



School Attachment and Loneliness in Early Adolescents with Different Bully Status

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Abstract

Previous studies indicated that bullying was quite pervasive among early adolescents and associated with some psychosocial correlates. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate associations among different bully status (victim, bully, bully/victim and bystander), school attachment and loneliness among early adolescents. The sample of the study was comprised of 415 students (F= 214, M= 201) coming from three elementary schools representing different socio-economic groups in Diyarbakır city center. There were significant differences among students with different bully status in terms of school attachment and attachment to friends, but not attachment to teachers. Moreover, there was no significant difference among students with different bully status. Findings also suggest that gender is a significant variable in identifying bully status. Findings of the study were discussed with regard to current literature.

Keywords

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Introduction

Number of studies that investigated pervasiveness of bullying problem among children and adolescents illustrated that bullying at schools is a very common and serious concern regardless of culture and region (see Smith et al., 2000). It was also found out by several investigations that students who were involved in bullying incidents as a victim or bully or bully/victim had psychosocial and health related problems (Kapçı, 2004; Pekel-Uludağlı & Uçanok, 2005; Renda, Vassallo, & Edwards, 2011; Viljoen, O'neill, & Sidhu, 2005). Regarding these findings, we aimed at investigating the relationship between bullying status, school attachment and loneliness in an early adolescent population in Turkey.

Bullying

There has been a growing attention to school bullying in the literature since the publication of "Aggression in the Schools" by Olweus in 1978. School bullying has been initially a trendy research topic in Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Many other countries like England, Germany, Ireland, Holland, USA, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand followed Scandinavian countries, and thus, studies about bullying, its correlates and bully-prevention programs has recently reached to an international level (Smith et al., 2004). Bullying affects considerable number of students and thus poses a serious threat for psychological, physical and psychosomatic problems in the future. Studies about pervasiveness of bullying problem in different cultures revealed that has been a worldwide concern. According to different studies in different countries, from 9% to 54% of adolescents suffer from bullying problem (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). The figures are not different in our country.

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According to a study conducted by Atik (2006), 4.6% of the participants was defined as bully, 21.3% as victim, and 6.5% as bully/victim. Girls are typically more exposed to bullying than boys, and boys display bullying acts more often than girls do (Harris & Petrie, 2003). While boys tend to display physical bullying more, girls tend to use different forms of indirect bullying like gossiping or spreading rumors (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Olweus (1999: p. 10-11) one of the pioneers in bullying literature defined three criteria for a behavior to be called as "bullying": (a) intention to give harm to someone, (b) repetitiveness of the behavior in time, and (c) a power imbalance between the individuals in a bullying incident. Bullying is differentiated from conflict or struggle between two individuals for involving a clear imbalance in power or social status regardless of the intensity or frequency of it (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Bullying is also regarded as one type of aggression, and comprises power inequality and continuance. Furthermore, bullying acts at schools may present in different forms. Some may be direct as it happens in physical bullying such as kicking, hitting, taking one's properties, calling names or making dirty jokes about one, and others may be indirect as it occurs in relational bullying such as gossiping, ignoring or excluding one socially (Smith & Sharp, 2003).

There are also defined four statuses in bullying literature: the victim being exposed bullying acts, the bully displaying bullying acts, the bully/victim who is both subject to bullying and victim of bullying acts, and the bystander not involved in bullying incident. Victims of bullying are defined as physically weak, emotionally vulnerable, anxious, lonely, having poor social skills, low level of self-esteem and academic problems. Bullies mostly present conduct disorders and may have high level of social status surprisingly and come from families with high SES. Most of them, therefore, present social adjustment problems. Bully/victims, on the other hand, may be both passive and provocative or aggressive. Bully/victims may adapt some maladaptive behaviors via displaying bullying acts themselves while coping with adverse effects of bullying behaviors (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Bullying behaviors may cause several psychosocial problems. Acts like calling names, hitting, socially excluding or sending harmful e-mails may threaten self-esteem and social status of the victim. Thus, s/he may have difficulty in developing belongingness to peers (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Victimization, therefore, may deteriorate children's personal and social development through causing social isolation and school drop-out. Most of the victims feel lonely at school and this situation increases the pain of social isolation (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Perren and Hornung (2005) found out that students with victim status had low level of peer acceptance comparing to bullies and bystanders. Rigby (2007) also claims that victimized children have few number of friends.

Besides poor emotional and social adjustment, bullying behaviors may result in serious health problems. More importantly, it was stated that being victimized or bullying others in childhood years increase the possibility of being diagnosed with a psychiatric illness in young adulthood years (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Şirvanlı Özen (2010) in a recent study disclosed that being exposed to bullying predicted some internalization problems such as depression and anxiety in adolescents. According to the findings of a study done in 19 underdeveloped countries by Fleming and Jacobsen (2009), students who were victimized in the last month felt more sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, insomnia and suicidal thoughts comparing to bullies as well as having more substance abuse problem.

Bayraktar (2009) stated that negative teacher, adult and peer relations are the most distinct features in victimization. Furthermore, it was found that victimized adolescents had poor peer relations and low level of attachment to peers. Adolescents who had high level of school bonding and positive perceptions about psychological climate of school displayed less bullying acts and were less victimized. In a recent study, Bilgiç and Yurtal (2009) concluded that students who did not involve in bullying incidents had more positive view about classroom climate comparing to bullies and victims.

School Attachment

Children's emotional and social well-being are vital in school success, and attachment is a key element in both of them. Attachment influences school success through developing attachment to parents, teachers and school in general. Children initially develop attachment to parents, and later to other important figures (e.g., teachers or care takers) (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming and Hawking (2004) state that family, school, peers and society are important socialization units for developing attachment. Attachment to family and school are different aspects of social bonds (Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, & Wong, 2001). When attachment is very strong, a child feels emotional ties to the family, school, and society as a whole. On the other hand, when it is weak, s/he feels unstrained to involve in criminal acts (Hirschi, 1969; cited in Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001). School attachment, thus, may prevent anti-social acts via having a central role in such domains that support socialization, and lead to progress in adolescence (Catalano et al., 2004).

In last years, a little, but important literature about school attachment has been evolving. Several investigations revealed that there was a relationship between school belongingness or attachment and positive academic, psychological and behavioral consequences during adolescence. There is a consensus on the view that perceived school belongingness is a fundamental need, and when this need is satisfied, positive consequences appear (Anderman, 2002). School attachment is an important concept in educational studies because it is an evidence for quality of school experiences at personal level, and level of adjustment at school. This concept is multifaceted; it encompasses satisfaction from school life, and emotional bonding and sense of belongingness (Ueno, 2009). Blum (2005) asserts that students should develop belongingness to school in order to be successful. There are different terms used to construe school attachment. Some researchers prefer using "school engagement", some of them prefer "school attachment" and others prefer "school bonding". Because of the fact that researchers from different fields such as education, health, psychology and sociology, these terms become more confusing. Even though different terms have been used in different fields, all of them address the same construct (Blum, 2005).

School attachment is a compelling determinant of adjustment in both children and adolescents (Hill & Werner, 2006). It was reported that adolescents having positive relations and strong ties at school display more pro-social behaviors, exceed their academic potentials, and demonstrate problem behaviors like fighting, bullying, vandalism and substance abuse less comparing to those who develop weak ties (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999). Simons-Morton et al. (1999) reported that there was a positive relationship between school attachment and perceived school climate and school adjustment, and negative relationship between problem behaviors. Supporting these findings, Anderman (2002) reported negative correlations between perceived school belongingness, and depression, social refusal and school related problems. Similarly, McGraw, Moore, Fuller and Bates (2008) disclosed that adolescents with high level of depression, anxiety and stress had low level of attachment toward family, peers and school.

Bullying & School Attachment

Considering the findings of studies investigating the relationship between bullying and school attachment (Backus, 2010; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005; Gottfredson, McNeil, & Gottfredson, 1991; O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009; O'Brennan & Furlong, 2010; Wilson, 2004), it can be confidently stated that there is a clear link between these two concepts, and students involved in bullying incidents as a bully or victim or bully/victim have problem in developing strong school attachment in comparison to uninvolved students. It can be claimed that having a stable and strong peer bond serves a preventive factor against bullying and victimization (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). In their study, Skues, Cunningham, and Pokharel (2005) concluded that victimized adolescents displayed low level of self-esteem, attachment toward teachers, peers and school, and low level of motivation to succeed. You et al. (2008) also reported that school attachment had a moderating role in the relationship between hope and life satisfaction in non-bullied students. Yet, they noted that the level of school attachment of victimized students was not low, but life satisfaction and hope level of them were low.

Loneliness

Loneliness influenced by one's social life qualities is an internal or emotional condition. There are several definitions of loneliness and approaches developed to annotate loneliness experience (see Peplau & Perlman, 1982 for an extensive review). However, there appear to be some conjunctions among these different definitions and approaches. First and foremost, loneliness is a very unique, highly subjective experience. Secondly, loneliness is almost invariably a negative, painful emotional experience (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that loneliness itself is not pathologic. It is a commonly shared experience. Everyone feels lonely to some degree in at least one time in his/her lifetime (Asher & Paquette, 2003). Nonetheless, it becomes problematic when it gets persistent and emotionally painful. Such an experience defines an emotional state that may hinder a student's physical, psychological and social development. Asher, Hymel and Renshaw (1984) found that about 10% of elementary school students felt lonely and socially dissatisfied. Loneliness may give rise to self-pity feelings or lack of motivation in children at school. It is highly possible that students struggling with loneliness may apply to health services at schools with somatic problems and increasing absenteeism (Krause-Parello, 2009).

Bullying & Loneliness

Victimized students who were exposed to bullying behaviors and made fun of usually feel socially isolated, and seek out places to escape from the pain and humiliation they face at schools (Krause-Parello, 2008). Because lonely students are often victimized, being in the victim position is one of the factors for peer refusal. The fact that most students dislike victimized students increases the possibility of feeling more lonely (Asher & Paquette, 2003). Similarly, Storch and Masia-Warner (2004) found a positive relationship between victimization and loneliness. Additionally, Rigby (2003) reported that as a result of bullying acts, victimized children demonstrated poor social adjustment, felt apart from school, social isolation, loneliness, avoided social milieu, and increased school absenteeism. It was also reported that there were positive relationships between relational bullying, fear of negative evaluation and loneliness (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2004). Furthermore, Boivin and Hymel (1997) stated that adverse peer relations and bullying had negative effects on loneliness and perceived acceptance. Other studies (e.g. Graham & Bellmore, 2007; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1997) evidence the relationship between bullying and loneliness.

Considering the fact that bullying involves a social domain, and there is a relationship between bullying or victimization and psychosocial problems, it would be worth to investigate the relationships between different bully statuses, school attachment, and loneliness. Thus, this study was designed to examine the relationships among different bully statuses (bully, victim, bully/victim and bystander), school attachment and loneliness in early adolescents. Based on previous studies, we hypothesized that adolescents named as victim and bully/victim would differ from bystanders and bullies regarding school attachment and loneliness. That is victims and bully/victims experience more loneliness feelings, but less school attachment comparing to bystanders and bullies.

Method

Participants

Participants of the study was comprised of 415 elementary school students [G= 214 (51.6%), B= 201 (48.4%)] schooling at three different elementary schools representing different socio-economic status in Diyarbakır, Turkey. The mean age was 12.82, and age range varied between 11 and 14. Total number of respondents was 450, but because of missing data and inappropriate answers, data obtained from 35 participants were kept out of the analysis.

Data Collection Tool

Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire: The scale was originally developed by Olweus (1996; cited in Solberg & Olweus, 2003), and adapted to Turkish by Dölek (2002). It is consisted of 40 items that define bullying type and frequency, where it happened, who did it, how often it was told parents and teachers, and what teachers do to prevent bullying. Internal consistency for bully was found as .75, and for victim as .71 (Atik, 2006). In the present study, internal consistency for victim subscale was computed as .84, and for bully subscale as .85. Cronbach alpha was .85 for the total questionnaire.

School Attachment Scale-SAS: The school attachment scale was developed by Hill (2005) and psychometric properties of it for Turkish were investigated by Savi (2011). Adaptation study was carried out with 708 students from 3rd grade to 8th grade. It contains 13-item with 3 subscales: namely attachment to school, attachment to teachers and attachment to peers. The higher is the score, the higher is the attachment level. Cronbach alpha coefficient was .84 for the whole scale, .82 for attachment to school, .74 for attachment to teachers, and .71 for attachment to peers. Item-total correlations varied between .66 and .85. Guttman Split-half reliability was computed as .78. In the current study, internal consistency of the scale was .83 for the whole scale, .85 for attachment to school subscale, .79 for attachment to teachers subscale, and .68 for attachment to peers subscale.

Children's Loneliness Scale: The scale was originally developed to assess loneliness in children by Asher and Wheeler (1985). Adaptation study to Turkish was conducted by Kaya (2005). Adaptation study was carried out with two different age groups. The first group involved students from 3rd to 4th grades, and the second one consisted of students from 5th to 8th grade. Having completed PCA for the second group, there were 23 items left eight of which were filling items, and nine of which are reverse items. Cronbach alpha coefficient was computed as .87 for the second group. The scale is unidimensional. Higher score indicates high level of loneliness. Cronbach alpha was calculated as .85 for the current study.

Personal Data Sheet: A personal data sheet was used to gather data about demographic variables such as gender, age, grade level and GPA.

Analysis of Data

In order to investigate the relationships between dependent variables of the study (school attachment and loneliness), Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. To examine group difference, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) was employed. Tukey HSD test was used to detect group differences when the model was significant. To determine gender difference with regard to different bully status, Chi-Square test was also run. SPSS 17.00 software program was used to conduct all these analysis. Confidence interval was set at .05 for all analysis.

First, assumptions for MANOVA were examined. Multivariate normality was checked via calculating Mahalanobis distance. Mahalanobis distance for four variables (21.84) exceeded the critical value (18.47) a bit. Thus, having outliers kept apart from data set, multivariate normality criteria was met. Because of these outliers, data set decreased to 404 data. Then linearity was checked by generating scatterplots. Scatterplots evidenced linearity between the variables. Histograms and descriptive statistics (see Table 1) evidenced the normality of the data set.

Results

According to the findings, 21.5% of the participants were defined as victim, 4.9% as bully, and 8.1% as bully/victim. Of the participants, 2.7% reported some forms of violence like hitting, cursing or threatening among family members. Descriptive statistics about each variable are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Regarding Each Variable

Variables	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attachment to school	404	6	20	17.70	3.12	-1.66	2.29
Attachment to peers	404	10	25	21.90	3.31	-1.15	.95
Attachment to teachers	404	5	20	17.34	3.25	-1.47	1.89
Loneliness	404	15	57	24.56	9.56	1.28	.97

Table 1 shows that distribution of the data is in acceptable ranges. Yet, it appears to be a bit negatively skewed regarding all values except the one about loneliness, and kurtosis values about attachment to school and teachers are bit high. Yet, it is claimed that as the research sample is big enough (N= 100 for positive skewness and N= 200 for positive skewness), little deviations in a distribution does not cause significant differences in the analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest taking the shape of distribution (histogram) into account as the sample is big enough. Even though it is a bit peaked, histogram proves normality of the data set.

Means and standard deviations of school attachment and loneliness scores for each bully status are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for School Attachment and Loneliness Scores of Each Bully Status

Variables	Victim (N= 87)		Bully (N= 20)		Bully/Victim (N= 33)		Bystander (N= 264)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Attachment to school	17.37	3.52	15.35	4.03	16.97	3.57	18.09	2.74
Attachment to peers	21.26	3.55	19.95	3.80	21.00	3.52	22.33	3.06
Attachment to teachers	17.16	3.06	15.80	3.50	16.15	3.46	17.67	3.21
Loneliness	26.41	9.43	25.40	11.06	27.06	10.82	23.57	9.22

Intercorrelations among study variables were computed for the overall sample via Pearson correlation coefficient and the findings are presented at table 3. As seen at table 3, correlation coefficients varied between -.07 and .81. The lowest correlation was between attachment to school scores and loneliness scores ($r = -.07$), while the highest correlation was obtained between attachment to attachment to school and total school attachment scores ($r = .81$). Except one intercorrelation between attachment to school and loneliness, all dependent variables correlated with each other significantly.

Table 3. Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Overall Sample

Pearson's r (N= 404)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attachment to school	---				
2. Attachment to peers	.35**	---			
3. Attachment to teachers	.53**	.27**	---		
4. Total school attachment	.81**	.71**	.78**	---	
5. Loneliness	-.07	-.29**	-.10*	-.20**	---

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

In order to investigate group comparisons (1= victim, 2= bully, 3= bully/victim, 4= bystanders) regarding school attachment scores and loneliness scores, one-way MANOVA was employed (see table

4). Because there were separate analysis, Bonferroni adjustment was applied to Manova and post-hoc comparisons. Thus, new alpha level was set at .012 to determine group comparisons. The univariate analysis for dependent variables yielded significant group comparisons except for loneliness scores. The multivariate analyses of variance revealed a significant effect of bully status on attachment to school [*Wilks' λ* = .917, *F* (3, 400) = 6.30, *p* < .01, η^2 = .45]. Yet, because the Levene's test was significant, a more conservative alpha level was taken as .01 in accordance with the suggestion that Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) offer for such cases. Tukey HSD test for attachment to school revealed significant group differences between victims (\bar{X} = 17.37), and bystanders (\bar{X} = 18.09) and bullies (\bar{X} = 15.35). That is, victims and bystanders have higher level of attachment to school than bullies. Other group comparisons did not reveal any significant differences regarding attachment to school.

Table 4. Differences Among Students with Different Bully Status with Regard to Dependent Variables

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Attachment to school	177.202	3	59.067	6.30	.000*	.045
Attachment to peers	187.276	3	62.425	5.91	.001*	.042
Attachment to teacher	125.005	3	41.668	4.04	.008*	.029
Loneliness	777.159	3	259.053	2.88	.036	.021

**p* < .01

Table 4 shows that the multivariate effect of bully status on attachment to peers was also significant [*Wilks' λ* = .917, *F* (3, 400) = 5.91, *p* < .01, η^2 = .42]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test yielded significant group differences between bystanders (\bar{X} = 22.33), and victims (\bar{X} = 21.26) and bullies (\bar{X} = 19.95). That is, students uninvolved in bully incidents had higher levels of attachment to peers than victims and bullies. Other group comparisons did not reveal any significant differences regarding attachment to peers.

Another multivariate analyses of variance also revealed a significant effect of bully status on attachment to teacher [*Wilks' λ* = .917, *F* (3, 400) = 4.04, *p* < .01, η^2 = .29]. Even though the model was significant, post-hoc group comparisons using Tukey HSD test did not reveal any significant group differences in terms of attachment to teacher. Thus, we did not assume any group differences regarding attachment to teacher variable in order to avoid Type 1 error. Table 4 also illustrates that there was no significant effect of bully status on loneliness scores [*Wilks' λ* = .917, *F* (3, 400) = 2.88, *p* > .01, η^2 = .21] considering the new alpha level set after Bonferroni adjustment. Thus, students with different bully status did not differ regarding loneliness scores.

In order to investigate gender difference regarding attachment to school and loneliness, another Manova was performed (see table 5).

Table 5. Gender Differences Regarding School Attachment and Loneliness

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Attachment to school	24.260	1	24.260	2.50	.115	.006
Attachment to peers	29.950	1	29.950	2.75	.098	.007
Attachment to teacher	39.267	1	39.267	3.75	.053	.009
Loneliness	.010	1	.010	.000	.992	.000

**p* < .01

The multivariate analyses of variance for gender effect on school attachment and loneliness did not yield significant gender differences for attachment to school [*Wilks' λ* = .973, *F* (1, 402) = 2.50, *p* > .01, η^2 = .006], attachment to peers [*Wilks' λ* = .973, *F* (1, 402) = 2.75, *p* > .01, η^2 = .007], attachment to teachers [*Wilks' λ* = .973, *F* (1, 402) = 3.75, *p* > .01, η^2 = .009], and for loneliness [*Wilks' λ* = .973, *F* (1, 402) = .000, *p* > .01, η^2 = .00].

To investigate the effect of gender on bully status, Chi-square test for independence was employed. Chi-square test for independence yielded a significant gender differences for bully status [$\chi^2= 10.888, p < .05$]. Of all students, 22.3% of girls and 20.8% of boys were named as victim; 4% of girls and 5.9% of boys were named as bully; 4% of girls and 12.4% of boys were named as bully/victim, and finally, 69.8% of girls and 60.9% of boys were named as bystander. According to these findings, girls are exposed to bullying behaviors more than boys, while boys display more bullying acts than girls. Besides, the possibility of being in bully/victim status for boys is higher than girls. That is, boys are both actors of bullying acts, and victims of such behaviors in return. A number of separate Chi-square tests for independence were employed to investigate the effect of grade level, age and academic success on bully status. It was found that grade level ($\chi^2= 10.899, p > .05$), age ($\chi^2= 21.324, p > .05$), and academic success ($\chi^2= 16.423, p > .05$) did not have a significant effect on bully status.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The main purpose of the current research was to investigate the effect of bully status on attachment to school, attachment to peers, attachment to teachers and loneliness in early adolescents. Besides, the effect of gender, grade level, and academic success on bully status were examined. Findings of analysis indicated that victims and bystanders had higher levels of school attachment comparing to bullies. Furthermore, there were not any differences between victims, bully/victims and bystanders. With regard to attachment to peers, adolescents named as bystander had higher levels of attachment to peers than those with victim status and bully status. However, there were no differences among students with different bully status regarding attachment to teachers. Similarly, no significant group differences were obtained in terms of loneliness. Additionally, gender did not have an effect on bully status, either. Boys and girls did not differ in terms of school attachment and loneliness. Moreover, grade level, age and academic success did not have significant effect on bully status.

One of the main findings of the study is that bullies have low level attachment to school comparing to victims and bystanders. One of the possible explanation of this finding is that bullies do not present high interest to school and school activities and thus, they do not like schooling. In various studies, a negative relationship was found between school attachment and problem behaviors (Simons-Morton et al., 1999), aggression and committing crime (Griffin, Gilbert, Lawrence, Doyle, & Williams, 2003), interpersonal violence (Gottfredson et al., 1991) and peer bullying (Limor, 2002), and school belongingness and schooling problems (Anderman, 2002). Vanderbilt and Augustyn (2010) state that bullies mostly display problem behaviors, and poor emotional and social adjustment. Because bullies and bully/victims have poor psycho-social adjustment, they may have problem to develop attachment to schools which are the largest areas to socialize for children. Hill and Werner (2006) also note that valuing learning processes internally is one of the components of school attachment. Thus, because bullies do not show interest toward learning processes, and instead constantly display disruptive behaviors in the classroom, they may not have strong ties to school.

It seems that there is a link between problems behaviors and school attachment. Blum (2005) claims that the possibility of demonstrating violent and disruptive acts by students who develop strong attachment to school is quite low. In a study, Hallinan (2008) reported that students who perceive or feel appreciation, genuine interest and respect from their teachers develop more positive feelings toward school. Due to the fact that, school principals or teachers sometimes show anger feelings toward bullies, and apply some punitive methods against bully behaviors, it may be hard for bullies to develop positive feelings toward school as general. Supporting this claim, O'Brennan et al. (2009) found that adolescents displaying bullying acts had more negative views toward school and thus, low level of attachment to school than victims, bully/victims and bystanders did. Similarly, You et al. (2008) reported that victims do not have problem in developing attachment to school. The finding that bystanders have higher levels of school attachment comparing to other bully categories might be explained with having positive relationships with peers, parents and teachers. Yet, there are some research findings that do not support this finding of the study. Cunningham (2007) found that bull/victims were the least group to develop attachment to school comparing to victims and bullies. In their study, Skues et al. (2005) found that victimized adolescents developed low level of school attachment. Likewise, Glew et al. (2005) reported that students exposed to bullying often had low level of school belongingness comparing to students with other bully status. Harris and Petrie (2003) also noted that victimized students felt less school satisfaction than other students.

Another finding of current research is that students with bystander status reported stronger peer attachment than those with victim status and bully/victims status. No differences were obtained between victims, bullies and bully/victims. It seems that because bystanders are not involved in bully incidents as a bully or victim, they are able to develop sound relationships with peers and thus, receive support from them in return. Thus, they may feel satisfied in peer relations at school, and this might lead to higher peer attachment. Supporting this statement, Simons-Morton et al. (1999) concluded in their study that adolescents who had positive and strong social ties tended to display more pro-social behaviors in social relations, and less fighting, bullying, vandalism and substance abuse than those with weak social ties. This finding of current research is also supported by a study (Skues et al., 2005) disclosing that victimized adolescents had low level of peer attachment.

It is a well-known fact that bullying is an indication of negative peer relations. Thus, it is possible that because of victimization, victimized adolescents might not develop strong, satisfying social ties which might have caused low level of peer attachment. It was, therefore, noted that being exposed to bullying behaviors may threaten belongingness feeling of being in a group (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Additionally, Harris and Petrie (2003) reported that victimized children may not have even a single friend which may lead to increased social isolation. Supporting this statement, Perren and Hornung (2005) disclosed that most of students do not like their peers who are victimized. Rigby (2007) also reported that victimized children have few friends and most children do not want to be a friend with victims.

Contrary to our hypothesis, there were no differences among students with different bully status with regard to attachment to teacher. It can be claimed that because peer relations gain importance during adolescence, adolescents may not value relationship with teachers much. Bergin and Bergin (2009) claim that kindergarten children and primary school children may develop stronger relationships with their teachers than secondary and high school students, because teachers at kindergarten and primary schools spend more time with students. Supporting this explanation, it was shown that 4th and 5th grade students scored higher on attachment to teacher than 8th grade students (Savi, 2011).

It was reported in the current study that there were no significant differences among students with different bully status with regard to loneliness scores. Contradictory to this finding, a number studies disclosed that victimized children and adolescents reported escalated loneliness feelings (Boivin & Hymel, 1997; Graham & Bellmore, 2007; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Ladd et al., 1997; Schafer et al., 2004; Storch & Masia-Warner, 2004). Frerichs (2009) also found that students who were exposed to relational bullying often reported higher depressive symptoms and loneliness/social dissatisfaction than those exposed relational bullying less. In another study, it was noted that most of the students who were exposed to violence at school are disliked by their peers, and they feel lonely and social excluded (Thomas & Smith, 2004). It was also reported in the same study that 80% of these victimized students felt hatred feelings toward school.

According to the findings of current research, gender did not have significant effect on attachment to school, peers and teacher. Similarly, Dornbusch et al. (2001) reported that there was not any differences between boys and girls regarding school attachment. However, a number of studies disclosed opposite findings saying that girls reported higher levels of school attachment (Hill & Werner, 2006; Savi, 2011; Savi Çakar, 2011a; Simons-Morton et al., 1999). It was also found in present study that gender did not have significant effect on loneliness scores. Similar results are reported in some studies

(Eskin, 2001; Pancar, 2009). Yet, there are some evidences that boys score higher on loneliness measures (Duyan et al., 2008; Körler, 2011).

Another important finding of current study is that there were significant gender differences among students with different bully status. Adolescent girls are exposed to bullying behaviors more often than adolescent boys, and thus, boys tend to display bullying acts more often than girls. This finding is supported by a number of studies in the literature (Atik, 2006; Bayraktar, 2009; Glew et al., 2005; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Totan, 2008; Şirvanlı Özen & Aktan, 2010; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Veenstra and others (2005) found that boys tend to be categorized as both bully/victim and victim about two times higher than girls do. Nonetheless, according to their study conducted in nineteen underdeveloped countries, Fleming and Jacobsen (2009) showed that boys in most countries are exposed bullying behaviors more than girls. This result may be explained by the effect of culture.

Furthermore, another investigation was made to pinpoint whether grade level, age and GPA had a significant effect on bully status. No significant differences were detected regarding these independent variables. While there are some studies showing differences with regard to grade level (Atik, 2006; Ayas & Pişkin, 2010; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001; Pişkin, 2010; Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006), other studies reported no group differences (Çalık et al., 2009; Salmivalli, 2002; Skues et al., 2005; Urbanski, 2007; Walden & Beran, 2010).

The current study comprises some limitations like any other research. The study was carried out with a group of secondary school students. Thus, findings of the study should be carefully interpreted when it comes to primary school students and high school students. Another limitation of the study is about the way used to determine bully categories. Bully status was defined with regard to solely participants' own responses. Peers and teachers can be asked to nominate students in terms of bullying status. Thus, more accurate categorization of bully status can be made. Lastly, using a large number of sample may increase the generalizability of these findings.

Findings of the current study indicated that early adolescents with different bully status differed significantly with regard to attachment to school, and attachment to peers. Victims and bystanders have higher levels of school attachment than bullies and bully/victims. On the other hand, students with bystander status reported higher levels of attachment to peers than students with victim and bully status. Furthermore, gender had a significant effect on bully status saying that girls reported more bully incidents than boys did. Yet, gender and bully status variables did not have a significant effect on loneliness scores. Boys and girls did not differ with regard to all domains of school attachment.

There is a limited number of studies that investigated psycho-social consequences of bullying and victimization in Turkish literature. Thus, there is a clear need to conduct such studies to discover psycho-social consequences of bullying in dept. Research findings indicated that there are some relations between school related variables and bullying at schools. So, further studies that examine the relations between school related variables and bullying may reveal valuable findings that may help to develop effective bully-prevention programs. There are also few attempts to prevent bullying at schools (Kartal & Bilgin, 2007; Şahin & Akbaba, 2010; Takış, 2007; Ugürol, 2010). Thus, we need more studies to evaluate effects of bully-prevention programs with different strategies. It is therefore important to design a bully-prevention program that encompasses all elements of bullying problem and can be implemented at schools by school counselors effectively.

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