

Effectiveness of reduction of bullying training on the rate of victim behaviors in children

Nasim Esteki Azad¹, Shole Amiri²

Journal of Research & Health
Social Development & Health Promotion
Research Center
Vol. 3, No.3, 2013
Pages: 429-435
Original Article

1. **Correspondence to:** MA in Psychology and Training Children with Special Needs, Department of Behavioral Science & Psychology, Isfahan University, Isfahan, Iran
Tel/Fax: +98 311 7932128
E-mail: Azad.psy@gmail.com
2. PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor of Psychology Department, Isfahan University, Isfahan, Iran

Received: 21 Oct 2012
Accepted: 18 Feb 2013

How to cite this article: Esteki Azad N, Amiri Sh. Effectiveness of reduction of bullying training program on the rate of victim behaviors in children. *J Research Health* 2013; 3(3): 429-435.

Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Reduction of Bullying Training Program on the rate of reduction victim behaviors in male's students of elementary school in Isfahan City. An experimental research with pre-test, post-test, and follow up (after six months of the post-test) design was carried out to pursue this purpose. Statistical population included all the male's bully children in the years of 1388-1389 in the city of Isfahan, Iran. Research sample included 40 Bullying children who were chosen after three stages of sampling by random multi-stage method and randomly assigned to two control and experimental groups. The research tools were Sociometry and Peer Relationship Questionnaire, with three subscales including bullying, victim & prosocial behaviors. The Experimental group took part in 10 sessions of Reduction of Bullying Training Program twice a week, while the control group did not received any intervention. ANOVA analysis with Repeated Measures used to analyze the data collected by SPSS-20 software. The result indicated that Reduction of Bullying Training Program significantly decreased the rate of victim behaviors and all its dimensions. Therefore the most important application of this research is the effectiveness to reduce of bullying and victim problems in schools and general society.

Keywords: Bullying, Training Program, Victim

Introduction

At the present time, bullying (Bullying) is a universal and important problem in the area of social psychology and health, especially at the school age. Results of international researches conducted in all countries has shown that between 4 to 45 percent of the children is bullying or victim [1].

Many researchers have proposed a definition of bullying, such as Greene proposed a definition that includes the following critical items: 1. it is bullying that causes harm, intimidation and harassment occurs to the victim (Victim) 2. Bullying has not already been raised. 3. It occurs frequently. 4. Bullies have higher physical power than the victims (bullying occurs in an unequal situation of power with different social status). And 5. Bullying occurs in small social groups whose members are familiar with each other [2]. Bullying is described as an aggressive behavior in children which has been happened

frequently and systematically at all levels against the poorer individuals in the class [3]. So, obviously bullying is different from fighting or quarrelling occurs between two individuals with equal social status and physical strength, though not all conflicts in schools are considered as bullying, but bullying is clearly a subset of conflict behavior that is different according to the degree of severity and seriousness [4,5]. The bullying child is an unsafe and uncomfortable child whom other children distance themselves from him. He sometimes noticed this, but did not know how to communicate other peers. Maybe when he sees symptoms of vulnerability in any child, he remembers his own memories; and the anger of the humiliation causes him to attack the other child. Or to care for himself against others threats, he frightens them. Rigby and Cox believe that out of every ten students, one is

bully. There is a variety of instants and classifications for bullying behavior, including: direct physical bullying like battling, pounding, and financial loss; direct verbal bullying like mocking others or scorning somebody's name; non-verbal or in other words indirect bullying, physical, or emotional like intimidating others through gestures or social exclusion of individuals; compound bullying such as sending an offensive message through mail [8].

So, the imbalance and inequality of power between the bully and the victim may not only be in the form of physical strength but also be related to personality traits [9].

Tatum and Herbert suggest that victims are children who are anxious, more uncomfortable, more cautious, more sensitive, and quieter than usual. They are also have closer ties with their parents, and may receive excessive care. Bully causes them to be more lonely and consider themselves deserved to be injured or mocked, and this results in forming a poor self image. Physically most of the victims are smaller than the bullies and usually have less ability to take care of their own [10].

Often the bullying children were also bullying victims [6]. Two critical roles in bullying must be discriminated: "The victim role" for a child who experiences bullying once or several times a week lasted at least for three months. 'The bullying role' is played by someone who has bullied their peers once or several times a week for three months. But the other category are people who are consistent with both the description and play both roles of "victim/bullying" (Victim-Bully Role). This role is originated from the victim role which resulted in two distinct types of victim, passive victim or active victim (who shows bullying behavior and aggression against bullies and gives the same response)]. Who play the victim/ bullying role are depressed more than the other two groups and exhibit a high rate of physical symptoms which caused by anxiety [11].

According to results of previous studies, bullying occurs along with the experiences of psychiatric disorders and emotional and social problems [12]. There is a positive relationship bullying behaviors, alcohol use and smoking. Also they have difficulty with skills related to problem solving [13]. Egan and Perry found

that children with low self-esteem are more likely at risk of victimization and this increase leads to a low self-esteem in the school year. Cuchendrfer and Ladd reported that individuals being victim in fall results in their mismatch in next spring [14]. Nufziger a research conducted on 100 children has found that low self-control acts as a modifying factor and an interface case for bullying and crime.

Schafer and colleagues in a study on 1525 school children have found that children who bully have low social status among their peers, and bullying and victimization patterns can predict their social status among them. Bullies often show higher levels of behavior problems, have low social status among their classmates, and criticized negative [13]. D. Hanin a research also has found that children who bully often have problems making friends, and mostly due to their negative behavior, have low social status among their classmates [16]. Mertens [17] also investigated the social status of oppressors. To this end, he involved 1230 bullying children, at the age of 10 to 12, from different schools in Northland with use of measures of self-reported and teacher evaluation. The conclusion reached was that bullying children never use socially desirable behaviors as a way of contact with their peers, but known and accepted among others for the dominance and control they have over other children. He recommended that by teaching the decrease of bullying behavior, we can teach the socially desirable behaviors to these children.

Also Olweus in 1980, after a study conducted on 2,500 children from 42 primary and secondary schools in Bergen and Norway, has announced that the effectiveness of Olweus didactic programs in reducing bullying was 50%. In the same year, again he reiterated the same study on other group of 3200 children and succeeded to reduce 21 or 38 percent of the victims and bullying problems. In 2004, in a project regarding dealing with bullying, he also reported that victims self-reported a 42% reduction (33% of boys and 48% of girls), and bullies a 52% reduction (64% of boys and 45% of girls) [18]. 49% [18]. Studying more than 450 schools located in Norway, Olweus likewise in a research entitled 'Investigation of Olweus didactic program in 2005' has

found that by applying this program we can decrease bullying and bullying/victim problems from 32 to 49 percent. Black and Jackson also investigated the effectiveness of Olweus didactic programs in six secondary schools located in northern America and reported that the effectiveness rate of the program on reducing bullying behavior was 65%. Raymond executed Olweus didactic program in two high schools in Midwestern during the academic year [18], Olweus, and a six hundred and ninety-nine students filled the victimization / bullying Olweus scale at the beginning and end of the school year. MONCOVA results showed that between the experimental and control groups, differences in victimization and bullying test scores are obvious.

Consequently, Olweus didactic program was a profitable for decreasing the rate of bullying/victim behavior and helped to create a safe place and to increase socially desirable behavior in schools.

In our country, few researches have been conducted on therapeutic and didactic measures about bullying. Poorseyed, Amiri, and Molavi have conducted a research entitled the effectiveness of didactic program in decreasing bullying in children on the rate of bullying behavior in five grade elementary students in the city of Abarkuh. They concluded that the didactic program of decreasing bullying in children as an effective didactic method is useable for decreasing bullying/victimization in bullying children.

Many theoretical and experimental gaps specifically in our country in the field of bullying cause the investigation of didactic program of decreasing bullying based on Olweus method and practical guidance of self-control to be taken as the research goal in order to understand we can reduce the severity of the victim's behavior by increasing the optimized function of moral and behavior (including self-control and problem solving)? The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs to reduce bullying behaviors of victims in children.

Method

this empirical research in terms of aim is classified in applied research group.

Furthermore, in terms of research design, it is an experimental design with pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. The population is composed of all the bully boy children in primary school in the academic year 1999-2000. In order to implement the plan, 40 bully boy (the second and fourth grades of elementary school 20 children) were selected. The sampling in this research is random multi-stage sampling which was carried out in three stages. First, one part of school district was selected randomly out of six parts in the city of Isfahan. Then, after attending the selected district, 4 elementary boy schools were selected randomly. Next, attending the selected schools and the second and fourth grades of those schools, the researcher had implemented population measuring among all the students attending the classes. Afterwards, 40 children were randomly selected as a model out of all the students who had the more selection of bullying, and then randomly divided into two groups of 20 and were positioned in the experimental and control groups.

Then, Olweus method presented in his book was bought and an e-mail was sent to him about permission of its translation, then regarding the implementation of the method, first the selected discussions was rendered into Persian next revised by the supervisor. And then the final run was made. Researcher acted based on instructions given by Olweus in numerous books and articles. It should be noted that the method used in this research is a fusion method respectively based on the guidelines given by Olweus [21] and practical guide to a life of self-control [22]. Reduce bullying intervention program on the experimental group was administered (control group did not receive any training action).

The training was provided in the lab or teachers' office, which were quiet and large. Each session began with a review of the content and assignments prior to the meeting. Then the researcher started the training session, and at the end of every session some related exercises were given as take-home. At the next meeting, they were evaluated, tested, and encouraged. After the training sessions, post-tests were administered on the experimental and control groups (rigby and easily peer relationships scale). For the

independent variables 10 group training sessions were held. Each session lasted one-hour, and two sessions were held per week. And all 20 patients in the experimental group, with the assistance and cooperation of school principals and teachers, were participated in the training sessions and the independent variables of the study were trained. Furthermore, the statistical potency was close to 1 and probability level was close to zero, indicating the sample size is sufficient. In order to investigate the required data, the method of measurement and peer relationships Scale questionnaire were used, in the following the questionnaire, scoring method, validity, and reliability will be discussed:

1. Method of measurement: The case of those children were asked to measure and name their peers based on their understanding of them and of the research questions asked of them. In the method of measurement, we want the attended children in a class or a group to grade their peers based on bullying and diagnostic criteria. The researchers often asked children to report the social status of their peers. In a method of measurement, children were asked to introduce among their classmates some whom they liked and some whom they disliked, or ranked their peers according to their demand for cooperation [23]. The method of measurement used in this research was based on a method in which each child was asked to write down privately among his classmates the names of three with the characteristics of bullying, victim, social desirable behavior on a piece of paper given to him. Then, children's responses were

extracted and the children who had the most choices among peers as a bully, were identified the bully.

2. Children's peer relationships Scale: This scale was prepared in 1993 by Rigby and Easly, to investigate the relationship between primary school children's peers. It's a self-report questionnaire that is completed by the child, the questionnaire included 20 questions on a Likert scale that is graded of 1 to 5 will be. The scale has been translated and validated for the first time by Tabaeian, Amiri, Molavi [24]. Three sub-scales has been included in this scale: victim subscale (which has been used in this study) (70.0), bullying subscale (73.0) and prosocial behavior subscale (The coefficient alpha 53.0). After the training sessions, post-tests were conducted on the test and control groups. Then after about six months of the post-test, follow-up was performed on control and experimental groups. For data analysis, mean index was used; and to test the hypotheses regarding the following assumptions, SPSS-20 software and ANOVA with repeated measures (Repeated Measures ANOVA) was used.

Results

Table 1 shows the mean and the standard deviation of the experimental and control groups at the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up at sacrifice subscale. Based on this information, the mean of the experimental groups after including the independent variable (educational program to reduce bullying), has fallen in victim subscale.

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation of the experimental and control groups at pretest, posttest, and follow-up in sacrifice subscale measuring peer relationships

Follow-up		Post-test		Pre-test		Group	Subscale
SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean		
±2.38	7.75	±2.81	8.60	±4.38	12.35	Experimental	Sacrifice
±3.46	12.15	±3.27	12.30	±3.15	11.95	Control	

According to Kolmogorov - Smirnov ($P=0.81$ Statistic and $P=0.80$) and Levene ($F=0.97$ and $P=0.83$), box ($F=1.33$ and $P=0.23$) Mauchly and Sphericity ($P=0.60$), based on a set of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variances, and covariance, there were the requirements for use of ANOVA test with repeated measures ANOVA.

The results of ANOVA test with repeated measures according to Table 2 show that in experimental group there are significant differences between the victim behavior means before and after the intervention. There are also significant differences between control and experimental groups ($P<0.007$). The test results showed that the interaction

between group membership and behavior of the victim is significant for each measure ($P < 0.001$). This indicates that the behavior or dependent variable is not the same in both control and experimental groups. In other words, according to descriptive findings the

decline of victim behavior intention in experimental group in comparison to control group was significant. The intervention bullying reducing program could decline the victim behavior intention in the experimental group.

Table 2 Summary of results of ANOVA with repeated measures on reducing bullying intervention program on children with victims of bullying behavior.

Observed Power	Parital Eta Squared	Sig	F	Mean Squares	df	Sum of Squares	Source
0.99	0.24	0.001	12.35	53.20	2	106.40	Measured three times (Pre, Pos & F)
0.79	0.17	0.007	8.18	197.63	1	197.63	Group (Experimental & Control)
0.99	0.29	0.001	15.62	67.23	2	134.46	Interaction between group and measured three times

Discussion

The present study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs to reduce bullying on behaviors of victims on the second and fourth grade elementary school boys in Isfahan. Hypotheses presented in this study indicate the effectiveness of the training reducing bullying on behaviors of victims. Findings of this research is consistent with the Olweus results in 1980, 2004, 2005 [18], Black and Jackson [19], Raymond [18]; Poorseyed et al [20]. As regard to the mentioned studies and findings, about the likely reasons of the effectiveness of the training reducing bullying we can say that it is creating a golden opportunity for bullying children to learn the critical and basic skills of social and peer relationship and develop a kind of self-control in their behavior. As for this reason, too, the study selected sample was from the elementary school to be a golden opportunity early cognitive and social development of self-control and problem-solving skills for optimal use. As long as the abusive behaviors in children have not been established and as such do not lead to behavioral disorders, the incidence of them should be declined. Also the selected sample from second and fourth grade and the program implementation in the form of group composed of two different age categories with different physical power make it possible for the bullying children to have great incentive to change. And when a child takes a part, others have the opportunity to witness their peers' behavior and take that as a pattern for

themselves in a comfortable surrounding and away from the fighting situation. Also they have the opportunity to think about knowing the feelings, whyness of bullying; they become conscious about their behavior, and have the opportunity to express their own experiences and share others. Also in this program, a variety of interactive activities creates greater incentive to participate in the sessions was to show its effects. In this program, the attempt was to teach children in school the self-control skills, cognition, emotion, empathy, problem-solving of children's bullying behaviors, and socially desirable behaviors. Learning these skills by children could create the context for development of interaction and communication with peers and improve the children self respect, because most of the bullying children due to damage to the mentioned skills don't enjoy any social status or acceptance among their peers.

Furthermore, between the child relationship and his social skills, there is a cyclical pattern of effects. For example, the undesirable and annoying behavior first leads to peers rejection, and this in turn leads the rejected child to access acceptance and social statues, and these attempts themselves results in more rejection. Furthermore, constant rejection by peers likely influences the child self-respect and others expectation, and this in turn can results in intensification of social problems and can create problems in other fields. Consequently, the training reducing

bullying based on the Olweus's method of reducing bullying with self-control techniques can cause responsibility, empathy, problem solving, delay requirements and tolerance, the role of both the victim and bullying, relaxation, and relaxation to enhance self-esteem and self-acceptance by others, and thus the rate of bullying, disturbing and vile behavior decrease. The majority of bullying children were also victims involved in others bullying. So, for good relationships with peers and successful interactions, not only it is essential for the bullying child to avoid his disturbing behaviors, but he must avoid being the victim of other bullying powers by learning techniques against them to be able to obtain a good social status. In this program, by use of acting techniques children are trained how to act against bullying children, and also if the bullying children understand that their disturbing behavior can cause negative emotional reactions in others, they may not iterate that behavior next times. Stability of the test results obtained after six months of implementation, in the follow-up stage is indicative of reliability and generalizability of the results and effectiveness of the training program to reduce bullying.

Conclusion

growing friendship with peers is one of the main aspects of social development in children. On the contrary, undesirable communication with the peers is considered as a stressful experience for children. On one hand, the children are stressed by such experience, on the other hand, the lack of support and social status associated with it makes the children are more vulnerable in the face of life stress. Bullying is one of the roles that the children chose in relation to their peers due to the dominance over their friends and peers. The bullying child is an unsafe and uncomfortable person. Other children distance themselves from him. He sometimes noticed this, but did not know how to communicate with peers and be sincere. Due to the need for an educational program for children bullying to learn communication skills in peer relationships, this venture was considered in this research. bullying reduce mechanism naturally affects

self-sacrifice and socially desirable behavior in children, a child who learns how to form relationships with peers through good behavior, no longer select bullying as the best way. Also, he no longer is victim against other bullies.

This study was limited to children in "bullying groups ". It is clear that parents and teachers' comments in this regard can be complementary to peers' comments. Also, According to the present of the experimental group, Effects could result in exposure to be effective and the limitations of the study has been, So It is suggested that in future studies to control out-group discussion sessions will be arranged.

Other limitations of this study were not investigating other disorders associated with the phenomenon of bullying. Although in previous studies [25], it has been confirmed that harassment behavior disorders (attention deficit hyperactive disorder, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder) were considered as bullying, along with the disorder, it is recommended that in further research associated disorders will be considered; and for a more generalized results, the scheme will be run in girls population and in the rest areas.

Acknowledgments

The Department of Education and the six areas of Isfahan are appreciated sincerely for cooperation in data collection.

Contributions

Study design: NEA, SA

Data collection and analysis: NEA, SA

Manuscript preparation: NEA

Conflict of interest

"The authors declare that they have no competing interest".

References

1. Fleming LC, Jakobsen KH. Bullying and symptoms of depression in Chilean middle school students. *Online J Public Health Inform*2009; 79(3): 123-135.
2. Hulseley C. Examining the psychometric properties of self-report measures of bullying:

- Reliability of the peer relations questionnaire [dissertation]. Kansas: Kansas State University 2005; pp: 38.
3. Schäfer M, Korn S, Brodbeck FC, Wolk C, Schalz H. Bullying roles in changing contexts: The stability of victims and bully roles from primary to secondary school. 2004; [20 screens] Available at URL: http://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/322/1/FB_165.pdf. Accessed at March 10, 2012.
 4. Salmivalli C, Peets K. Bullies, Victims and bully-victim relationships in middle childhood and early adolescence. In: Rubin KH, Bukowski WM, Laursen B, eds. Handbook of peer interactions, relationships, and groups. New York, Guilford Press, 2009; pp: 322-340.
 5. Olweus D. Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do. Oxford: Blackwell; 2006.
 6. Brazelton T. Mastering anger and aggression the brazelton way. (Translated by A). shokr-zade, 1389), Ghom: Shahriyar pub; 2005. [In Persian]
 7. Rigby K, Cox L. The contribution of bullying at school and low self-esteem to acts of delinquency among Australian teenagers. *Pers Individ Dif* 1996; 21(4): 609-612.
 8. Bernard E, Milne L. Safe schools are effective schools (school procedures and practices for responding to students who Bully) [dissertation]. Melbourne: University of Melbourne 2008; pp: 123.
 9. Jolliffe D, Farrington DP. Examining the relationship between low empathy and bullying. *Aggress Behav* 2006; 32: 540-550.
 10. Fontana D. Psychology for teachers: Social relationships. (Translated by S. Ebrahimi-Ghavam, 1385), Tehran: Nobahar pub; 1981. [In Persian]
 11. Georgiou SN, Stavrinides P. Bullies, victims and bully-victims: Psychological profiles and attribution styles. *J Sch Psychol* 2008; 29(5): 574-589.
 12. Brennan ML, Bradshaw CP, Sawyer AL. Examining developmental differences in the social-emotional problems among frequent bullies, victims, and bully/victims. *Psychol Sch* 2009; 46(2): 100-115.
 13. Keffe FK. An evaluation of the olweus bullying prevention program [dissertation]. Hofstra: Hofstra University 2008; pp: 313.
 14. Fox LC, Baulton JM. Friendship as a moderator of the relationship between social skills problems and peer victimization. *Aggress Behav* 2006; 32: 110-121.
 15. Nofziger S. The cause of low self-control the influence of maternal self-control. *J Res Crime Delinq* 2008; 45(2): 191-224.
 16. Kuk PN. Understanding school bullying: A general theory of crime and empirical findings [dissertation]. San Antonio: University of Texas 2010; pp: 142.
 17. Mertens N. Social competence in bullies, defenders and neutrals: A Comparison [dissertation]. Utrecht: University of Utrecht 2010; pp: 20.
 18. Reymond AL. An evaluation of the olweus bullying prevention program's effectiveness in a high school setting [dissertation]. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati 2009; pp: 212.
 19. Black S, Jackson E. Using bullying incident density to evaluate the Olweus bullying prevention programme. *Sch Psychol Int* 2007; 28: 623-638.
 20. Purseyed R, Amiri Sh, Molavi H. Effectiveness of education programs to reduce bullying in fifth grade. *Journal of Research on Exceptional Children* 2010; 10(2): 113-12. [In Persian]
 21. Olweus D. The Olweus bullying prevention Program. 1993; [5 screens] Available at URL: <http://www.Clemson.Edu/Olweus>. Accessed at March 10, 2012.
 22. Janbozorgi M, Noori N, Agah-haris M. Ethic's education, social behavior and the ability to children. Tehran: Arjmand pub; 2010. [In Persian]
 23. Amiri Sh. A developmental study of relationship between social status and adaptive behavior, social skills and conduct disorders from childhood to adolescence [dissertation]. Tehran: Tehran University 2001. pp: 229. [In Persian]
 24. Tabaeian R, Amiri Sh, Molavi H. Factor analysis, reliability, convergent and discriminate validity of "The Peer Relationships Questionnaire" (PRQ). *Journal of Studies of Learning and Instruction*. In Press. [In Persian]
 25. Steki-Azad N, Amiri Sh, Molavi H. A comparison of the social status of young children with disruptive behavior disorder and normal children in the school stage. *Journal of Social Psychology Research* 2011; 1(1): 1-15. [In Persian]