



Current Research in Psychology and Behavioral Science (CRPBS)

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2020

Article Information

Received date : 12 December, 2020

Published date: 11 January, 2021

*Corresponding author

Sefa Bulut, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Ibn Haldun University, İstanbul, Turkey

ORCID ID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2622-4390>

Key Words

Inclusive education; Social competence; Bullying

Distributed under: Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

Effect of Bullying of Inclusive Students' Social Competence

Sefa Bulut* and Şeymanur Kaya

Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

Abstract

Bullying is a far-reaching term that affects people. Victims of bullying are exposed to aggressive behaviors repeatedly over time because of an imbalance of power. Children are more likely to be bullied. This risk of being bullied increases for inclusive students in a normal classroom environment, because even the children without disability are bullied, their peers who are diagnosed with physical or cognitive disability are at higher risk of bullying. They may seem different, vulnerable, or weak compared to the rest of the classroom members. Inevitably, being bullied affects inclusive students physically, socially, and psychologically, because different dimensions of bullying are implemented to these students. Despite the fact that inclusive education aims at social interaction and competence, sometimes it ends with hating school, friends even the withdrawal process.

Introduction

Bullying is one of the most important problems in today's youth, which affects them physically, socially, or psychologically. According to *Olweus* [1], bullying is a constant and repeatedly exposure to aggressive behaviors because of an imbalance of power. Victims of bullying may seem different than the rest of the group and therefore stand out because of an appearance characteristic. That is, they may be physically small or overweight, have a disability, wear glasses or belong to a different race or culture [2]. As stated by *Lowenstein* [3], victims as remarkably less physically attractive and more likely to have "mannerisms or physical handicaps" than children in their class. *Naylor et al.* [4] indicate that children who are exposed to bullying are usually perceived as vulnerable, different. In the study of *Bahar* [5], inclusive education is that individuals with special needs perform educational activities in the same class as their peers in the normal development process, by taking into account their differences. Inclusive education according to *Link* [6]; is training that aims to maximize the relationship of children having a disability with their peers in a normal educational setting. Therefore, besides academic achievement, inclusive education aims to bring social competence to inclusive students. Social competence refers [7] getting along with others, establishing and maintaining close relationships, and responding appropriately in social situations. As a result, by providing social integration is between inclusive students and their peers without disability, social competence of inclusive students might be improved. Even students without physical or mental disabilities can face bullying, this risk of being bullied increases for inclusive students as cited by *Luciano & Savage* [8]. Students who are placed in an inclusive setting tend to be more defenseless socially, psychologically, and physically than their peers without a disability. This situation can make inclusive students an open target from the eye of bullies. Therefore, inclusive students can face some problems including poor social skills in the short-term or long-term. Not having enough studies in related literature regarding bullying towards inclusive students, which socially affect them, will make this work important. This paper will give an overview of the effect of bullying on inclusive students' social competence.

Literature Review

There are many researches about how inclusive education is beneficial for both children with special needs and peers without special needs. *Atasoy & Gırlı* [9] mention studies conducted about integration showed that it improves children's language, positive attitudes and social skills. During the integration process, it is observed as peers maintain a positive role model for the individuals' lack of social skills and that is because these children with special needs improve their social skills a lot more than the ones who are not included [9]. For this reason, class peers are very significant in terms of social acceptance because the classroom environment is one of the first places that inclusive students get out of their comfort zone. If the classroom is accepted as a small community, behaviors that inclusive students face will be key for social skills, and those students may carry social relations and skills to the other environments. Also, social competence is a prior condition for academic achievement. If social acceptance is supplied, students will love being in the school environment, spend time and consequently they will have low level of fear of school and anxiety. This makes students more focused and concentrated on their academic performance as *Sucuoğlu* [10] claimed.

In contrast, inclusive education can increase the risk of being bullied. Being subjected to mockery, being exposed to verbal abuse and exclusion, and physical violence are problems that inclusive students fight. The research conducted by *Beaty and Alexeyev* [11] with children with special needs in inclusive classes reveals that 67% of these children and 25% of their peers without disability are bullied. Also, *Carter and Spencer* [12] find out those students with disabilities experience three to four times more bullying than students without disabilities. *Whitney, Smith, Thompson* [13] investigated the victimization rates of 93 students with disabilities and their demographically matched peers within an inclusive setting. The reason for the higher risk of bullying and victimization in these students is generally the insufficiency of important qualities such as intelligence, physical appearance, physical and social skills in the peer group. In the study of *Gırlı and Atasoy* [9] with primary school students diagnosed with learning disability and autism, these students were often left alone, were called "problematic children" and encountered bad words and behaviors especially in the garden outside the classroom. *Kabasakal et al.* [14] emphasize that inclusive students are seen as individuals who are less loved and have problems with communication with their friends. An inclusive group is least preferred by the classmates and it is considered as the group that is thought to need the most friends. Besides, in a study conducted with the families of inclusive students, *Kargın, Acarlar, and Sucuoğlu* [15] have argued that their children were mocked and excluded by other students.

Quite likely, the victimization of inclusive students affects their social competence and skills. It may be estimated that because victimization is associated with social maladjustment, loneliness, and poor peer relationships, inclusive students who



are bullied by their peers be friends with fewer children. As stated in the study of *Luciano and Savage* [8] children who perceived themselves as having fewer friends reported being bullied more often than children who felt they had many friends. In the study of *Llewellyn* [16], it was revealed that the students who have physical disabilities were worried about social isolation and bullying, were often excluded by their peers, and were more exposed to verbal bullying. Students who are bullied are avoiding going to school or escaping from the school because for them, the school environment is not safe and secure [17]. Even they go to school, they don't stay at specific spots that bullying occurs like a garden, toilet, canteen. If this process goes far, it can result in irreversibly. Çetin, Bilbay, and Kaymak [18] suggested that these humiliated children would isolate themselves more and have a greater risk of being in a withdrawal process than the others. According to Budget Offering of the Ministry of National Education [19], a total of 295,697 students, including 115,556 at the primary level, 130,624 at the secondary level, and 48,257 at the high school level, got benefited from full-time inclusive education. This data shows that from secondary to high school level, more than half of the inclusive students experienced withdrawal. Children with disabilities who do not have the skills to join in peer interaction in the social environment may also lose the courage necessary to initiate and respond to peer relationships over time, which may lead to lower interaction with their peers. However, if children without disability interact with a friend with disability, this child with disability will improve his behavior patterns. This will increase his acceptance in society. Therefore, social skills, as well as academic skills, should be included in inclusive education [20].

Conclusion

In conclusion, bullying is a worldwide phenomenon that has physical, social, and psychological effects. Considering normally developed children, the risk of being bullied for inclusive students is higher than normal peers. Neither physical differences nor behavioral differences can be the reason for bullying for inclusive students. Even though inclusive education aims to provide social integration for disabled children with their healthy peers, some problems can happen like exclusion, verbal abuse, or psychical abuse. Inclusive students tend to be introverted and have fewer social skills. This makes them more defenseless in front of bullies. These inclusive students are more likely to be lonely and excluded from social environments or groups and they don't feel belonging to the school itself. They can try to escape from school or even go through withdrawal experience. In social settings, they may have fewer friends, problematic relations with peers. *Yüce* [21] concluded that students with disabilities were excluded by their friends and these students were generally anxious and had poor social relations with their friends. In general, a lack of social skills and competence is shown within inclusive students. However, when having a lack of social skills matched with bullying, it creates bigger problems. Present social relations can be blind, the inclusive child can isolate himself- herself even he or she can experience withdrawal. To encourage inclusive students to have relations, make them join the society, people around them especially classmates should be informed. They should be suggested to have and show more empathy toward inclusive classmates. This way will improve the social deficits of inclusive students and prepare them for real life.

References

1. Olweus D (1994) Annotation: Bullying at school: Basic facts and effects of a school-based intervention program. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 35(7): 1171-1190.
2. Eslea M, Mukhtar K (2000) Bullying and Racism among Asian School children in Britain. *Educational Research* 42(2): 207-217.
3. Lowenstein OF (1978) The bullied and the non-bullied child. *Bulletin British Psychological Society* 31: 316-318.
4. Naylor P, Cowie H, Del Rey R (2001) Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 6(3): 114-120.
5. Bahar M (2018) Investigation of Empathic Tendencies of Classrooms with Inclusion Students. Ahi Evran University, Kırşehir, Turkey.
6. Link S (2008) Mainstreaming in the Public Schools. EBSCO Research Starters, p. 7.
7. (2010) Craighead EW, Weiner IB (eds.), *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*. In: *Social Competence*, 4th (edn.), 4: 1623-1625.
8. Luciano S, Savage RS (2007) Bullying risk in children with learning difficulties in inclusive educational settings. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* 22(1): 14-31.
9. Girli A, Atasoy S (2012) The Views of Students with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Regarding their School Experience and their Peers in Inclusion. *Buca Journal of Education* 32: 16-30.
10. Sucuoğlu B, Kargın T (2006) *Integration Practices, Approaches, Methods, Techniques in Primary Education*. Morpa Publishing, Turkey.
11. Beaty LA, Alexeyev EB (2008) The problem of school bullies: what the research tells us. *Adolescence* 43(169): 1-11.
12. Carter BB, Spencer VG (2006) The Fear Factor: Bullying and Students with Disabilities. *International Journal of Special Education* 21(1): 11-23.
13. Whitney I, Smith PK, Thompson D (1994) Bullying and children with special educational needs. In: Smith PK, Sharp S (eds.), *School bullying: Insights and perspectives*. 1st (edn.), Taylor & Francis Group, UK, pp. 1-288.
14. Kabasakal Z, Girli A, Okun B, Çelik N, Vardarlı G (2008) Mainstreaming students peer relationships and peer abuse. *Dokuz Eylül University Buca Faculty of Education Journal* 23: 169-117.
15. Kargın T, Acarlar F, Sucuoğlu B (2003) Determining the opinions of teachers, administrators and parents about mainstreaming practices. *Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Special Education Journal* 4: 55-76.
16. Llewellyn A (2000) Perceptions of Mainstreaming: A Systems Approach. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* 42(2): 106-115.
17. Olweus D (2005) A useful evaluation design, and effects of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *Psychology, Crime & Law* 11(4): 389-402.
18. Çetin F, Bilbay AA, Kaymak DA (2001) *Social Skills in Children*. Epsilon Publishing, India.
19. (2019) Ministry of National Education. *National education statistics formal education 2017-2018*.
20. Sarı H, Pürsün T (2019) An Investigation of Peer Bullying in Inclusive Classrooms in Terms of Teacher and Student Views. *Journal of Social Work Policies*, pp. 1-44.
21. Yüce G (2015) Determination of Peer Relationships and Exposure to Peer Violence Levels of Children with Special Needs and Normal Development Attending Preschool Education. Turkey.