Effects of A Bullying Prevention Group Counseling Program on Self-Esteem, Self-Assertiveness and Victimization of Bullied Children

Jong-Un Kim† Seong-Moon Cheon
Indiana University Kyungsung University

The present study examined the effects of a bullying prevention group counseling program on self-esteem, self-assertiveness, and victimization of bullied children in school. Participants in the treatment group attended the bullying prevention program 2 sessions per week for 5 consecutive weeks, whereas those who participated in the control group received no treatment. The findings indicated that the treatment program effectively improved self-esteem and self-assertiveness, reducing victimization of bullied children. At the same time, the results revealed the significant effects of the bullying prevention program on several of the dependent variables. Counseling implications of the results and several suggestions and limitations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: a bullying prevention program, group counseling, self-esteem, self-assertiveness, victimization
Peer relationships have an effect on elementary school children by providing important role models as well as affective resources. But victims of bullying are shut out from many of these experiences. Victims of bullying have a tendency to have lower levels of both self-esteem and self-efficacy and appear to be anxious, oversensitive, insecure and quiet (Olweus, 2001). They also are more worried, fearful, withdrawn and ashamed of new situations such as transition from sixth grade to seventh. Slee and Rigby (1993) found that victims are less happy and more lonely at school and in the classroom, because of having fewer good friends. Victims of bullying are more likely to think about suicide repeatedly. A study showed that in relation to school bullying several young students in England committed suicide every year (Smith & Shu, 2000). In Korea, a few victims of bullying from a elementary school level through a high school level have lately committed suicide.

In order to understand the phenomenon of bullying and the victims of bullying, it is important to begin by defining bullying in the context of school. Moreover, the definition is extremely important because the findings of studies on bullying provide a basis for developing prevention and intervention programs (Ross, 2003).

Gu (1997) described bullying as anything including both verbal and physical behaviors, from saying something mean or teasing, to physical aggression where a group of children that consists of two children or more repeatedly picking on someone over a long period of time. Olweus defined bullying as repeated exposure, over time, to negative actions and exclusion by one or more students (Olweus, 1994). Negative actions include behaviors ranging from low-level nonverbal harassment such as stares and glares, to malicious gossip, social ostracism, cruel teasing, ethnic slurs, destruction of another’s property, extortion and serious physical assault (Olweus, 1993). Thus, in this study, bullying is described as a concept including any intentional action or implied action done by one or more children both physically and psychologically.

According to a study by Kim & Park (1997), thirty percent of elementary school students, middle school students, and high school students surveyed had experienced bullying. The study revealed that forty-eight percent of students surveyed had bullied other students. The Korean Education Development Institute (1998) stated that about twenty-four percent of 6893 students surveyed had experienced victimization of bullying. According to this study, twenty-nine percent of middle school students, twenty-five percent of elementary school students, and nearly twenty-one percent of high school students surveyed had experienced bullying.

These research results informed us that bullying from an elementary school level through a high school level was serious. In particular, the experience of victimization in an elementary school level is vital. When it is considered that these results would be able to affect adolescence as well as adulthood afterward, the intervention for bullying and victims in an elementary school is very important (Lee, 1998).