

EXAMINATION OF PEER PRESSURE IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON TEACHERS' OPINIONS

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Abstract

This study examines peer bullying behaviors among high school students between the ages of 15 and 18 based on teachers' opinions. The sample group consisted of a total of 30 teachers, 22 of whom were female and 8 of whom were male. All these teachers worked in high schools and equivalent schools in Istanbul. A total of 23 of the participants hold undergraduate degrees, and 7 of them hold postgraduate degrees. The participants were selected from different branches. The data were collected using the face-to-face interview technique. Teachers were asked 11 types of questions about peer pressure, and their responses were noted. The data were collected from volunteer teachers who were still on duty. The 'Peer Bullying Questionnaire in Schools', developed by the researchers and determined according to expert opinions and consisting of two parts, was used as a data collection tool. The first part of the peer bullying questionnaire includes the demographic characteristics of the participants, and the second part includes 11 types of questions for teachers about peer pressure.

Consequently, this research is a study that reflects the peer bullying cases that students have been exposed to, how students react to such bullying, what kind of attitude teachers have towards such behaviors, how they act as teachers, why bullying behaviors develop, and how they suggest solutions to such behaviors. The results of the present study showed that peer bullying is a highly prevalent problem in high schools, and the students mostly suffered from verbal and social bullying. Familial factors were reported as the major cause of peer bullying. Teachers stated that the first source they used to cope with bullying was the school's psychological counseling and guidance services. The results of the present study were discussed based on the available literature, the study's limitations were indicated, and suggestions for future practical and theoretical studies were presented.

Key words

peer bullying, bullying, pressure, teacher

Introduction

Bullying can generally be described as behavior that harms another person physically and emotionally. School bullying is a highly common type of bullying. Based on the definition, the term refers to a child who exhibits behaviors that will harm another child physically, verbally, or in a virtual environment (Olweus, 2005). Bullying is a form of aggression (Olafsen, Viemero, 2000). Aggression is the tendency to manifest aggressive behaviors; anger is the emotion that an individual feels when faced with inhibition, injustice, or threats to one's self; violence is all of the individual or

collective actions that harm people physically or mentally by imposing force and oppression (www.meb.gov.tr). The person who exhibits bullying behaviors is called the bully, and the person who suffers from such behavior is called the victim or the aggrieved person.

Some scientific studies have revealed that bullying leads to serious mental and physical disorders (Morita, 1985). Studies conducted in Turkey have shown that children exposed to bullying suffer from negative emotions such as anxiety, inward anger, helplessness, worthlessness, and loneliness (Atik and Kemer, 2008). Children who are exposed to bullying are also reported to display low self-esteem (Tural Hesapçioğlu, Yeşilova Meraler and Ercan, 2018) and suffer from problems such as reluctance to attend school and low academic achievement (Atik, 2006; Gökler, 2009). Schools are institutions where students attain professional and academic knowledge, self-esteem, and respect for others. Every child and adolescent has the right to receive education in a safe school environment (Leach, 2005). Therefore, peer bullying runs counter to such principles.

National and international literature on bullying also includes several studies on students who witness bullying (Espelage, 2018; Jenkins and Nickerson, 2019; Kurt Demirbaş and Öztemel, 2019). It has been observed that teachers and administrators were the most frequent witnesses of bullying, except for students. Studies have been done abroad to investigate teachers' opinions (Dake et al., 2003; Stauffer et al., 2012; Yoon, 2004), administrators and parents (Peyton, 2015) on bullying. However, it can be asserted that there are very few studies in Turkey where the opinions of school administrators and teachers on bullying are examined (Aksoy, 2019; Hoşgörür, Orhan, 2017; İnandı, Yıldız, 2014; Serin, 2012), and these studies are mostly descriptive quantitative researches, while qualitative studies are too few to be listed (Atış Akyol, et al, 2018). In Turkey, there have been studies on the causes of peer bullying, its variables, and the causes of differentiation based on age, gender, or grade level. However, it is important to consider teachers' opinions to prevent peer bullying in schools and examine the trauma it creates. Since the teacher is the person who is responsible for the child's character development, building a positive self-perception, and establishing a safe environment besides their role as an instructor, the necessity of analyzing the opinions of teachers becomes clear in today's world, where peer bullying seems to intensify. Additionally, this study will reveal how teachers should act to prevent this bullying.

1. Method

Study Model

This study examines and describes teachers' opinions about peer bullying in schools. The design of the study is fundamental qualitative descriptive to serve this aim. This design aims to provide a direct and simple description of a fact (Lambert, Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2010). In other words, this design aims to describe the thoughts of individuals about a case or fact by defining them (Willis et al., 2016). According to Sandelowski (2000), even though qualitative descriptive studies have less interpretivism than

phenomenological studies, they also have the characteristics of other qualitative designs, such as the phenomenological design.

Sample Group

The typical case sampling method—one of the purposive sampling methods—was used to form the sample group. Purposive sampling is the selection of cases with abundant information content based on the aim of the study. Typical case sampling involves determining a non-ordinary case from many cases in the population (Büyüköztürk, et al. 2013).

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics of the participants*

Variables	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	22	73.3
	Male	8	26.7
	Total	30	100.0
Age	26-35 years	6	20
	36-45 years	13	13
	46-55 years	10	10
	56 years and above	1	1
	Total	30	100.0
Educational background	<i>Undergraduate</i>	23	76.7
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	7	23,3
	Total	30	100,0
Type of school served	Anatolian High School	19	63,3
	Science High School	2	6,7
	Social Sciences / Sports High School	2	6,7
	Career and Technical Anatolian High School	3	10
	Imam Hatip High School	2	6,7
	Multi-programmed Anatolian High School	1	3,3
	Special Education Application School	1	3,3
	Total	30	100,0
Duration of working in the same institution	1-5 years	16	53,3
	6-10 years	9	30
	16 and above	5	16,7
	Total	30	100,0
Branch	Physical Education and Sports	13	43,2
	Physics	1	3,3
	Chemistry	1	3,3
	Biology	3	10
	Turkish Language and Literature	2	6,7
	Mathematics	3	10
	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	3	10
	English	2	6,7
	Visual Arts	2	6,7
	Total	30	100,0

When Table 1 was examined, it was found that 73.3% of the participants were female and 23.7% were male, 20% were aged between 26 and 35 years, 13% were aged between 36 and 45 years, 10% were aged between 46 and 55 years, 1% were aged between 46 and 55 years, and 1% were over 56. 76.7% of them hold a bachelor's degree. 23.3% had a master's degree. 63.3% were employed in Anatolian High School, 6.7% were employed in Science High

School, 6.7% were employed in Social Sciences/Sports High School, 100% were employed in Career and Technical Anatolian High School, 6.7% were employed in Imam Hatip High School, 3.3% were employed in Multi-Programmed Anatolian High School, and 3.3% were employed in Special Education Application School. 53.3% worked in the same institution for 1-4 years, 30% for 6–10 years, and 16.7% for more than 16 years. 43.3% of them were Physical Education teachers, 10% were Biology teachers. 6.7% were Turkish Language and Literature teachers, 6.7% were Visual Arts teachers, 3.3% were Physics teachers. 10% were Mathematics teachers, 3% were Chemistry teachers, 10% were Psychological Counselling and Guidance teachers, and 6.7% were English teachers.

Data Collection Tools

The 'Peer Bullying Questionnaire in Schools', which was developed by the researcher and put into final form according to the expert opinions, was used as a data collection tool in the study. It consists of two parts. The first section includes questions about demographic characteristics, and the second section includes 11 types of questions, 2 closed and 9 open-ended, for teachers about peer bullying. Different types of questions would appeal to different ways of thinking among the participants. Moreover, the same question type can be boring and cause problems in gathering in-depth and detailed data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The questionnaire was applied to teachers who were voluntary to participate and were still on duty. Attention was paid to selecting different types of schools, schools in different regions, and teachers from different branches. It took approximately 20–25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire was applied face-to-face, and after the interview, it was filled out online again. The questions in the questionnaire are given below.

1. Do you come across bullying behaviors in your school?"
2. Do you come across bullying behaviors in your class?"
3. What kind of bullying behaviors do you come across in your school?"
4. Under what circumstances do students bully?"
5. How do students who are bullied usually behave?"
6. How do students who witness bullying usually behave?"
7. How do you act as a teacher when you witness bullying?"
8. What do you think are the causes of bullying behaviors?"
9. What are the characteristics of students who bully?"
10. What actions do you think should be taken to prevent bullying?"
11. How do you get the help you need to cope with bullying?"

2. Data Analysis

This study analyzed the responses to the questions in the questionnaire through content analysis and descriptive analysis. Content analysis is the process of organizing, expressing, and interpreting data that are similar to one another in terms of content and context in an easy-to-understand way by bringing them together under specific concepts and themes (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2013). Descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that involves summarising and interpreting qualitative data (Yıldırım, Şimşek,

2013). In this study, the data were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. Also, in this study, some precautions were taken for validity and reliability based on the opinions of Lincoln and Guba (1985). As suggested by these researchers, the purposive sampling method was used to ensure the transferability of the research, and the participant opinions were presented in direct quotable form. Data were collected from teachers employed in different institutions with different branches. The data collected within the scope of the study and coding were kept for verification in case of need.

3. Findings

The findings of this section are presented in tables with frequency values. Direct quotations regarding the opinions of the participants were included, but their real names were not disclosed. Instead, a code representing 30 participants was assigned, and these codes were used in the participant's opinions (P1, P2, P3, etc.). The responses of the teachers to the questions in the questionnaire in this study were given numerically in the tables.

Table 2: *Teachers' opinions on the incidence of bullying in their schools and classrooms*

Teacher Opinions	Yes	No
Do you come across bullying behaviors in your school?	28	2
Do you come across bullying behaviors in your class?	26	4

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When Table 2 was analyzed, 28 of the teachers who participated in the study stated that they came across peer bullying behavior in their schools and 26 in their classrooms.

Table 3: *Teachers' opinions on the types of bullying behaviors they come across in their schools*

Categories	f
Verbal Bullying (nicknaming, insulting, swearing, verbal abuse)	15
Social Bullying (humiliation and ridicule in society)	11
Physical bullying (kicking, pushing, pulling hair)	7
Exclusion, dominance, and threat	7
Psychological coercion, intimidation, insulting the personality	6
Cyber Bullying	4
Competing and comparing achievements	2
Manipulation	1
Cultural humiliation and racist behavior	1

When Table 3 was analyzed, the teachers stated that verbal bullying and social bullying behaviors stand out among the types of bullying they come across in schools. This is followed by physical bullying. P19, one of the participants described the bullying behaviors exhibited by the students as follows: *'There is pressure on students due to their appearance.*

Although they are not exposed to any physical violence, they are subjected to psychological pressure, such as making fun of them, excluding them from the friend group, and ostracising them" and P28 stated: "Peer bullying is malicious behaviors including envy about their appearance, the opportunities they have, perseverance, success, diligence, and manipulation.

Table 4: The teachers' opinions on the circumstances in which students bully

Categories	f
When they want to prove themselves when they want to draw attention	9
Towards people who are socio-culturally distant from them	8
In matters in which they consider themselves superior	8
When they are under pressure, they are unable to challenge the authority	7
When they feel inadequate, unsuccessful, or jealous of successful students	7
When they lose the game, the competition/during the game	7
When they come across those, they find them weak.	6
When their academic achievement is low	5
When they conflict with their friends	3
When they have disputes when they disagree	3
When they face impossibilities	1

When Table 4 was analyzed, teachers respectively reported that they exhibited bullying behaviors when they wanted to prove themselves, against people who were socio-culturally distant from them, when they considered themselves superior, when they were under pressure, when they lost a game or competition, or when they felt inadequate, unsuccessful, or jealous of successful students. This was followed by responses such as when they disagreed, they came across those they found weak, they conflicted with their friends, and their academic achievement was low. *P24 stated, 'I realise that dominant students in the community bully students socially and psychologically in academic studies and studies requiring physical activity. Individuals who have difficulty in expressing themselves or have a lifestyle and way of thinking outside the dominant culture are exposed to this bullying more.'*

Table 5: Teachers' opinions on the behaviors of the students who were exposed to bullying

Categories	f
They tend to become introverted, keep silent, and lose self-confidence	15
They suffer from sadness, fear, and psychological trauma	7
They tell the situation to their relatives, friends, and teachers	5
They react to bullying by bullying back; they bully other people	9
They defend themselves	4

They report the case to the school administration	1
They inform their families	1

When Table 5 was analyzed, the student reactions to bullying mostly led to consequences such as withdrawal, keeping silent, acceptance, and loss of self-confidence. One of the participants, P25 stated: *'Instead of expressing themselves and seeking their rights, they generally become individuals who become more introverted and more isolated. Besides this reaction, the second most common reaction is observed as bullying back to bullying. P2: 'Unfortunately, students show the courage to share their bullying behaviors with someone when others suffer from the same situation and when this comes to light. Most students are unable to report this to the school administration and their families as they are afraid of the person by whom they are bullied.'*

Table 6: *The teachers' opinions on the causes of bullying behaviors*

Categories	f
Family factors (lack of appreciation, lack of given responsibility, other family problems)	10
Indifference, worthlessness, lack of acceptance, emotional hunger	6
Psychological factors such as lack of self-confidence, drawing attention, failure, and jealousy	6
Social media and television influence	4
The effect of adolescence	4
Economic factors	2
Environmental factors and learned behaviors	2
Past traumas, triggering behaviors, and bad family attitudes	1

When Table 6 was analyzed, the teachers stated that the situations that caused bullying resulted from familial factors, lack of self-confidence and acceptance, being among the characteristics of adolescence, and the influence of social media and television on this issue. P15 stated: *'Lack of love, self-acceptance, dominance, growing up in a problematic family or environment. It may be due to the behavior patterns that are accepted as normal in the environment they come from.'* and P18 stated: *'I think lack of self-confidence, desire to stand up for oneself, and lack of empathy. A child who can bully must have been exposed to bullying behaviors. A child who grows up with lack of love usually tends to be violent.'* and P24 stated: *'I think there are many socio-cultural factors such as selfishness, lack of knowledge on how to respect people, ignoring those who are not one of them, lack of love, economic incapacity, and socio-cultural differences.'*

Table 7: *The teachers' opinions on the behaviors of the students who witnessed bullying*

Categories	f
They keep silent	16
They support the exposed student	10

Protecting and supporting their friends	6
Fighting and bullying instead of the victims of bullying	4
Reporting the situation to the administration, witnessing	2
They are afraid of being exposed	2
Ignoring, distancing	1
Spreading the situation by gossiping	1

When Table 7 was analyzed, it was observed that the students kept silent against peer bullying, supported the person exposed to bullying to try to prevent bullying, and tended to protect their friends. One of the participants, P9 stated: *Students who witness bullying usually keep silent. Although it is rare, sometimes they defend the bully student instead.* P21 stated: *Some of them react to it and stand by their friends who are exposed to the behaviour, and some of them act as if nothing has happened.*

Table 8: *The teachers' behaviors when they witness bullying*

Categories	f
I try to settle the situation myself by getting the parties to meet.	13
I refer them to counseling services.	8
I warn them	5
I refer them to the disciplinary committee.	3
I refer them to the administration	3
I ignore it	2
I meet with the student's parents	1
I take a stand against the bully	1

When Table 8 was analyzed, P11, one of the participants regarding their reactions when they witnessed bullying, stated: *I speak calmly with the parties. I try to understand how the bullying behavior took place and mostly ask them to express what they feel. I try to make them empathize and understand how they would feel if they were bullied.* P12 stated: *We try to act according to the coping level of the students; first we try to make peace, but if there is a clear intention of complaint, the student's parents file a petition, and the disciplinary process initiates. This process can be a little less effective when students get punished, such as warning and condemnation. Some may hesitate to file a complaint or solve the problem on their own.* According to Table 8, the teachers stated that they mostly solved the bullying themselves, took the parties to the counseling service, and warned them. P26 stated, *I respond to the bullying immediately and remind the students that violence will never be accepted. If it happens again, I speak to the student to let him/her know that we will report it to the necessary authorities and that he/she will be punished for it. I also explain to the bullied student not to avoid normalizing it and what he/she can do.*

Table 9: *The teachers' opinions on which characteristics children with bullying behaviors have*

Categories	f
Students who lack attention, love, and support	5
Students who lack self-confidence	4
Those with family problems	3
Those having economic problems	3
Physically gifted students	2
Students who have been bullied before	2
Those with low academic achievement	2
Male students	1
Students with psychological problems and traumas	1
Those with a good income status	1

When Table 9 was analyzed, the teachers' opinions on the characteristics of individuals who exhibited bullying behavior were as follows: The person who exhibits bullying behavior is perceived among people who lack attention and who have grown up with a lack of love and interest. It is among people who have suffered from family problems, are physically gifted, have self-confidence problems, have low academic achievement, and have been exposed to bullying before. P19 stated: *Those with physically gifted characteristics attempt to gang up with others with similar characteristics due to their inability to belong to a team or a group. They are usually students with low academic achievement, weak discipline, and low skills.*

Table 10: *The teachers' opinions on the resources they used to cope with bullying*

Categories	f
Guidance service	13
My knowledge	13
School administration	3
Books, articles, supporting publications and books	3
I don't get support	3
From families	2
From colleagues	2
I don't care	2

According to Table 10, the teachers' views on the resources they use to cope with bullying are as follows. P1 stated: *'If I cannot find a solution, I get support from the counseling service, I do research on it'* and P23 stated: *'I try to find a solution to the problem by getting help from human relations and the relevant regulations.* There were 3 participants who stated that they could not get the support they needed to cope with bullying and 2 participants stated that they did not care.

Table 11: *The teachers' opinions on the actions that can be taken to prevent bullying behaviors*

Categories	f
Training, seminars, and information about peer bullying	5
Training for the family	4
Attaining skills that will make the individual strong/Training	4
Psychological support, individual support/assistance	2
Building a school, student, and teacher chain	2
Including sports/travel/art activities into one's life	2
There must be legal sanctions	2
Training should be provided on empathy	2
Training on how to react to peer bullying	1
Supporting students who are bullied psychologically	1
Legal regulations	1
Medication	1

According to Table 11, the teachers stated that it was necessary to provide training, seminars, and information about peer bullying, psychological support, individual support/assistance, training for the family, the student who is exposed to bullying, and the bully, and inform them about legal sanctions in order to prevent bullying. One participant stated that it was necessary to regulate medication, and another participant stated their opinions on how to react to peer bullying.

One of the participants, P4 stated: *'Family and parent training should be more frequent. Since children are the reflection of their families, I think that all kinds of behaviors originate in the family. In fact, I truly believe that people who are not parents should know how to raise children and be ready'*, P18 stated: *'First, it is important to provide informative classroom counseling activities and ensure that students do not hesitate to share this with someone when they are bullied. On the other hand, strengthening their communication skills and self-confidence can reinforce their ability to cope'*, P29 stated: *'Education at school should be prioritized. Families should also be made aware. A systematic effort should be made starting in kindergarten. Positive behaviors should be taught while the personality settles. They should be able to internalize them. If it still doesn't work. Punishments should be dissuasive.'* and P30 stated: *'We should make each student feel that they are important and valuable, when they feel that we understand and respect them, their respect for themselves and their environment also improves'*.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This study aims to examine teachers' opinions about the cases where bullying is exhibited in school and classroom environments, what kind of bullying behaviors are exhibited, how students who are bullied react, how students who witness bullying react, what teachers who witness bullying do, and what the general characteristics of bullying students are. Additionally, it was aimed at examining teachers' opinions on what they do to prevent bullying and how

they get help coping with it. The opinions in this study consisted of the responses of 30 teachers to 11 questions in the questionnaire.

The results of this study showed that 28 out of 30 teachers come across bullying behaviors in the school environment, and 26 come across bullying behaviors in a classroom environment. This finding can be interpreted as the majority of the high school teachers who participated in the study came across bullying behaviors in their schools and classrooms, and peer bullying was widespread in their schools and classrooms. This finding supports the findings of previous studies reporting that bullying is widespread and important in schools. The study by Pişkin (2006) reported that one out of every three students who attended school was exposed to bullying, and Kartal and Bilgin (2008) also reported that 41% of the students were continuously exposed to bullying. When generally evaluated, the results of the present study and previous studies suggest that peer bullying is widespread in schools and schools lack the capability to develop policies to prevent peer bullying.

The teachers who participated in this study were employed in high schools. These teachers stated the types of bullying they came across at school as verbal bullying, social bullying, physical bullying, exclusion, dominance, threats, psychological pressure, intimidation, insulting the personality, cyberbullying, comparing achievement, manipulation, cultural humiliation, and racist attitudes, respectively, from most to least. This finding is similar to those of Çubukçu and Dönmez (2012), Gültekin Akduman (2010), Gültekin Akduman (2012) and Özkan and Çifci (2010), who found that most common types of bullying in primary and secondary schools are physical and verbal bullying. Both the results of this study and the studies briefly summarised above can be interpreted as replacing physical bullying with verbal bullying, psychological pressure, and social bullying as proceeding from primary school to high school and as we get older. This interpretation supports Gülten Akduman's (2010) opinions that overt aggression, i.e., physical violence, declines with advancing age, and verbal aggression rises with the improvement of speaking skills in children aged 7-8 years.

The participant teachers who responded to the question about in what kind of circumstances bullying is committed, respectively, stated that students bullied when they wanted to prove themselves, they wanted to draw attention, they considered themselves outstanding to people who were socially and culturally distant from them, they were under pressure, they were unable to challenge authority, they felt inadequate, unsuccessful, or jealous of successful students, when they lost the game, the competition/during the game, they came across those they found weak, their academic achievement was low, they conflicted with their friends, they had disputes, they disagreed, and they faced impossibilities. When these findings were examined, it is possible to conclude that according to the teachers who participated in the study, the student who bullies acts out due to psychological triggers such as growing up in a similar social and psychological inadequacy, a lack of acceptance, and shame for their own failure against the success of others.

These behaviors, respectively, suggest that high school students could not develop some social and emotional learning skills sufficiently that they should have attained during the period they were in. This is because the

problems they face in interpersonal relationships, emotional-behavioral domains, and at school may be an indicator of the inadequacy of their social skills (Segrin, 2001). In fact, previous studies on bullying have found that students fail to obey school rules, behave aggressively and inflict violence, as well as fail in interpersonal relationships (Olweus, 2005) and have low problem-solving skills and high levels of anger towards others (Atik, Kemer, 2008). Additionally, several studies have found that bully students have problems in dyadic relationships and have low levels of social skills (Champion et al., 2003; Fox, Boulton 2005; Hiloğlu, Cenkseven-Önder, 2010; Jenkins, Demaray et al., 2016; Kaukianien et al., 2002).

The teachers who participated in this study noted that the students who were exposed to bullying, respectively, stated that they had complained to their teachers, kept silent, bullied the students they could bully as well, complained to their parents, reacted with sadness/crying, told their friend groups, withdrew from school, reported to the school administration, and bullied someone else. The findings of this study support the results of some previous studies. For example, as reported in this study, Gökler (2007) stated that when students were bullied, they mostly told their class teachers, their friends, then their parents, and the people most interested in them were their class teachers. Similarly, Bilgin (2007) reported that seeking help from parents or an adult at school ranked in the first two places among the reactions to bullying by primary and secondary school students. However, Bilgin (2007) also found that there were students who stated that they kept silent/unresponsive and responded, "I also used bad language, made fun of them, or called them a nickname," along with the students who claimed that they got such help. This corresponds to the second most popular option in this study, 'they bully back to bullying'. Özkan and Çifci (2010) found that the majority of primary and secondary school students who were exposed to bullying reported it to their teachers, more than half to their parents, and one-fifth to an adult at school. In their study, Kartal and Bilgin (2009) found that when students were bullied, they first told this to their friends, and their teachers shared the bullying behavior they witnessed with an adult at school. When the results of this study and previous related studies were evaluated in general, it was remarkable that teachers were the first source that students exposed to bullying resort to for help at school. The finding of the study by Kartal and Bilgin (2009) contradicts the result of this study. Given that, it is possible to conclude that students who were exposed to peer bullying in high school did not prefer to resort to their teachers and families.

Except for the students who were exposed to peer bullying in schools, there is an important group of students who were neither exposed to bullying nor bullies. The students in this group were those who witnessed that their peers were exposed to bullying and acted as bystanders/witnesses to bullying. This study showed that the teachers who participated in the study tended to keep silent and protect the students who witnessed the bullying, respectively. These findings support the results of previous related studies. For example, Rigby and Johnson (2005) showed a video of bullying incidents to 200 students in primary and secondary schools and examined how they would react. The study results showed that the students were gathered in two groups

with equal numbers of those who stated that they would help the victim and those who stated that they would ignore the victim. Hawkins, et al. (2001) found that students who witnessed bullying responded aggressively to the bully, which was usually effective. In their study, Özkan and Çifci (2010) determined that more than half of the students who witnessed bullying asked the bully how they felt, and almost half of them helped the child who was exposed to bullying generate ideas to solve this problem. When the findings of this study and the other studies summarised briefly here were evaluated in general, it was considered that the reactions of children who witnessed bullying may be affected by some factors. For example, it is known that children who respond to bullying have a higher sense of social justice. Children who refrain from responding to bullying also state that the incident is not directly related to them and they abstain since there is no excessive violence (Cappadocia et al. 2012). When the findings of the present study and previous studies are considered, factors like a sense of social justice, level of empathy, self-efficacy to respond, and expectations of favorable outcomes can influence how those who witness bullying react. Based on the results of this study, the most frequently mentioned behavior of those who witness bullying is silence/unresponsiveness, which raises concerns. The reactions of those who witness bullying can contribute to it by rewarding or encouraging the behaviors of bullies (Saarento and Salmivalli, 2015). It is even suggested that bullies also benefit from the silent approval of those who witness bullying (Cowie, 2014). Those who witness bullying help the bully intimidate or hurt a child. Since this majority is timid, the children who witness bullying, can sometimes play the role of silent applauders of the bully (Juvonen, Graham, Schuster, 2003). Also, this silence/unresponsiveness of those who witness bullying may be due to their worries and fears that they may one day be exposed to bullying.

The teachers who participated in this study stated that when they encountered bullying of their students, they had individual interviews with the students, referred the bully to the counselling service, verbally warned the bully, referred the bully to the school administration and disciplinary board, and talked to the parents of the students, respectively. One teacher also stated that they took a stand against the bully. The teachers were observed to react to bullying, respond to it, as well as use different methods.

When the findings of the present study and the study results summarised above were evaluated in general, it can be asserted that teachers mostly react appropriately when they come across bullying. However, it is considered that it would be beneficial for teachers to develop life skills such as resolving conflicts, solving problems, and making decisions in order to prevent bullying. After following the rest of this result, a conclusion may be reached concerning whether it has reached a solution or not.

The teachers who participated in the study reflected the reasons for bullying behaviors of students at school, respectively, as those who lacked attention, love, and interest, lacked self-confidence, had family problems, faced economic problems, were physically gifted, had exposure to bullying before, had low academic achievement, had psychological problems; had traumas, and had good income status. Danacı and Çetin (2016) conducted a study on

bullying based on family characteristics and found that factors such as living in a broken family, being the only child, low socio-economic status, low level of parental education, number of siblings, and exposure to violence caused bullying. Similarly, in their studies, Cenkseven-Önder and Yurtal (2008) and Gültekin Akduman (2010) found that the major cause of peer bullying was familial factors. Hoşgörür and Orhan (2017) determined, based on the opinions of school principals, that the causes of bullying behaviors at school can be attributed to the way the family raises the child, domestic violence, the environment where the student grows up, violent productions in the visual media, and the academic failure of the student. The present study's findings support the results of various international studies investigating the causes of bullying. For example, the study conducted by Carney and Merrell (2001) on the parents of bully children revealed that bully children were raised with harsh discipline techniques and were exposed to corporal punishment. Asimopoulos, Bibou-Nakou, Hatzipemou, Soumaki, and Tsiantis (2014) state the causes of peer bullying as psychopathological characteristics, family problems and neglect of children by parents, parents' lack of interest in cooperating with teachers, lack of psycho-social support network at school, and vulnerabilities of the educational system. Another international study reported that a variety of familial characteristics, such as the emotional structure, socio-economic standing, and migration history of the family, were effective in the development of bullying or victimization (Perren, Stadelmann, Von Klitzing, 2009). Briefly, the results of the present study and previous studies showed that the family and environment in which children grow up were the primary sources from which they adopt bullying behaviours. In other words, it can be asserted that no matter what kind of family, culture, or educational system the children grow up in, the family and its environment come first in children's learning of bullying behaviors. The display of bullying behaviors by children who have grown up without the support of their families in terms of attention, love, and support can be attributed to the reduction of these behaviors in children who have grown up with love and support.

The teachers who participated in this study suggested training for students and their families, cooperation with families, empathy training for students, psycho-social intervention, attaining skills that will make the individual strong, bringing problem-solving skills, the necessity of building a student-teacher chain, including sports/travel/art activities into their lives, training on how to react to peer bullying, psychological support, legal regulations, and medication in order to prevent bullying in schools. The results of studies on bullying show that it is recommended to organize seminars and conferences aimed at bringing the bullying child and their environment with certain skills (such as problem-solving, effective communication, etc.) or addressing bullying and prevention of bullying for the child and his/her environment in order to prevent bullying, and cooperation with the child's environment is highlighted. According to the results of the study by Çubukçu and Dönmez (2012), school administrators stated that parental education, student education, and teacher education are necessary for the prevention of bullying in schools, which supports the results of the present study. This study

revealed that teachers had different opinions about the prevention of peer bullying behavior. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the prevention of bullying behaviors involves psychological empowerment of the individual, education, and support.

The teachers who participated in the study stated that they first got the help they needed to cope with bullying from counseling services (psychological counselors) and psychologists. It is an expected and desired view that teachers first seek help from school counseling services to cope with bullying. This response of the teachers who participated in the study indicated that they knew the functions, roles, and duties of school counseling services in such a way that they asked psychological counselors for help that requires expertise, such as bullying. Also, the teachers' responses suggested that they attached importance to the roles and functions of the psychological counselors in the school counseling services when they have problems with students while performing their duties or when students have problems with each other. When the findings of the present study and other related studies are evaluated in general, it can be asserted that cooperation with the interested parties, especially guidance counseling services, is of great importance in order to prevent bullying in schools. On the other hand, teachers' responses to this question as 'I make use of my own knowledge' showed that teachers had knowledge on this issue and believed that they had knowledge on it. The responses of two teachers as "I don't care" to this question are also suggestive of their reasons.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Consequently, high school students' exposure to peer bullying was determined by taking teachers' opinions. The results of the study revealed the necessity of establishing training programs, developing action plans, and conducting practical studies to prevent peer bullying. Organizing family training programs for parents and providing training on raising awareness about peer bullying and its prevention may contribute to the students who exhibit peer bullying behavior or are exposed to peer bullying. The importance of raising awareness on the subject by applying educational programs on peer bullying to students at schools appears to be important. Therefore, conducting activities to develop social-emotional learning skills and practices to raise social skill levels and organizing group counseling and psychoeducation programs to prevent bullying for students who witness bullying would be beneficial to raise awareness against peer bullying. This would also prevent the person who is exposed to or witnesses bullying from keeping silent as a reaction. The sensitivity of teachers to the subject can be increased by organizing in-service training programs on the types and characteristics of bullying. Teachers can be supported to develop life skills such as resolving conflicts, solving problems, and making decisions to help prevent school bullying in in-service training programs.

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