

The Ratio of Bullying and Victimization among Turkish Elementary School Students and its Relationship to Gender and Grade Level

Hülya Kartal

*Department of Elementary Education, Faculty of Education, Uludag University, Bursa, Turkey
Telephone: 0.224. 294 22 09, Fax: 0.224. 442 92 14, E-mail: hkartal@uludag.edu.tr*

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence of bullying and victimization among Turkish elementary school students and its relationship to gender and grade level. It was reported that 79.6 % of the elementary level students were bullied during the last month. It also was reported that the type of bullying that students experienced the most was verbal and physical bullying. It was revealed that the percentage of male students experiencing verbal, physical and spreading of rumors type of bullying was significantly much higher than female students. Due to the likelihood of those who bully at an early age to offend in the future and physically, emotionally, psychologically and academically adverse effects of bullying on the bully and the victim, in order to determine the types of bullying experienced by the children at elementary level and its frequency as well as to cleanse schools of bullying, programs have to be urgently implemented.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a common problem that is gradually increasing in every part of the society and in schools and that has negative impact especially on the climate of the schools and on the students. The incidents of bullying experienced by young children and adolescents in schools have become the focal point of international studies in the last quarter century. Incidents of those kinds have always come to occur from time to time. However, it is clearly observed that the incidents of bullying commonly experienced today tend to involve a gradual increase of violence and even some fatalities.

Bullying is commonly characterized as aggressive behavior that is intended to cause distress or harm, involves an imbalance of power or strength between the aggressor and the victim, and commonly occurs repeatedly over time (Nansel et al. 2001; Limber 2002). It can take many forms, including physical, verbal or psychological.

The studies on bullying demonstrate that about 30% of the students are in a way involved in bullying either as a bully or a victim, or both a bully-victim. (Nansel et al. 2001; Cohn and Canter 2003; Fight Crime: Invest in Kids 2003; Harris and Willoughby 2003). According to the data provided by National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), of the 30% of the students involved in bullying, 13% reported that

they actually bullied other students; 11% experienced bullying and 6% were involved in bullying as a bully or victim (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids 2003). In another study, 8% of the students reported being bullied at least once a week. (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). In addition to these the studies carried out in U.S. (Nansel et al. 2001; Bureau of Justice Statistics 2005), in England (Whitney and Smith, 1993; Wolke et al. 2001b), in Germany (Wolke et al. 2001b), in Finland (Kumpulainen and Rasanen 2000) and in Australia (Rigby and Slee 1991), the frequency of bullying was reported to be in the region of 15% to 20%. On the other hand, in the study carried out by Greeff (2004) among 360 grades four to grade six students, it was concluded that 56.4% of the students reported being bullied.

What lies in the centre of bullying is an imbalance of power. The students who are physically stronger, more aggressive, more adventurous, and physically more active, have an intrinsic tendency to bully. On the other hand, those students who are physically and emotionally weaker, more reserved, more unpretentious and no vindictive are likely to be the victims. When one investigates the aggressiveness and the family factors, it is easy to observe that the bullies come from families with no role-models and lack of discipline (Farrington, 1991), exposed to violence in the family (Thornberry 1994; Cohn and Canter 2003), from families using aggressive discipline techniques

(Loeber and Dishion 1983) and from families with no problem-solving skills at all (Tolan et al. 1986) (cited in Espelage and Swearer 2003).

Unlike the bullies, the victims have a tendency to be quiet and passive, and have only few friends. The victims are unable to effectively respond to aggressive behavior of others and are inhibited and would not tell about being bullied to an adult or wait for a long time to do that (Marano 1995). Some of the reasons for these are timidity, fear of reporting the bullies and if they do report, being fearful of their families not being able to protect them in the places where they are bullied (in play grounds, school hallways and going to and from school) (Garrity et al. 1996). It is reported that the male victims, when compared to male bullies, are observed to have the characteristic features of physical weakness and being less skilful. Oliver et al. (1994) demonstrated that the bullied victims think that they are bullied due to their own incompetence, sentimentality and social incapability, and also think that they are themselves to blame for this.

While it was generally thought until 1970s that bullying occurred in areas outside the school, the results of the studies concluded that bullying, on the contrary to common assumptions, took place inside the schools and on the way to and from schools (Rivers and Smith 1994; Wolke et al. 2001b). Bullying inside the schools were reported to occur in the playgrounds (Smith and Shu 2000; Buchanan and Winzer 2001; Seals and Young 2003). In the study carried out by Çinkir and Karaman-Kepenekçi (2003) in Turkey, it was reported that where bullying behavior occurred the most was in school playgrounds. However, in the study carried out by Mellor (1997), it was shown that the second common place after schools where bullying was observed to take place was in areas outside the schools. While Shellard (2002) reported that bullying in schools occurred in areas where the adult control was insufficient (school hallways, changing rooms, toilets, lunchrooms and bus stops), it was also revealed that classrooms were also one of the places and were no more safe places when it came to bullying (cited in Blazer 2005).

Gender and Bullying

The differences between genders prove to be topic of research for many studies. Those studies also include gender differences in bullying. It is

observed that in the majority of the studies on gender differences, bullying is used as a tool for comparison. Basically, both genders are involved in bullying. While the results of some studies showed that males inflict more bullying than females (O'Moore and Hillery 1989; Baldry and Farrington, 2000; Salmivalli and Nieminen 2002), some others concluded that males not only inflicted more bullying, but also exposed to more bullying too (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory 2001; Cohn and Canter 2003). According to *The Indicators of School Crime and Safety* (2004), males experienced bullying more than girls (DeVoe et al. 2004). It was reported that while males used more of physical type of bullying, females used more of implicit types of bullying such as spreading of rumours and exclusion from the group that are subtlety and skillfully inflicted (Nansel et al. 2001). In addition to these, there are also some studies that demonstrate that males inflict direct physical bullying (Sourander et al. 2000; Baldry and Farrington 2000; Natvig et al. 2001). Some other researchers also concluded that while males experienced more of the direct physical bullying, females suffered from the indirect types of bullying such as spreading of rumours and exclusion (Wolke et al. 2001a; Van der Wal et al. 2003).

It was reported that the most frequent type of bullying suffered by both genders was verbal bullying (taunting, teasing and calling name) followed by physical bullying such as hitting and kicking, and being threatened by others (Richter et al. 2000; Seals and Young 2003).

In the study involving grade five and grade seven students by Olweus (1993), it was revealed that 60% of the girls were bullied only by boys, 20% bullied by both boys and girls. A large percentage, 80% of the boys reported that they were bullied by males. This result proves that males are more likely to inflict direct type of bullying behavior involving physical and verbal attacks referred to as direct bullying by Olweus. Based on this result, it was concluded that girls intimidated and hurt other girls with indirect types of bullying that were difficult to detect. In addition to these, the response to questions such as "How often do they exclude you and how often do you have to be left alone" demonstrated that both girls and boys equally suffered from this problem. Olweus also adopted it as a unit of measurement of indirect bullying.

Björqvist et al. (1992) reported that there were an equal percentage of bullies among girls and

boys; and only the types of bullying used by them proved to be different from each other. It was reported that while girls mainly used verbal and exclusion from the group types of bullying, boys mostly inflicted physical types of bullying. Therefore, when one attempts to compare girls and boys by bullying type, it is significant to note how one defines bullying.

Grade Level and Bullying

While it was claimed, on the one hand, that bullying increased at elementary level; reached its peak at secondary level and had a tendency to decrease in 11th and 12th grades (Salmivalli 2002; Seals and Young 2003; Selekman and Vessey 2004). Borg (1998) maintained that as the students got older and more mature, aggressive and physical bullying did not actually decrease but only changed form being replaced by more passive types of verbal bullying. The most frequent bullying type was reported to be verbal bullying (abusive language, teasing, calling name, and verbal abuse) followed by exclusion from the group and abusive and humiliating language use for a person's physical appearance (Shellard 2002). It was also explicated that there occurred more physical bullying as well as teasing, taunting, intimidation and exclusion from the group at elementary school level (Banks 1997). Schreck et al. (2003) reported in a study carried out with 6418 students that victimization decreased as the grade level increased. In their study, Demaray and Malecki (2003) found no difference between the two groups in the frequency of bullying by age and grade level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ratio of bullying and victimization among Turkish elementary school students and its relationship to gender and grade level.

METHOD

Participants: The participants were 230 girls and 230 boys of public elementary school students in Bursa, Turkey. They were randomly selected from grade four and grade six students of two elementary schools. These schools were classified as low socio-economic level by the Local Education Authority in Bursa. In order to reach

the participants, a written request was made to the Local Education Authority in Bursa which is depended upon Ministry of National Education in Ankara before the study. This request was investigated by the ethics committee in local education authority and then was granted. At the last step the school principals let the researcher for reaching the participants.

Material and Design: The questionnaire of Colorado School Climate Survey developed as a part of a bully proofing program for schools by Garrity et al. (2000) was used in the study. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish and some small changes were made by three educational psychologists. The questionnaire was designed to measure several aspects of bullying behavior. Several subscales were used in the questionnaire: "Bullying experienced, what strategies they used when they were bullied, who was bullying done by, and where did it happen and who did the students tell". In order to assess the types of behaviors involved in bullying, students were asked to rate six bullying behaviors on a five-point scale (never, less than 1 time per week, 1 time per week, 2-4 times per week and 5 or more times per week). Using the same questionnaire, the students were asked where the bullying occurred, what did you do, who was it done by, and who did you tell. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was demonstrated in the current sample with alpha coefficients of .71 for the victim score.

Procedure: The questionnaires were given to the students in regular class hours. They were asked to reply the questions honestly as a part of a research. They were told not to write their names on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was applied and supervised by the researcher herself, because the students were asking some questions and frequently needed some explanations. The application of the questionnaire in question was carried out in the Spring Term of the 2005-2006 Academic Year.

Data Analysis: The data related to the responses of the students were analyzed by using SPSS 11.5 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to reveal the descriptive results such as frequencies and percentages.

Reports of elementary school students to the Colorado School Survey Questionnaire (Garrity et al. 2000) were analyzed to determine the frequency and the types of bullying experienced, who was bullying done by, location of bullying, what strategies they used when they were bullied,

who did the students tell. Research data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulation were used to analyze report of elementary school students to the Colorado School Survey Questionnaire and categorized participants according to their level of involvement in bullying as victims. Cross-tabulation and the chi-square statistic were used to determine relationships.

The relationship of gender and grade level to classification was addressed by a series of 2 x 2 cross-tabulations using genders and grade levels. Accepted levels of significance reported in this study are as follows: The five percent level of significance includes all chi-square values where $p < .05$. Secondly, the one percent level of significance covers all chi-square values where $p < .01$.

RESULTS

1. What is The Ratio of Bullying in Schools?:

The frequency and the percentage of the students had faced bullying in the various categories at the least once in the last month was calculated. It was founded that the 79.6% of the 460 students involved in the study reported to have experienced bullying during the last month (in the Spring Term of the 2005-2006 Academic Year). The reports of the elementary school students about the bullying they have experienced are given below in Table 1.

The students reported that the most frequent type of bullying (20.9%) was that other kids said mean things, teased them, or called them names (during last month 5 or more times per week). This was followed by students reporting to have been hit, pushed or kicked by other kids (19.1%). The percentage of students (67.8%) responding that other kids "never" told inaccurate stories about

themselves was very close to the percentage of those (67.6%) who responded as "never" to the question other kids never let them join. On the other hand, while about 3/4th of the students (74.3%) reported that other kids did not take their things; a very high percentage of the students (81.1%) reported that they were not threatened by other kids.

2. The Relationship Between Gender and Types of Bullying Experienced: Table 2 presents the frequency of bullying by gender as experienced by elementary level students during the last month. Both genders reported (48.3% of girls and 67.0% of boys) that they experienced verbal bullying (*Other kids said mean things, teased me, or called me names*) the most. In terms of experiencing verbal bullying, a significant difference was found between male and female students ($\chi^2=24.74$; $p < .01$). The results of this study revealed that male students experienced more verbal bullying than female students.

When we look at the frequency of physical bullying by gender, we observe that 40.4% of the female students and 57.0% of the male students reported that they were hit, pushed or kicked "more or less once a week" by other students during the last month. Kay square results ($\chi^2=16.59$) showed that there was a significant difference ($p < .01$) between male and female students by experiencing physical bullying. Similarly, a significant difference ($\chi^2=16.56$; $p < .05$) was found between male and female students who reported that other students told stories about them that were not true.

On the other hand, there was no significant difference between male and female students in terms of experiencing the types of bullying such as "Other kids did not let me join in what they were doing", "Other kids took things that belong to me" and "Other kids threatened to hurt me or

Table 1: Types and frequencies of bullying during the last month

Types of behavior	Never		less than 1 time per week		1 time per week		2-4 times per week		5 or more times per week	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I was hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids	236	51.3	88	19.1	50	10.9	42	9.1	44	9.6
Other kids said mean things, teased me, or called me names	172	37.4	88	19.1	47	10.2	57	12.4	96	20.9
Other kids told stories about me that were not true	312	67.8	58	12.6	52	11.3	25	5.4	13	2.8
Other kids did not let me join in what they were doing	311	67.6	55	12.0	30	6.5	34	7.4	30	6.5
Other kids took things that belong to me	342	74.3	40	8.7	43	9.3	15	3.3	20	4.3
Other kids threatened to hurt me or take things	373	81.1	30	6.5	27	5.9	13	2.8	17	3.7

Table 2: Frequencies and percentages of students who were bullied in school and how often by gender

Types of behavior	Never		less than 1 time per week		1 time per week		2-4 times per week		5 or more times per week		P
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I was hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids											
Girl	137	59.6	43	18.7	19	8.3	13	5.7	18	7.8	<.01
Boy	99	43.0	45	19.6	31	13.5	29	12.6	26	11.3	
Other kids said mean things, teased me, or called me names											
Girl	96	41.7	51	22.2	15	6.5	22	9.6	46	20.0	<.01
Boy	76	33.0	37	16.1	32	13.9	35	15.2	50	21.7	
Other kids told stories about me that were not true											
Girl	163	70.9	18	7.8	30	13.0	12	5.2	7	3.0	<.05
Boy	149	64.8	40	17.4	22	9.6	13	5.7	6	2.6	
Other kids did not let me join in what they were doing											
Girl	167	72.6	22	9.6	11	4.8	18	7.8	12	5.2	ns
Boy	144	62.6	33	14.3	19	8.3	16	7.0	18	7.8	
Other kids took things that belong to me											
Girl	182	79.1	18	7.8	15	6.5	8	3.5	7	3.0	ns
Boy	160	69.6	22	9.6	28	12.2	7	3.0	13	5.7	
Other kids threatened to hurt me or take things											
Girl	191	83.0	12	5.2	16	7.0	3	1.3	8	3.5	ns
Boy	182	79.1	18	7.8	11	4.8	10	4.3	9	3.9	

take things". Majority of the students (62.6% - 83 %) reported that they "never" experienced such kinds of bullying during the last month.

3. The Relations between Grade Level and Types of Bullying Experienced: Table 3 shows the frequency bullying by grade level as experienced by elementary level students during the last month. Both grade four (59.1 %) and grade six (59.1 %) students reported that they experienced verbal bullying (*Other kids said mean*

things, teased me, or called me names) the most during the last month. It is easily observed that there is no significant difference ($\chi^2=4.99$; $p=1$) between grade levels in terms of experiencing bullying.

Students reported that what followed this high percentage of verbal bullying by grade level was physical bullying (*I was hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids*). Grade six students (55.7 %) reported higher percentages of physical bullying

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of students who were bullied in school and how often by grade level

Has this happened to you during the past month?	Never		less than 1 time per week		1 time per week		2-4 times per week		5 or more times per week		P
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I was hit, pushed, or kicked by other kids											
Grade 4	134	58.3	42	18.3	19	8.3	18	7.8	17	7.4	<.05
Grade 6	102	44.3	46	20.0	31	13.5	24	10.4	27	11.7	
Other kids said mean things, teased me, or called me names											
Grade 4	94	40.9	41	17.8	22	9.6	32	13.9	41	17.8	ns
Grade 6	78	33.9	47	20.4	25	10.9	25	10.9	55	23.9	
Other kids told stories about me that were not true											
Grade 4	167	72.6	28	12.2	18	7.8	12	5.2	5	2.2	ns
Grade 6	145	63.0	30	13.0	34	14.8	13	5.7	8	3.5	
Other kids did not let me join in what they were doing											
Grade 4	149	64.8	35	15.2	15	6.5	18	7.8	13	5.7	ns
Grade 6	162	70.4	20	8.7	15	6.5	16	7.0	17	7.4	
Other kids took things that belong to me											
Grade 4	171	74.3	24	10.4	19	8.3	10	4.3	6	2.6	ns
Grade 6	171	74.3	16	7.0	24	10.4	5	2.2	14	6.1	
Other kids threatened to hurt me or take things											
Grade 4	183	79.6	16	7.0	14	6.1	10	4.3	7	3.0	ns
Grade 6	190	82.6	14	6.1	13	5.7	3	1.3	10	4.3	

than the grade four students (41.7%) during the last month. A significant difference ($\chi^2=10.53$; $p<.05$) was found between grade levels in terms of experiencing physical bullying.

On the other hand, higher percentage of grade four student (35.2%) than the grade six students (29.6%) reported that other kids did not let them join in what they were doing. However, there was no significant difference ($\chi^2=5.29$; $p=1.0$) between the grade levels in terms of experiencing bullying.

Majority of the fourth and sixth grade students reported during the last month that "Other kids told stories about me that were not true" (fourth grade: 72.6%; sixth grade: 63.0%); "Other kids took things that belonged to me" (fourth grade: 74.3%; sixth grade: 74.3%) and "Other kids threatened to hurt me or take things" (fourth grade: 79.6%; sixth grade: 82.6%). No significant difference was found between grade levels in terms experiencing bullying.

4. The Bully(ies): Both girls and boys reported that the bullies were mostly male students (44.3% of girls; 66.1% of boys). On the other hand, there were a very low percentage of boys reported being bullied by female students (10.0 %). 34.8% of the girls reported that they were bullied by female students. The percentage of boys (29.1 %) that reported to have bullied by a group was higher than those of girls (19.6 %). More than half of the both fourth grade (55.7%) and sixth grade students (54.8) reported that they were

bullied by a male student. While the percentage of fourth grade students reported being bullied by a female student was 29.1%, the percentage of sixth grade students was almost the half of fourth grade students (15.7%). On the other hand, the percentage of sixth grade students (29.6%) reported being bullied by a group was higher than those of fourth grade students (19.1%).

5. The Places Where the Students were Bullied: Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage of places where the students were bullied by gender and grade level. Among the top three places where female students reported that they were bullied were classroom (43.5%), playground (40%) and hallways (23.0%); male students reported that they were bullied in the playground (49.1%), in the classroom (40.0%) and while going to and from school (27.8%). In addition, male students (18.7%) reported being bullied in the toilets three times more than girls (6.1%). Male students (11.7%) reported being bullied in the lunchroom more than girls (7.0%).

When analyzed by grade level, fourth grade student reported their top three places where they were bullied as being playground, (40.0%), classroom (38.3%) and while going to and from school (29.1%); and sixth grade students reported playground (49.1%), classroom (45.2%) and hallways (29.1%) respectively. 4th grade students (11.3%) reported being bullied in the lunchroom more than sixth grade students (7.4%).

6. Victims' Reactions to Bullying: Table 6

Table 4: The bully(ies) reported by gender and grade level

Bully	Gender				Grade level			
	Girl		Boy		Grade 4		Grade 6	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
A Girl	80	34.8	23	10.0	67	29.1	36	15.7
A Boy	102	44.3	152	66.1	128	55.7	126	54.8
A Group	45	19.6	67	29.1	44	19.1	68	29.6

Table 5: The places where the students were bullied by gender and grade level

	Classroom		Playground		Hallways		Going to and from school		Toilette		Lunchroom	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Gender												
Girl	100	43.5	92	40.0	53	23.0	48	20.9	14	6.1	16	7.0
Boy	92	40.0	113	49.1	64	27.8	71	30.9	43	18.7	27	11.7
Grade Level												
4 th	88	38.3	92	40.0	50	21.7	67	29.1	29	12.6	26	11.3
6 th	104	45.2	113	49.1	67	29.1	52	22.6	28	12.2	17	7.4

shows the frequency and percentage of students' reactions to bullying by gender and grade level. When the female students experienced bullying, the highest percentage (43.9%) of what they reported they did was that they avoided the kid so they would not get hurt or teased again.

The percentage of male students who reported that this was exactly the same way that they reacted to bullying was the same as the girls. This reaction of the female students was respectively followed by "I told the kid to stop" (39.1%), "I got help from my parents and I ignored it or walked away" (37.8%) and "I got help from an adult at school" (36.1%). The percentage of female students who reported that they did nothing against bullying was 34.3%. The percentage of those who said that they got help from another kid was only 17.4%. The most common reaction (45.7%) of the male students, as they reported, was to tell the bully to stop. This was respectively followed by the items "I avoided the kid so I would not get heart or teased again" (43.9%), "I ignored it or walked away" (39.6%), "I got help from my parents" (39.1%) and "I got help from an adult at school" (37.8%). The percentage of male students (39.1%) who reported that they did nothing was quite high.

Nonetheless, it can easily be observed that the percentage of male students who reported that he also hit, kicked or pushed the bully (16.1% of boys and 9.1% of girls) and that he also said mean things, teased or called the bully names was much higher than the girls (boys of 19.6%; girls of 9.6%). The percentage of female (26.5%) and male students (30.9%) who reported that 'I said things to myself to help myself feel better' was quite close to each other.

When we look at the students' reactions to bullying by grade level, it is easily observed that by using all the item apart from the one reporting "I did nothing", fourth grade students reacted with higher percentage than sixth grade students.

7. To Whom the Victim Talked about the Bullying by Gender and Grade Level: Table 7 presents the percentage and frequency of those to whom the victim talked about bullying by gender and grade level. Students reported with a high percentage (46.1% of girls and 39.1% of boys; 37.4% of grade four and 48.3% of grade six) by both gender and grade level that they told about their experience of bullying to their friends. This response was respectively followed by the responses "I told my family" with 31.0% and "I did not tell anybody" (16.1% of girls and 20.9%

Table 6: Victims' reactions to bullying by gender and grade level

What did you do?	Gender				Grade level			
	Girl		Boy		Grade 4		Grade 6	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I got help from an adult at school	83	36.1	87	37.8	93	40.4	77	33.5
I got help from another kid	40	17.4	61	26.5	59	25.7	42	18.3
I hit, kicked, or pushed the kid	21	9.1	37	16.1	31	13.5	27	11.7
I told the kid to stop	90	39.1	105	45.7	100	43.5	95	41.3
I told the kid I agreed with what he or she said about me	34	14.8	43	18.7	50	21.7	27	11.7
I avoided the kid so I would not get heart or teased again	101	43.9	101	43.9	102	44.3	100	43.5
I got help from my parents	87	37.8	90	39.1	102	44.3	75	32.6
I ignored it or walked away	87	37.8	91	39.6	97	42.2	81	35.2
I said mean things, teased, or called the kids names	22	9.6	45	19.6	36	15.7	31	13.5
I tried to stop the kid by saying or doing something funny	58	25.2	46	20.0	60	26.1	44	19.1
I said things to myself to help myself feel better	61	26.5	71	30.9	67	29.1	65	28.3
I did nothing	79	34.3	90	39.1	76	33.0	93	40.4

Table 7: The percentage and frequency those to whom the victim talked about the bullying by gender and grade level

	No one		A friend		An adult at school		A parent		Bus driver		Other	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Gender												
Girl	37	16.1	106	46.1	29	12.6	73	31.7	1	0.4	10	4.3
Boy	48	20.9	90	39.1	31	13.5	73	31.7	8	3.5	20	8.7
Grade Level												
4 th	52	22.6	86	37.4	27	11.7	72	31.3	8	3.5	25	10.9
6 th	33	14.3	111	48.3	33	14.3	75	32.6	2	0.9	6	2.6

of boys; 22.6% of grade four and 14.3% of grade six). We can also see that the percentage of male students (13.5%) who reported that they told about the bullying "to an adult in school" was higher than the female students (12.6%); the percentage of sixth grade students (14.3%) was higher than the fourth grade students (11.7%). However, these percentages are rather low when compared to others.

DISCUSSION

Bullying that seems to be increasing day by day and that emerges as a form of use of violence, has turned out to be a problem today for which urgent precautions have to be taken and dealt with in many societies.

This study that involved 460 elementary school students mainly aimed to investigate and determine the types and frequencies of bullying by grade level and gender that elementary level students experienced and also to determine who the bully/ies was/were, where bullying took place, the reactions of the victims to bullying and whether there was any difference in the percentage between the groups to which bullying was told.

The results of the study demonstrated that 79.6% of the elementary level students reported that they were bullied during the last month in the Spring Term of 2005-2006 Academic Year. This percentage is much higher when compared to those in the relevant literature. For instance; In Ontario, a study of grades six, seven, and eight in one school in Kingston (Wilson 1992) found that 10% of students reported being bullied once or twice a month. Nansel et al. (2001) studied 15,686 students of fourth to tenth grades in the United States and explicated that 10.6% of those students reported being bullied. In another study in the United States, the ratio estimate of victimization in elementary school students was 19% (Pellegrini et al. 1999). In Canada Craig et al. (1999) reported that 5% of boys and 7% of girls were victimized by others. *The prevalence of victimization in grades one to five 11.3% in a sample of learners in Finland (Dake et al. 2003). On the other hand, there are also some studies that have similar findings to the current study. Greeff (2004) found in a study that involved fourth, fifth and sixth grade students (360 students in total), 56.4% of the students reported that they were bullied during the term. The results of a survey carried*

out by Glover et al. (2000) revealed that 75% of 4700 students aged 11-16 experienced physical bullying.

Rather high percentage of both female and male (58.3 of girls and 67.0% of boys) as well as both fourth and sixth grade students (59.1% of grade four and 66.1% of grade six) reported that other kids said mean things, teased and called them names; that is, they were verbally bullied. This particular finding of the study has some parallels with results of such studies as Seals and Young (2003) and Richter et al. (2000).

Reporting of physical bullying experienced by male students (57.0%) was significantly higher than female students (40.4%). This particular finding has a very close similarity to the results of some studies in the relevant literature such as Mynard and Josep (2000), Carney and Merrell (2001), Wolke et al. (2001a); Schreck et al. (2003), and Van der Wal et al. (2003). In addition to these findings, Sutton et al. (1999) in their study involving 102 female and 91 male students aged 7-10 found that there was no significant difference between bullying and gender.

Student reports demonstrated that the percentage and frequency of male students experiencing certain bullying types such as physical, verbal and spreading of rumours were significantly higher than female students. In other types of bullying, there was no significant percentage difference of being bullied between girls and boys.

When grade levels were compared by percentages of experiencing bullying, *no significant difference* was found between fourth and sixth grades in terms of experiencing other types of bullying apart from the physical one.

According to the reports of both female (44.3%) and male students (66.1%) as well as both fourth (55.7%) and sixth grade students (54.8%), it was the male students who inflicted the highest percentage of bullying. This particular finding overlaps with the results of many other studies (Baldry and Farrington 2000; Mynard and Joseph 2000; Salmivalli and Nieminen 2002; Schreck et al. 2003; Mouttapa et al. 2004). On the other hand, the percentage of male students reported being bullied by a female student was only 10.0%.

Elementary level students reported that where they experienced bullying the most was respectively in the playground (44.6%), classroom (41.8%) and going to/from school (25.9%). Based on these results, female students reported that

they were bullied the most in the classroom (43.5%), male students in the playground (49.1%), 4th and 6th grade students in the playground and classroom. Some other studies also found that bullying mostly took place in the playground, followed by classroom, hallways, lunchroom and toilets (Whitney and Smith 1993; Smith and Shu 2001; Wolke et al. 2001b; Seals and Young 2003; Greef 2004).

While the percentage of students' asking for help from an adult in the school was over 30% in both groups, the percentage of those who said that 'they told about bullying to an adult in the school' was rather low (11.7% - 14.3%). This particular finding has some similarities to results of studies by Harris and Willoughby (2003) and Houndoumadi and Pateraki (2001). Researchers reported that students told about bullying to their families more than teachers and that teachers were not even aware of students' experience of bullying.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation to the study was that the research sample consisted of only 460 fourth and sixth grade students. The fact that only a self-report measure was used to obtain data further limited generalizations and comparisons with other researches. However, the results of the current study revealing that 79.6% of the elementary school students experienced bullying is only limited to the self-reports of a small student group on bullying. It is commonly accepted that more beneficial and informative research results on bullying can be obtained through reaching out all the relevant circles involved (parents and school staff).

IMPLICATIONS

The fact that the students involved in the current research mostly experienced bullying in places where there was no sufficient inspection is an important result that seriously needs to be addressed by school staff and teachers. This particular result also makes it clear that the awareness of teachers about bullying has to be increased and that students have to be better supported on how to deal with conflicts.

In a positive school climate, the teachers would inevitably be expected to be aware of their students' experiences of bullying. The possible

reasons for participants' tendency to tell about the bullying mainly to their friends and family can be related to the teachers' opinions about bullying (Naylor et al. 2006) and to the fact that the students think that teachers' efforts to deal with bullying are insufficient.

It goes without saying that children are born into a family where they start to learn things for the first time. Therefore, the reasons for bullying should not only be sought in the school environment. To this end, future studies on bullying should be expanded to involve the network of in-family relations as well. The main reason for all these effort should be to cleanse not only the schools but also the whole society of bullying.

CONCLUSIONS

Many findings of this study have close similarities to the results of researches in the relevant literature on bullying. The results of this study may form a basis for future studies in Turkey. Current findings have important information for teachers and school staff to assist them in understanding the problems learners may experience in school. The results also make it clear that the awareness of teachers about bullying has to be increased and that students have to be better supported on how to deal with conflicts. As a result, due to the likelihood of those who bully at an early age to offend in the future (Andershed et al. 2001), and physically, emotionally, psychologically and academically adverse effects of bullying on the bully and the victim (Weinhold and Weinhold 1998; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001; Lumsden 2002), in order to determine the types of bullying experienced by the children at elementary level and its frequency as well as to cleanse schools of bullying, programs have to be urgently implemented. To be able to do this is vitally important in today's world in which we all witness the destructive effects of violence in our lives.

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