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Peer Bullying in Schools: A Cognitive Behavioral Intervention Program

Füsun Gökkaya

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Abstract

Students face few problems in schools. Some of these conflicts may be defined with the bullying concept. The concept of bullying is defined as "to repetitively expose a student/students to negative effects of another student or students." "Negative effects" includes students getting disturbed as well as getting hurt from the same kind of negative behavior; it also may be done by attempting to hurt someone, deliberately harming someone verbally or physically. Bullying behavior should include an "inequivalent power" between opponents and this needs to be "permanent" and "intentional." Bullying at school affects lots of students around the schools who witness bullying behavior in different dimensions; thus, it is an important problem that needs to be prevented. While some of the studies encompass interventions toward the whole school system, some studies were conducted by determining separate groups and working on those. In this paper, first, some whole school approach–based prevention programs and the effectiveness of these programs and then intervention programs for groups, which are provided to reduce and intervene bullying, will be explained. Second, cognitive behavioral therapy and its use in preventing bullying will be briefly explained. Finally, the context of a cognitive-behavioral based peer bullying intervention program.

Keywords: peer bullying, intervention program, cognitive behavioral therapy, school bullying, prevention program

1. Introduction

Students encounter various problems in the school environment and some of those are experienced among friends. Cases termed as "bullying," which is one of the problems encountered among friends, have certain characteristics that differ from cases of violence. This concept is defined as "a student/students repeatedly exposing another student/students to negative

effects multiple times" [1]. This "negative effect" may range from disturbance to actual injury and can be done verbally or physically in order to attempt to do harm or deliberately harm another. In bullying behavior, certain characteristics should be present, such as an "unequal power relationship" between the sides, the situation having a "continuous" characteristic and the acts being carried out "on purpose" [1].

Research has shown that approximately 15–20% of all students are affected by peer bullying at school [2–6]. Peer bullying can be performed directly or in an indirect manner. While direct bullying is performed openly against the bullied student, indirect bullying may well range into the realm of purposeful exclusion from the social group because of discrimination [1]. Generally, peer bullying has been grouped into physical bullying, verbal bullying and social exclusion. While physical and verbal bullying are elements of direct bullying, social exclusion is in the scope of indirect bullying. Physical bullying encompasses behavior such as hitting, pushing, spitting, kicking, pulling hair and tripping, whereas verbal bullying encompasses behavior such as use of foul language, giving nicknames and insulting. Social exclusion encompasses behavior that aims to harm the social relations of the students such as gossiping, exclusion from the friend group, ignoring and not accepting the student into games. The shape of peer bullying has changes throughout the years. In recent years, the developing Internet and communication technologies have created the concept of cyber bullying [7]. Writing various things under the photographs of friends in social network sites through the Internet, spreading unfounded rumors on them, disturbing them thorough phone messages and E-mails, taking inappropriate pictures via cameras and spreading them through the Internet are all defined as cyber bullying. Additionally, although these behaviors are conducted in environments outside the school, their effects are more pronounced at school. Sexual harassment/disturbance behavior has also been discussed as a type of peer bullying with a different motivation. For this reason, sexual bullying, which encompasses sexual behavior (lifting skirts, taking pictures under skirts, pulling down pants, etc.), has been defined as a separate category.

While discussing peer bullying, students are generally grouped into bullies, victims, bully-victim and bystanders [1, 8]. Bullying at school affects bullies, victims and bystanders who witness bullying behavior in different dimensions. Victims of bullying encounter problems such as anxiety, feelings of anger and desperation, unhappiness, ostracism and loneliness [9–11]. Alongside possibilities such as disciplinary action and exclusion from academic life, children who exhibit bullying behavior during school years have high risks of having their experiences affect their adult life negatively and carry their behavior into adulthood. Longitudinal studies have shown that children and adolescents who exhibit bullying behavior at school get mixed up in acts of violence in adulthood, have impulsive behavior, lead unsuccessful lives with lower job positions and have substance abuse problems [12–15]. These findings have made interventions to prevent and reduce bullying gain importance.

In many countries (Australia, Finland, the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Norway), it can be seen that programs toward preventing peer bullying have been applied for years and country wide studies on the subject have been performed [16, 17]. Stopping bullying behavior at school can be carried out through prevention or intervention programs [16, 18, 19].

Studies researching the reasons behind bullying behavior at school have shown that the personal characteristics of the students, parental attitudes, family relationships, school atmosphere, teacher attitudes, friendship relations and cultural factors may all have effects on the subject [20–22]. For this reason, studies on reducing bullying at schools can be said to have different focal points. While some of the studies encompass interventions toward the whole school system, some studies were conducted by determining separate groups and working on those.

In this chapter first, some whole school approach-based prevention programs and the effectiveness of these programs then intervention programs for groups, which are provided to reduce and intervene bullying will be explained. Second, cognitive-behavioral therapy and its use in preventing and intervening bullying will briefly explain. Finally, the context of a cognitive-behavioral based peer bullying intervention program.

2. Whole school approach studies to prevent peer bullying at schools and their effectiveness

Whole school approach programs to prevent peer bullying at schools are applied on school, classroom and individual levels [1]. Interventions toward bullying aim at all of the students at the school developing an attitude against bullying and are applied to decrease bullying events within the school. Interventions at the school level are student and teacher questionnaires, school conference days aimed at developing a positive school environment, parent-teacher meetings, telephone interviews with parents and the regulation of school playgrounds. Classroom efforts include forming classroom rules against bullying, information being given to raise awareness, the formation of a positive environment and meetings with parents and teachers. Programs applied on an individual level include interventions such as having serious meetings with bullies and victims, having meetings with the parents of children involved in bullying, receiving help from unbiased children, providing help and support for parents, forming discussion groups with the families of bullies and victims and changes in schools and classrooms [1]. The programs summarized in this section are some of the most widely used studies.

2.1. Olweus bullying prevention program (BPP)

The first school-based program to prevent bullying, the BPP aims to change the social norms that see bullying behavior as acceptable. Within the context of this goal, it first tries to create awareness on bullying. First, the rates of bullies, bully-victims, victims, bystanders and exposure to bullying are determined through a scanning effort in the school. Then, school wide conferences, meetings with school staff, teacher trainings, family trainings, small group efforts with the families, classroom studies and individual meetings with bullies and victims are performed [1].

Alongside many studies where Olweus' program was applied and its effectiveness was researched, Olweus himself has made effectiveness evaluations regarding the application. The results of the first studies found a 50% decrease in bullying behavior [1] and later evaluations have shown the change to be between 21 and 38% [23, 24].

2.2. Creating a peaceful school learning environment (CAPSLE)

The program, developed in 1994, aims to prevent bullying and create a positive school environment through ensuring that students learn ways to solve their problems without aggression and the social skills necessary to communicate positively [14]. The program consists of four basic and two supporting elements. The first basic element is to create a positive atmosphere at school by "zero" tolerance to all bullying. The second element is the formation of a disciplinary plan to provide appropriate behavior. In the process of doing this, the importance of social skills not only among the students but also with adults in the school was stressed. The third element is a classroom management plan. For this, the aim is to raise awareness on the dynamics of bullying and develop the appropriate disciplinary measures to ensure the change of these behaviors. The fourth basic element is a unique physical training program. In this program, the focus is on self-defense sports that may help students develop self-regulation skills. Additionally, in this stage, the aim is to provide counseling in a manner that will help to prevent bullying through an appropriate counseling program for children and adults. The first supportive element of the program is changing the language used at school to increase cognitive skills and the awareness of a person of his/her role in the bullying phenomenon. The second supportive element is to focus on psychopathology instead of penalty applications in the bully-victim-bystander triangle to direct toward treatment and making the necessary referrals [9, 25]. In the program, study groups with families as well as the children are arranged to increase their awareness on the subject.

Twemlow et al. [26], who developed and applied the program, which was generally found to decrease victimization, aggressiveness and aggressive bystanders, performed a longitudinal study with a control group. The applications were performed by showing zero tolerance to bullying at the school where the program was applied. In the control group, only regular psychiatric consultation was provided. The results were evaluated by taking data on disciplinary cases and school success from those two schools. The increase in academic success and the decrease in disciplinary events in the school where the program was applied were found to be significantly different compared to the school in the control group [26].

2.3. Steps to respect

The program consists of three stages: the first stage starts with building a school bullying management team that encompasses the whole school. This team makes observations regarding bullying behavior. The antibullying strategies and procedures and the consequences that those who apply bullying behavior will face are determined and the expectations on the subject are communicated to the whole school. In the second stage, the whole school staff is trained according to the reports of the students. During school personnel training, counselors, classroom teachers and foreign personnel are all trained for awareness on the subject. Some selected school personnel are trained to work directly with children involved in bullying. The families are included in this stage. In the third stage, classroom efforts where the classroom teachers give skill trainings last 11 hours. Classroom level efforts are aimed toward increasing the socioemotional skills of the students so that they can form positive relationships. Emotion regulation, recognizing emotions, resisting certain emotions

and reporting bullying behavior are all among skills taught during training. Additional aims include being able to enter a group, being able to discern bullying behavior from others and adding responsibility to bystanders [27].

The results of studies on the effectiveness of the program have shown a significant decrease in the bullying approval behavior of bystander students in the intervention group compared to the control group. Additionally, an improvement in the taking responsibility to stop bullying behavior of the bystanders in the intervention group was reported [28]. According to the results of another study, students have reported 33% less physical bullying, teachers have reported 35% decrease in fights and 20% of school staff stated that the school environment had a more positive atmosphere [29].

2.4. Bully busters

This program was prepared by Newman et al. [30]. The "Bully Busters" program is a teacher training focused psychoeducational intervention program aimed at preventing violence. The program includes both individual and environmental factors regarding a child. The aim is to ensure that especially teachers learn bullying and victimization prevention and intervention strategies, skills and techniques. The training, which starts with high priority awareness training on bullying, continues by teaching bully and victim recognition, bully and victim intervention, stress management, relaxation and coping skills. Through teacher support groups, trainings on activities to be applied in the classroom are taught to teachers. The teachers are given handbooks and CDs. The special aims of the program are increasing the coping skills of the students through strong role models, decreasing aggressive behavior and creating a more positive school atmosphere. Additionally, the program forms a discussion environment in the classroom so that students understand factors regarding being bullies and victims and aims at the provision of the necessary alternative social skills for conflict resolution.

Study results have shown that the Bully Busters program increases the knowledge of teachers on the subject and their intervention skills [31, 32], increases their personal sufficiency regarding bullying prevention [31], and decreases the bullying events among students and disciplinary problems [31, 33].

2.5. Bully prevention in positive behavioral interventions and supports: BP-PBIS

The BP-PBIS is a school-based prevention program focused on the positive behavior of students and school staff. It is a program where bullying behavior is followed for the prevention of gossiping, inappropriate behavior and cyber bullying that encompasses the whole school curriculum and aims at providing social responsibility awareness. It was prepared using a developmental approach [30].

BP-PBS teaches all of the students in a school the concept of "being respectful" and aims at adopting a three-stage response (do not talk, stop, walk) when they encounter disrespectful behavior. The program is designed to train the personnel to make the correct interventions to the problematic behavior of students by teaching the correct behavior after the three-stage response is used.

Around the school, the PBS is organized around a three-layered prevention model. In the first layer, the aim is to make the school a safe and positive environment for students around the clock. For this reason, the behavior expected from them is taught to all of the students in the form of structured rules, the appropriate behaviors are ensured to be accepted in social environments, the results of problematic behavior are made to be predictable and the punishments to be met are made clear. In the second layer, the students under risk who do not receive enough support in the first layer are provided additional support. This layer includes interventions made to the students in small groups. Bullying is tried to be eliminated using social rewards. Last, the third layer includes students who do not respond to the first and second layers and consistently act negatively to be examined and worked with separately [34].

This program is supported, in addition to subjects included in the school curriculum, activities performed by students on the Internet. The effectiveness of the program is evaluated through questionnaires and the observations of supervisors [30].

Studies evaluating the effectiveness of the program have shown that children in the schools where the program was applied encountered less peer rejection and bullying compared to schools where the program was not applied [35], and that there was a decrease in problematic behavior, especially 65% decrease in physical and verbal aggression [34].

2.6. Kiusaamista Vastaan: against bullying: KiVa

This program, which was developed in Finland, has international characteristics. In the program, it is suggested that teachers and students should form group norms in their schools through individual and group discussion. Content is presented through various materials prepared for teachers, students and parents. For example, in order to make students develop antibullying attitudes, antibullying video games are used. The whole of the program takes 20 hours and the courses are given by the teachers. In the courses, discussions, group studies, short films on bullying and role playing techniques are used to conduct the program. After each course, a classroom rule appropriate for the theme of the subject of the day is adopted. Another important factor of the program is teacher training. Teachers supervise during play time in the school playground. In the teacher training, they are taught to recognize the signals of bullying, which starts at the playground and reflects into the school and intervene appropriately. Additionally, an electronic forum environment where teachers from different schools can communicate is formed. In this electronic environment, teachers inform each other on the bullying events and interventions they encounter and make suggestions. Additionally, support groups for bullying victims are formed. Last, families are sent a handbook containing information on bullying and what they can do to prevent bullying [13].

When the effectiveness of the KiVa program was evaluated, 79.4% of the students stated that bullying stopped completely, 18.5% stated that it decreased, 0.9% stated that it stayed the same and 03% stated that it increased, while an increase in liking school and decreases in depression and anxiety were found [36]. Additionally, bullying was found to decrease in groups where bullies where characterized as having medium or little popularity [37].

3. Group studies toward intervening in peer bullying and their effectiveness

Some of the programs toward intervening in peer bullying are conducted in a classroom level while some are only toward the target student group [13]. Target-focused programs are intervention efforts made toward bullies, victims, bully-victims, or mixed groups. Since peer bullying is not a psychological disorder that is evaluated and classified according to certain diagnosis criteria, the studies performed with students with high bullying inclination were named not as therapeutic applications but as preventive group efforts in this section. In this section, although the number of the group studies made with high bullying tendencies is not much in the literature, especially the studies made with these bully students will be evaluated. For example, effort to increase the self-respect of victims, similar victim-based intervention studies and classroom-based training studies will not be discussed.

In a study performed with male adolescents displaying bullying behavior [38], the aim was to decrease bullying by using behavioral techniques. The experimental study was conducted with 54 male bullies at age 16 studying at 3 middle schools in South Africa in three groups. The results of the study were evaluated using pretest, posttest and follow-up measurements (1 month). The program was based on the social interactive model which explains the development of aggression in its theoretical basis and the behavioral approach, which is thought to be appropriate for the prevention of bullying. The program was performed by psychology students at school during school hours twice a week in nonconsecutive 10 weeks with sessions that took a total of 20 hours. In the behavioral program applied, the homework, self-monitoring, role-playing and token economy methods were used to provide positive behavior. For behavior change in rewarding nonbullying behavior, the "Wonderland Game" tokens, chocolates and movie tickets were used to utilize token economy. In each session, a topic was discussed in a manner allowing feedback on the behavior of students and role-playing, drawings and games were utilized. During role-playing, each member chose a "partner" to use the observations of the partner in "self-monitoring sessions." With the program, a small decrease in bullying behavior that was not statistically significant was achieved. The nature and shortness of the program were thought to be the reason.

In another study, the aim was to provide outpatient treatment to young people with demonstrating bullying behavior, decrease the anger of young people and to improve their interpersonal relationships and health behavior related to quality of life [39]. For this reason, 22 young people received 6 months of family therapy and 22 young people were included in the control group. Weekly sessions for 90 min were held in the first 2 months and these sessions were made once a fortnight in the following months. In the sessions, elements of systematical therapy, dynamic therapy, gestalt therapy, psychodrama therapy and behavioral therapy were used. The therapy focused on interfamilial relationships. Topics such as communication, interfamilial rules and the freedoms of family members were discussed and "family games" changing familial balance were used to raise awareness and form new family rules. Two trained therapists conducted the sessions. Once every 2 weeks, the scales used in the study were applied to the members to evaluate improvement. A year after the study, follow-up measurements were taken. The results of the study showed that the family therapy decreased

the aggression and bullying behavior of young males with bullying behavior in a statistically significant manner and that the therapies increased health behavior related to quality of life.

In another study conducted with male students who engaged in bullying behavior, short-term strategic family therapy was conducted [40]. The anger and health behavior related to quality of life of male adolescents who engage in bullying were tried to be changed. Of 72 students demonstrating bullying behavior, 36 were assigned to 12-week short-term strategic family therapy and 36 were assigned to the control group. After 12 weeks of treatment, decreases in the bullying behavior of the study group, increases in anger control and increases in health behavior related to quality of life were all found to be statistically significant.

In a study where art was used to decrease bullying, the effectiveness of an opera watched by the students in decreasing bullying was evaluated using pretest and posttest measurements [41]. The opera, named Elijah's Kite, was found to be more effective compared with the results of previous studies through social-emotional learning, improving both social skills and life skills. The subject of the opera, which tried to emerge emotions through music, movement, order and dance, was the recognition of bullying, understanding the feelings of the victim and giving information on what to do in event of bullying. The study was performed with fourth and fifth graders formed from 57 males and 47 females and the opera was staged 6 weeks (3 schools) after the pretest measurements. In the results, the information of the students regarding bullying was found to be increased and reports of victimization were found to significantly decrease. Alongside these, while reports of bullying decreased with time in males, it increased in females.

In a study conducted in Turkey (Konya), the pressure exerted by high school students exerting peer pressure was tried to be decreased [42]. The study was conducted with 24 male students from among freshmen from a high school. In the study, the group psychological counseling applications developed by the researchers with an eclectic approach took 8 weeks. In the sessions, the subjects of having information on peer pressure and understanding basic concepts, sharing experiences regarding peer pressure, what the group members considered peer pressure, why they acted as such, what they feel when they exert or receive pressure, coping methods for feelings of anger, communication skills, conflict resolution training, emotion training and what the situations and automatic negative thoughts were when exerting or receiving peer pressure in daily life and how these could be changed, in respective order. As a result of the application, the program was found to be effective in decreasing peer pressure.

In another study, the elements of cognitive behavioral therapy were used in a program for bullying intervention [43]. The effects of contingency management and cognitive self-instruction on bullying behavior were examined. The sample of the study consisted of 120 randomly selected bully students from 3 schools in 3 settlements in Nigeria. The study was conducted with 2 study (self-instruction and contingency management) and one control group and each group consisted of 40 people (20 male and 20 female). The intervention groups took 1-hour trainings once a week for 6 weeks. In each session, 15 min were allocated to the discussion of the previous session, 30 min to discussion/lesson and 15 min to summarizing and assigning homework for the next session. In the intervention group that received self-instruction training, the method of using positive self-concepts instead of negative ones such as "I should overcome bullying" and "I should think twice before bullying" was used. In the contingency

management group, reinforcers for positive behavior were given. In the placebo control group, trainings on subjects such as time management and the importance of keeping notes were given. Results based on pretest and posttest evaluation showed that contingency management and self-instruction had significant effects in decreasing bullying behavior. Self-instruction was found to be more effective than contingency management. The effectiveness of the treatment did not show difference according to the religion or age of the participants.

4. A general overview of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and peer bullying preventions with CBT

According to cognitive model, the ways people interpret the events affect their emotions and actions. Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on two principles: one of them is our cognitions (thoughts) that determine our emotions and actions and the other one is the way we act that shows some strong effects on our thoughts and feelings. According to CBT, every single psychological disorders and problematic behaviors have an underlying mechanism as distortional and dysfunctional thoughts that affect people's psychological mental health and their actions. Evaluation and changing them cause some improvements and recruitments on emotions and actions. Briefly, fundamental assumption of CBT is changing emotions and actions by finding the negative automatic thoughts and reframing them. Cognitive and behavioral techniques are used while working on changing thoughts and emotions. These techniques are briefly emotional education, mindfulness education, cognitive restricting, role-playing and exposure techniques.

Examination of peer bullying prevention and intervention programs reveals that cognitive and behavioral techniques are frequently used although not all components of the cognitive behavioral therapy methods are employed. For instance, Olweus' [1] bullying prevention program aims to alter bullying-related cognitions at schools. Attempts at altering bullying-related cognitions involve changing these cognitions with positive thoughts, such as "children are okay with this" versus "bullying must be stopped/no child can be educated like this" or "bullying is a great opportunity" versus "I can stop bullying when I confront it."

In the Bully-Busters bullying prevention program, components of cognitive behavioral therapy are used. The program's manual teaches children to change their negative bullying-related cognitions with positive alternatives and to plan various actions against bullying. Anger management, emotion training, empathy training, cognitive training, social skills training, problem solving skills training and conflict resolution training are among other cognitive behavioral elements used in the Bully-Busters program [44].

In a bullying prevention program which used behavioral techniques involved self-monitoring, role playing and token economy [38]; while in another program which used cognitive behavioral techniques involved self-instruction and contingency management [43]. During the studies, the researchers employed the cognitive reframing technique and tried to establish positive thoughts such as "I must overcome bullying" and "I should think twice before bullying someone."

In conclusion, despite the abundance of efficacy studies on cognitive behavioral therapy programs aimed at reducing aggression among youth, studies that use cognitive behavioral interventions in youth who bully peers are limited [38, 43]. As explained above from a cognitive behavioral approach, it can be postulated that psychological disorders derive from dysfunctional thought patterns or the lack of positive-appropriate behavioral coping strategies. In this treatment approach, it is aimed to restructure effective coping strategies and problem solving skills as well as reducing cognitive bias or distortions [45].

In this context, an intervention program which included cognitive behavioral therapy elements was prepared for middle school students with high bullying tendencies. The efficacy of the program was tested in an experimental study which investigated the pretest, posttest and follow-up measures of experiment, placebo control and control (no intervention) groups. It was found that this cognitive behavioral therapy program that aimed to reduce bullying tendencies was effective in changing bullying related cognitions and in reducing bullying behavior [46].

5. Introduction of a cognitive Behavioral intervention program aimed at decreasing bullying

The cognitive behavioral intervention program was prepared according to the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy. In summary, it consists of certain techniques, namely psycho-education, which entails understanding what bullying behaviors are, the difference between joking and conflict, how bullying harms people in the short and long terms (to encourage change and motivate the group) and feelings and thoughts that accompany bullying behavior; self-awareness training, which helps a person recognize their valuable aspects and supports positive self-perception; cognitive restructuring, which entails changing the thoughts accompanying bullying; coping techniques, which entail stopping bullying behavior and replacing them with alternative behavior; self-instruction, which entails finding slogans and internal discourses to remind of stopping bullying and repeating them to oneself; and role-playing, which is applied to use the techniques learned in hypothetical situations. Additionally, a reward system to reinforce positive behavior was used.

5.1. The process of the program, duration and content

The group application consisted of 13 120-min sessions, once a week. The first 15 min of each session is allocated to forming connections to the previous session and the discussion of homework, if present. Later, the daily subject was discussed for 20–30 min. After a 15-min break, the second half of the session was started and the subject was reinforced with an appropriate game (table game, enactment) (15–20 min). Later, free play time was given (15–20 min). At the end of the games, the reward schematics were recorded. Last, a review of the day was performed, feedback on the session was received and the session was ended.

5.1.1. Environment

The applications were made in an empty room seen appropriate by the school management (library, counselor's room, etc.). An environment where the students could comfortably sit in

a circle, come to a table when needed, which was wide enough that free games and role plays could be played and which would not be used during group hours for other reasons was tried to be ensured. To use rewards, sometimes the schoolyard was also used. In each session, the pages of the program handbook were given to the students as written materials and written-table games were prepared for the subjects.

Use of rewards: in order to support members' participation, compliance with group rules, completion of assignments and positive interaction, the use of rewards is very important. In this study, a reward table was used for rewards. The reward table was recorded at the end of each session. These rewards were arranged as individual and group rewards.

5.1.2. The content of the sessions

According to the plan outlined above, the goals and general summary of each session was given below.

5.1.2.1. Sessions 1–3: psychoeducation

5.1.2.1.1. Introduction

The leader started by introducing themselves. The reason for the group gathering and the group process was explained to the students and an introduction game was played. Group rules were discussed and the contracts on compliance with group rules were given as two copies to the students to be signed. Then the aims of the study, rewards, study type and study days were explained. In order to ensure group motivation, the students were told to think of a group name until the nest session.

5.1.2.1.2. Awareness on bullying behavior

In order to make peer bullying more understandable, examples of bullying and nonbullying behavior were given in hypothetical situations and the differences between these behavior types were discussed. What peer bullying is was explained.

5.1.2.2. Sessions 4 and 5: emotional training

In order to recognize emotions, understanding someone else's emotions by bodily cues and the fact that more than one emotion can be experienced in an event were studies using emotion posters and emotion guessing games. In order to make students realize that emotions can change, different people having different emotions in various situations and the emotions that occur during bullying were studied using the experiences of the students recorded at home by homework and the prepared worksheets.

5.1.2.3. Sessions 6–10: cognitive restructuring

In these sessions, the concepts of thought, connections between thought-emotion-behavior, recognizing thoughts related to bullying, making the connections between thoughts and emotions related to bullying behavior and replacing thoughts that cause bullying with new thoughts were studied. Card games prepared beforehand were used to reinforce the subject.

In this process, awareness training was given so that group members could recognize their own positive characteristics. The needs underlying one's bullying behavior were checked, the needs for perceiving oneself as strong, valuable and leading were identified and positive personality characteristics that would make one such a person without bullying were emphasized. Additionally, what the alternatives to bullying behavior could be was discussed.

5.1.2.4. Session 11: self-instruction training

Finding slogans and internal discourses to change the thought that may cause bullying and remind of the alternative behavior and rewarding oneself when bullying behavior is stopped were studied. In order to replace bullying behavior with new behavior, behavioral experiments that would remind one of the slogans were performed. In this stage, self-instruction and role playing techniques were used.

5.1.2.5. Sessions 12 and 13: reviewing all of the techniques and conclusion

In these sessions, all of the techniques that were learned were reviewed and alternative behavior to stop bullying behavior and slogan reminding were reinforced through role playing. The efforts of the students to reward themselves when they stopped bullying behavior were supported.

6. Discussion

In the prevention of peer bullying, whole school approach programs that encompass all groups whether bully, victim, or bystander and that are applied to the school system as a whole are known to be effective [1, 13]. These programs generally contain education efforts done in large groups. However, when the risks exhibited by bullying children regarding their adult lives are considered, it was thought that these children should be the subject of separate interventions with more comprehensive techniques and thus a cognitive behavioral intervention program aimed at reducing or eliminating these behavior was prepared and its effectiveness was tested [46]. This program is not thought to be an alternative approach to prevention programs toward the school system as a whole, but as an additional application that may lead to more effective results in the reduction of bullying.

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