The association between risk taking, anger, prosocial tendencies and, bullying/victimization

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Introduction
The studies have recently indicated that risk taking behaviors including alcohol consumption and smoking were associated with bullying (Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008). The authors suggested that these behaviors might be critical indicators of an anti-social personality. On the other hand, anger was frequently found to co-occur with bullying behaviors as a hostility like emotion toward the victims (Azzam, Beaulien, & Maercker, 2007). Indeed, these prementioned negative characteristics did not mean that bullies were lack of social-psychological abilities. Many studies have shown that especially bullies are more likely to have superior social cognitive abilities (i.e. perspective taking, theory of mind abilities) comparing victims and bully-victims (Hawley, 2003; Xie, Swift, Cairns ve Cairns (2002). Also, Hawley (2003) mentioned that bullies frequently used prosocial strategies to get their statuses among their peer group. While studying bullies with prosocial tendencies, researchers should be aware of that there are different types of prosocial behaviors (Boxer, & Tisak, 2005). This awareness might be very helpful to understand the potential covariant role of different prosocial tendencies (i.e. proactive, reactive and, altruistic prosocial behaviors) for bullying behavior especially when bullies have relatively high social cognitive abilities.

Aim
The main aim of this study is to investigate the association between risk taking, anger and, bullying/victimization by taking the covariant role of prosocial tendencies into account. Hence, we hypothesized that proactive prosocial behavior should be a covariate variable between risk taking, anger and bullying/victimization as a self-oriented characteristic.

Method
Sample:
The sample included 435 adolescents (211 girls, 224 boys) from 9th-10th gardes and from middle/upper-middle families in Ankara, Turkey.

Measurement Tools:
- Aggressive and Prosocial Behavior (ProS. B.) Questionnaire (Boxer, Tisak, & Goldstein, 2004): Cronbach α=.80-.88 for Prosocial Behavior Sub-Scales. Representative items:
  I often help people without being asked (Altruistic ProS. B.)
  When someone puts me in a good mood, I will often compliment them if they ask (Reactive ProS. B.)
- Risk Taking Scale (Bayar, 1999): Cronbach α=.84
- State Trait Anger Inventory (Barrio, Aluja, Spielberg, 2004). Cronbach α of Anger Sub-Scale=.86
- Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard, & Joseph, 2000): Cronbach α=.79
- Peer Bullying was measured by rewording the Peer Victimization Scale Items (Pekel, 2004): Cronbach α=.82.

Results
✓ A 2x2 MANCOVA was performed on bullying and victimization. Adjustment was made for three covariates: proactive, reactive and altruistic prosocial behaviors. Independent variables were risk taking (high vs low) and anger (high vs low).
✓ Risk taking (Wilks Λ=.80) was significantly related to bullying and, anger (Wilks Λ=.95) was significantly related to both bullying and victimization.
✓ The interaction of risk taking and anger (Wilks Λ=.98) was significant for bullying.
✓ To investigate the power of covariates to adjust dependent variables multiple regressions were run. These results indicated that only proactive prosocial behavior provided significant adjustment to bullying but not to victimization. The β was .12 (t (213) = 2.97, p<.01) with η² value of .02 (see Table 1).
✓ Roy-Bargmann Stepdown analysis was performed to examine the individual main effects of risk taking and anger after adjustment for covariates. The results revealed that high risk taking was associated with higher bullying scores.

Table 1: MANCOVA results for Bullying and Victimization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Dependent Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial η²</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive ProB.B.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive ProB.B.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.434</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic ProB.B.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.129</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Taking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.900</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.901</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk T* Anger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.404</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
✓ Overall, the associations between risk taking, anger and bullying/victimization was as expected.
✓ The interaction effect of risk taking and anger indicated that bullies had higher risk taking and anger scores than victims.
✓ Proactive prosocial behaviors had been found as a covariate between risk taking, anger, and bullying, as we hypothesized.
✓ Relatively negative viewpoint to bully has been changing by examining their social abilities, popularity etc. Therefore, the association between positive psychosocial characteristics (i.e. empathy, perspective taking) and bullying/victimization might be analyzed to find out how prosocial tendencies had a covariant role within these dynamics.
✓ All results depend upon self-reported data. Therefore, revisiting the analyses by taking peer-reporter teacher data would increase the validity of the results.

References
Roy-Bargmann Stepdown analysis was performed to examine the individual main effects of risk taking and anger after adjustment for covariates. The results revealed that high risk taking was associated with higher bullying scores.

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