

Effects of Restorative Discipline Model on Bullying and Violence in High Schools

Arzu HANHAN

*Doğanlar-Hüsnü Bornovalı Middle School
arzum0407@gmail.com*

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to establish the prevalence of bullying and violent behavior among students of general and vocational high schools of low-medium socio-economic status; and to evaluate the efficiency of Restorative Discipline Model in solving peer bullying and violence in a stable and constructive way. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques. To obtain quantitative data the sample group consisted of 561 students of grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 while the group that provided qualitative data consisted of 145 students and 31 various “Restorative Practices” involving bullying or violence problems. The quantitative data were analyzed statistically and content analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data. All of the 31 discipline problem cases were solved permanently and constructively. It can be inferred from the results that the Restorative Discipline Model is an effective tool for the solution of peer bullying and violence problems at general high schools and vocational high schools of low-medium socio-economic level in Turkey.

Keywords: restorative discipline, peer bullying, violence

Today, all over the world, at every level of school, peer bullying and violence, which of the intensity is at substantial level and which draws the interest of researchers with this feature, is creating a huge source of stress to many children in the school environment and to their families as its effect continues for a long time.

During the process children are exposed to bullying, in addition to stress, anxiety, depression, physical illness at high levels and sometimes up to an attempt at suicide, the negative effects of bullying and violence experience during childhood may continue also during adulthood, it is reported that not only the victims but also the bullies or adversely affected (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004, cited in Kapcı, 2004). The frequency of peer bullying and violence incidences that can be observed all around the world, how terms related to the subject are defined and although closely related with used measurement techniques, the common opinion of researchers (Alikaşifoğlu, Erginöz, & Ercan, 2007; Attar-Schwartz & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Kapcı, 2004; Koca, 2011; Miller, 2008; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1995; Pişkin, 2003; Terzi, 2007) is that it is a very common problem to be addressed in a multidimensional direction.

There are an increasing number of studies available towards the prevention or at least reducing peer bullying and violence which is experienced in different ways and seen as an issue required to be studied by researches due to its prevalence and the long-term damage it is creating. In this context, when studies on peer bullying in Turkey are examined, descriptive studies could mainly not be coincided (Akgün, 2005; Ayas & Pişkin, 2011; Gökler, 2009; Kapcı, 2004; Koç, 2006; Pekel, 2004; Pişkin, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010; Pişkin & Ayas, 2005). However, a few scale development studies (Ayas & Horzum, 2010; Koç, 2006; Kutlu, 2005; Pişkin & Ayas, 2007) and studies with education program content (Dölek, 2002; Kutlu, 2005) were found. Similarly, as in many countries around the world, also in Turkey projects provided with education program content draw attention in recent years, in addition to descriptive studies towards violence in schools (Pişkin, Öğülmüş, & Boysan, 2011; Türnüklü, İkiz, & Kaçmaz, 2009). In parallel to this, it is observed that event prevent within the framework "strategy and action plan for preventing and reducing violence in educational settings" 2006-2011+ (Ministry of Education, 2006) are included to school programs.

From scientific researches that examine bullying and violence in different aspects and in addition to descriptive studies and education programs intending to reduce and prevent the problem, it is seen that a penalty-based approach is exhibited when the intervention method is examined in the school environment when a bullying-violence issue occurs among students.

In the solution of the bullying and violence behavior, which is in fact an interpersonal relationship issue, it is observed that the punishment-based approach is taken as a basis in school environments and that they are punished with four types of penalties in the form of condemnation, short-term suspensions, expulsion from school and expulsion beyond formal education (Ministry of Education Secondary Schools Award and Discipline Regulation, 2012). Adults in the “punitive approach” create a plan towards the solution of the problem and apply this plan without considering the thoughts of the student who made a failure. In this method, any other behavior cannot be expected than sentencing the student with the most appropriate deemed punishment among these four punishments which will be usually unrelated (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). This situation eliminates the need of the student's failure to confront and take on responsibility for his mistake, to take a step to compensate for the damage due to an error and to play an effective role in solving the problem. Thus, among the students, deteriorating interpersonal relationships, material or moral damage caused to restructure and which require compensation in the face of bullying and violent behavior, the penalties for this kind are remain useless or irrelevant. Moreover, some penalties given in school environment may even lead to the increase in social problems. In fact, such punishment may sometimes turn to be a reward instead of a punishment. As material and moral damage cannot be compensated in terms of the victim student, the victim remains alone with his/her grievances. Moreover, the feelings of confidence in the school of parent of the victim student are harmed as the school management and teachers live in the feelings of helplessness. Therefore, today's educational environment, increasing the penalty of discipline-based educational needs gave birth to new pursuits (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005) and has contributed to the agenda of the Restoration term which of the foundations are dating back to 11th century indigenous tribes (Zehr, 1990, cited in Sutter, 2003).

Its basic philosophy in Western culture, first emerging in the field of law, Restorative Discipline which is based on Restorative Justice has found an implantation area in today's education by considering that the traditional discipline approach is inadequate in preventing and solving problems (Glanzer, 2005; Varnham 2005).

Likewise, Restorative Discipline defines giving students the behavior of the penalty or reward orientation, away from concern with the regulation, focused on the damage, seek to remedy the damage, taking into account a person's needs are damaged, such as possession, improper behavior. In this model, there is an intention for an improvement towards the future

and while searching for ways to improve, it is utilized from a cooperative process (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Restorative Discipline which is based on different philosophies and in Traditional Discipline approaches answers are sought to different questions. The following questions are asked in the Restorative Discipline approach;

- What happened?
- Who, how it was affected?
- How can we correct the error?
- What have we learned in order to evaluate different options next time?

In contrast to this approach, in the punishment-based Traditional Approach answers are sought for following questions;

- What happened?
- Who's to blame?
- What is the appropriate punishment? (Hopkins, 2004).

Restorative Discipline, focuses on an “education for the community and together with the community” approach which is including not only the students but all members of the society, where bullying is eliminated, respect is encouraged on social structure (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

In this direction, Restorative Practices which show the actualized form of the Restorative Discipline Model, in addition to damaging or damaged students if necessary, their families, classroom teachers, teachers who witnessed the event, contact the teacher (psychological consultant), students needed to support their colleagues and school security team is participating in a group of the society may represent a small part, "Restorative Discipline" away from the concept put forward the problems of violence by the adoption of a constructive approach to solving important in terms of philosophy in different environments. Restorative Practices intend the solving with alternative methods of violence and bullying among students at a level requiring sending to the disciplinary committee. Conferences held within the scope of Restorative Practices" are official conferences as a result will be in binding on the parties due to the nature of the decisions taken. Restorative Practices are conducted through a "Restorative Conference" or a "Family Group Conferences".

"Restorative Conference" and "Family Group Conferences" although embodying a number of similarities in the process, they are applied for different situations. In the "Restorative Conference" the damaging party is clearly identified in the individual interview before the meeting. "Family Group Conference" are meetings used in situations where the damaging party is not certain and where parties do not take a responsibility. Another difference of the "Family Group Conference" from the "Restorative Conference" is that the family comes together for the compensation plan based on the caused damage. Whether in the "Restorative Conference" or "Family Group Conference", the process cannot advance if responsibilities are rejected and the issue is referred to the disciplinary committee (MacRae & Zehr, 2004).

The Restorative Discipline Model has a problem-solving aspect towards solving the present discipline problem. During the meetings process held at the same time, there is a purpose of improving the future for the damage and reduce the recurrence preventive and instructive in this respect. Therefore, the "Restorative Discipline Approach" is a philosophical approach that will guide us in creating programs appropriate to the Turkish culture that will be a substitute for the subversive discipline models in schools (Türnüklü, 2006).

In summary this study,

The definition of bullying and violence experienced in general high schools and vocational high schools representing the lower-middle socioeconomic level,

Besides the nature of bullying and violence prevention in case of this kind of behavior; the school administration, teachers, psychological consultants and others concerned about what kind of an approach is to put forward in comprehensive and practical aspects of a model,

By means of the applied Restorative Discipline Model, it is considered that decreasing bullying and violent behavior of students, in the event of the decrease of bullying and violence tendency through increasing conflict is important in terms of the expansion and diversification of these applications.

Therefore, as a first in this survey, it was intended to determine the bullying and violent behavior of students attending the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th class of lower-middle socioeconomic level general high schools and vocational high schools. As a second, to adapt the Restorative Discipline Model to the Turkish education system, being an alternative method in solving bullying and violence behaviors among students requiring to be sent to the disciplinary board and to examine the efficiency of the "Restorative Discipline Model" in solving the peer abuse and violence issue experienced among students in a constructive and

lasting manner. Based on this aim, it was intended to investigate the solution of the following problem in the survey. Problem: Within the scope of the “Restorative Discipline Model”, what is the effect of “Family Group Conference” and “Restorative Conferences” on peer abuse and violence of students?

As a result, besides preventive studies for the prevention of bullying and violence prevention programs studies set out in the school environment by this study, it is considered to be a qualified integrated and systematic approach that can replace the reward and punishment based understanding which remains inadequate in today’s conditions.

Method

Research Model

This research was carried out using qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques together. The data in the survey were collected using both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. In this way, the variation between the methods was to strengthen each other, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

This study consists of two parts. In the first part of the study, the level of bullying and violent behavior of students who attend public high schools and vocational high schools was determined. In the second part, the efficiency of the Restorative Discipline Model in solving peer bullying and violation experienced among students in a permanent and constructive manner is determined. The first section is a quantitative study consisting of a pilot and main study. The second study is a qualitative study in which the efficiency of the Restorative Discipline Model adapted to Turkey’s education system is investigated by the researcher based on the opinions of Amstutz and Mullet, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; MacRae and Zehr, 2004; O’Connell, Wachtel and Wachtel, 1999. Dependent variables of the study are the level of peer abuse in high schools, violence level and the effect of "Family Group Conferences" and the "Restorative Conferences" on student bullying.

Participants

Probability-based sampling technique was employed for acquiring the quantitative data of the research. For this end, the inventory comprised of “Personal Information Form”, “Peer Bullying Determination Scale Adolescence Form” (Pişkin & Ayas, 2007) and “Violence Survey” was chosen in İzmir based on layered, cluster and random sampling

technique in the given order; pilot application was made to 40 students comprising of 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th class students of high schools representing low- socioeconomic level and middle-socioeconomic level general high schools and vocational high schools and application within the scope of the main study was made to 561 students. As there were not a high school representing upper socioeconomic level among general high schools and vocational high schools, upper socioeconomic level high school was not incorporated into the scope of the study. Because of the non-availability of high-schools among general high-schools and vocational high-schools representing the upper socioeconomic level, the upper socioeconomic level high-school was not included within the survey. To create the sample group, the lower and middle socioeconomic level in Izmir Province from the list of public high schools and vocational high schools, using a table of random numbers, the scale implementation of the schools were performed (Wiersma, 2000).

In schools where peer bullying and violence is frequently encountered, Family Group Conferences and Restorative Conferences were held with students, their parents and teachers. Following the meeting, the process evaluation forms which are prepared separately according to the roles of all participants at the meeting was applied as qualitative and quantitative data related to the efficiency of the process was collected and subsequently qualitative data were obtained with a randomly selected group by using the interview method. Within the scope of Family Group Conferences and Restorative Conferences, 31 applications were performed consisting of 94 students, 38 teachers 11 parents and 2 school security teams.

Dependent and independent variable

The independent variable of the study is the Restorative Discipline Model as the Dependent variable is the level of peer bullying, violence level and the effect of “Family Group Conference” and “Restorative Conference” on student bullying. The peer bullying determination scale adolescence form was used in order to determine peer bullying. This form, which was prepared by Pişkin and Ayas (2007), consists of two sub-scales as bully and victim scale and a total of 53 items. Both bully and victim scales are made up of six sub-factors. These factors are; 1) Physical Bullying/Victimhood, 2) Verbal Bullying/Victimhood, 3) Ostracism, 4) Rumoring/Being Rumored About, 5) Damaging Properties/Damage to Properties and 6) Sexual Bullying/Victimhood. The height of the grade students achieved from sub-scales of bullying means that they exhibit bullying tendency more; the height of the grade they achieve from victimhood sub-scales means they exhibit the tendency of being a

victim more. Decrease of the grade of students they achieved from bullying sub-scale means that they exhibit bullying tendency less; the decrease in their grades achieved from victimhood scale means that they exhibit the tendency of being a victim less. In the bully and victim sub-scale prepared as 5 point Likert scale, selection of one of the options of “almost every day”, “once a week”, “once a month”, “once throughout the semester” and “never” is expected to be chosen. For the validity study of the victim and bully scale, firstly specialist opinion was consulted by the researchers and then, confirmatory factor analysis was made. As a result of the first level CFA made for the “victim scale”, fit index was found as $\chi^2=5407.73$ (sd=1307, p=.00), $\chi^2/sd = 4.13$ RMSEA= 0.041, GFI= 0.90, AGFI= 0.89, CFI=0.90, NFI=0.96 and NNFI= .97. As a result of the second level CFA made; fit indexes were found as $\chi^2= 5959.71$ (sd= 1315, p= .00), $\chi^2/sd = 4.53$ RMSEA= .043, GFI= .89, AGFI= .88, CFI=.97, NFI=.96 and NNFI= .97. Cronbach α internal consistency reliability coefficient of the victim scale was calculated as .93 for Total Victimhood Scale, .82 for “Physical Victimhood” sub-scale, .75 for “Verbal Victimhood” sub-scale, .77 for “Ostracism” sub-scale, .75 for “Being Rumored About” sub-scale, .80 for “Damage to Properties” sub-scale and .88 for “Sexual Victimhood” sub-scale. As a result of the first level CFA made for the “Bully Index”, fit index was found as $\chi^2= 6461.32$ (sd=1307, p=.00), $\chi^2/sd = 4.94$ RMSEA= .046, GFI= .89, AGFI= .88, CFI=.96, NFI=.95 and NNFI= .96. As a result of the second level CFA, fit indexes were found as $\chi^2= 7298.38$ (sd=1316, p= .00), $\chi^2/sd = 5.54$, RMSEA= .049, GFI= .87, AGFI= .86, CFI=.96, NFI=.95 and NNFI= .96. Cronbach α internal consistency reliability coefficient of the bully scale was calculated as .92 for Total Bullying Scale, .83 for “Physical Bullying” sub-scale, .74 for “Verbal Bullying” sub-scale, .75 for “Ostracism sub-scale, .66 for “Rumoring” sub-scale, .79 for “Damaging Properties” sub-scale and .88 for “Sexual Bullying” sub-scale (Ayas and Pişkin, 2011; 556,557). The violence level was measured with the “Violence Survey” prepared by the researcher. While multiple answers were accepted in 5 of the total 9 questions in the survey, a single answer was expected in 4 of them. The effect of “Family Group Conference” and “Restorative Conference” on student bullying was measured by means of meeting process minute recording, process evaluation forms, interview forms and by instructions of “Family Group Conference” and “Restorative Conference”.

Procedure

This survey consists of two parts. The first part was planned in the form of a pilot and main study in order to experience the level of peer bullying and violence experienced in high-

schools. The students were applied an inventory consisting of a “Personal Information Form”, a “Peer Bullying Determination Scale Adolescence Form” and a “Violence Survey”. The inventory application was performed, 4 of which are general high-schools and 4 are vocational high-schools, totally in 8 high-schools. The second part of the survey tends to measure the effect of the “Restorative Practices” on the issue created by bullying and violence. “Restorative Practices” were performed on 2nd April 2009 and 18th May 2010 and carried out within the education hours of schools.

Data analysis

In the survey, both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were used. Regarding the data collected in quantitative research techniques, the techniques of independent samples, t-test for parametric analysis and the one-way analysis of variance, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test techniques were used in the analysis. Independent samples t-test analysis of the important differences in effect sizes using Cohen's d formula one-way analysis of variance identified significant differences, the study examining as the η^2 (eta squared) formula was used. In statistical transactions carried out with the SPSS program the importance level of .05 was taken. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interview were analyzed through content-analysis technique. After data in each category were coded, frequency and percentage figures based on gender were computed. Excerpts from student statements for each category were also provided. Before the final coding intra-rater reliability was checked (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Responses were coded by the same researcher twice, on week apart. The result of both codings indicated 85.92% reliability.

Result

In this section, findings and discussions related to the survey were presented. In this direction, findings related to victim students recommending the “Restorative Practices as a solution path is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Opinion of victim students in relation to the solution path of the "restorative practices" of the (self-regulatory focus / internal controlled) approach

| Categories | G | % | B | % | Victim-Harming Student Statements |
|--|----|-----|---|-----|---|
| Yes, I would recommend | 3 | 23 | 1 | 20 | Of course, resulted in a very good way/ I would have recommended. A good meeting, I saw it here for the first time, a different meeting. |
| As constructive solution is reached a "self-regulation approach" | 3 | 23 | 1 | 20 | Yes, you are able to reveal events according to being sent to the disciplinary board and the constructive resulting possibility is high / Of, course I would directly orientate If the incident goes to the disciplinary board it cannot be solved but here it can be solved. |
| As it provides expression freedom a "self-regulation approach" | 4 | 30 | 1 | 20 | Yes, Since if it directly goes to the disciplinary board the issue would expand. We can freely discuss our considerations in such a meeting. |
| Due to a more professionally approach, a "self-regulation approach" | 1 | 8 | 2 | 40 | I would suggest. Experienced people, they were not angry, it was acted according to our feelings/psychology |
| As honesty is dominant a "self-regulation approach" | 1 | 8 | - | - | Everything was revealed in truth. There were no lies. |
| As it provides the opportunity to correct mistakes, a "self-regulation approach" | 1 | 8 | - | - | Yes. I would like them to correct their mistakes like F. |
| Total | 13 | 100 | 5 | 100 | |

As shown in Table 1, the victim along with all of the students by basing it on different grounds, "Restorative Practice" recommended as a solution. Preferences of boys and girls in this direction, "yes, I would recommend" (G: 23%, B: 20%), a "constructive solution to is reached" self-regulation-oriented "approach" (G: 23%, B: 20%) and "because it provides the ability to express" self-regulation-oriented "approach" (G: 30%, B: 20%) categories are similar to each other. Both girl and boy students used a certain ratio of the statement "yes, I would recommend" as a general statement. Students who preferred the "Constructive solution is reached" self-regulation-oriented "approach", rather than a punitive approach, created by the devastating effects of the problem they see the "Restorative Practice" as an approach aims to resolve in all dimensions. Similarly, students who preferred the "because it provides the

ability to express" self-regulation-oriented "approach" emphasized that people can express themselves in equivalent conditions and in a clearly manner.

According to victim-harming students, the findings in relation whether there are different points that can be planned for the "Restorative Conference" are given in Table 2.

Table 2

According to victim-harming students, the findings in relation whether there are different points that can be planned for the "restorative conference"

| Categories | G | % | B | % | Victim-Harming Student Statements |
|---|----|-----|----|-----|--|
| There are different points that could be planned | 1 | 7 | 2 | 13 | We would more comfortably respond if we had the questions. (Questions asked by the facilitator in terms of participants) / I would like to bring a witness to the meeting. To find out who gave the most harm / Maybe a deputy and a few witnesses (students in class), would be nice. |
| There is not a different points that could be planned | 13 | 93 | 13 | 87 | It was good enough/ I would have arranged in this way/ This is the most appropriate/Would not. Everything is considered/ It passed very nice. . |
| Total | 14 | 100 | 15 | 100 | |

As seen in Table 2; victim-damaging students "Restorative Conference" projected to make up the thoughts whether there are different points, the difference between "have different points projected" (G: 7%, B: 13%) and "do not have a different point" (G: 93% B: 87%) categories is quite significant.

Findings related to the Resulting Ratio of the Restorative Practices in Agreement is given in Table 3.

Table 3

Resulting ratio of the restorative practices in agreement

| Participant | Resulting Ration in Agreement | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|----|-----|
| | YES | NO | % |
| Victim | 18 | 0 | 100 |
| Harming | 17 | 0 | 100 |
| Victim-Harming | 52 | 0 | 100 |
| Total | 87 | 0 | 100 |

In Table 3, when the results of the Resulting Ratio of the Restorative Practices in Agreement are examined, it is seen that 100% of “Restorative Practices” concluded by signing the “Agreement Text” by agreeing among themselves.

Discussion

The purpose of the study is to determine the bullying and violence behavior levels of students at high schools giving education in different types and analyzing the effectiveness of the Restorative Discipline Model in solving the peer bullying and violence problem experienced among students in a permanent and constructive way. In the research, it was detected that bullying behavior increased with the increase of students’ class level. This finding might be related to bullying students’ belief that they can achieve dominance more easily on students who are at lower class levels. It was also found in the research that the state of being victim increases as the class levels of students decrease. Results of domestic and foreign researches in which the state of being victim is investigated in terms of the variable of class level also reveal that the number of students who state that they were bullied at the first years of school is significantly high (Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Rigby, 2002; Scheithauer et al., 2006, cited in, Attar-Schwartz & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Yurtal & Cenkseven, 2007). The phenomenon that the level of being victim increases at the first years of school can be explained by the fact that, parallel to the child’s being at a younger age, the number of children who can dominate him/her increases, as explained by researchers reaching similar findings. These findings that are obtained indicate that the factors of age and class level must be taken into consideration in all preventive and solution-based studies concerning the problem of bullying and violence.

A striking result was encountered when the thoughts of victim students whether they recommend the “Restorative Practices” as a solution path was examined. It was observed that all victim girls and boys, although binding to different justifications, recommended the “Restorative Practices” as a solution path. In line with this finding, when especially the victim identities of students are considered, it is thought that there is also a share in the considerations of victim students that their problem will be solved in a fair manner, that they will not be left alone, that they can find a professional support on which they can rely.

A striking result was encountered when the considerations of victim-harming students related to whether there are different points that could be planned for the “Restorative Conference” are examined. A large part of the students (G: 93%; B: 87%) expressed that

every detail was considered in the “Restorative Conference” and that they see it as the path in solving problems in a constructive and permanent manner. When this result is evaluated in the context of the grievance experience by victim-harming students, it can be interpreted that students have encountered an environment in which their frustration and harm they have experienced is compensated. Similarly, when the harming aspect of the victim-harming student is evaluated, it can be interpreted as the positive feelings for playing a role in solving the problem of conscientious fulfillment of a responsibility for damage inflicted in an environment focusing on the harm.

Not only did “Restorative Practices” resulted in ensuring consensus among all of the students, but also 95.7% of them resulted in a constructive way and 100% resulted in a permanent way. 4.3% of the decisions taken were neither constructive nor destructive but neutral decisions. Whether or not the bullying and violence problem among students resulted in a constructive way was based on the agreement text signed by parties at the end of “Restorative Practice”. Whether or not a permanent solution was reached was based on the reports prepared by the classroom teacher according to the result of the follow-up period. In this way, all of the 31 problems containing bullying and violence ended without requiring to sending to the school discipline board and punishing. As this research is a pioneer study for Turkey, the findings obtained in this direction were not compared with domestic literature. It is seen that researches made in different countries bring results which are in consistent with this research. In some of the researches investigating the effect of “Restorative Practices” on discipline punishments, it was concluded that the student’s rate of being sent to administration decreased (Isaac Christian, 2011), and in some of them, it was concluded that the number of students sent to the administration did not decrease but suspensions decreased (Brown-Kersey, 2011). In the results of some other research, it was detected that there was a decrease in the number of both suspensions and expulsions (Kane et al., 2007; Porter, 2007; Sumner et al., 2010).

As a result, it seems possible that this general conclusion can be reached about the research. “Restorative Discipline Model”, which was adopted and applied to Turkish education system in this research regarding the fact that a comprehensive model must be devised for the solution of the violence and bullying problem experienced among students, is an effective way in the solution of the bullying and violence problem among general high schools and vocational high schools being at a level that requires be sent to the disciplinary board.

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