

Peer relationships and bullying victimization among elementary school children in Rotterdam

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Ethical review	Approved WMO
Status	Recruitment stopped
Health condition type	Other condition
Study type	Observational non invasive

Summary

ID

NL-OMON34467

Source

ToetsingOnline

Brief title

Peer relationships and bullying among elementary school children

Condition

- Other condition

Synonym

aggression, bullying

Health condition

pesten

Research involving

Human

Sponsors and support

Primary sponsor: Erasmus MC, Universitair Medisch Centrum Rotterdam

Source(s) of monetary or material Support: NWO

Intervention

Keyword: bullying victimization, computer program, peer nominations

Outcome measures

Primary outcome

Primary study parameters/outcome of the study are:

- Bullying victimization and involvement in bullying as aggressor
- Forms of bullying
- Peer status (acceptance or rejection by classmates)
- Defender*s role
- Prosocial behavior

Secondary outcome

Secondary study parameters/outcome of the study are:

- Earlier behavioral problems of children
- Parental psychopathology
- Parenting style
- Attachment
- Temperament
- Emotion recognition
- Verbal and non-verbal cognitive development

Study description

Background summary

School bullying is a form of children's aggression manifested in systematic, repeated, and deliberate negative actions, which are directed at children who often find it difficult to defend themselves [1, 2]. School bullying is a prevalent and serious problem in most countries, including the Netherlands. More than 16% of Dutch school children of 9 to 11 years old reported being bullied regularly, and about 40% of children at this age group had experienced bullying at least once or twice [3]. It appears that bullying among younger children is rather prevalent too. Recent research findings show that bullying exists already at kindergarten-age, and its nature corresponds to that of among school-aged children [4, 5].

The consequences of bullying can be very harmful to health and behavior of children involved in its processes [6]. Apart from poorer physical health, victimization is strongly associated with the loss of self-esteem, and risk of developing psychosomatic symptoms, depression, and suicidal ideation [2, 7, 8]. Children involved in bullying exhibit poorer psychosocial adjustment, as compared to those not involved [9, 10]. Physical and relational victimization among preschoolers contribute to later school adjustment problems [10, 11]. Early involvement in bullying is a precursor of children's feelings of loneliness and school avoiding behavior [5, 12]. It was reported that despite the pre-existing behavioral and school difficulties, being victimized by bullying during first 2 years at school uniquely contributes to an increase in adjustment problems among victims and bully/victims [11]. Furthermore, bullying can also undermine academic achievements, and it is associated with delinquency and crime involvement in youth [2, 9, 13, 14].

In the context of school bullying it is important to try to prevent its occurrence or to identify it as early as possible. It is recommended to intervene at the start of the elementary school [7]. The duration of the victimization experience is associated with the magnitude of the school maladjustments [7, 22]. Therefore, problem of bullying has to be adequately addressed already at the start of the elementary school.

However, parents and teachers often struggle with their attempts to tackle bullying. It is rather 'hidden' from adult supervision and it often remains unnoticed because it usually happens at the least well supervised locations [2, 27]. Also, children can be rather reluctant to report bullying. Up to half of the involved children reported not telling adults about being bullied [2, 3] and therefore, parents and teachers may often be unaware of the full extent of the problem. This all can make it rather difficult to assess the problem just by day-to-day observation and it certainly makes it challenging to deal with bullying effectively. The usual methods such as questionnaires are not suitable

for children whose reading skills are not fully developed yet (e.g. children in grades 2 and 3 of the elementary school). Because of these complications it is rather challenging to diagnose bullying among young children. A suitable for this goal instrument is currently lacking. Therefore, an age-appropriate instrument should be developed that would allow studying bullying among young children in a simple and efficient manner.

Study objective

Currently there is no instrument available that could be used to identify bullying among young children. An instrument that is developed within this study, however, can fulfill this goal. The developed program can be used to analyze the situation in a class and to provide a tailored, evidence-based feedback to the teachers. With the help of this tool it is easy to detect whether there is a problem in a class and to what extent it is a problem.

Questionnaires that have been widely used for bullying research up till now are not suitable for 6-7 year-old children. Usually, parent or teacher reports are used to assess bullying among young children, but children themselves are asked very seldom. The proposed in this study instrument, on the other hand, is based on cumulative experience of researchers working on bullying problem among young children [4, 5, 21, 28, 29] and it can be used for self-report of bullying victimization among young children. A specifically designed for young children computer task will be used in this study to collect data on peer interactions among elementary school children in Rotterdam. Children are asked to nominate classmates by whom they are bullied. With the help of this program it will be possible to measure to what extent bullying is prevalent among young elementary school children and what patterns of peer relationships are common among these children. Because this tool is easy to utilize, it can later be used independently by any school interested in diagnosing the situation in a class.

The primary research questions of the study are:

1. What percentage of children report bullying victimization?
2. Which form of bullying is the most common among elementary school children?
3. What is the structure of the social networks among elementary school children?

Furthermore, using the tool for monitoring of the peer relationships in a class is also beneficial for prevention purposes. Such information can help to improve an understanding of the relationships among children in a class, and it can help to prevent dangerous patterns of peer relations turning into severe chronic problems at a later stage.

Apart from creating an instrument to study bullying victimization, this study will also look at the role of the early risk factors for maladaptive relations among elementary school children. This secondary goal can be achieved by combining an extensive data about early developmental factors of children

participating in the Generation R study with the data on bullying and peer relationships collected in this study. Within the Generation R project a wide range of data has been collected about children's behavioral problems, parental psychopathology, family functioning, parenting, and social demographic data [33]. This approach will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the bullying processes among young children.

Secondary goals of the research aim to answer the following research questions:

1. Which early developmental risk factors are related to maladaptive relations among elementary school children?
2. Which early developmental risk factors can predict victimization and bullying among young elementary school children?

Study design

This is an observational, cross-sectional study during which children report information about their relationships with classmates. The data is collected by means of a computer program in a form of a computer game. The computer test is approximately 15 minutes in duration and children are asked to complete the task once, at school, under usual for them circumstances. Several children can do the task at the same time.

The demo version of the computer program can be viewed on the following website: www.pestenopbasisscholen.nl. This website has been created specifically for this project. It contains information about the project but also useful materials about bullying among young schoolchildren. Teachers and parents can visit this website in order to obtain more information about this research project, and they can try the test version of the computer program or watch a demo movie about the program on this website.

Study burden and risks

It is expected that the proposed computer test holds minimum burden for children participating in the study because children are asked to report the information that they know implicitly already. Children answer questions about their relationships with the classmates and are not confronted with a new for them information. The entertaining nature of the computer test makes it easy and fun for most of the children to answer the questions.

Contacts

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Trial sites

Listed location countries

Netherlands

Eligibility criteria

Age

Children (2-11 years)

Inclusion criteria

School level: Elementary schools in Rotterdam attended by children participating in Generation R study.

Class level: Classes 2, 3 and 4 of the participating schools in which the Generation R participants are studying.

Individual level: Schoolchildren from classes 2, 3 and 4 from the participating schools.

Exclusion criteria

1. Classes where more than 25% of the children can not participate due to parents giving no consent for their children's participation in the study. If more than 25% of children whose parents gave consent for children's participation are absent on the day of the visit, the school visit will be carried out on another day.
2. Insufficient command of Dutch language by a child. A child has to be able to understand the questions and instructions, which are available in Dutch only.
3. Any severe developmental or behavioral problems that may be an obstacle for a child to complete the task. This will be first discussed with the teacher.

Study design

Design

Study type: Observational non invasive

Masking: Open (masking not used)

Control: Uncontrolled

Primary purpose: Diagnostic

Recruitment

NL

Recruitment status: Recruitment stopped

Start date (anticipated): 03-01-2011

Enrollment: 207

Type: Actual

Ethics review

Approved WMO

Date: 26-10-2010

Application type: First submission

Review commission: METC Erasmus MC, Universitair Medisch Centrum Rotterdam (Rotterdam)

Study registrations

Followed up by the following (possibly more current) registration

No registrations found.

Other (possibly less up-to-date) registrations in this register

No registrations found.

In other registers

Register	ID
CCMO	NL32478.078.10