IS VICTIMIZATION OBSERVED IN GREEK SCHOOLS?

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Abstract

The main goal of this research is to investigate the various aspects of victimization as a result of the bullying that occurs in Greek schools during late childhood. Inparticular, 272 students aged 10 to 12 from schools in Aitoloakarnania Prefecture (Greece) took part. Mynardand Joseph's *MultidimensionalPeer-VictimizationScale* (2000) was used to collect the data. Findings showed that the commonest type of victimization observed in Greek schools is verbal victimization, followed by social manipulation, grabbing/destroying things and physical violence. Furthermore, statistically significant differences between participants' age and gender were not edregarding the types of victimization. Our findings are argued in reference torelevant findings of the international literature.

Keywords: late childhood, school bullying, victimization, types of victimization.

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Introduction

School bullying is a phenomenon that occurs more and more in the recent years. School bullying is a widespread social problem where some children deliberately and systematically abuse their power to dominate over and harm others, at a physical, social and/or emotional level (Orpinas & Horne, 2006, Smith 2013). This phenomenon affects a great number of kids worldwide and its victims run an increased risko fhaving physical and mental problems, following them in the rest of their lives (see the Hawker&Boulton review, 2000). It is no coincidence that victimization and bullying are characterized as unique social phenomena, requiring interdisciplinary analysis. There are have been several attempts to give a definition of school bullying. Some researchers simply describe the phenomenon, whereas others attempt to set criteria, so that the term "bullying", in an uncritical generalization, does not describe any kind of conflict that may arise in the school environment (Smith, Cowie, Olafson, & Liefooghe, 2002). According to Olweus "a student is bullied or victimized when repeatedly and constantly subjected to negative actions by one of more other students" (2009, 29). By "negative actions" we mean the case when a person deliberately causes or attempts to cause harm to another person. This case can either be verbal or come as a result of physical contact. Obscene gestures or grimaces may also lead to such a case. However, the most important criterion to define bullying is duration. By taking duration in to account, occasional acts of violence are considered random and are therefore excluded. At this point, we need to note that the term "school bullying" should not be used to describe any quarrels between two or more students of the same physical strength. In order to successfully use the term, there has to be difference in strength, so that the victim feels weak and helpless towards the bully (Olweus, 2009).There are more than one type of bullying. Researchers acknowledge two basic types. Olweus (2009) seperates *direct* bullying from *indirect* bullying. *Direct* bullying is defined as "relatively straight attacks on the victim", where as *indirect* bullying is defined as the type that "has the form of socialisolation and deliberate exclusion from a group" (Olweus, 2009, 30). *Indirect* bullying has less apparent characteristics than *direct* bullying.

Quiroz, Arnette and Stephens (2006) mention that direct bullying refers to a generally "straight" attack, whereas indirect bullying appears rather concealed. The first type includes: a) beating, pushing, tripping, b) verbal threatening, swearing, making racist comments and c) enforcement for errands, as well as pocket-money stealing. Indirect bullying includes behaviors such as: a)

social rejection and isolation, b) ridicule, c) manipulation of friends and relationships, d) threatening messages and e) blackmailing.

Other researchers give different names to the types of bullying. Particularly, it can be distinguished between *indirect* ,*social* and *relational* bullying (Björkqvist, 2001. Crick&Nelson, 2002. Underwood, 2003). Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) distinguish four types of bullying: *physical*, *directly verbal*, *indirectly verbal* and *general*. More specifically, the relevant literature also presents the following classification of the types and expressions of bullying (Olweus, 2007;Sharp&Smith, 1994;Suckling&Temple, 2001):

(a) *Indirect* or *physical* bullying: Use of violence, such as punching, kicking, pushing.

(b) *Verbal* bullying: This includes blackmail, swearing, racist comments, mocking nicknames, taunting.

(c) *Indirect*, *social* or *relational* bullying: It refers to the making of a clan that excludes the victim from the group, using gossip, slander etc.

(d) *Sexual* bullying: Sexual teasing with non-consensual physical contact. Sexual bullying is different from sexual harassment (Dunkun, 1999. Olweus, 1993;Rigby, 2008;Smith, Nika, &Papasideri, 2004).

(e) *Electronic* or *cyber* bullying: This type appeared recently with the development of technology and it is defined by Chibbaro (2007,65-68) as "the act of using technologies such as emails, cell phones, or text messaging with the intent of causing harm to others".

(f) *Racist* bullying or *racial* harassment: It is observed when the aggressive behavior targets a person that belongs to a different race.

We need to note here that, in many cases, these types of bullying are combined. Additionally, these behaviors may either be expressed by one person or by a group of people (Rigby, 2008;Ronald, 2000).

The way a stdent is involved in a bullying incident determines their role in it. There are four different roles that students may have: (a) *bullies* or *doers*, (b) *victims*, (c) *bullies/victims* and (d) *others involved* (Sharp&Smith, 1994;Suckling&Temple, 2001;Whitney&Smith, 1993). Most researches on bullying and victimization focus on the differences between the two genders. However, there are more factors related to the phenomenon and to the various reactions of the people involved. Specifically:

As far as gender is concerned, relevant researches have shown that boys are more exposed to bullying than girls, and this is more apparent at the age of 12 to 15 years (Olweus, 1993;Rigby, 1997). According to Olweus (1993), the percentage of boys that have exercised violence is a quadruple of the percentage of girls. Several researches mention that boys mainly adopt physical-direct types of aggression, where as girls mainly show verbal-indirect aggression (Boultonetal., 2001;Olweus, 1993;Rigby, 1996;Whitney&Smith, 1993). Nevertheless, in some other researches, no differences regarding the exercise of direct or indirect bullying are noticed between the two genders (Andreou, 2000;Rigby, 2008;Slee&Rigby, 1993). In an older research, where gender was related to the role that someone plays in a bullying incident, it was noticed that boys are often involved as helpers and supporters of the bullies, whereas girls play the role of indifferent and defensive (Papastamou, 1986).

The Greek scientific community became concerned about bullying in the beginning of the 21st century. More particularly, the first extensive research in Greece was carried out by Pateraki and Chountoumadi in 2001. This research was carried out in Athens with a sample of 1,312 students aged 8-12 years. Findings showed that 14.7% of the participants had been involved in bullying incidents being the victims, 6.2% being the bullies and 4.8% being the bullies/victims for at least a week. Later, in 2006, the Greek National Centre for Social Research carried out a significant research on bullying in Greece. This research was carried out in 101 Greek schools. Findings showed that the percentage of victimization is higher in ages from 6 to 12 years old than from 12 to 18 years old. More specifically, 11% of the students aged 12 to 18 have been subject to physical violence, where as the corresponding percentage of students aged 6 to 12comes up to 37%. This shows that the phenomenon is deescalated with age. In contrast, the percent ages of bullies at school do not significantly differ by age, since 11% of the mare from 12 to 15 years old and 13% are students in the primary school (Greek National Centre for Social Research - NCSR, 2006). Similarly, Galanaki and Amanaki (2009) research aimed to investigate the individual types of school bullying in pre-adolescence and early adolescence. According to that research, bullying and victimization occurred worryingly often. Approximately one out of two children said they had been either bully of victim of bullying, whereas systematic victimization percentage came up to 12.7% (Galanaki& Amanaki, 2009).

In parallel, several researches how that the phenomenon of victimization is deescalated with age (NCSR, 2006;Beze, 1996;Chantzi, Pateraki, & Chountoumadi, 2000). In particular, the Galanaki and Amanaki(2009) research found that the phenomena of verbal victimization, exclusion, physical and indirect victimization, grabbing and destroying things, threatening, racial and sexual victimization are significantly reduced with age, whereas electronic victimization occurs significantly more often. However, this is not the same in bullying; on the contrary, there is an increase of verbal, sexual and electronic bullying with age. In other words, "it seems that it is the self-reported victimization that declines with age and not the self-reported bullying" (Galanaki&Amanaki, 2009, p. 378).

The present research

In the context of the above, we designed the research so that it investigates the phenomenon of victimization in late childhood or pre-adolescence, and to reveal the various aspects of it. Specifically, an attempt was made to measure the frequency of victimization and, more particularly, to note the various forms-aspects of it as well as how they are interrelated. The research is focused on children aged from 10 to 12 years old, in the age range of late childhood or pre-adolescence. This age range was selected because it is considered to be a crucial age for peer relationships shaping and team compliance. Furthermore, this research investigates whether the various forms-aspects of victimization vary according to gender and age.

Method

Participants

135 students aged from 10 to 11 years old and 137 students aged from 11 to 12 years old took part in the research. The sample was taken randomly from schools in Aitoloakarnania, Greece.

Research Tools

Mynard and Joseph's (2000) *MultidimensionalPeer-VictimizationScale*was used, after being translated into Greek and adapted for the needs of this research. It consists of 49questions.Before answering the questionnaire, participants were given a descriptive presentation of the notions of bullying and victimization. More particularly, the following was explained to them:

"We say that one or more students *bully* a fellow student when they deliberately attempt to harm or scare them. This may be done physically (e.g. beating them), verbally (e.g. mocking them), or psychologically (e.g. excluding them from their fellowships). The bully kid attempts to impose on the other children. Furthermore, it is probable that a kid bullies others using a combination of ways, such as threatening and beating, or swearing and excluding them from fellowships".

Procedure

The scale was given by the researchers to the school classes, after obtaining the parental consent to fill in the questionnaire. Specifically, participants were asked to answer truthfully, where as all research ethics principles were observed for the protection of the participants' personal data.

Results

At first, the *Cronbach'salpha* internal consistency reliability in dexes for the fours ubscales of the *MultidimensionalPeer-Victimization Scale* were investigated, per gender, per age and for the total of participants. It was observed that the four subscales show satisfactory internal consistency, with the only exception of subscale Grabbing/Destroying Things at the age group 11-12 years old (Table 1).

Table 1

Cronbach's alpha reliability indexes for Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation and Grabbing/Destroying Things, per gender, per age and for the total.

Variables	Boys (*n*=150)	Girls (*n*=121)	10-11 years old (*n*=133)	11-12 years old (*n*=138)	Total (*N*=271)
Physical Victimization	0,69	0,61	0,67	0,69	0,67
Verbal Victimization	0,62	0,70	0,68	0,61	0,65
Social Manipulation	0,80	0,76	0,81	0,77	0,80
Grabbing/Destroying Things	0,76	0,71	0,74	0,49	0,74

A series of factor analyses were carried out in order to investigate the factorial structure of the *MultidimensionalPeer-Victimization Scale*. These analyses showed that only four factors

(subscales) of the original scale appear at the particular Greek adaptation of the scale. Compared to the original subscale, there are fewer questions with over 0.40 tension at the Physical Victimization factor. Therefore, these 16 questions were included in the final factor analysis, which is presented here and was carried out using the principal component method and with orthogonal rotation (varimax method). For this analysis: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.87 and Bartlett's test of sphericity: χ^2=1085.63, df=120, $p<.0001$. These in dexesar every satisfactory, justifying the use of factor analysis on these data. Analysis showed four (4) factors, which explain 56.91% of the total fluctuation (Table 2). The first one is Social Manipulation (31.14%), followed by Grabbing/Destroying Things (9.81%), then it is Verbal Victimization (8.91%) and, finally, the factor Physical Victimization (6.73%).

Table 2

Structure of the Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale *(Mynard&Joseph, 2000), as seen from the factor analysis (*N=271)

Questions	Factors			
	Social Manipulation	Grabbing/ Destroying Things	Verbal Victimization	Physical Victimization
(11) They tried to make my friends turn against me.	**0.78**	0.09	0.15	0.21
(14) They made others not to talk.	**0.76**	0.17	0.16	0.07
(2) They tried to make me have problems with my friends.	**0.76**	0.16	0.05	0.03
(13) They refused to talk to me.	**0.61**	0.36	0.24	0.06
(3) They took something from me without my permission.	0.03	**0.76**	0.03	0.14
(10) They tried to destroy something that belonged to me.	0.19	**0.72**	0.14	0.12
(12) They stole something from me.	0.18	**0.69**	0.14	0.01
(15) They deliberately destroyed something that belonged to me.	0.18	**0.68**	0.14	0.13

(16) They swore at me.	0.03	0.15	**0.71**	0.07
(1) They mocked me.	0.31	0.12	**0.68**	0.15
(5) They mocked me for some reason.	0.17	0.07	**0.64**	0.15
(4) They made fun of my looks.	0.43	0.05	**0.46**	0.10
(6) They punched me.	0.02	0.08	0.17	**0.77**
(9) They beat me up.	0.22	0.06	0.01	**0.73**
(8) They hit me on the body somehow.	0.05	0.18	0.36	**0.66**
(7) They kicked me.	0.10	0.30	0.45	**0.47**
Percentage (%) of total fluctuation	56.91			
Percentage(%) of common fluctuation	31.14	9.81	8.91	6.73
Eigen value	4.98	1.57	1.43	1.08

In the data analysis, it was noted that the most common type of victimization is Verbal Victimization, followed by Social Manipulation, Grabbing/Destroying Things and, finally, Physical Victimization (Table 3). Particularly, it was noted that the Verbal Victimization average is higher than the scale average, which equals 2. This means that students experience relatively high levels of Verbal Victimization from their peers at school. Furthermore, it was found that students report moderate to low levels of Social Manipulation and lower levels of Grabbing/Destroying Things and Physical Victimization. In conclusion, verbal and social types of bullying are more frequent in the school environment among students, whereas the types of bullying related to grabbing or destroying personal items appear in lower proportions. As far as physical victimization to students is concerned, this appears less frequent, compared to the rest of the types of bullying.

Table 3

Descriptive data on Physical Victimization, Verbal Victimization, Social Manipulation and Grabbing/Destroying of Things

Variables	*M*	*SD*	Maximum value/	Obliquity	Curvature

			Minimum value		
Verbal Victimization*	2.08	0.56	3.00/1.00	-0.09	-0.96
Social Manipulation*	1.79	0.64	3.00/1.00	0.40	-1.02
Grabbing/Destroying Things*	1.60	0.54	3.00/1.00	0.63	-0.49
Verbal Victimization*	1.51	0.47	3.00/1.00	0.89	0.31

Note. * Scale: 1-3.

Discussion

A significant percentage of the students who took part in the research reported that they have been bullied. In particular, 34.3% of them report to have been bullied, i.e., approximately one every three students. These percentages appear to be slightly higher compared to other researches. It is estimated that three out of ten children are victims of bullying (Kochenderfer& Ladd, 1996).

According to the findings of this research, the most common type of bullying is verbal victimization followed by the others, whereas physical bullying is the least frequent.

Not surprisingly, the bullied students report higher levels of verbal victimization, social manipulation, grabbing/destroying things and physical victimization, compared to the students that have not been bullied.

As far as the bullied students' age is concerned, the research found that students aged 10 to 11 years old have been subject to various types of bullying more often than students aged 11 to 12 years old. This finding is consistent with the current literature, where it is noted that the phenomenon decreases with age. It is worth noticing that students aged 11 to 12 years old showed higher levels of social manipulation compared to students aged 10 to 11 years old. On the other hand, there has been no significant differentiation between the two age groups regarding verbal victimization.

The victimization types coexist and the dominant coexisting types are verbal victimization, social manipulation and physical victimization. As far as gender is concerned, the verbal

victimization coexistence with social manipulation is dominant in girls, whereas the verbal victimization coexistence with physical victimization is dominant in boys. It seems that the association of verbal with physical victimization, as well as the association of social manipulation with physical victimization decrease with age.

Therefore, based on the findings of this research, bullying and victimization are two phenomena present in the Greek schools. Dealing with school bullying is a holistic situation that requires school, family and social partners to cooperate. Needless to say, everyone involved in education needs to be aware of these verity and extent of the phenomenon in general. Efforts to prevent and consequently deal with phenomenon should be integrated in to the general upgrading of the provided education, not only in Greece, but globally, with the ultimate goal of forming a better and better educational system.

Limitations

This research is subject to the following limitations:

(a) The small and not representative sample does not allow generalization of the findings.

(b) Only students' self-reports were used to evaluate victimization; no other sources, such as teachers, parents and peers, were utilized.

(c) Bullying was not investigated in comparison with other relevant variables.

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