What Makes Bullying Happen in School? Reviewing Contextual Characteristics Surrounding Individual and Intervention Programs on Bullying

Okullarda Zorbalık Neden Olur? Zorbalıkla İlgili Müdahale Programları ve Bireyin Çevresel Özelliklerinin bir İncelemesi

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the existing research on the various factors that affects a bullying. Within literature review, this paper frames the research on bullying and provide insight into diverse contextual factors associated with the bullying in school. The literature review for this paper includes what factors pertains to bullying to school and classroom, the importance of school contexts and classroom management, as well as implications on prevention programs in practice for teachers and schools.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, bullying has been on the rise among students and it is becoming more and more frequent in today's schools across the country. There are numerous definitions for the word "bullying". Even though bullying is a common problem across schools, its definition varies and it seems to not even need to be defined. "The bully means to inflict emotional physical pain and expects his or her action to hurt another, which gives the bully pleasure" (Wolfgang, 2009, p. 224). Bullying is defined as three components of purposeful, imbalance, and continual and as well bullying occurs in physical social and emotional contexts was perpetrated by a more powerfully person or group to a less powerful person
(Olweus, 1993; Rock & Baird, 2011; Smith & Brain, 2000; Wolfgang, 2009).

Bullying is an increasingly high profile issue within and beyond schools. According to the research on the prevalence of school bullying in the United States, approximately 25% of elementary school students are involved in bullying or are victims of bullying during elementary school (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). While boys do physical acts of bullying at higher rates than girls, girls are more involved in indirect activities such as spreading rumors or isolating others (Nansel et al., 2001). Moreover, reports of bullying tend to peak between the ages of 11 and 13 or at the transitional period from elementary to secondary school (Olweus, 1993).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextual factors surrounding an individual
The contextual factors surrounding an individual will be reviewed in order to better understand the complex dimensions of bullying and effective interventions. Family or parental characteristics, school or teacher contexts, and peers in the classroom influence an individual's

behavior (Figure 1). In general, bullying activities occur based on complex components and environmental or contextual components among students. Exploring what components surround an individual is helpful to design an anti-bullying intervention program.
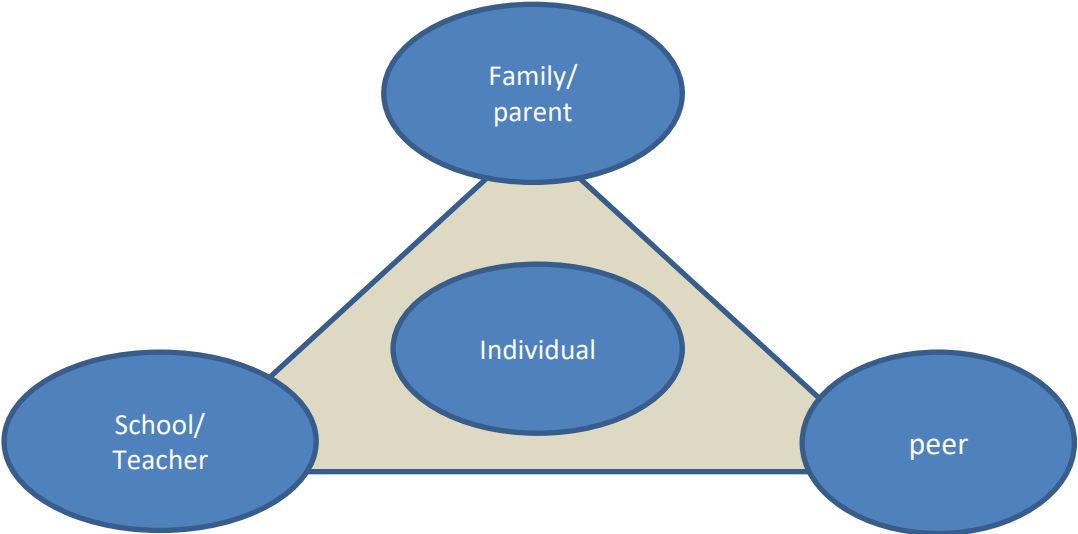

Figure 1. Conceptual model: contextual components surrounding individual

Researchers have shown the individual characteristics of bullying behavior and contexts around children. Two decades of research have identified the individual-level attributes of children and adolescents bullying (Barboza et al., 2009). Individuals who have been bullied in the past are more likely to bully others, have negative attitudes towards school engagement, and engage in unhealthy behaviors such as alcohol use or smoking (Nansel et al., 2001). Males are more apt to bully physically whereas females are typically involved with verbal or psychological bullying (Olweus, 1993).

In considering the components of individual characteristics, self-efficacy or self-esteem may be factors that contribute to children bullying others. Some studies have shown that the enhancement of self-esteem and self-efficacy can be important preventive factors for bullying (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001), others suggest the exact anti-bulling activities to reduce the risk factors for bullying (Jeson & Dieterich, 2007). However, the relationship between race/ethnicity and bullying has not been widely studied (Seals & Young, 2003), therefore findings pertaining to the prevalence of bullying among ethnic minority students are inconclusive. For example, some researchers have found no significant differences in bullying behaviors among different ethnic groups (Seals & Young, 2003).

Contextual factors surrounding individuals: parents and family
We may consider the relationships between parents and children who have been involved in bullying activities and what characteristics their parents have. Shetgiri et al (2012) studied parental characteristics associated with perpetrating bullying from ages 10 to 17 years. Using multivariable regression analyses, the National Survey of Children's Health the authors examined the associations among child, parent, and community factors and bullying perpetration among children. The results revealed that African American and Latino children living in poverty and who had emotional or behavioral problems had higher odds of bullying. On the other hand, children who always or usually completed homework and had parents who talked with them and met all or most of their friends had lower bullying odds. Based on this study, maternal mental health, and parental perceptions may identify children at risk for bullying. Parent–child communication, meeting children's friends, and encouraging children

academically were associated with lower bullying odds and these factors may be useful in designing preventive interventions (Shetgiri et al., 2012). In other words, negative parental perceptions of the child and suboptimal maternal mental health were associated with higher odds of child bullying perpetration, whereas positive parental involvement such as parental communications with their child and meeting the child's friends was associated with lower odds of bullying. Therefore, parenting skills and parental interactions with the child could also be useful to consider when addressing bullying perpetration among children. In other words, negative parental perceptions of children and maternal mental health can be used to identify children at risk for being bullies.

Contextual factors surrounding individuals: school and peers
School context and school climate may also be critical factors that affect student's bullying in the classroom. School characteristics such as SES, percentage of ethnicity or portion of free lunch may be predictors of student's bulling at school. However, relatively little is known about the contextual or environmental factors that may influence students to bully others (Limber, 2006). While the majority of bullying occurs on school grounds, little is known about the effect of school factors on bullying behavior in primary school (Shetgiri et al., 2012). One study by Natvig et al. (2001) found that school-related stress and school alienation are potential risk factors for bullying behavior among Norwegian adolescents.

Some researchers have considered 'peer group contextual effects' to address bullying activities (Brown, 2003; Graha & Juvonen, 2002; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Brown (2003) indicated that with the exception of bully-victim relationships, most peer relationships were based on voluntary interactions that reflect mutuality, reciprocity and positive companionship. In terms of bully-victim peer associations, both bullies and their victims were rejected by their peers, although bullies were the more aggressive partner in the relationship. In other words, bullies seek out vulnerable peers to be their victims while victims appear to make themselves available targets (Brown, 2003). Moreover, most children witnessed bullying on many occasions during their school years and the majority of these children readily identifed the bully's behavior as wrong, and most bystander interventions that do occur were successful, yet children seldom stand up to bullies (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000).

We need to consider children's inaction and why they choose to become a bystander during bullying activities. One possibility is that they are incapable of generating appropriate response strategies in these situations. Rock and Baird (2011) examined the number and type of strategies children used against bullying situations. Older children generated more strategies than did younger children. Children most often suggested that the bystander confront the bully directly, followed by the suggestion that the bystander find a teacher for help or to comfort the victim. The study highlights the fact that children as young as age six but particularly older children, are capable of generating intervention strategies. This has clarified that children do not fail to intervene for lack of strategies, but that the types of strategies they produce are dependent on gender, age, and the type of bullying encountered. Thus, we continue to consider the complex social environment in which bullying occurs and how individual characteristics of bystanders affect their behavior in these situations. However, many gaps in our understanding of bystander intervention in bullying situations remain.

Prevention programs
Regarding the effects of a skill-based prevention program among elementary school children, Jeson and Dieterich (2007) conducted group comparisons to determine whether a prevention program works for preventing bullying and student's aggressive behaviors. For over two years of data collections, tests showed the effect of the intervention on self-reported bullying and bully victimization and bully victim scale scores declined. The rate of decline in victimization

was significantly higher in experimental schools relative to control schools. However, the results from binary outcome growth models indicate no significant effects from the prevention program and we may determine what anti-bullying strategies are effective to change children's bully status and bully victim status over time.

There are some bullying prevention programs among schools and states. Among them, Olweus (1993) developed the efficacious anti-bullying program which was created in response to several youth suicides in Norway in the 1980s. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* is a school-wide approach focusing on age-cohort designs in Norway. The program is currently being tested in the United States to apply their strategies to changing school climate and values associated with bullying (Limber, 2004). How the prevention program raises awareness of school bullying and how it changes student's perception of bullying, as well as teachers', school administrators', and the community's, should be considered.

An emerging issue in the prevention literature suggests that social and emotional skills training may be an effective way to reduce bullying behavior and victimization (Rock & Baird, 2011). An important factor in moderating or reducing the risk for bully victimization is associated with a victim's ability to respond to direct or indirect forms of bullying (Rock & Baird, 2011). Thus, it follows that strategies aimed at teaching social and emotional skills may help students regulate their emotions and develop appropriate responses to bullying prompts. The acquisition of social and emotional skills may also have a positive effect on reducing the number of classroom bullying activities by strengthening social norms against bullying in school. Therefore, social and emotional skill training has been associated with reductions in childhood aggression (Smith & Brain, 2000).

Table 1. Classroom plan

Classroom management	Class rules against bullying: definition, clarification, praise and encouragement
	Classroom bullying survey and reporting with discussion
	Creating journal on anti-bullying
	Regular class meetings
	Role playing and cooperative learning
	Presentation of group work for anti-bullying once a month
	Common Positive class activities (class jobs, helper. etc.)
	Conflict-solution strategies through discussion
	Activities for developing social skills
	Group for playing sports, games during recession time
	Reporting policy for bullying
	Serious talks with bullies and victims
	Serious talks with parents of involved students
Individual meeting	Individual plan for developing interpersonal skills
	Individual journal with parents at home
	Parent conference: meeting for help and support for parents of bullies and victims
Parenting meeting	Work with children for positive peer relationships and presentations for specific activities they provide to others
	Social meeting with other parents for discussion with anti-bullying at school or community

In particular, teacher's classroom management for anti-bullying is an important component. Moreover, parental involvement plays an important role in student's perception of bullying. Through parental involvement, students have more opportunity to realize how serious

bullying is to peers and to society. Parents will create communities based on the belief that each person has a responsibility to treat themselves and others with dignity through parenting meetings with students. In addition, teacher may focus on student's social skills such as self-control or interpersonal skills and he/she should teach students how bullying influences student's development. Table 1 shows a specific classroom plan introduce anti-bullying, along with parental outreach.

In addition, surveys of bullies and those bullied at each school should be conducted and reported in a longitudinal study. Recognition of what current problems are and schools' approaches to solve them should be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs. Representatives such as administrator, educators, and parents should observe their schools and their programs and document their effectiveness in public. Effectiveness of classroom and school programs may focus on how students attempt to achieve better peer relations at school, and to create climates that make it possible for both victims and bullies to achieve those positive peer relations. Through schools need to evaluate (1) how students' participations in acts of bullying as the bully or the bullied are behaved; (2) how student's perceptions of school safety increase and (3) how the school encourages participation in activities and programs that create a positive school climate.

CONCLUSION

Bullying is a complex behavior and has various causes. With multiple risk factors ranging from individual characteristics to school contexts, investigators need to use diverse spectrums to examine bullying (Barboza et al., 2009; Hoof et al., 2008; Limber, 2004; Jenson & Dieterich, 2007). Reviewing literatures on bullying provides better understanding the complex features of bullying as well as giving inspiration to build partnerships models for teacher and parents. For example, teaching students to resolve conflicts is unlikely to be successful if the school climate is negative and tends to ignore teacher's recommendations on conflict. Intervention programs should begin by considering the individual level. However, interventions at both the individual and school level may be insufficient if parents use bullying and aggressive behavior at home or encourage children to solve problems physically (Barboza et al., 2009; Shetigiri, 2012). Therefore, we consider how we make intervention programs succeed and which factors contribute to bullying a student's behavior from the individual to family and school. Moreover, for a bullying intervention program to succeed, schools, parents, and peer groups need to cooperate and determine what they do for anti-bullying with a longitudinal plan. Moreover, it is crucial to evaluate anti-bullying programs and take long-term actions to enhance their effectiveness.

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