The effects of conflict resolution and peer mediation training on primary school students’ level of aggression

Abbas Turnuklu*, Tarkan Kacmaz, Selma Gurler, Burcak Sevkin, Fulya Turk, Alper Kalender and Feza Zengin

Dokuz Eylul University Conflict Resolution Research Centre, Izmir, Turkey

(Received 24 September 2007; accepted 15 January 2009)

This study aims to analyse the effects of conflict resolution and peer mediation (CRPM) training on the levels of aggression of 10–11-year-old Turkish primary school students. The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design. The experimental group of the study included 347 students (173 girls, 174 boys), and the control group had 328 students (158 girls, 170 boys). Data for the research were collected using the ‘Aggression Scale’. Data analyses revealed that CRPM training was effective in lowering the aggression scale scores of the students. Boys seem to have benefited more from the training than girls. CRPM training was found to reduce student aggression which may lead to more constructive, restorative and peaceful behaviour in classroom and school settings. Since less energy and time will have to be allocated to resolving problem behaviour, academic success may increase, and a safer school atmosphere may be attained.

Keywords: student aggression; conflict resolution; peer mediation

Introduction

Schools are settings where students with different levels of personal, physical, emotional, cognitive, and moral development come together during certain times of the day. This communal activity of students who have different demands, interests, objectives, values, problem-solving skills, and personalities naturally leads to interpersonal conflicts and disagreements. More often than not, students resort to aggressive behaviour to solve their conflicts and disagreements, or, in other words, their shared problems. Therefore, aggressive behaviour as a problem-solving method or self-expression is a natural and inevitable part of school settings. However, serious aggressive behaviour is not as common at the primary level where frequent low-interest conflicts are more likely to be observed. Turnuklu and Sahin (2002) found that fighting, verbal confrontation, verbal abuse, name calling, gossiping, practical jokes, pestering, blaming, bullying, and passing on rumours were the most common types of aggressive behaviour at the primary level in Turkish schools.

Claiming that aggressive behaviour is often used to solve problems would not be an overstatement. In a study that reviewed different approaches of various researchers on this issue, Acker and Talbott (1999) report that children who resort to aggressive and violent behaviour are equipped with limited conflict resolution

*Corresponding author. Email: abbas.turnuklu@deu.edu.tr