24,6% (168) stated that they are bullied. Also when asked that their reactions during one bully other, of the students 78 (11,4) state that “I don’t do anything”, 213 (31,2%) state “I think that I should help to victim” and 392 (57,4%) state that “In any case I help to victim”.

### 3.2. Bullying behavior and SRAS

Students who stated that they bully have higher score of “bullying personality” ( $t_{(681)}=10,250$ ,  $p<,01$ ) and lower score of “avoiding from bullying” ( $t_{(681)}=-6,214$ ,  $p<,01$ ) than students who stated that they do not bully other. As well students who indicated that they are bullied, have higher score of “bullying personality” ( $t_{(681)}=5,011$ ,  $p<,05$ ) than students who indicated that they are not bullied. The other finding is that students who said that “In any case I help to victim, when one bully other” have higher score of “self-confident” than students saying “I don’t do anything” and “I think that I should help” ( $F_{(2-680)}=3,949$ ,  $p<,05$ ).

### 3.3. Bullying behavior and FAD

Students’ scores from all scales of FAD who stated that they bully, are higher than those who stated that they don’t bully and these scores are; problem solving ( $t_{(681)}=3,768$ ,  $p<,01$ ), communication ( $t_{(681)}=3,615$ ,  $p<,01$ ), roles ( $t_{(681)}=4,738$ ,  $p<,01$ ), affective responsiveness ( $t_{(681)}=4,090$ ,  $p<,01$ ), affective involvement ( $t_{(681)}=3,692$ ,  $p<,01$ ), behavior control ( $t_{(681)}=3,169$ ,  $p<,01$ ) and general functioning ( $t_{(681)}=4,785$ ,  $p<,01$ ).

At the same time, students who stated that they are bullied have high score of all scales of FAD except behavior control; problem solving ( $t_{(681)}=4,689$ ,  $p<,01$ ), communication ( $t_{(681)}=4,171$ ,  $p<,01$ ), roles ( $t_{(681)}=4,760$ ,  $p<,01$ ), affective responsiveness ( $t_{(681)}=4,093$ ,  $p<,01$ ), affective involvement ( $t_{(681)}=3,796$ ,  $p<,01$ ) and general functioning ( $t_{(681)}=5,408$ ,  $p<,01$ ).

### 3.4. Bullying behavior and PSSS-R

Students who stated that they bully other perceived lower social support from family ( $t_{(681)}=-4,265$ ,  $p<,01$ ) and teachers ( $t_{(681)}=-3,091$ ,  $p<,05$ ) than students who stated that they do not bully. Moreover students who stated they were bullied perceived lower social support from family ( $t=-4,690$ ;  $p<,01$ ), peers ( $t=-3,706$ ;  $p<,01$ ) and teachers ( $t=-2,768$ ;  $p<,05$ ). The other finding is that students who said that “Anywise I help to victim, when one bully other” have higher score of “teacher support” than students saying “I don’t do anything” and “I think that I should help” ( $F_{(2-680)}=3,746$ ,  $p<,05$ ).

### 3.5. Relationship between SRAS, FAD and PSSS-R

The relationship between subscale of SRAS, FAD and PSSS-R were presented in Table-1. According to the Table 1, SRAS’s subscales which is “bully personality” is related positively to all of the subscales FAD and negatively PSSS-R. SRAS’s subscales which are self-confidence” and “avoidance of bullying” are related

negatively to all of the subscales of FAD except “affective involvement” and positively all of subscales of PSSS-R.

Table 1. The relationship between SRAS, FAD and PSSS-R

Subscale	SRAS			FAD				PSSS-R			
	Problem solving	Communication	Roles	Affective responsiveness	Affective involvement	Behavior control	General functioning	Family support	Teacher support	Peer support	
Bullying personality	r	,173	,194	,238	,208	,286	,246	,261	-,184	-,201	-,208
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	n	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683
Self-confident	r	-,234	-,254	-,203	-,192	-,026	-,223	-,235	,184	,244	,173
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,500	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	n	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683
Avoiding from bullying	r	-,179	-,113	-,174	-,102	-,035	-,106	-,107	,112	,082	,194
	p	,000	,003	,000	,007	,356	,005	,005	,003	,033	,000
	n	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683	683

#### 4. Discussion

By the results, students who stated that they bully others have high score of “bullying personality” and low score of “avoiding from bullying”. Also it is indicated that students stating that they were bullied have high score of “bullying personality”. These results are supported by the previous studies. Relevant studies indicate that victims of bullying could bully others later on (Koç, 2006; Olweus, 1995; Schwartz, 2000; Yıldırım, 2001). Another important finding is that, students having high level of self-confidence and high teacher support try to help victims anyway when they encounter bullying. This result show that psycho-educational programs aim to develop self-confidence and assertiveness and whole school approach including all teachers and other staffs, may have an important role on prevention of bullying.

Besides results show that students who have higher score of “bullying personality” have high level of family dysfunctions and low level social support. The higher students have score of “self-confident” and “avoiding from bullying” the lower they have family dysfunctions. Students who have social support, are self-confident and can avoid from bullying. Lastly students stating that “bully other” and “was bullied” have high score of family dysfunctions and less social support. These results mean that the more families have inadequacy in their functions such as problem solving, communication the more children bully or are bullied. The more children have social support the more they can avoid from bullying. These results are consistent with previous studies (Atik, 2006; Holt, & Espelage, 2007; Idsoe et al., 2008; Marini et al., 2006; Morris 2007; Ok and Aslan, 2010; Sarıbeyoğlu, 2007; Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel and Haynie, 2007; Turgut, 2005; Yaban, 2010).

This study indicates that family functions and social support have an important effect on bullying. Therefore, intervention and prevention programs related with bullying must take account of familial and social factors and contain whole stakeholders such as, peers, parents and teachers.

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