



An Examination of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Bullying, Their Coping Strategies for Handling Bullying, and Perceived School Climate *

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Abstract

Bullying is one of the most frequently observed aggressive behaviours in schools. It is quite significant problem since it creates many major problems such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and loneliness in children and adolescents who are bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Studies have revealed that teachers are the people that students mostly ask for help when they are subjected to bullying. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in the prevention of bullying as bullying is mostly observed in schools and children mostly ask for their help in such a situation. Being actively involved in the bullying processes, teachers become role models for students both with their attitudes and behaviour, and the coping strategies they use when bullying incidents take place. The aim of this research was to analyze teachers' attitudes towards bullying, the coping strategies they use when they are faced with bullying, and their perceptions of the existing school climate. A total of 396 teachers (280 female, 116 male) from 12 different middle schools participated in this research. The results revealed that female teachers showed humanistic and authoritarian attitudes more, and used working with the victim; enlisting other adults; and disciplining the bully strategies more frequently compared to male teachers. Additionally, significant age differences were found on the coping strategies that the teachers used. According to the results of the regression analysis the coping strategies of the female teachers; the older ones; the teachers that had too much humanistic and uncompassionate attitudes; and the teachers who perceived instructional innovation more positively were found out to be more effective.

Keywords

Bullying
Teachers' attitudes
Coping strategies
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Introduction

Bullying is defined as a particular type of aggressive behaviour that is intended to do harm, is repeated over time, and involves imbalance of power (Olweus, 2003). There are three main types of peer bullying: physical, verbal, and relational (Olweus, 1993). Physical bullying involves the violent behaviour resulting from the intentional use of physical force (e.g. hitting, slapping, kicking) whereas verbal bullying involves the behaviour that harms the person through verbal behaviour (e.g. swearing, insulting, calling names). On the other hand, relational bullying involves the situations in which the person is harmed socially (e.g. spreading rumours about the person, leaving the person out of the group). In addition to these types of bullying, today, a new type of bullying called “cyberbullying” has emerged as a consequence of the development of technology and the gradually increasing impact of social media (Slonje & Smith, 2008). This type of bullying which is done by using technological devices such as computers or mobile phones involves sending harassing text messages, e-mails, or opening a social media account in the name of the victim and posting improper content (Doğan, 2010). The most commonly observed types of bullying are physical and verbal bullying. Relational bullying is observed less compared to the other types of bullying (Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Kepenekçi & Çinkır, 2006). The reason why the prevalence of bullying types differ in the literature may be stemming from the fact that it is easier to identify physical and verbal bullying, whereas it is more difficult to identify relational bullying. Thus, teachers’ recognition of different bullying types and knowledge about how to intervene will significantly contribute to the bullying literature.

Bullying is a quite frequently encountered problem both in Turkey and in the world. A great deal of research in this field have been conducted in many countries for many years; however, in Turkey it is seen that the number of research has increased only in recent years (Akay, 2019; Ayas & Pişkin, 2011; Doğan et al., 2017; Gökkaya & Sütçü, 2018; Günay & Gürhan, 2018; Özdemir, 2018; Sezen & Murat, 2018). The prevalence and the types of peer bullying differ from country to country, and even from school to school within the same country. In the literature, there are many research findings concerning the prevalence of peer bullying in terms of different aspects. For example, in a research involving 463 secondary school students in the USA, it was observed that more than 37% of the children had been exposed to face to face or online bullying, and 31% of the children who were bullied reported the bullying incident to adults (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry, & Green, 2018). In another research conducted in the USA, it was revealed that 50% of approximately 45 thousand high school students aged 15-18 years from 100 different high schools bullied others, and 47% had been a victim (Josephson Institute, 2010). In another research conducted in England to examine the developmental differences, 8% of primary school students and 10% of secondary school students were reported that they bullied others (Smith, 1991). In a research carried out in 39 countries by the World Health Organisation regarding bullying, it was found out that the ratios for being the victim for students aged 11, 13, and 15 years were 15%, 14%, and 10% respectively; and the ratios for being the bully were 9%, 12%, and 12% respectively (Currie et al., 2008). The results of recent studies in Turkey have also shown similarities with the research conducted in other countries. In a study carried out in Turkey, it was found out that 26% of the students had been victims, 16% had been bullies, and 23% had been bully-victims (Yıldırım, 2001). In another study, the prevalence of peer bullying was investigated and it was found out that 31% of the 5th grade students, 24% of the 7th grade students, and 11% of the 9th grade students were victims (Dölek, 2002). The low percentages of bullying may be stemmed from the fact that it is difficult to recognize bullying incidents. However, even these percentages would be considered as high and it should be taken into consideration that the effects of bullying are long-lasting for the children.

Bullying has numerous physical, psychological and social negative effects on the victims as well as the bullies, the bully/victims, and the bystanders. Headaches, stomachaches, concentration problems, sleeping and eating problems, or bedwetting at night can be considered as physical effects (Orpinas &

Horne, 2006; Swearer, Grills, Haye, & Cary, 2004). Depression, loneliness, social anxiety, low self-esteem, risk of suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder are considered as psychological effects (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004; Furlong, Soliz, Simental, & Greif, 2004). The academic, emotional, and social development of the students involved in bullying is affected negatively during school period and they suffer a great deal of problems in their adulthood, which can be noted as social effects (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004).

Since bullying is a quite common problem and has many negative effects, researchers recommend that the bullying behaviour should be identified and preventive intervention programmes should be implemented in schools (Gaffney, Ttofi, & Farrington, 2019; Kartal & Bilgin, 2007; Saracho, 2017). The opinions concerning bullying incidents at schools vary among teachers and students. The number of bullying incidents is reported less by teachers compared to students (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Holt & Keyes, 2004). The inconsistency between the opinions of students and teachers show that teachers are not aware of the peer bullying incidents at their schools or students do not report the bullying incident to their teachers (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). Because of this, it is difficult to recognize bullying incidents and to find a solution for these negative problems. On the other hand, research shows that when there is no effective intervention for negative behaviors, these behaviors may be seen as acceptable; therefore, they tend to increase. Teachers' recognition level of bullying may depend on the type of bullying behavior. Research shows that teachers may have a difficulty in recognizing relational bullying; therefore, they tend to intervene less compared to verbal and physical bullying (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). In a study which investigated teachers' attitudes in bullying incidents at schools, secondary school teachers' attitudes towards bullying were analysed and it was found out that the attitude scores differed depending on gender and experience in teaching years (Bush, 2009). According to the results, it was revealed that female teachers had more problem solving attitudes towards bullying compared to male teachers; and the teachers with 16-20 years of service had the highest attitude score. Research findings indicate that teachers' demographic characteristics have an effect on their level of recognition of bullying behaviors as well as their coping strategies for handling bullying. In a research study including teacher candidates, participants reported that they feel incompetent in dealing with bullying and they need support on this topic (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002). Even though it is believed that the experience in teaching years would increase teachers' knowledge and skills, it is difficult to reach an exact conclusion.

Students' perceptions concerning the teacher is also very important. For students, teachers are secondary attachment figures after parents and effective socialisation agents (Bayraktar, 2013). Therefore, the influence of teachers on children's social, emotional, and behavioural development is very important (Hoover, Oliver, & Thomson, 1993). Besides educating, teachers organise the social structure of the class and the relationships among the students with their rules and norms (Juvonen & Murdock, 1995). Moreover, the support that students receive from their teachers makes them feel they belong to their class and perform less bullying behaviour (Yaban, 2010). While the students who perceived the support of their teachers reported that they were involved in bullying less (Bayraktar, 2009), it was observed that the students who were not supported by their teachers tended to perform disruptive behaviour more (Wentzel & Cladwell, 1997). While students tackle with bullying, they need teachers who take an active position to develop an effective approach in reducing bullying (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014). The attitude against the bullying behavior is determinative in handling the problem. In a study by Bradshaw et al. (2007), the relationship between teachers' coping strategies for handling bullying behaviour and their attitudes towards bullying was analysed. The results showed that the teachers who perceived bullying as a critical problem thought they had effective strategies for preventing bullying. In addition, the ratios of the teachers participated in this study were observed to be high on thinking that their schools took enough precautions in the

prevention against bullying; on feeling safe at school; and on their commitment to school. These results support that when teachers have sufficient knowledge about bullying, this will help their coping strategies and their perceived school climate which will decrease bullying at schools and show the importance of teachers' role in preventing bullying.

According to Bandura's (1973) social learning theory, individuals learn by observing those around them. Therefore, students may learn these coping strategies for handling bullying by observing (role modelling) adults around them especially their teachers. For this reason, teachers' strategies for handling bullying and the behaviour they perform are significant. However, several studies concerning the topic show that teachers avoid being involved in bullying incidents for different reasons. Among these reasons are that teachers may not be aware of the bullying behaviour; they may not know the different types of bullying; they do not know what kind of a method to use for handling bullying; and that they should not intervene (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001). Pepler, Smith, and Rigby (2004) summarized the common coping strategies that can be used by the students who bully, the students who are exposed to bullying, bystanders, families, and school personnel. While listing the effective coping strategies, the researchers stated that the strategies should be followed from the lowest to the highest level when working with the students. For instance, starting with showing the bully that his/her behaviour is wrong and the negative consequences of that behaviour, and if no improvement is observed, guiding them to get counselling. Indicating that no punishing method is recommended, the researchers mentioned that some schools adopted zero tolerance as an education policy and in these schools, methods such as suspension was used.

When the strategies which can be used in the classroom are considered, it is seen that the emphasis is on the behaviour of the teacher and of the students in the role of bystanders. According to the studies, the more teachers feel the responsibility to cope with bullying, the more successful the result is (Güven, 2015). There are various strategies that teachers use in handling bullying such as supporting the student who were bullied, talking to the bully, getting help from other adults to settle the situation, and ignoring the situation. According to the research results, supporting the student who is exposed to bullying is one of the most effective strategies. Along with this, encouraging the students in the role of bystanders to be involved in the process will help preventing bullying (Yurdakal & Soyuçok, 2016). Motivating and educating bystanders is used as an active strategy in widely implemented bullying prevention programs (e.g., KiVa, ViSC) (Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2011; Strohmeier, Hoffmann, Schiller, Stefanek, & Spiel, 2012). When these strategies are broadened to include all the students in the school, a safe school environment for students will be provided. In a study that analyzed teachers' coping strategies for handling bullying, the participants consisting of a total of 128 teachers 36 of which were in the school administration were asked to indicate the coping strategies they used in bullying incidents along with their opinions concerning the prevention of bullying (Çinkır & Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2003). According to the results, 94% of the teachers spent individual effort, 47% asked for school administration's help, 43% asked for other teachers' help, and 27% asked for the help of the school counsellor. At the same time, the study investigated whether the strategies that the teachers and the school administrators used differed or not; and it was found out that the administrators' coping strategies for handling peer bullying differed from the teachers'; 68% made verbal warnings and 13% ignored the situation. Additionally, on being asked what could be done for handling bullying, 88% of the participants said "we should be more concerned about students' problems" and 81% said "students' energy should be directed to activities." In another study, it was found out that one of the most effective strategies for handling bullying is to build a positive class climate. In this research, it was emphasised that imposing the principle "*Treat your friends in the way you want to be treated*" is an effective method (Newman-Carlson & Horle, 2004).

In handling bullying, the type of bullying that teachers are encountered with is effective in determining the strategy to be used. According to research results, teachers consider physical and verbal bullying more critical, and intervene in such behaviour more; however, they intervene in relational bullying less compared to the other types of bullying or ignore such behaviour (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Some other research results show that teachers tend to report the incidents less when they think the bullying incident stems from individual reasons; and they do not consider the incident as a bullying behaviour (Sondergaard, 2018).

Another reason that makes teachers insufficient in their intervention strategies for bullying is that the children who are subjected to bullying do not tell the incident to their parents or teachers (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). The reasons for students to keep the incident a secret can be listed as the reaction they will get from their friends, the fear that the situation can get worse, thinking that the teacher will not take it seriously, or blaming themselves. Because of these reasons, students can sometimes hold back from talking about the incident; and thus, teachers will not be aware of the bullying behaviour and cannot intervene in the incident. In their study, after placing cameras in the classrooms, Atlas and Pepler (1998) examined whether the teachers intervened in the bullying situations or not. The results revealed that the teachers had intervened only in 11 of the 60 (18%) bullying incidents. It was observed that most of the bullying incidents that were not intervened in took place when the teacher's back was turned to the class or while the teacher was at the other corner of the classroom. It was also found out that the teachers had noticed half of the 30 bullying incidents and they had intervened in 11 of them. The researchers interpreted these results as suggesting that teachers' levels of awareness should also be focused on as well as their coping strategies. Besides not knowing the description and the types of bullying in details, teachers may also have wrong beliefs concerning the topic such as bullying is a natural part of childhood or children should cope with these difficulties themselves. In order to prevent the negative results that stem from bullying, it is recommended that programmes should be developed for increasing teachers' skills to identify the bullying situations (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Pas, Larson, & Johnson, 2018). However, only increasing teachers' skills is not enough. The students' and teachers' perception of school environment and their attitudes towards their school is also very important in preventing bullying.

Another topic that is known to be related with bullying at schools is school climate. Based on the common perceptions of the individuals at school, school climate is a feature that affects all the school personnel and is affected by their behavior (Hoy, 2003). It has relative continuity and is considered in many different aspects as education materials, relationships, physical environment, and resources. School contributes to children's socialization and to their social and emotional development as it enables them to share with peers (Farmer & Xie, 2007). The bullying incidents at school affect the school climate in a negative way (Nabuzoka, Ronning, & Handegard, 2009). Studies analyzing various factors that cause bullying in schools found that the low control over violent incidents (Kasen, Barensen, Cohen, & Johson, 2004) and strict discipline rules against these incidents (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003) increase the possibility of the bullying behavior by creating a negative school climate. School climate concept has been examined in five dimensions. These are: collaboration (how teachers work together in a coordinated way), decision making (how teachers are involved in decision making process in schools), student relations (teachers' perceptions about students), school resources (whether teachers find school resources sufficient), and instructional innovation (the desire of the teachers and administrators in using new educational techniques). According to the results of a cross-sectional study that examines the effects of classroom applications, teacher attitudes, and school environment, school climate has a critical significance in understanding the nature and prevalence of aggressiveness and bullying statuses. Teachers' perceptions of school are also among the important variables that predict bullying as well as the students'.

Teachers are the most effective actor in learning process. Teachers who are responsible for both academic and social learning teach children new behaviors and help them to change and shape their behaviors. For example, if teachers react to a negative event or behavior, they give a message to their

students that this behaviour is unacceptable; on the other hand, if teachers ignore the negative behavior, students may believe that this behaviour is acceptable. The importance of teachers in preventing bullying is highly increased with the fact that bullying takes place at schools and teachers are the people whom the victims ask for help the most. Many researchers claim that the most important factor which determines the success of preventive intervention programmes is the teachers' knowledge and skills on this topic (Ahtola, Haataja, Kärnä, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2012; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Veenstra et al., 2014). Teachers actively involve in prevention efforts with their attitudes and the coping strategies they apply. To summarize, researchers have emphasized that teachers' attitudes towards bullying along with their level of knowledge concerning bullying is a significant factor in the prevention and intervention of bullying. While there are a large number of studies in other countries concerning teachers' attitudes towards bullying, the number of studies in Turkey is scarce. This research will contribute to understanding of how teachers can lead an active role in the prevention of bullying. To evaluate teachers' attitudes towards bullying and their coping strategies and to determine the factors that affect them will contribute to the design and implementation of future bullying prevention programs. Moreover, school climate will be examined and the needs of the teachers and the relations between these needs and bullying will be identified. Thus, it is aimed that findings of this study will contribute to the development of education policies as well as the regulations in schools.

The objective of this research was to measure teachers' attitudes towards peer bullying, examine their coping strategies for handling bullying, and their perceived school climate. The following research questions were examined:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' attitudes, their coping strategies for handling bullying, and their perceived school climate?
2. Are there any significant differences on teachers' attitudes, their coping strategies for handling bullying, and their perceived school climate depending on demographics (e.g., age, gender, year in teaching)?
3. Do demographics, teachers' attitudes, and their perceived school climate predict teachers' coping strategies for handling bullying?

Method

Participants

This research was conducted in 12 middle schools located in the districts that represent different socioeconomic levels in one subprovince in İzmir, Turkey. A total of 396 middle school teachers, 280 (71%) of which were female and 116 (29%) of which were male participated in the research. The ages of the participants varied between 24 and 62 years; and their age average was 39.2 (SD = 8.0). Their years of service varied between 1 and 40 years (M = 15.3, SD = 8.0); their service for the current school varied between 3 months and 18 years (M = 3.7, SD = 3.1). Sixty-eight mathematics (17%); 67 Turkish (17%); 51 science (13%); 49 English (12%); 41 social studies (10%) teachers; and 121 (30%) teachers of other branches and of elective courses (e.g. physical education, music, art, information studies) participated in the research.

Procedure

An approval was obtained from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Ege University. Next, permission letter obtained from the local authorities of Ministry of Education was sent to the schools. The researchers visited the schools and informed the school administrators about the research and determined the schedule. The questionnaire was carried out at the times when the teachers were free in terms of the course schedule determined by the school administration. The teachers completed the questionnaire out of class hours in the teachers' room. It took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Before the teachers started to answer the questionnaires, they were given brief information about the study and their consent was obtained.

Measures

The survey consisted of Demographics, Teachers' Attitudes Towards School Bullying, Handling Bullying and School Level Environment Questionnaires.

Demographics: This form contains the information about the participants' gender, age, branch of study, years of service, and service at the current school.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards School Bullying Questionnaire: This scale was developed by Yeşilyaprak and Balanuye (2012) to determine teachers' attitudes towards bullying behaviours. The response format was a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 25 items (1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree). The lowest and highest scores to be obtained in the scale were 25 and 125, respectively. High scores were interpreted as indicating that teachers had optimal attitudes towards bullying. The scale consisted of four subscales: ignoring attitude (e.g. I ignore the bully's behaviour if it happens only once or twice); humanistic attitude (e.g. I am concerned about the bully as much I am concerned about the student exposed to bullying); authoritarian attitude (e.g. bullying stems from the flexible discipline understanding employed at school); and uncompassionate attitude (e.g. the student who exhibits behaviour that provokes the bully deserves to be bullied). In the original study, the Cronbach's Alpha for the whole scale was .78; Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales varied between .55 and .72. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha for the whole scale was .81; and Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales were between .63 and .77.

Handling Bullying Questionnaire: This scale, developed by Bauman, Rigby and Hoppa (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Doğan and Strohmeier (2016), examines the reactions that teachers give when they are encountered with a bullying incident. A scenario was presented at the beginning of the scale and the teachers were asked what kind of a coping strategy they would use when they encountered such an incident. The response format was a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 22 items (1-I definitely would not, 5-I definitely would). The total score of this measure was used. Higher scores indicate an effective coping strategies for handling bullying. The scale consisted of five subscales as working with the bully (e.g. I would share my concern with the bully about what happened to the victim and I would tell him/her to treat the victim in a more caring and responsible manner); working with the victim (e.g. I would tell the victim to stand up to the bully); ignoring the incident (e.g. I would treat the matter lightly); enlisting other adults (e.g. I would ask the school counsellor to intervene); and disciplining the bully (e.g. I would make sure the bully was suitably punished). In the original study, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the whole scale was .77; Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales varied between .52 and .78. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha value of the whole scale was found out as .84; and Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales were found out to be between .64 and .80.

School Level Environment Questionnaire: This scale, developed by Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch (2007) and adapted to Turkish by Doğan and Strohmeier (2016), measures teachers' perceptions of the existing school climate. The response format was a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 21 items (1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree). The scale consisted of five subscales as collaboration (e.g. In my school, there is good communication among teachers.); decision making (e.g. In my school, teachers are frequently asked to participate in decisions.); student relations (e.g. Students in my school are well-behaved.); school resources (e.g. Instructional equipment in my school is not consistently accessible.); and instructional innovation (e.g. New and different ideas are always being tried out in my school.). In the original study, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the whole scale was .85; Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales varied between .77 and .86. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha value for the whole scale was .90; and Cronbach's Alpha values of the subscales were between .75 and .84.

Results

The data were analysed using SPSS 25.0 software package. We evaluated skewness and kurtosis of the variables and normality values before conducting parametric and further analyses. Findings are presented below in this order: correlation analyses between all the scales and the subscales, teachers' attitudes towards bullying; strategies for handling bullying; school climate; and the variables that predict the coping strategies.

Relationships between the Variables

The relationship between the scales and the subscales used in the research was analysed using Pearson Correlation Technique; and the results were presented in Table 1. The findings revealed a *low-level, positive and significant* relationship between the ignoring attitude among teachers' attitudes and working with the bully ($r=.14, p<.001$) and enlisting other adults ($r=.22, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of strategies for handling bullying scale; on the other hand, a *low-level, negative and significant* relationship was found between ignoring the incident ($r=-.33, p<.001$) which was a subscale of strategies for handling bullying scale and collaboration ($r=-.21, p<.001$) and decision making ($r=-.19, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of school level environment scale. A *low-level, positive and significant* relationship was found between the humanistic attitude among teachers' attitudes and working with the victim ($r=.23, p<.001$) and disciplining the bully ($r=.22, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of strategies for handling bullying scale, collaboration ($r=.22, p<.001$) and student relations ($r=.16, p<.001$) and school resources ($r=.17, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of school level environment scale. Furthermore, a *mid-level, positive and significant* relationship was found between the humanistic attitude and enlisting other adults ($r=.38, p<.001$) and working with the bully ($r=.47, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of strategies for handling bullying scale and instructional innovation ($r=.30, p<.001$) which was among the subscales of school level environment scale. A *low-level, negative and significant* relationship was found between the authoritarian attitude among teachers' attitudes and working with the victim ($r=-.16, p<.001$) and ignoring the incident ($r=-.16, p<.001$) which were among the subscales of strategies for handling bullying scale. Finally, the relationships between the uncompassionate attitude among teachers' attitudes and subscales of strategies for handling bullying scale were as follows: a *low-level, negative and significant* relationship with working with the victim ($r=-.12, p<.05$); a *low-level, positive and significant* relationship with working with the bully ($r=.14, p<.05$); and a *mid-level, negative and significant* relationship with ignoring the incident ($r=-.30, p<.001$) were found.

Table 1. Relationship Between Attitudes, Strategies, and School Climate

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<i>Teacher Attitudes Toward School Bullying</i>													
1. Ignoring Attitude													
2. Humanistic Attitude	.31**												
3. Authoritarian Attitude	.35**	-.09											
4. Uncompassionate Attitude	.52**	.34**	.31**										
<i>Strategies for Handling School Bullying Incidents</i>													
5. Working with the Victim	-.12	.23**	-.16*	-.12*									
6. Ignoring the Incident	-.33**	-.19**	-.16*	-.30**	.10								
7. Enlisting Other Adults	.22**	.38**	-.10	.10	.25**	-.11							
8. Working with the Bully	.14*	.47**	.01	.14*	.33**	-.16*	.34**						
9. Disciplining the Bully	.01	.22*	-.09	-.11	.26**	-.01	.30**	.19**					
<i>School Climate</i>													
10. Collaboration	-.21**	.22	-.09	-.13*	.12	.08	-.10	.09	.02				
11. Decision Making	-.19**	.02	-.16*	-.10	.09	.08	.07	-.01	-.03	.19**			
12. Student Relations	.07	.16*	.22**	.17*	.10	-.03	-.06	.08	-.01	.05	.04		
13. School Resources	-.08	.17*	-.01	.03	-.07	.05	-.03	.14*	-.05	.13	.09	.06	
14. Instructional Innovation	-.05	.30**	-.07	-.07	.14*	-.07	.28**	.21**	.13	.25**	.18**	.19**	.07

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.001$

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Bullying

Teachers' attitudes towards bullying were analysed in terms of different demographic variables and were presented in Table 2. An independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze gender differences; and according to the results, females' mean scores for humanistic attitude and authoritarian attitude were observed to be statistically significant and significantly higher compared to males ($t(394)=2.93, p<.001$; $t(394)=2.96, p<.001$). It was found that ignoring and uncompassionate attitude did not show a significant difference in terms of gender ($t(394)=-.68, p>.05$; $t(394)=-.95, p>.05$, respectively).

Table 2. Teacher Attitudes Toward Bullying by Gender

		Ignoring Attitude		Humanistic Attitude		Authoritarian Attitude		Uncompassionate Attitude	
		\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.
Gender	Female	2.44	.47	4.19*	.41	3.36*	.78	2.22	.72
	Male	2.47	.43	4.02	.42	3.10	.77	2.29	.72

* $p<.05$

In order to analyse whether there was a difference between teachers' attitudes towards bullying and age groups, 5 different age groups were formed (24-30 years, 31-35 years, 36-40 years, 41-45 years, and 46 years or over); and a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. According to the findings, no statistically significant difference in terms of gender was observed on ignoring attitude, humanistic attitude, authoritarian attitude and uncompassionate attitude subscales ($F(4, 390)=.28, p>.05$; $F(4, 390)=1.01, p>.05$; $F(4, 390)=1.01, p>.05$; $F(4, 390)=.15, p>.05$, respectively). Similarly, in order to analyze whether teachers' mean scores for attitudes towards bullying change depending on their years of service, 3 different groups were formed (10 years or less, 11-17 years, and 18 years or more). According to the results of the one-way analysis of variance, no statistically significant difference in terms of years of service was observed on ignoring attitude, humanistic attitude, authoritarian attitude and uncompassionate attitude subscales (respectively, $F(2, 393)=.04, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=1.44, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=.77, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=.84, p>.05$).

Teachers' Coping Strategies for Handling Bullying

Teachers' coping strategies for handling bullying were analysed in terms of different demographic variables and the results have been presented in Table 3. An independent sample t-test was done to analyze whether teachers' strategies for handling bullying differed depending on gender. According to the findings, it was observed that females used working with the victim ($t(393)=2.30, p<.05$), enlisting other adults ($t(393)=3.10, p<.05$), and disciplining the bully ($t(393)=2.11, p<.05$) strategies significantly more frequently than males. On the other hand, no gender differences were found on working with the bully and ignoring the incident strategies among strategies for handling bullying.

Table 3. Strategies for Handling School Bullying Incidents

		Working with the Bully		Working with the Victim		Ignoring the Incident		Enlisting Other Adults		Disciplining the bully	
		\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.
Gender	Female	3.99	.54	3.58*	.79	1.96	.55	4.32*	.55	4.14*	.61
	Male	3.88	.57	3.37	.79	1.99	.67	4.12	.62	3.99	.66
Age	24-30	3.77 ^b	.44	3.21 ^b	.88	1.99	.54	4.10 ^b	.50	4.02	.59
	31-35	3.90	.57	3.48	.75	1.95	.58	4.42 ^a	.52	4.02	.67
	36-40	4.02	.61	3.60	.77	1.96	.64	4.26	.62	4.18	.62
	41-45	3.87	.54	3.48	.78	1.98	.66	4.12 ^b	.66	4.14	.55
	46+	4.06 ^{a*}	.50	3.65 ^{a*}	.75	1.97	.55	4.29	.58	4.09	.66
Years of service	0-10	3.91	.54	3.41 ^b	.83	1.96	.56	4.24	.54	4.04	.63
	11-17	3.98	.58	3.49	.73	2.01	.62	4.31	.59	4.13	.61
	18+	3.99	.53	3.68 ^{a*}	.82	1.93	.59	4.22	.62	4.11	.65

a>b, * $p<.05$

To analyze whether teachers' mean scores for strategies for handling bullying differed depending on the age group (5 age groups), a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between working with the bully, working with the victim, and enlisting other adults scores depending on age ($F(4, 390)=1.99, p<.05$; $F(4, 390)=1.99, p<.05$; $F(4, 390)=2.95, p<.05$; $F(4, 390)=1.98, p<.05$, respectively). No difference depending on gender was found on ignoring the incident and disciplining the bully subscales of strategies for handling bullying ($p>.05$). According to the results of Bonferroni test, the mean scores for working with the bully ($M=4.06, SD=.50$) and working with the victim ($M=3.65, SD=.75$) of the teachers aged 46 years or over were significantly higher than the mean scores of the teachers aged between 24-30 years for working with the bully ($M=3.77, SD=.44$) and working with the victim ($M=3.21, SD=.88$). Additionally, the mean scores for enlisting other adults of the teachers aged between 31-35 years ($M=4.42, SD=.52$) were observed to be significantly higher ($p<.05$) than the mean scores of the teachers aged between 24-30 years ($M=4.10, SD=.50$) and of the teachers aged between 41-45 years ($M=4.12, SD=.66$) for enlisting other adults.

Similarly, in order to find out whether teachers' strategies for handling bullying differed depending on years of service (3 groups), a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. According to the findings, it was observed that working with the victim subscale significantly differed depending on years of service ($F(2, 393)=3.17, p<.05$); however, no significant difference depending on years of service was observed in the mean scores for working with the bully, ignoring the incident, enlisting other adults, and disciplining the bully subscales ($F(2, 393)=.43, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=.66, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=.92, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=.82, p>.05$, respectively). According to the results of Bonferroni test, the mean scores for working with the victim of the teachers with 18 years of service or more ($M=3.68, SD=.82$) were significantly higher than the mean scores for working with the victim of the teachers with 10 years of service or less ($M=3.41, SD=.83$).

Teachers' Perceptions of School Climate

Teachers' perceptions of school climate were analysed in terms of different demographic variables and the results have been presented in Table 4. An independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze whether teachers' perceptions of school climate differed depending on gender. The findings revealed that males perceived student relations ($t(393)=-2.035, p<.05$) and school resources ($t(393)=-2.130, p<.05$) more positively compared to females. No gender differences were found on collaboration, decision making, and instructional innovation subscales.

Table 4. School Climate Scores by Demographic Variables

		Collaboration		Decision Making		Student Relations		School Resources		Instructional Innovation	
		\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.	\bar{x}	Sd.
Gender	Female	3.54	.59	2.98	.79	3.23	.82	2.91	.68	3.36	.65
	Male	3.46	.55	3.04	.79	3.48 ^a	.76	3.08 ^a	.74	3.43	.66
Age	24-30	3.58	.59	3.00	.77	3.09 ^b	.81	2.87	.71	3.39	.64
	31-35	3.56	.57	2.98	.79	3.08 ^b	.88	2.79 ^b	.75	3.26 ^b	.62
	36-40	3.44	.59	2.97	.85	3.26	.76	2.92	.68	3.36	.70
	41-45	3.51	.61	2.98	.80	3.40	.82	3.10	.77	3.40	.68
Years of service	46+	3.51	.58	3.07	.72	3.50 ^{a*}	.69	3.12 ^{a*}	.62	3.53 ^{a*}	.58
	0-10	3.53	.58	2.94	.73	3.04 ^b	.81	2.82 ^b	.73	3.32	.61
	11-17	3.49	.59	3.03	.85	3.29 ^{a*}	.82	3.00	.65	3.35	.68
	18+	3.52	.59	3.02	.76	3.47 ^{a*}	.74	3.07 ^{a*}	.71	3.46	.65

a>b, * $p<.05$

To analyze whether the mean scores for teachers' perception of school climate differed depending on the age group (5 age groups), a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. According to the findings, no difference depending on age was found in the scores for collaboration and decision making among the subscales of teachers' perceptions of school climate. However, there was a significant difference depending on age on student relations, school resources, and instructional innovation subscales ($F(4, 390)=4.28, p<.05$; $F(4, 390)=2.72, p<.05$; $F(4, 390)=2.43, p<.05$, respectively). According to the results of Bonferroni test, the mean scores for student relations ($M=3.50, SD=.69$), school resources ($M=3.12, SD=.62$), and instructional innovation ($M=3.53, SD=.58$) of the teachers aged 46 years or over were significantly higher than the mean scores of the teachers aged between 31-35 years for student relations ($M=3.08, SD=.88$), school resources ($M=2.79, SD=.75$), and instructional innovation ($M=3.26, SD=.62$); and the mean scores of the teachers aged between 24-30 years for student relations ($M=3.09, SD=.81$).

Similarly, in order to find out whether the mean scores for teachers' perception of school climate differed depending on years of service (3 groups), a one-way analysis of variance was conducted. According to the findings, it was observed that student relations and school resources subscales significantly differed depending on years of service ($F(2, 393)=9.63, p<.05$; $F(2, 393)=4.47, p<.05$); however, no significant difference depending on years of service was observed on collaboration, decision making, and instructional innovation subscales ($F(2, 393)=.15, p<.05$; $F(2, 393)=.59, p>.05$; $F(2, 393)=1.89, p>.05$, respectively). According to the results of Bonferroni test, the mean scores for student relations of the teachers with 11-17 years of service and 18 years of service or more ($M=3.29, SD=.82$; $M=3.47, SD=.74$) were statistically and significantly higher than the mean scores for student relations of the teachers with 10 years of service or less ($M=3.04, SD=.81$). Furthermore, it was found out that the mean scores for school resources of the teachers with 18 years of service or more ($M= 3.07, SD= .71$) were statistically and significantly higher than the mean scores for school resources of the teachers with 10 years of service or less ($M= 2.82, SD= .73$).

The Regression Analysis Predicting the Coping Strategies for Handling Bullying

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate to what extent demographic variables, teachers' attitudes towards bullying, and teachers' perceptions of school climate predict the coping strategies for handling bullying (See Table 5). Ignoring the incident and disciplining the bully attitudes were not entered in the model because of the multicollinearity problem. In terms of perceived school climate, only two subscales (collaboration and instructional innovation) were added to the model. When teachers perceive high levels of collaboration in their schools, they may frequently use enlisting other adults strategy. In the first step, demographic variables, gender and age were included in the model; and in the second step, humanistic attitude, uncompassionate attitude, instructional innovation, and collaboration variables were included in the model. The correlation coefficients between coping strategies and other variables ranged between $-.14$ and $.32$. It was observed that the demographic variables explained the strategies for handling bullying at a ratio of 5% [$F(2, 390)=8.67, p<.001$]; additionally, the strategies for handling bullying were observed to be explained at a ratio of 17% with the inclusion of the other variables in the second step [$F(6, 386)=10.90, p<.001$]. Collaboration variable was not included in the model as it was not significant. According to the findings, it was observed that the variable which provided the most contribution to the model was humanistic attitude ($\beta = .319, p<.001$). It was found out that only gender ($\beta=-.14, p<.01$) variable among the significant variables included in the model predicted the coping strategies for handling bullying negatively; however, the other variables predicted the coping strategies for handling bullying positively. As a result, the coping strategies of the female teachers; the older ones; the teachers that had too much humanistic and uncompassionate attitude; and the teachers who perceived instructional innovation more positively were found to be more effective.

Table 5. Regression Analysis Predicting Coping Strategies for Handling Bullying

<i>Step 1</i>	B	SH	ß	t	p
Constant	78.81	1.40		56.28	.00
Gender	-3.39	.90	-.19	-3.76	.00
Age	.89	.31	.15	2.89	.00
R ²			.05		
F			8.67*		
<i>Step 2</i>	B	SH	ß	t	p
Constant	45.88	5.06		9.06	.00
Gender	-2.69	.86	-.15	-3.13	.00
Age	.75	.29	.09	1.98	.05
Humanistic Attitude	6.07	.98	.33	6.32	.00
Uncompassionate Attitude	1.76	.55	.16	3.17	.00
Instructional Innovation	1.80	.68	.15	2.64	.01
Collaboration	-.71	.76	-.05	-.93	.35
R ²			.17		
F			10.90*		

**p*<.05

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Bullying is reported to be the most frequently observed aggressive behaviour in schools. Teachers are seen as the most important people in the prevention of bullying. Teachers' knowledge about bullying and their solution-oriented approaches are known to be the most important factors that determine the success of prevention and intervention programmes (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). According to the research, the more knowledge teachers have the more positive attitudes they can develop towards preventing bullying. In this research, the relationships between teachers' attitudes towards bullying, their coping strategies, their perceptions of school climate, and different sociodemographic variables were analysed.

According to the results, female teachers seemed to exhibit humanistic attitude and authoritarian attitude more frequently compared to male teachers. It was an expected result to see that female teachers used humanistic attitude more because it is a more constructive attitude. On the other hand, it was surprising that authoritarian attitude was also used more frequently by female teachers. In a research in which 372 teachers participated, Balanuye (2007) who is one of the developers of the scale concerning attitudes used in this research showed that female teachers exhibited positive attitude towards peer bullying more compared to male teachers. Similarly, in the research by Yaman and Çuha (2014), primary school teachers' attitudes towards school bullying were analysed; and female teachers' attitudes were found to be more positive compared to male teachers. Another study revealed that teachers tend to discipline the bully more when the gender of the teacher and the victim is the same (Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman, 2016). In this study, no difference was found when teachers' attitudes towards peer bullying were analysed in terms of age and years of service. There are contradictory findings in the literature about this issue. For example, in one study, it was found out that teachers' attitudes towards bullying differed significantly depending on gender, but there was no difference depending on the years of experience or branch of study (Özbilen, Canbulat, & Soylu, 2017). On the other hand, in studies by Yeşilyaprak and Balanuye (2012) and Yaman and Çuha (2014), differences depending on years of service were observed. According to these studies, teachers with 21 years or more service were reported to have more positive attitudes. On the contrary, Kehres (2003) who analysed teachers' attitudes using bullying scenarios revealed that teachers aged between 40-49 years were the most ineffective age group in intervening bullying. These contradictory findings show that more number of studies should be carried out in this field with teachers of different age groups in Turkey.

In this research, we also investigated whether teachers' attitudes towards peer bullying differ depending on gender. Findings showed that female teachers used working with the victim, enlisting other adults, and disciplining the bully strategies more frequently compared to male teachers. Also in the study in which handling bullying questionnaire had been developed, it was found out that female teachers used working with the victim and enlisting other adults strategies more compared to male teachers. In another study carried out in Turkey with 1670 teachers, teachers' strategies for handling bullying were analysed and it was observed that female teachers used getting help from others strategy more compared to male teachers (Kanık, 2010). It can be stated that the obtained results are consistent with the literature; and female teachers tend to enlist other adults more compared to male teachers (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008). Besides, the strategy which was reported to be used the least for handling bullying by the teachers was "ignoring the incident" strategy, which shows that teachers cannot intervene in bullying situations adequately. Even though this result is promising, future research should focus on why teachers tend to use this strategy. In her study based on observations, Limber (2002) found out that only 18% of the teachers had intervened in the situation, and only 35% of the students thought that the teachers were concerned with the situation. This may have resulted from being unable to identify the incident since teachers did not have enough knowledge concerning bullying, or it may also have stemmed from social desirability. It was found out that teachers showed differences depending on age in using coping strategies. As a result, it was observed that teachers aged 46 years or over used working with the bully and working with the victim strategies more often compared to teachers aged between 24-30 years. That is, teachers with longer years of service used working with the bully and working with the victim strategies statistically and significantly more compared to teachers with shorter years of service. No study has been found in the literature that analyses the relation of age and years of service with the strategies for handling bullying. Therefore, the results obtained from this research will guide future studies or intervention programmes to be developed for teachers.

Additionally, when school climate variable was analysed, it was observed that male teachers perceived more positive student relations and school resources compared to female teachers. In their study that analysed teachers' perception of school climate, Huang and Fraser (2009) found out that there was a significant difference depending on gender on student relations and decision making subscales of school climate. Their findings show that male teachers considered student relations more positive compared to female teachers. This result may be related to other gender differences that were obtained. Since male teachers did not think there was a problem in student relations, they were not able to identify bullying or could not use the appropriate strategy. Moreover, male teachers may not recognize bullying behaviors adequately because of gender roles in the society. If they think that bullying behaviors are normal part of children's development, it will be difficult to recognize and prevent these behaviors.

We also conducted regression analyses to predict teachers' coping strategies for handling bullying. Results from t-tests and ANOVA showed that age and gender are significant predictors on coping strategies. These results are consistent with previous literature (Burger, Strohmeier, Sprober, Bauman, & Rigby, 2015). Attitudes were also added to the analyses because they have an important role in predicting coping strategies (Balanuye, 2007). Similarly, when there is instructional innovation in the school, teachers may think that they are supported by the school. However, results indicated that instructional innovation was significant but collaboration was not. Finally, according to the regression results, gender, age and humanistic attitude predicted the coping strategies for handling bullying significantly. In short, the coping strategies of the female teachers, the older teachers, the teachers that

had too much humanistic and uncompassionate attitude, and the teachers who perceived instructional innovation more positively were found out to be more effective. Findings showed that teachers who have humanistic attitude used more effective coping strategies. Contrary to the expectation, teachers who have authoritarian attitude also used more effective coping strategies. This finding may be related to the culture. Moreover, attitudes are different than behaviors. Due to recent educational reforms, corporal punishment or harsh discipline by the teachers were prevented at schools. This situation may explain the difference in teachers' behaviors and their attitudes.

To summarize, this research shows that different demographic variables have significantly predicted teachers' attitudes towards bullying, their coping strategies for handling bullying, and their perceptions of school climate. It is stated in the literature that teachers play a major role in preventing bullying and serve as a protective factor for the victims at the same time. However, there are only few studies in Turkey that analyze the significant role of teachers in bullying. That is why this study will guide teachers and researchers in preventing violence in schools and in implementing prevention and intervention programmes. Nevertheless, there are some limitations to this research.

The gender distribution of the teachers (mostly women) participated in this research differed from each other. In future research, equal gender distribution can increase the generalizability of the results. Similarly, years in teaching experience is important. In the recent years, there has been important reforms in educational policy including having more child focused and child friendly pedagogy instead of using harsh discipline techniques. Senior teachers might have a difficulty in adopting these new reforms in their classrooms. However, senior teachers might develop effective coping strategies because of their experience at schools. Based on the findings of previous studies, it is important to consider that school type or school climate may be a mediator. Another limitation concerning the generalizability of the research is that the study was carried out only in the public middle schools in one subprovince of İzmir. Research show that the school type (private, public) and the school level (elementary, middle, high school) affect the attitudes towards bullying, the coping strategies, and the school climate. For this reason, in future studies, different geographical regions, school types, and school levels should be included. Besides, in this research, survey method was used to collect information from the teachers. While answering the questionnaire, the teachers may have given more positive answers in order to increase their social desirability. The number of observational studies are increasing in the recent years. These studies not only prevent social desirability but also provide an opportunity to study the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. Future research should include multimethods including in class observations.

Despite all these limitations, this research has presented important information regarding teachers' attitudes towards peer bullying and their coping strategies which is a rarely studied topic in Turkey. The intervention research conducted especially in recent years show that school-based and holistic approaches are more effective in preventing bullying. These programs should include all the stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, students, parents) (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Previous research showed that teachers need help and support in handling bullying incidents. These prevention programs especially will be helpful to teachers. Moreover, bullying prevention topic such as definition, types, and prevention strategies would be included in the curriculum of teacher education at the undergraduate level. Furthermore, schools should develop bullying prevention policies and give a message to their students that bullying is not tolerated in the school. Perceived school climate is also an important factor that needs to be taken into consideration. Positive school climate affect teachers' coping strategies and attitudes as well as students' sense of safety and school success. Therefore, schools should

create positive school climate with the help of education policies and positive school practices. Schools that have a holistic structure and effective policies should include parents as well. In conclusion, since teachers play a crucial role in the lives of the students, our schools will be safer with the improvement of teachers' knowledge and skills about both the definition and types of bullying and the handling of these aggressive behaviours.

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