The Relationship of Character Strengths with Peer Bullying and Peer Victimization Among Adolescents*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This research examined the relationship of character strengths with peer bullying and peer victimization. The research group consists of 663 high school students in Kocaeli chosen by convenience sampling method. Character Growth Index, Peer Bullying Scale Adolescent Form and Personal Information Form have been used. The results indicated that peer bullying was related to the strengths of perseverance, humility, optimism, kindness, love/care, calmness, wisdom, spirituality, and honesty, while no relationship was found with courage and forgiveness. It was also found that peer victimization was related to the strengths of perseverance, humility, optimism, kindness, love/care, calmness, courage, wisdom, spirituality, and honesty character strengths, while there was no correlation with the strength of forgiveness. As a result of the regression analysis, the strength of perseverance and honesty in the Character Growth Index explained 10% of the total variance in being a victim of peer bullying, while the strength of perseverance, humility, spirituality, and honesty in the Character Growth Index explained 16% of the total variance in performing peer bullying. In the examination made according to the gender variable, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions of optimism, kindness, calmness, courage, wisdom, and honesty in the Character Growth Index scale according to gender. Again, according to the gender variable, it was found that the total peer victimization and total peer bullying scores of the students were higher in male students than in female students.

1. Introduction

Adolescence, which is considered a critical period in terms of personality development, covers a wide area of social life (Kulaksızoğlu, 2002). The crises that need to be overcome during this period and the needs that need to be satisfied cause the individual to behave aggressively by increasing the level of anxiety and stress (Koç, 2006). Another important problem the individual face during adolescence is bullying, a sub-dimension of aggression behavior (Eşkisu, 2009). Olweus (2003) defines school bullying as one or more students harming those who are weaker than their peers through negative actions such as aggressive behavior or deliberate hitting, disturbing, excluding, and gossiping about them. According to Olweus (2003), for an act to be bullying, it must contain the following 3 criteria: 1. intentional damaging actions against the individual or group in the position of victim, 2. the continuity of the act over time, 3. the inequality of power between the bully and the victim. Bullying, which is expressed as the stronger constantly disturbing the weaker himself, has always existed from the past to the present. Many people who now continue their lives as adults have had a life of bullying as a bully and/or victim or witnessing this process (Ayas & Pişkin, 2011). It can be said that

bullying behavior is an important issue because it carries risks that affect the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of adolescents and may cause unwanted problems in adulthood (Pelendecioğlu, 2011). The sooner negative behaviors such as bullying begin in individuals, the higher the likelihood of committing chronic, serious, and violent crimes as adults. The opposite can also happen. The later the individual exhibits negative behavior, the less concern will be about his behavior in adulthood (Steinberg, 2007). For this reason, it is of great importance to plan activities to prevent negative and undesirable behaviors towards our youth in our schools, to recognize the concept of bullying, which has turned into a school syndrome, and to raise awareness, to protect the health of students, to create a safe environment in schools and to increase school success (Avşar, 2016; Yaman et al., 2011).

Considering the studies for students in terms of preventive studies, emphasizing the positive behaviors that young people need will help reduce negative behaviors. When it comes to the positive development of young people, the most important part is the character strengths which are evaluated within the scope of positive traits. Character strengths are recognized as one of the newest research areas of positive psychology (Steen et al., 2003). Positive psychology focuses on the questions of what is good for the person, how can we measure, how do we build good character in children and young people. For this reason, character strengths are accepted as the center of the psychological good life (Park & Peterson, 2008). Character corresponds to the spiritually valuable aspects of personality. It is the set of positive characteristics that take place in an individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. It also includes moral values (Park & Peterson, 2008). Character strengths are different from externally based forces such as skills and abilities, which are positively related within themselves. It is a set of positive characteristics that enable human development (Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Niemiec, 2013). Good character is not just a structure that is determined by right or wrong and consists of existence or non-existence, it is the whole of them (Peterson & Park, 2008).

Park and Peterson (2009) created the classification of character strengths by defining 24-character traits within 6 virtue dimensions. *Wisdom:* It is the virtue dimension of cognitive strengths for acquiring and using knowledge. This virtue can be considered as a kind of intelligence. Wisdom virtue dimension is regarded as the main virtue dimension that enables the existence of other strengths. Originality, curiosity, openness to learning, open-mindedness, versatile perspective character strengths are included in this virtue dimension. *Courage:* It includes emotional competences that have the willingness to succeed against all obstacles from inside or outside. It includes the observed behaviors and the cognitions, emotions, motives, and decisions that make up these behaviors. Honesty, courage, perseverance, and enthusiasm for life character strengths are included in this virtue dimension. *Humanity:* It is defined as positive personality traits that include establishing good relations with other people, being friendly, socializing and being pro-social within the science of psychology. Good courage, social intelligence, and capacity to be loved character strengths are included in this virtue dimension. *Fairness:* The virtue dimension includes the personality traits necessary for individuals to live more comfortably, fairly, and equally in the society they live in. Equity, leadership, and responsibility character strengths are included in this virtue dimension. *Moderation:* The dimension of virtue consists of personality traits that protect the individual against extremism. It includes the devotion that the individual shows towards himself and his environment. It is about the consequences of a psychologically good life. Forgiveness, modesty, caution, self-control character strengths are included in this virtue dimension. *Transcendence:* It is the virtue dimension that explains the meaning of life by providing connection with the greater being in the universe and includes the strength of the individual to believe and attach to the transcendent. This dimension of virtue includes the strengths of aesthetics and appreciation of perfection, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality.

Lately, Liston (2014) classified the character traits a little differently. He has reviewed many character trait classifications to design a simple, useful, and economical character development scale in schools. The most widely distributed character lists in the field of character education, the most detailed character lists and the most comprehensive character strength lists have been determined by scanning and creating 6 important lists to be included in the taxonomy. Among these lists, he identified 18 hypothesis features for use in his study. As a result of the factor analysis made on these hypotheses, Liston determined the Character Growth Index (CGI) classification as 11 factors. Character traits determined in the character development approach: Perseverance, optimism, love, humility, courage, kindness, peace, forgiveness, wisdom, spirituality, and honesty.

Character strength classification has an important potential for youth development practices since the first day it was developed (Biswas & Diener, 2006). Strong characters are personality states that are considered morally valuable. Today, most schools and youth programs focus on developing the skills and abilities of young people, such as reading, writing, understanding, and thinking, to achieve their life goals. These characteristics play an important role in helping young people reach their life goals. However, people cannot desire the right things without good character (Park & Peterson, 2009). Good character brings results such as school success, leadership, valuing diversity of tolerance, the ability to delay satisfaction / satisfaction, kindness, and altruism. It has been stated that good character is associated with decreasing problems such as substance use, alcohol addiction, smoking, violence, aggression, depression, and suicide (Park & Peterson, 2008). The biggest problem of schools is to deal with such problems and not to take preventive interventions before the problem occurs (Korkut-Owen, 2015).

Having strong characters prevents unwanted consequences in life and is also important for healthy development throughout life. Much evidence shows that character strengths such as hope, hope, self-control and self-regulation, social intelligence, and multi-faceted perspective protect the individual against the negative effects of stress and traumas, prevent their problems, and limit their problems. In addition, they (character strengths) provide desired results such as academic success, tolerance, leadership, ability to delay gratification, altruism, and kindness by helping the development of young individuals (Park & Peterson, 2009). Character strengths development programs show that students who build strengths such as kindness, altruism, spirituality, morality, willpower, responsibility, and social intelligence eliminate aggression, behavioral problems in school, antisocial behaviors such as fighting, bringing a weapon to school, violence, suicide, and long-term alcohol addiction; although it does not eliminate them completely (Park & Peterson, 2006)Character strengths can be taught and developed differently from personality traits (Shoshani & Aviv, 2012). For example, the main purpose of psychological counseling is to identify the strengths that students can use to produce solutions for their problems and encourage them to use these strengths (Kabakçı, 2016). This psychological counseling, not only developing strengths such as perseverance, is beneficial in solving academic problems in educational settings, it has also been found to be useful in solving disciplinary (Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Seider et al., 2013). Raising happy, healthy, and good children is the main goal of every educator, family, and society (Park & Peterson, 2008). When educators and parents talk about the qualities they wish to develop in children, they often express character strengths such as kindness, teamwork, love of learning, love, honesty, and optimism (Seligman et al., 2009). They think that children who has these qualities can contribute to society and do what is necessary in their lives. Eryılmaz (2013) and Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that focusing on negative features should be avoided in the 21st century and stated that people should focus on the construction of positive traits such as optimism, courage, interpersonal skills, trust, and hope.

Today, the issues that are constantly on the agenda of counseling services in schools are academic achievement and discipline problems. Using character strengths in counseling services can help the students know themselves better. Working with the student who comes to the fore because of the survey and learns their strengths in the background can be easier and more encouraging in the studies on their problems. Featured strengths include 5-character strengths, which are at the top of the student's 24-character strength rankings (Park & Peterson, 2009 cited in Kabakçı, 2016). A student who knows their strengths will be more open to work and renew himself. He is encouraged to develop his weak and background strengths. From this point of view, the inclusion of character strengths in counseling services can be the starting point to support the positive development of students who show risky behavior, bullying discipline, or who need special education.

The concept of character strengths has been explored in a limited number of studies in the Turkish literature, with concepts such as subjective well-being, resilience, academic achievement, peaceful and happy life, and internalization and externalization in adolescents (Kabakçı, 2013; Demirci, 2017; Kiye, 2016). No study was found that examined the relationships between character strengths and bullying. The concept of character strengths is a field that provides positive development of the individual. Having strong characters prevents unwanted consequences in life and is also important for healthy development throughout life (Park & Peterson, 2009). Since character strengths are a new area of research and few studies have been conducted in our country, it is anticipated that examining the relationships between character strengths and bullying, as well as examining these variables in relation to gender, will make an important contribution to the literature. For this purpose, answers to the following questions have been sought.

- Do the character strengths of adolescents differ by gender?
- Do adolescents who engage in peer bullying and are victims of peer bullying differ by gender?
- Are there significant relationships between adolescents' character strengths and engaging in peer bullying and being a victim of peer bullying?
- Do character strengths predict whether adolescents will engage in peer bullying and become victims of peer bullying?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

In the study, the relational survey model was used to examine the relationships between the strengths of the character, which are the independent variables, and the level of being a bully and a victim. In addition, among the aims of the research is to examine whether the character strengths and bullying variable differ significantly according to gender.

2.2. Research Sample

The research study group consists of 663 (400 male and 263 female) high school students studying in 6 secondary education institutions in Gebze, Darıca and Çayırova districts of Kocaeli province. 25.6% of the participants are 9th grade, 26.1% is 10th grade, 23.1% is 11th grade, 25.2% is 12th grade. 4.1% of the students' mothers participating in the study are illiterate, 35.3% are primary school graduates, 24.7% are secondary school, 24.1% are high school graduates, and 11.8% are university graduates. Looking at the fathers' education levels of the students, it is seen that 0.8% were illiterate, 22.8% were primary school graduates, 21.7% secondary school, 35.3% high school, and 19.4% university graduates. Considering the working status of the parents of the students, 33.5% of the mothers are working, 66.5% of them do not work. 94% of fathers are working, 6% are not working.

2.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

Character Growth Index, Peer Bullying Scale Adolescent Form and Personal Information Form were used to collect data within the scope of the research.

Character Growth Index. The purpose of the Character Growth Index (CGI), developed by Liston (2014) and adapted into Turkish by Ekşi et al. (2017), is to evaluate the character development characteristics of adolescents in a valid and reliable manner. The measuring tool consists of 11 sub-dimensions. These dimensions are perseverance, humility, optimism, kindness, closeness, calmness, courage, wisdom, spirituality, forgiveness, and honesty. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .92. The factor loads of the items in the scale vary between .30 and .80. Internal consistency reliability coefficients of 11 sub-dimensions of the scale vary between .60 and .83. It is seen that the item-total score correlation coefficients of the scale are between .22 and .68. In the confirmatory factor analysis, it was stated that the 11-dimensional model showed a valid fit. For coherence validity, the relationship between CGI and Character Strengths and 52 items of the 96-item form of the Virtuous Becoming Youth Inventory was found at the level of .85. The relationship between the 11 sub-dimensions also varies between .41 and .81. As a result of the reliability analysis conducted in this study, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients of the Character Growth Index scale sub-dimensions were .82 for the Perseverance sub-dimension, .45 for the Humility sub-dimension, .78 for the Optimism sub-dimension, .67 for the Kindness sub-dimension, and. 51 for the Calmness sub-dimension, .69 for the Courage sub-dimension, .72 for the Courage sub-dimension, .78 for the Wisdom sub-dimension, .74 for the Spirituality sub-dimension, .78 for the Forgiveness sub-dimension, and .50 for the Honesty sub-dimension.

Peer Bullying Scale Adolescent Form. The "Peer Bullying Scale-Adolescent Form" developed by Ayas and Pişkin (2015) consists of two parallel scales, one called the "Peer Bullying Scale" and the other "Peer Victimization Scale" and consists of asking the same items in different ways. This scale consists of 53 items and six factors (physical, verbal, exclusion, rumor spreading, damaging things and sexuality) to identify students who "bully" their peers and who are "exposed to bullying". Each item was evaluated using a 5-point rating scale. The psychometric studies regarding the subscales are as follows.

a) Victimization Scale: This part of the scale consists of physical victimization, verbal victimization, exclusion, rumor, damage to belongings and sexual victimization. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed after evaluating the expert opinions for the validity study of the scale. As a result of the first order DFA, the fit index ($X2$ = 5407.73 (sd = 1307, p. = .00), $X2$ / df = 4.13 RMSEA = 0.041, GFI = 0.90, AGFI = 0.89, CFI = 0.90, NFI = 0.96 and NNFI It was found to be = 0.97 and then as a result of the second level CFA; fit indices $X2$ = 5959.71 (sd = 1315, p. = .00), $X2$ / df = 4.53 RMSEA = 0.043, GFI = 0.89, AGFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.96 and NNFI = 0.97. For Victimization Scale, the internal consistency reliability coefficient was found as 0.93. As a result of the reliability analysis conducted in this study, the internal consistency reliability coefficient was calculated as .88 for the total score of the Victimization Scale.

b) Bullying Scale: Sub-dimensions of physical bullying, verbal bullying, exclusion, rumor making, damaging things and sexual bullying constitute this part of the scale. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed after evaluating the expert opinions for the validity study of the scale. As a result of the first order CFA, the fit index is $X2$ = 6461.32 (sd = 1307, p. = .00), $X2$ / df = 4.94 RMSEA = 0.046, GFI = 0.89, AGFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.95 and NNFI = 0.96. As a result of the second level CFA performed later, the fit indices are $X2$ = 7298.38 (sd = 1316, p. = .00), $X2$ / df = 5.54, RMSEA = 0.049, GFI = 0.87, AGFI = 0.86, CFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.95 and NNFI = 0.96. The Cronbach α number for the internal consistency reliability coefficient was found to be 0.92 for the Total Bullying Scale. As a result of the reliability analysis conducted in this study, the internal consistency reliability coefficient was calculated as .85 for the total score of the Bullying Scale.

Personal Information Form. The personal information form prepared by the researcher contains the students' demographic information. The personal information form consists of information about gender, the type of school the students attend, the class level, the education level of the parents, and the parents' working status, respectively.

The scales used in the study were applied by the researcher in each class within one course hour (45 minutes). Before the application, the researcher introduced himself to the class, explained the purpose of the investigation and gave the necessary explanations to answer the questions. He also stated that the information provided will be kept confidential and no personal evaluation will be made to ensure that the students give sincere answers.

2.4. Data Analysis

SPSS 24.0 for the Windows package program was used to analyze the data. Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between sub-dimensions of the Character Growth Index and sub-scales of the peer bullying scale. In addition, the Independent Samples T-Test was applied to see whether the scores of high school students in the Character Strengths 11 sub-dimensions differ significantly according to gender. Likewise, the Independent Samples t-Test was applied to see whether the scores of high school students obtained from the victim and bully scales differ significantly according to gender. In addition, a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to examine whether the character strengths of high school students participating in the study predicted their level of being bully and victim. To meet the assumptions of the analyzes, the normality values were examined from the plot's tables and the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the data were examined.

2.5. Ethical

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. Ethical Review Board Name: Abant İzzet Baysal University Ethics Committee. Date of Ethics Evaluation Decision: 08.05.2018 Ethics Assessment Document Issue Number: 2018/05

3. Findings

The study's main purpose is to examine the relationship between 11 sub-dimensions of character strengths and adolescents' performing bullying and being victim of peer bullying. In addition, in the study, it was examined whether the character strengths of adolescents and their status of being a bully and a victim differ according to gender and whether character strengths predict adolescents' status of being a bully and a victim.

Table 1. *The Scores Obtained from the CGI Scale and the Mean and Standard Deviation Values Obtained According to the Gender Variable*

	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	ss
Perseverance	Female	400	19,9950	3,25599
	Male	263	20,3156	2,83974
Humility	Female	400	19,6075	2,75725
	Male	263	19,5209	2,89355
Optimism	Female	400	18,2325	3,93983
	Male	263	18,9354	3,38491
Kindness	Female	400	22,5050	2,26225
	Male	263	21,6692	2,48370
Love/Care	Female	400	22,0850	2,20339
	Male	263	22,0722	2,18393
Peace	Female	400	15,6175	3,79634
	Male	263	16,7947	3,87245
Courage	Female	400	17,6900	3,23730
	Male	263	19,3004	3,16425
Wisdom	Female	400	18,7250	2,96587
	Male	263	19,8783	2,61098
Spirituality	Female	400	19,9525	3,25911
	Male	263	20,2662	3,23941
Forgiveness	Female	400	16,8475	4,13606
	Male	263	17,2471	4,40633
Honesty	Female	400	19,9375	3,00102
	Male	263	19,1331	3,38629

It is observed that the total scores of male and female high school students from the 11-character strengths are normally distributed. As a result of the analysis, the lowest and highest skewness values (-.601, -.001) and the lowest and highest kurtosis values (-.571, -.202) of character strengths sub-dimensions are as the deviation limit from the normal distribution. It was found to be between the accepted (-2 and +2) values (Tabachnick and Fidel,2007).

Table 2. *Findings on Whether the Scores from the CGI Sub-Dimensions Differ According to the Gender Variable*

	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	ss
Perseverance	Female	400	19,9950	3,25599
	Male	263	20,3156	2,83974
Humility	Female	400	19,6075	2,75725
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	Male	263	17,2471	4,40633
Honesty	Female	400	19,9375	3,00102
	Male	263	19,1331	3,38629

* p<0,05

The results stated that there was a statistically significant difference according to gender in the optimism, kindness, calmness, courage, wisdom, and honesty sub-dimensions of the Character Growth Index. According to the descriptive statistics, male students (X = 18.93, Ss = 3.38) have a higher average score than girls (X = 18.23, Ss = 3.93) in the dimension of optimism. In the calmness dimension, male students (X = 16.79, Ss = 3.87) scored higher than girls (X = 15.61, Ss = 3.79). In the courage dimension, male students (X = 19.30, Ss = 3.16) scored higher than girls (X = 17.69, Ss = 3.23). In the wisdom dimension, male students (X = 19.87, Ss = 2.61) scored higher than girls (X = 18.72, Ss = 2.96). In the dimension of honesty, female students (X = = 19.93, Ss = 3.001) scored higher than boys (X = 19.13, Ss = 3.38). In the kindness dimension, female students (X = 22.50, Ss = 2.26) had a higher average score than boys (X = 21.66, Ss = 2.48). It was concluded that there is no significant difference in terms of gender in the other sub-dimensions of the Character Growth Index, namely, perseverance, humility, love/care, spirituality, and forgiveness.

Table 3. *The Scores Obtained from the Victimization and Bullying Scales of Peer Bullying and the Average and Standard Deviation Values Taken According to the Gender Variable*

	Gender	n	X	ss
Total Bullying Score	Female	400	67,4000	13,60156
	Male	263	74,1141	18,29931
Total Victimization Score	Female	400	63,0100	11,63500
	Male	263	66,6274	12,64903

It is observed that the total scores obtained by female and male high school students from the victimization and bullying scales show a normal distribution. The total victimization score obtained from the analysis was seen as the value of skewness and kurtosis (1.313; 1.532), while the bullying score was seen as the value of skewness and kurtosis (1.466; 1.982). These values are between (-2 and +2) values, which are accepted as the limit of deviation from the normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007).

Table 4. *Findings Regarding Whether the Scores of the Peer Bullying Scale Differ According to the Gender*

		F	p	t	df	sig.
Total Bullying Score	Variances are equal	29,108	,000*	-5,410	661	,000*
	Variances are not equal			-5,096	448,089	,000*
Total Victimization Score	Variances are equal	3,095	,079	-3,782	661	,000*
	Variances are not equal			-3,718	527,410	,000*

Independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the scores obtained from the victimization and bullying scales differ significantly in terms of gender. When the analysis was examined, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference according to gender in the total victimization and total bullying scores. According to the descriptive statistics, male students (X = 74.11, Ss = 18.29) scored higher than girls (X = 67.40, Ss = 13.60) in the total victimization score. In the total bullying score, male students (Xs = 66.62, Ss = 12.64) had a higher average score than girls (X = 63.01, Ss = 11.63).

Table 5. *Relationships Between the Scores of the Adolescents' 11 Sub-Dimensions of the Character Growth Index with Peer Victimization Scale and Peer Bullying Scale*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1												
2	,210**	1											
3	,357**	,176**	1										
4	,263**	,312**	,227**	1									
5	,192**	,233**	,285**	,343**	1								
6	,251**	,274**	,347**	,043	,147**	1							
7	,392**	,243**	,216**	,242**	,038	,333**	1						
8	,491**	,299**	,372**	,216**	,198**	,423**	,475**	1					
9	,301**	,236**	,323**	,290**	,266**	,195**	,115**	,285**	1				
10	-,064	,164**	,211**	,121**	,279**	,240**	-,066	,042	,170**	1			
11	,391**	,342**	,167**	,255**	,187**	,182**	,181**	,289**	,268**	,070	1		
12	-,209**	-,167**	-,086*	-,098*	-,103**	-,092*	-,086*	-,142**	-,089*	,003	-,295**	1	
13	-,226**	-,238**	-,096*	-,102**	-,101**	-,153**	-,057	-,146**	-,207**	-,058	-,361**	,665**	1
X	20,12	19,57	18,51	22,17	22,07	16,08	18,32	19,18	20,07	17,00	19,61	70,06	64,44
Ss	3,09	2,81	3,74	2,38	2,19	3,86	3,30	2,88	3,25	4,24	3,18	15,96	12,16

N= 663 **P<0,01 *P<0,05, 1= Perseverance, 2=Humility, 3= Optimism, 4= Kindness, 5=Love, 6=Peace, 7=Courage, 8=Wisdom, 9=Spirituality, 10= Forgiveness, 11= Honesty, 12= Total Victimization, 13= Total Bullying

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationships between the scores on the 11 subdimensions of the Character Growth Index (CGI) scale of high school students and the scores on the victimization and bullying subdimensions of the Peer Bullying Scale are presented in Table 5.According to Table 5, when the correlation coefficients between the Character Growth Index (CGI) sub-dimensions and total bullying scale are examined, it is seen that the highest negative significant relationship of peer victimization is with honesty sub-dimension of CGI (r = -,295). It is also seen that the lowest negatively significant relationship of peer victimization scale is with the optimism (r = -,086) and courage (r = ,086) sub-dimensions of CGI. According to the relation coefficients between CGI sub-dimensions and the total bullying scale, it is seen that the highest negative significant relationship of bullying is with the honesty sub-dimension of CGI (r = -,361). It is also seen that the lowest negative significant relationship of peer bullying is with the love/care sub-dimension of CGI (r = -,101). According to Table 5, no relationship was found between total victimization scale score and the forgiveness sub-dimension of CGI. There is also no significant relationship between total bullying scale score and courage, and forgiveness sub-dimensions of CGI. Finally, the multiple regression analysis is performed, and the results are evaluated below.

Table 6. *Multiple Regression Analysis Results on the Prediction of Character Strengths at High School Students' Levels of Being a Victim of Peer Victimization*

	B	Sh	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	112,307	7,751		14,489	,000
Perseverance	-,570	,242	-,111	-2,357	,019*
Humility	-,379	,242	-,067	-1,567	,117
Optimism	,017	,186	,004	,090	,928
Kindness	,074	,290	,011	,256	,798
Love	-,235	,303	-,032	-,777	,438
Peace	-,030	,180	-,007	-,167	,867
Courage	,086	,217	,018	,397	,691
Wisdom	-,063	,271	-,011	-,233	,816
Spirituality	,144	,206	,029	,698	,485
Honesty	-1,167	,214	-,233	-5,445	,000*

R= 0,321   R2=0,103   F (10, 652) = 7,479   *p<0.05

The results of multiple regression analysis regarding the prediction of high school students' victimization levels according to the Character Growth Index sub-dimensions are given in Table 6. When the skewness and kurtosis values of the character strength sub-dimensions and the total victimization score were examined, the lowest and highest skewness values were found between -,601 and -,001 for the character strengths sub-dimensions. The lowest and highest kurtosis values of character strength sub-dimensions were determined between -,571 and -,202. The skewness and kurtosis values of the total victim score are between 1.313 and 1.532, and it is between the values (-2 and +2) accepted as the limit of deviation from the normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007).

As the students' perseverance and honesty scores increase, being a victim of peer bullying decreases. When looking at the t-test results regarding the significance of the multiple regression coefficients, it is seen that only the honesty and perseverance character strengths are significant predictors of being a victim of peer bullying. Perseverance and honesty explain 10% of the total variance in being victim (R = 0.323, R2 = 0.104, p <0.01).

The results of multiple regression analysis regarding the prediction of high school students' level of performing peer bullying according to the Character Growth Index sub-dimensions are given in Table 7. When the skewness and kurtosis values of the character strength sub-dimensions and the total peer bullying score were examined, the lowest and highest skewness values were found between -.601 and -.001 for the character strengths sub-dimensions. The lowest and highest kurtosis values of character strength sub-dimensions were determined between -, 571 and -, 202. The skewness and kurtosis values of the total peer victimization score are between 1.466 and 1.982, and it is between the values (-2 and +2) accepted as the limit of deviation from the normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2007).

Table 7. *Multiple Regression Analysis Results in the Prediction of Character Strengths of High School Students' Level of Performing Peer Bullying*

	B	Sh	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	102,529	5,642		18,172	,000
Perseverance	-,369	,174	-,094	-2,119	,034*
Humility	-,504	,177	-,116	-2,842	,005*
Optimism	,096	,137	,029	,699	,485
Kindness	,231	,209	,045	1,105	,270
Love	-,010	,220	-,002	-,043	,966
Peace	-,191	,131	-,061	-1,461	,145
Wisdom	,211	,191	,050	1,104	,270
Spirituality	-,382	,151	-,102	-2,529	,012*
Honesty	-1,059	,157	-,277	-6,733	,000*

R= 0,406   R2=0,165   F (9, 653) = 14,329   *p<0.05

As students' perseverance, humility, spirituality, and honesty scores increase, performing peer bullying decreases. Forgiveness and courage were not included in the regression analysis because they were not found to be related in the correlation analysis. According to the standardized regression coefficient (β), the order of importance of character strengths; it is in the form of honesty, humility, spirituality, and perseverance. When looking at the t-test results regarding the significance of the multiple regression coefficients, it is seen that only the character strengths of perseverance, humility, spirituality, and honesty are significant predictors of performing peer bullying. They explained 16% of the total variance in peer bullying score (R = 0.406, R2 = 0.165, p <0.01). The variables of love, calmness, wisdom, kindness, and optimism character strengths do not have a significant effect.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

As per results obtained from the study, female students scored higher in the honesty and politeness sub-dimension than male students, while male students scored higher in the sub-dimensions of optimism, calmness, courage, and wisdom. According to the study of Shimai et al. (2006), while love and humor character strengths were higher in women's reports than men's, bravery and creativity were higher in men's character strength reports than women. Brdar et al. (2011) found that the highest five character strengths for women are integrity, kindness, love, gratitude and fairness, while for men the strengths of integrity, hope, humor, gratitude and wonder. In their study, Linley et al. (2007) stated that women differed from men by getting high scores in their strengths of kindness, love, and gratitude, and men differed from women by getting high scores in their power of originality. In general, when examining the studies conducted, it was concluded that "there are more similarities than differences between the sexes" and therefore stated that gender differences in character strengths should not be exaggerated. Since character strengths are mostly related to individual differences and one's lifestyle, it can be said that gender differences do not have much influence, as the studies show.

As per results obtained from the study, when situations of bullying are analyzed according to gender, male students score higher than female students in terms of total victimization score and bullying score. In a similar study, Kartal and Bilgin (2008) investigated if the bullying changes according to gender or not and it was found that male students mostly did the bullying. Similarly, many researchers such as Cenkseven-Önder and Sarı (2012), Hilooğlu and Cenkseven-Önder (2010), Froschl and Gropper (1999), Rigby and Slee, (1991) found that boys were involved in more bullying incidents and that female students were less involved in bully / victim groups. These studies are mutually supportive. However, some studies found different results on bullying and gender. Pişkin (2003) and Totan (2008) found that boys were more in the bully/victim group than girls, while Pelendecioğlu (2011) and Kavşut (2009) found that girls were more victims and bullies than boys in their study. Unlike these studies, Dölek (2002); Gültekin (2003); Mynard and Joseph (2000); Pekel (2004); Pişkin (2002) and Smith and Shu (2000), found out that there was no difference between male and female students in terms of bullying and being bullied in their studies. When these studies in the literature are evaluated, it is understood that there are very different results regarding the relationship between bullying and gender. Still, as a result, it is known that the phenomenon of bullying has negative physical, emotional, psychological, academic, and sociological consequences for both female students and male students.

According to the results of the examination of the relations of character strengths with bullying, the highest negative correlation of both being a victim of peer bullying and performing peer bullying was found with honesty character strength. The lowest negative correlation was found with the strength of optimism in the case of being a victim, and the strength of love/care in the case of performing bullying. A review of the literature shows that character strengths and peer bullying have been treated and studied separately in many concepts. Still, no one study has been found that deals with the relationship between these two concepts. Hilliard et al. (2014) investigated how the development of character virtues are associated with the course of adolescents and bullying situations. In the study of Hilliard et al. (2014), it was concluded that the young people defined as bullies exhibit less good behavior and behave less well than the others, think less about society, and contribute less to society than the young people who are not bullied.

Considering the extent to which character strengths explain adolescents' state of performing peer bullying and being a victim of peer bullying, it is observed that as perseverance and honesty scores increase, victim status decreases. It was also found that as the scores of perseverance, humility, spirituality, and honesty increased, the situation of performing peer bullying decreased. As mentioned before, no study has investigated the relations of character strengths and bullying. Therefore, we cannot compare these results with previous findings. However, there can be theoretical explanations for the results. One of the most important theoretical concepts associated with perseverance is self-efficacy. It can be predicted that individuals with high self-efficacy are more successful in coping with negative behaviors. So having high levels of perseverance could mean for the adolescents that they can achieve their goals despite the difficulties. This might help adolescents control their actions when they face negative emotions and experiences, which leads them not to perform bullying when they are upset. Implications of the results of this study for education: Perseverance can be increased by rewarding people for their efforts and attributing their failures to lack of effort rather than low ability. Individual planning can be done by paying attention to this in the individual interviews held in the counseling services and the bully and victim students can be intervened.

According to the results obtained from the study, as honesty scores increase, victimization and peer bullying scores decrease. Honesty requires a person to present himself / herself in a real way, act sincerely, live without lies, and take responsibility for his / her actions and feelings. People with high honesty characteristics determine their behaviors according to their personal values, remain loyal to their beliefs, and treat others with respect (Wedding & Niemiec, 2018). In addition, they lead an authentic life by avoiding acting, hypocrisy and dalavera. They stick to other people, institutions, principles, and rules in their lives. Individuals with such a characteristic cannot expect bullying behavior to occur anyway, and they do not allow themselves to become victims. Even if they are being bullied, they can express this clearly and ask for help. Rettinger and Kramer (2009) stated that the opposite term of honesty, dishonesty, is contagious and can be learned by seeing. Based on this situation, if a social disgust attitude is placed against the deceptive, dishonest, negative, and bullying behaviors encountered in schools, an important way can be achieved in reducing these behaviors (cited in Wedding & Niemiec, 2018).

As per the results obtained from the study, humility negatively predicts peer victimization, which humility character strength can be defined as the correct evaluation of one's abilities, knowing the limits, being open to new ideas, considering his achievements, and appreciating the value of everything. These people can become aware of the good and the bad and adjust their behavior accordingly. Means that as humility increases, peer bullying decreases. People with high humility strength do not see themselves at the center of the universe, they have a realistic view of themselves. They cultivate positive and other-oriented emotions in their relationships. In this characteristic, people do not behave negatively towards them because they see other people with them as partners (Liston 2004). So, it is predictable that adolescents with a high level of humility would not perform bullying.

Spirituality is the strength of character most associated with happiness. Spirituality is another character strength which that negatively predicts peer bullying. As spirituality increases, performing peer bullying decreases. Spirituality and religious strengths are defined as finding the meaning of the universe and having a consistent belief about one's position within this meaning (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In general, spirituality is when the individual is in contact with a divine being, with God, with a supreme power, with his beliefs and bonds with ultimate reality. Studies have found that individuals with this power experience lower levels of depression, anxiety, distress, and negative behaviors using positive religious coping methods (Ano &

Vasconcelles, 2005; cited in Wedding & Niemiec, 2018). Insufficient spirituality or meaning in life can lead to consequences such as emptiness, meaninglessness, irregularity, and automatism. Based on the literature, people who lack the strength of spirituality can lead themselves and their environment in destructive ways. According to the results of this study it might be predicted that the adolescent whose spiritual aspect has increased might exhibit less bullying behavior at school and might participate more in actions that benefit the community. Young people who develop this aspect keep themselves away from bad events and negative behaviors in schools by adding a more profound purpose and sense of meaning to their lives. The results of the present study supported previous theoretical background and suggestions.

The results provide an empirical finding into how character strengths can be related to peer bullying and peer victimization. However, there are some limitations of the present study. First, the study group was formed with high school students who are studying in one city in Turkey. This limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the data were obtained only by self-report measures. The use of diverse data collection methods can supply deeper insights.

Despite the limitations, this study contributes the growing positive psychology literature. Positive psychology has emphasized identifying psychological strengths that enhance healthy development. This study found evidence that character strengths are related to the absence of peer bullying and peer victimization. For further research, it could be suggested to investigate the relationship between character strengths and peer support. In addition, research can be conducted to reveal the relationships between perceived parental attitudes, school bullying, and students' character strengths. Regarding the implications of the findings of this study in the field of counseling, it can be suggested that developing character strengths at schools can reduce the main problems in schools, such as violence, bullying and aggression. Character strengths training and intervention programs can be designed to prevent students' aggressive behaviors in schools. Programs specifically on honesty and perseverance can be designed to reduce peer victimization. In addition, developing the character strengths of spirituality, humility, honesty, and perseverance seems to be important to prevent and reduce peer bullying at schools. Studies aimed at developing character strengths can be applied to students individually or in groups by counselors to assist them to use and develop their strengths in the psychological counseling process.

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