Individual Correlates of Bullying Behaviour in Turkish Middle Schools

Arif Özer,¹ Tarık Totan² and Gökhan Atik³

¹ Program of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Vocational Education, Gazi University, Turkey
² Program of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Faculty of Education, Dokuz Eylül University, Turkey
³ Program of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Ankara University, Turkey

This study investigated the relationship between bullying involvement (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not involved) and gender, academic achievement, self-efficacies (academic, social, and emotional self-efficacies). Data were collected by administering the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996), the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (Murris, 2001), and a demographic information form to 721 middle school students (50.3% female, 49.7% male). The associations between bullying involvement and the independent variables were evaluated using a multiple correspondence analysis. Results showed that females tended to be not involved or victims, whereas males tended to be bullies or both bullies and victims. There were moderate associations between all self-efficacies, academic achievement, and bullying involvement. In particular, high self-efficacies and high academic achievement were related to being not involved in bullying, while low self-efficacies and low academic achievement were associated with either being a victim or both bully and victim.

Keywords: bullying, gender, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, multiple correspondence analysis

Schools provide an opportunity for students to not only enhance their knowledge and vocational skills, but also gain an understanding of social responsibility, self-control, and respect for others. In this regard, schools, working with limited resources, play a critical role in raising children to be responsible, happy, cooperating, and caring individuals by fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010). However, it has been questioned how efficiently schools meet these expectations. In recent years, the increase in violent incidents at schools has raised concerns regarding school safety. The World Health Organization (2006) anticipated that every year 150 million girls and 73

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Gökhan Atik, Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Program of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Ankara, 06590, Turkey. E-mail: gokhanatik@gmail.com
million boys are exposed to sexual harassment on their way to school or in school. Every student deserves to be educated in a secure environment, but some are scared of going to the bathroom or schoolyard because they are kicked, teased, or sexually assaulted (Olweus, 1993; Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Rigby, 2003). These behaviours — collectively known as bullying — associated with physical and psychosocial health problems.

At the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations (UN; 1989) proclaimed that children are entitled to access to education in peace and security. However, bullying incidents among students have a detrimental influence on the sense of peacefulness and safety. Schools have clear responsibility to address bullying, but they may not adequately deal with bullying because of larger system issues, including lack of support, funding, and staffing that limit their capacity to provide a peaceful and safe environment. The international and national estimates of bullying prevalence indicate its seriousness in schools. For instance, Due, Holstein, and Soc (2008) investigated bullying victimisation among 13- to 15-year-old schoolchildren (N = 218,104) in 66 countries and territories via two large international surveys: The 2001/2 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey (HBSC) and the Global School-Based Students Health Survey (GSHS). The results of the HBSC indicated that 32.1% of students had been victimised at school at least once within the past 2 months; the results of the GSHS indicated that 37.4% of students had been victimised at least once within the past month.

In Turkey, the estimates of bullying prevalence are highly variable. The percentage of students in each bully involvement category range from 3.3% (Kartal & Bilgin, 2009) to 33% (Kutlu, 2005) for bullies, 9.8% (Hiloğlu & Cenkseven-Önder, 2010) to 79.6% (Kartal, 2009) for victims, and 4.8% (Hiloğlu & Cenkseven-Önder, 2010) to 30.2% (Pişkin, 2010) for bully/victims. Atik (2011) argues that differences in the prevalence of bullying across Turkish samples is due to how bullying is assessed. There are several critical factors that play a role in determining the prevalence of bullying, such as how bullying is conceptualised, use of a priori definition of bullying or the word ‘bully’ in survey items, timeframe of measurement, and how adequately the assessment tool evaluates the conceptual components of bullying (e.g., repetition, intentionality, and power imbalance) and different forms of bullying. Additionally, Griffin and Gross (2004) noted that the prevalence rates reported in bullying studies differ according to the sample characteristics and when the research was conducted. Rigby (2002) reported that variation in the definition of bullying and confusion about bullying and aggression in some studies leads to discrepant results.

Uncertainty about the definition of bullying has prompted collaborative efforts to reach an agreement on how bullying should be conceptualised. It has been defined as a form of aggression that includes the following core elements: repeated incidents between the same people over a considerable length of time, intention to be hurtful, and power differentiation (Furlong, Sharkey, Felix, Tanigawa, & Greif-Green, 2010; Greif & Furlong, 2006). Repeated aggressive acts according to this definition of bullying can be physical, verbal, or social.

The variation in definitions of bullying leads to different categorisation of bullying as well. The common categories used by researchers are as follows: bully, victim, bully/victim, or not involved (Olweus, 1995; Solberg & Olweus, 2003).
Some researchers classify students as anxious bullies, bullies, proactive victims, victims, or bully/victims (Stephenson & Smith, 2002). Salmivalli (1999) categorises students into roles that take peer group dynamics into account, resulting in the following categories: bully, victim, bully’s assistant, bully reinforcers, or outsiders. In this study, we classified students according to the categorisation scheme used by Olweus and colleagues.

Although different classification systems have been used, all previous bullying studies have indicated that students who are involved in bullying suffer from low self-esteem, stress, loneliness, anxiety, sleep disorders, somatisation, social withdrawal, and depression (Murphy, 2009; Rigby, 2001, 2003, 2007). This has prompted researchers to examine the factors that cause bullying and to consider ways that these factors (and their effects) can be eliminated. Most studies conducted along these lines have examined the relationship between gender and bullying. Many studies indicate the prevalence of bullying and victimisation more among boys than among girls (Olweus, 1995; Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006; Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Some studies suggest that girls use and are exposed to more relational and indirect bullying than boys, while boys use and are exposed to more physical and direct bullying than girls (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Olweus, 1993). Other studies have found no significant gender differences in bullying involvement (Espelage, Mebane, & Swearer, 2004; Rigby, 2004; Wilkins-Shurmer et al., 2003; Wolke, 2000). Similarly, studies in Turkey indicate a differentiation regarding gender differences. For instance, Pişkin (2010) found that boys were more likely to be bullies or bully/victims than were girls. Girls reported more victimisation than boys. Yurtal and Cenkseven (2007) found that boys reported more bullying and victimisation than girls. However, Kapcı (2004) suggest no significant gender differences either in victimisation and bullying. The variation in the results could be related to sample characteristics, measurement, or gender differences in the form of bullying behaviour. Apart from these studies, in a study, conducted by the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Directorate General on the Status of Women, 39% of the women (N = 10,798) reported being exposed to physical violence of their partners at any time in their lives. The most important point is that 14% of the participants (24% for the participants from low SES; N = 10,353) accepted that their husbands can beat them (Jansen, Yüksel, & Çağatay, 2009). These results indicate that women are more victimised than men due to cultural influences, and women are prone to accept this violence. Therefore, in this study, it is expected that girls are more likely than boys to be victims of bullying whereas boys are more likely than girls to be bullies or bully/victims because of the structure of patriarchal culture in Turkey.

Another factor that is often found to be related to bullying is academic achievement. Most researchers agree that children who participate in bullying tend to have lower academic scores (Bush, Ladd, & Herald, 2006; Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2010; Schwartz, Farver, Chang, & Lee-Shin, 2002; Wienke Totura, Green, Karver, & Gesten, 2009). Beran and Lupart (2009) found that students being harassed by their peers had trouble in school achievement when they display behaviour problems and poor peer interactions. Gu, Lai and Ye (2011) investigated middle school students’ problem behaviours based on international
educational database (TIMMS) and found that problem behaviours (e.g., intimidation or verbal abuse of other students, profanity) predicted negatively students’ academic achievement. Recently, Juvonen, Wang, and Espinoza (2011) investigated the association between bullying experiences and academic performance in a longitudinal study. They found that a higher level of bullying is related to poor academic achievement and academic disengagement across 3 years. In this study, we expected that students classified as low academic achievers would likely be involved in bullying as either bully, victim, or both bully and victim.

Self-efficacy is another factor that plays an important role in bullying behaviour. Bandura defines self-efficacy as ‘the belief in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations’ (1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy provides the foundation for how children feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. Confident students are successful academically, socially, and emotionally. They can also generalise their beliefs about their own abilities across activities and situations. Researchers have made significant progress in understanding self-efficacy and its association with bullying. Nevertheless, discrepancies across studies prevent a clear main conclusion from being drawn. Some research indicates that students who have a strong sense of self-efficacy are more inclined to behave aggressively toward others or bully others (Andreou, Vlachou, & Didaskalou, 2005; Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom, 2001). In other words, bullies are characterised as having high self-efficacy. On the other hand, Doll, Song, and Siemers (2004) found that low self-efficacy scores were related to aggressive behaviours and increased the likelihood of being a bully. Eslea and Wolke (1998) reported that increased self-efficacy empowered students and decreased their bullying behaviours. In terms of victims, it has mostly been reported that increases in self-efficacy decrease the likelihood of being bullied (Doll et al., 2004; Putter, 2007). In sum, these studies suggest an association between self-efficacy and bullying, however the nature of this relationship needs to be investigated more thoroughly.

The aim of this study is to examine the association between bullying involvement (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not involved) and gender, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy. Although the relationship between academic achievement and bullying are well established, the relationships between gender, self-efficacy and bullying are less conclusive. Therefore, this study will contribute to the current literature on bullying by revealing the associations between bullying, gender, academic achievement, and self-efficacy.

Method
Participants
The participants in this study were 721 students from six middle schools in Izmir, Turkey. These schools were located in neighbourhoods of middle socioeconomic status. In Turkey, middle school is level of schooling between elementary and high schools. Middle school includes grades 6 through 8, consisting of students from ages 11 to 14. Schools and participants were selected by convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Three hundred and sixty participants
(50.3%) were female and 355 (49.7%) were male. Six cases didn’t report their gender. The sample consisted of 243 sixth (35.9%), 158 seventh (23.4%), and 275 eighth (40.7%) grade students. The students who didn’t report their grade levels were 45.

**Measures**

**Demographic variables.** Information about gender, grade level (6th, 7th, and 8th grade), and academic achievement was collected using a Demographic Information Form developed by the researchers. Academic achievement was obtained by asking participants for their Grade Point Average (GPA) for the last academic term.

**Bullying and victimisation.** The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) (Olweus, 1996) was used to classify students into bullying involvement categories. This questionnaire was originally developed for a national campaign to evaluate bullying incidents among students (Olweus, 1983, as cited in Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Since then, it has undergone several revisions. In this study, a 40-item version translated by Dölek (2002) for use with Turkish students was used. Olweus (1994, 1996) reported the internal consistency of the OBVQ were high (.80 and above) for the combined items on bullying and victimisation. The Turkish OBVQ has Cronbach alpha coefficients of .75 for the bullying items, and .71 for the victimisation items (Atik, 2006). In another study (Totan, 2008), the coefficients were found to be .82 for the bullying items, and .77 for the victimisation items. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a definition of bullying that emphasises core elements (intention, repetition, and power differential) and different forms of bullying is provided. Next, two general questions are asked: ‘How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?’ and ‘How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?’ For the next seven items that describe specific forms of bullying and victimisation behaviours, students are asked to consider how often they have been exposed to or have done that form of bullying, and to respond on a 5-point scale: Never, Once or twice, Sometimes, About once a week, and Several times a week (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Students who bullied others sometimes or more in the past couple of months were categorised as bullies, those who were bullied sometimes or more in the past couple of months were categorised as victims, those who both bullied others and were bullied sometimes or more in the past couple of months were categorised as bully/victim, and those who reported bullying others or being bullied less than sometimes were classified as not involved (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

**Self-efficacy beliefs.** The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) developed by Muris (2001) was used to assess self-efficacy. The SEQ-C consists of 21 items and participants respond on a five-point scale (1 = Not at all and 5 = Very well). The SEQ-C consists of three sub-dimensions: social self-efficacy (e.g., ‘How well can you express your opinions when other classmates disagree with you?’), academic self-efficacy (e.g., ‘How well do you succeed in passing a test?’), and emotional self-efficacy (e.g., ‘How well can you control your feelings?’). Higher scores correspond to higher self-efficacy on each dimension and in general. The
original SEQ-C has internal consistency ranging from .85 to .88 for the subscales, and .85 for overall self-efficacy (Muris, 2001). This questionnaire was adapted by Telef (2010) for use with Turkish students, and the factor structure in the adapted questionnaire is the same as the structure reported for the original version of the questionnaire ($\chi^2 = 614.68$, $df = 186$, $\chi^2/SD = 3.31$, $GFI = .94$, $NFI = .95$, $RFI = .94$, $CFI = .96$, $IFI = .96$, $RMR = .066$, $RMSEA = .050$). The internal consistency of the Turkish SEQ-C was .86 for overall self-efficacy and ranged from .64 to .84 for the subscales.

**Procedure**

Initially, the researchers made personal visits to the principals of the schools in Konak and Buca, provinces of Izmir, to explain the purpose of the study and to request their assistance. Six elementary school principals agreed to allow their students to participate in this study. Informed consent was obtained from the students as well. The data was collected by the researchers in collaboration with school counselling and guidance services. School counsellors assisted in organization of the data collection. They got in touch with the teachers to arrange the classrooms for administration. The questionnaires were administered during class sessions in the academic year of 2008–2009. Information about the study and detailed instructions on how to respond for each questionnaire was provided by the researchers. Data collection took 30 minutes.

**Analysis of Data**

The dependent variable in this study was bullying involvement category (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not-involved) and the independent variables were gender, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy. Because the dependent variable is categorical and most of the independent variables are continuous, the data were initially analysed using discriminant and logistic regression analyses. However, bootstrapped cross-validation analyses indicated that the classification accuracy rates were below chance. The validation table obtained in this analysis revealed that the original model was not verified by accuracy rates. In other words, the validation was not successful because the significant predictors were not the same across analyses. Therefore, the parameter estimates obtained using discriminant or logistic regression analyses were not reliable. Consequently, multiple correspondence analysis, also known as homogeneity analysis or optimal scaling, was selected for data analysis.

Correspondence analysis is a statistical method for transforming a cross-tabulation of data into a graphical display. The variables are weighted negatively and positively within two dimensions and represented as dot points in a four-quadrant space. The goal of the analysis is to describe the relationship between two or more nominal variables in a low-dimensional space (i.e., minimum of two dimensions) containing the variable categories as well as the objects in those categories (Greenacre & Pardo, 2006). All variables used in this study were multiple nominal variables. Thus, for academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, and grade point average participant scores were classified into two categories (low and high) based on k-means cluster analyses. All statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 18.
Results

In this study, the relationships between gender, academic achievement, self-efficacy (academic, social, and emotional) and bullying category (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not-involved) were investigated. The response frequencies for gender, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy are presented in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, a large proportion of bullies (66%) and bully/victims (71%) were males, whereas a large proportion of victims (53%) and not involved (54%) were females. In addition, a large proportion of not involved (81%) and bullies (79%) were students with a high level of academic achievement, and a large proportion of victims (33%) and bully/victims (30%) were students with a low level of academic achievement. Moreover, a large proportion of not involved (about 60%) were students who scored high on self-efficacy (academic, social and emotional), whereas most bully/victims (about 60%) were students who scored low on self-efficacy (academic, social and emotional). We used multiple correspondence (optimal scaling) analysis to test whether the observed differences between the categories were statistically significant.

The singular values, eigenvalues, inertia, and values are presented in the Table 2. Instead of a variance term, correspondence analysis aims to partition the Pearson value or the total inertia value using the Euclidean distance between variable categories. Singular values refer to the square root of inertia and show the correlation between the row and column categories of a given dimension in the table. The total eigenvalue is the sum of all the eigenvalues and shows the total variance explained by the dimensions. Inertia refers to the squared singular values of the scaled table, reflecting the variation accounted for in the dimensions.

The multiple correspondence analysis indicated that dimension 1 accounted for 38% and dimension 2 explained 21% of the variance in the bullying category variable. The chi-square value for these two dimensions indicates a strong relationship between the rows and columns in the contingency table generated by the category variable, \( \chi^2 = 2483.84, \ p = .000 \). The fact that the two dimensions together accounted for most of the variance (59%) in the data suggests that the pattern of relationships between variables can be adequately explained by a two-dimensional analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying categories</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Academic self-efficacy</th>
<th>Social self-efficacy</th>
<th>Emotional self-efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully/Victim</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
<td><strong>128</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, the discrimination measures of two-dimensional variables were checked (see Table 3). The relationships between the dimensions and variables were also examined and are described in the Figure 1.

Table 3 and Figure 1 were created according to the discriminant measures, which can be regarded as component loadings in correspondence analysis. When Table 3 and Figure 1 were evaluated together, inner relationships between variables could not be explained with one dimension; an additional dimension was needed. Academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy were closest to dimension 1. Although academic achievement was associated with dimension 1, its discrimination values were low. In other words, the contribution of academic achievement to dimension 1 was lower than the contribution of the self-efficacy subscales. Moreover, bullying categories and gender were correlated with dimension 2. This situation is illustrated in Figure 2 where the relationship between gender and social self-efficacy is plotted in two-dimensional space.

As seen from Figure 2, dimension 2 differentiated males from females, while dimension 1 differentiated those high in social self-efficacy from those low in social self-efficacy. Two singular values capture the bulk of the variance, indicating that the 2-D correspondence plot (Figure 3) is a good approximation of the higher dimensional relationships in the table.

### Table 3

The Discrimination Measures Per Variable Per Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Figure 3, the point where dimension 1 and dimension 2 intersect (0,0), is the origin and divides the graph into four quadrants. According to Funnell, Bryer, Grimbeek, and Davies (2004), response categories aligned with the mid-point between two quadrants indicate that participants from these quadrants share many characteristics. Our results show that students classified as high on social self-efficacy and high on emotional self-efficacy were located in quadrant one. Students who were very close to quadrant one were those who were categorised as not involved in bullying and bullies. Quadrant two mostly consisted of
females categorised as not involved. Those students were also high academic achievers and were rated high on academic and social self-efficacy. Quadrant three included mostly male students categorised as bullies and bully/victims. In this quadrant, bully/victims had low academic achievement and were low in academic and social self-efficacy. Quadrant four consisted mostly of students who were low in emotional and social self-efficacy and were categorised as victims. Figure 3 also shows that females were associated with not involved and victim categories, while males were associated with bully and bully/victim categories. In addition, although females seemed more academically successful than males, level of academic achievement was more strongly related to self-efficacy than gender.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The current study investigated the association between bullying involvement category (bully, victim, bully/victim, and not involved), gender, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy. Our results indicate that females tend to be classified as not involved and victims whereas males tend to be classified as bullies and bully/victims. The finding that female students are less involved in bullying than male students is in accordance with previous research (Olweus, 1994; Pepler et al., 2006; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1998). In addition, female students were more likely to be bullied as compared to male students,
which is again consistent with previous studies (Baldry, 2003; Totan, 2008; Wolke, Woods, & Samara, 2009). Furthermore, we found that male students were more likely to be bullies or bully/victims as compared to female students, which is consistent with previous research (Olweus, 1995; Scheithauer et al., 2006; Solberg et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2009). Gender differences in bullying involvement could be because of gender role socialization (Atik & Kemer, 2008; Orpinas & Horne, 2006). For example, Atik and Kemer (2008) pointed out that in Turkish culture the aggressive behaviours displayed by boys, as compared to those by girls, are more accepted and encouraged. In contrast, girls are expected to be non-aggressive, polite, kind to others, and passive. As mentioned earlier, the study conducted by the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Directorate General on the Status of Women could be another example of how gender role socialization encourages the use of violence. In this study, 14% of the women accepted that their husbands can beat them in some cases (Jansen, Yüksel, & Çağatay, 2009). This can be an evident how violent behaviours are nurtured in a cultural context. In this study, although the independent variables are not directly related to cultural factors, it is recommended for further studies to include these factors to understand better how they shape bullying behaviour.

In this study, low self-efficacy and low academic achievement were found to be related to being a bully or being both bully and victim. Pajares (1996) considers self-efficacy as an indicator of academic achievement. Therefore, it is expected that the association between self-efficacy and academic achievement is linear and strong. It is also well established that students who are involved in bullying tend to be less successful academically (Atik, 2006; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005; Konishi et al., 2010; Schwartz et al., 2002; Wienke Totura et al., 2009). Similarly, Andreou and Metallidou (2004) pointed out that bullying and victimisation were related to low academic self-efficacy.

In this study, the students who were not involved in bullying had higher social and emotional self-efficacy compared with those who were involved in bullying in some way. This is consistent with previous research. For example, Crick and Dodge (1994, 1996) indicated that students who were not involved in bullying had higher emotional and social self-efficacy scores than those who were involved in bullying, and Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999) found that aggressive behaviours were mostly associated with poor social skills. According to Mahady Wilton and Craig (2000), deficits in emotional skills lead to victimisation, while Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, and Patton (2001) suggest that victimisation and the lack of social relationships lead to emotional problems. Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) reported that there is a close association between victimisation and social and emotional problems. Finally, Andreou (2004) revealed that bullying and victimisation were related to low self-efficacy for assertion. Considering previous research findings, in this study, it appears that the students not involved in bullying have higher social and emotional self-efficacies than those involved in bullying as bully, victim, or bully/victim. Given that a high level of social self-efficacy is an indicator of healthy peer relations, the students with high emotional self-efficacy tend to have more friends than those whose social self-efficacy scores are low. Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks (1999) emphasised that having friends is a protective factor against victimisation. Thus, it is not surprising that the students not involved in bullying
had high social self-efficacy. Moreover, it appears that bullies have higher self-efficacy scores and achievement than those who are victims some or all of the time. This may be because bullies are inclined to demonstrate that they are more powerful as compared to their peers (Sutton et al., 1999), and that bullies may lose their popularity if social and emotional weaknesses are seen by their peers. Therefore, bullies are likely to have high emotional and social self-efficacy.

The current investigation found that female students had higher self-efficacy than male students did, which is consistent with Joo, Bong, & Choi (2000). However, Bong (1999) indicated that boys perceived themselves to be more successful academically than girls, which is inconsistent with our findings. This could be because the girls who participated in our study were more successful than the boys were, as it is known that achievement is a significant contributor to the enhancement of self-efficacy.

In conclusion, our findings indicate that female students tended to be victims or not involved in bullying, whereas male students were mostly bullies or both bully and victims. Therefore, there are clear gender differences in bullying involvement. Being male could be considered a risk factor for displaying bullying behaviours. High self-efficacy and academic achievement scores were associated with not being involved in bullying, while low self-efficacy and academic achievement scores were related to being a victim or both bully and victim. It is expected that this study will contribute to global efforts to understand and prevent bullying and victimisation among children and youth from a different cultural background. Given that there is a scarcity on studies investigating the effect of self-efficacy on bullying, this study may increase the generalisability of the previous findings to other cultures. By taking into account these results, school counsellors can prepare school-wide intervention plans that include gender sensitive strategies, group guidance programs aimed at improving academic, social, and emotional self-efficacy, and social skills. Also, school counsellors can concentrate on preventative and developmental strategies that increase self-efficacy beliefs of girls to reduce the likelihood of being bullied.

This study has some limitations. First, since the schools and the participants were selected through convenient sampling, the findings can be generalised to those who display similar characteristics to these schools and participants. Second, the school are located in neighbourhoods of middle socioeconomic status, in Izmir. Thus, it is recommended to repeat this study among different schools from different SES in order to generalize the findings. Third, in this study data were analysed using multiple correspondence analysis because of difficulties meeting the assumptions of discriminant and logistic regression analyses. To analyse the data with correspondence analysis, some continuous variables had to be translated into categorical variables. Transforming the data in this way may have left out the nuances in the data. Lastly, the participants’ academic achievement depends on students’ self-report of GPA.

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