

PREVENTING BULLYING IN SCHOOL

Dorina Xhani*, Brunilda Hoxhaj*

* European University of Tirana, Ruga Xhanfize Keko, 1001 Tirana, Albania

Corresponding Author: dxhani@gmail.com

Abstract

Schools have historically been an institution of peace and knowledge. Over the years this has begun to change and the school is returning to a place where students no longer feel safe. Bullying is becoming a widespread phenomenon that is disturbing not only students but also parents and teachers. International studies on the prevalence rate of bullying show that a large number of students are involved or affected by this phenomenon with severe psychosocial consequences that can lead to suicide. The Convention on the Child's Rights emphasizes the importance of protecting the quality of the child's life and their right to be educated in a safe environment free from violence, harassment and neglect.

This article aims to find out the perceptions and attitudes of people who are victims of bullying, the consequences it causes as a phenomenon, and the means and ways that it can be used to prevent it. The method used is the qualitative research method. The study involved 40 teachers from the school "Sali Çeka" in Elbasan. The sample was randomly selected. Based on interviews conducted and other studies, it turned out that bullying is a widespread phenomenon in schools and that teachers do not have the proper qualifications on how to prevent or act in cases where bullying occurs. Schools should play an important role as a community center to prevent and address bullying behavior to this regard.

Keywords: *community center school, bullying, student rights*

Introduction

Bullying among children is not a phenomenon nowadays. Genuine scientific studies of this violent behavior began in the 1970s, the year in which the phenomenon of bullying began to be subjected to systematic scientific research (Owleus, 1973a, 1978).

One of the biggest difficulties in managing and preventing the short-term and long-term effects of bullying in school lies in its definition. The issue of bullying has always aroused debate and controversy in the scientific and academic media. According to Smith (2004), at a Conference of the Society for Child Development Research held in 2001 in Tampa, there had been 30 new entries in the bullying research index compared to just two years ago, most of which related with the definition of bullying, the types of aggression and the roles of the people involved in it. Many experts have agreed to use the definition that Owleus (1993) has given for bullying according to which "a student is bullied 1 or victimized when he or she is repeatedly and for a long time exposed to the negative actions of one or more students". The term negative actions encompasses a very wide range of behaviors, from nonverbal attacks, such as staring and mockery, to the most serious physical attacks. The inclusion of "repetitive" quality in the definition by Oleus was done to exclude minor incidental incidents. To improve Oleus's definition, Smith and Sharp (1994) constructed another definition of bullying, emphasizing that bullying is "a systematic abuse of power. As noted, the interaction between the bully and the victim requires in advance an imbalance of power or power between them, thus determining the bully's satisfaction with the victim's rape. This definition was later considered. by Smith & Brain (2000), who attached to the relative helplessness of the victim to self-defense also the intervening role that others should take when they realize that the victim's rights are being violated.

Bullying, school violence and safe school Studies on bullying in Albania are few, mainly as part of student research at the end of the second cycle of university studies, and bullying is generally studied as a subset of violence in age groups and categories different social, racial,

gender, etc. The study, from which the first indicative figures of the presence of bullying in schools in Albania are drawn, is the study conducted by the Center for Human Development (Tamo and Karaj, 2007), "Violence against Children in Albania". This nationwide study shows that it is time for research and intervention programs to focus on specific forms of violence, such as bullying. From this national study, it is sufficient to evaluate two data collected from student reports. The first shows that among the most typical forms of psychological violence against students in schools, the threat ranks first. (As will be described below, threats are one of the most typical forms of bullying). The second data is the fact that 1500 students interviewed or included in focus groups state that in 23% of cases, violence against them was perpetrated by other children.

According to Miller (2008) school violence includes, but is not limited to, behaviors such as: child and teacher victimization, child and / or teacher abuse, physical and psychological bullying, cyber victimization, intimidation and bullying cybercrime, bullying, bullying, class disorders, physical and psychological harm to teachers and students, behaviors and activities that are derivatives of various cults, sexual violence and other border violations as well as the use of weapons in school settings. As will be analyzed, bullying and other forms of school violence are interrelated.

Bullying is summarized as systematic abusive power. (Smith and Sharp, 1994). Bullying among children is not a new phenomenon, but recently it is taking the most perfect form and its development is becoming disturbing. The experience of children who have been systematically bullied by their peers has been documented in literary works for hundreds of years. The term "bullying" is a new term used to name a phenomenon that is prevalent in the school environment of every continent and causes great suffering to children affected by it. Bullying is the use of force or abuse by a group of society to intimidate a certain target group. There are different ways of its manifestation, such as physical and psychological violence. The relationships that individuals create between themselves, especially adolescents are degraded. Since the latter experience changes in every moment, their character or emotional state is always different. They start to differentiate between each other and without much thought put the mark of "unaccepted" for their peers. These unaccepted are the victims of bullying. In addition to being insulted and separated from the group, physical violence is also used. The causes are various. A person may be harassed for: how they look, family background, popularity, achievements, race or culture, being male or female, for a disability, their mental health, being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This is the whole problem of bullying, accepting the other. (Based on analytical report on bullying, Alo 166).

Schools have always been perceived as a place of education and peace, but what we really see today is the fact that peace is being lacking every day more and more in our schools, due to the emergence and rapid advancement of a phenomenon of violence (of all forms) known by the term, bullying. This phenomenon is spreading at a rapid pace and is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers, teachers and psychologists in schools. Seeing the serious impact that this phenomenon has on the emotional and psychological health of children, requires a close cooperation, parent-teacher-social worker.

This paper aims to bring some cases of occurrence of this disturbing phenomenon in schools, seen from the perspective of a teacher who is in daily contact with students. But also to bring some ways of cooperation, teachers-parents-social workers to distinguish and stop this phenomenon, for a more beautiful childhood today and a more peaceful society tomorrow.

Material and methods

Empirical and observational methods were used to achieve the purpose of this study and interviews were conducted with students and teachers. Triangulation of the study methodology has guaranteed this study data verification and configuration of findings. The study time included the school year 2018-2019 and was conducted mainly in the vocational high school "Sali Çeka" Elbasan; as a case study only for the application of a research instrument.

The sampling used in this study is the intentional sample without probability. The search method that forms qualitative data is the interpretive search paradigm. Due to its exploratory nature, the researcher considered the qualitative method as the most appropriate to analyze the attitudes, perceptions and reactions of teachers to the phenomenon of bullying. Through 40 interviews the researcher received more in-depth information. She could also direct any questions that arise during the interview to obtain additional information. The method used is data management initially manually. Handwritten interviews were initially transcribed. This method helps more in understanding the information. After writing and re-reading highlighted the categories that emerged from the study. After dividing the categories, they were put into words and interpreted. The coding of semi-structured interviews was carried out according to the following topics: Bullying, Violator, Victim.

Results and discussions

Some of the findings of the study are: The students and teachers involved in the study did not have sufficient knowledge about bullying and the forms of its occurrence. There was even a tendency to keep cases of bullying hidden. The reasons why children are involved in acts of bullying are various, among them we mention:

- a) They see bullying as a way to get the attention of others
- b) The economic situation causes such tendencies to arise
- c) Feel jealous of their friends
- d) They want them to be dominant in the social group and others to be afraid of them.

The environments where bullying is most present are: schoolyards, their stairs, toilets, internet, etc. It turned out that those most affected by bullying are the students who are most committed to lessons, those who come from rural areas and those who come from the Roma community. Those who practice bullying the most are boys. It turned out that being insulted greatly affects the child's personality, making it possible for that child to grow up with a deformed personality. The most common form of bullying is emotional-psychological. One finding of the study is that students disagree that being bullied lowers self-esteem and does not support the idea that bullying affects school attendance.

Finally, prejudices, ridicule, insults, harassment, etc., negatively affect the relationship between adolescents.

Conclusions

We live in a chaotic social environment that influences this phenomenon, so we need to protect children from the occurrence of violence in any form. To raise healthy, happy children, for a better and more loving society.

What can a teacher do to prevent bullying?

Bullying can happen anywhere and anytime, the presence or absence of a teacher, parent or school psychologist does not eliminate the possibility of this phenomenon occurring, but it can definitely help reduce the number of cases that occur every day in our schools.

It is imperative that teachers create the conditions for cooperation with students to combat the effects of psychological violence in school. According to researchers Dedousis - Wallace and Shute (2009) the role of teachers is closely linked to their perceptions of the importance and serious consequences that come as a result of this violence.

This conclusion of the above-mentioned scholars should serve us as an alarm bell not to neglect any conflict, no matter how small. But it also gives us the strong message that each of us, as teachers, can do something small to discover and then stop this phenomenon in school.

We first need to talk to students about this phenomenon, but at the same time we need to know how to talk to them, so that they understand what it means, what harm it does and why they should not use it.

- . We need to ask students from time to time how they feel at school, in the classroom, in their social group.

- . We need to trust our students so that they can tell us and ask for help when they fall victim to this phenomenon.

- . We need to do different questionnaires focusing on this phenomenon.

Every teacher needs to know his students, not just by name, but by knowing their psychology, understanding how they feel and what they need. All the more so with the pupil class students and specifically with those who stay in the dormitory. Being away from family the teacher's work with these students should be very close to the role of parent. Asking them often how they get beyond school, to the dorm or to the city. How do they feel, are they satisfied, are they safe, do they have a problem, etc.? If the teacher has given the student confidence and has shown that he is willing to help, then the student is also willing to refer to his teacher any problem, or any concern, inside or outside the school.

Teachers are the first to encounter conflicts and the phenomenon of bullying, but they do not always react and much less help to end the conflict. Researchers Leff, Kupermidt, Patterson, and Power (1999) concluded that elementary school teachers intervened more in cases of bullying than upper-class teachers. This is due to the fact that in high schools teachers change hour by hour and in most cases neglect the conflicts they face during class.

We can help reduce this phenomenon by not neglecting any case, no matter how simple it may seem to us. As soon as we encounter the phenomenon in any class, we must intervene, communicating with the students, informing the caretaker teacher, referring the case to the school psychologist, etc. So, try to do everything to settle the conflict and not think that the lesson is over and that was our job as teachers.

According to a study by Mishna (2004), teachers often think, "It's very difficult to know if someone, who is always being bullied, could have done something to deserve this" and "In some cases victims like to be victimized "

The fact that teachers often think so has led to the rapid advancement of this phenomenon in our country, causing 20% of students to be affected by bullying. It is not just a high figure, but an alarming figure, seeing the emotional and psychological consequences on the persons affected by this phenomenon.

It is easy to be silent, or to get away from the problem, but the role of the teacher is not to be silent, not to neglect, but to do the best possible, for a more loving class, for a more peaceful school and for a better company. We as teachers should never look at our work only as teachers

and speak as "robots" only for teaching, without understanding the inner world of students. But above all we must be educators of a generation that will be the society of tomorrow.

Children are the future of every nation, so they must be protected from violence in any form. Rousseau said: "Give the child more freedom: let him run, let him jump, let him be free, let him play and have fun, let him never be quiet." So as parents and as teachers let us forgive children everything.

Recommendations

Creating a positive school climate would be a good move to prevent bullying.

- Establishment of support structures to strengthen ties between students and to prevent the creation of differences in status / power between students, as preconditions for bullying
- Creating clear regulations which contain; intolerable behaviors, the consequences of these behaviors for the persons involved as well as the concrete steps of referring to these problematic behaviors.
- Extensive information of school actors about bullying, the different roles of individuals in it and the development cycle of bullying.
- Establishment of special awareness campaigns related to the importance of the initial reactions of the actors involved in bullying, as a very important factor in the fight against bullying.
- Creating training programs to increase the predisposition of other individuals, beyond the victim and the bully, to determine the origin of a bullying relationship.
- Establish training programs to strengthen the role of observers.

Bibliography

1. Carney, A. G. and Merrell, K. W. (2001) Perspectives on understanding and preventing an international problem. *School Psychology International*, 22:364-82.
2. Craig, W. M. (1998) The relationship among bullying, victimization, depression, anxiety and aggression in elementary school children. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 24:123-130
3. Crick, N.R. and Grotpeter, J. K. (1995) Relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment. *Child Development*, 66:710-722.
4. Emanuela Islami Doktoratura "Bullizmi në shkollat 9-vjeçare të Tiranës"
5. Instituti Pedagogjik i Kosovës " Dhuna dhe siguria në shkollë"
6. Klomek, A. B., Marrocco, F., Kleinman, M., Schonfeld, I. S. and Gould, M. S. (2007) Bullying, depression, and suicidality in adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*
7. Ledia KASHAHU (XHELILAJ) Universiteti "Aleksandër Moisiu" Durrës, Durrës/Albania Theodhori KARAJ Universiteti i Tiranës Tirana/Albania "Perceptimet dhe Qendrimet e Mesuesve dhe Drejtuesve të Shkollave 9-Vjeçare mbi Fenomenin e Bullizmit"
8. Leff, S. S., Kupersmidt, J. B., Patterson, C. J., & Poëer, T. J. (1999). Factors influencing teacher identification of peer bullies and victims. *School Psychology Review*
9. Mishna, F. (2004). A qualitative study of bullying from multiple perspectives. *Children and Schools*
10. Olweus, D. (1999) Sweden. In Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R. and Slee, P. (Eds) *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp 7-27). London and New York: Routledge. Publishers.
11. Olweus, D. *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford Blackwell

12. Pepler, D. J., Craig, W. M., Connolly, J. A., Yuile, A., McMaster, L. and Jiang, D. (2006) A developmental perspective on bullying. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32:376-384.
13. Silvana Loka Doktratura “Bullying në shkollat fillore: një program ndërhyrjeje për të reduktuar bullying”
14. UNICEF - Reduktimi i dhunës në shkolla - si të bëhet ndryshimi
15. Vlora Sylaj, Doktratura (2018) Bashkëpunimi i shkollë familje në parandalimin e dhunës ndërmjet nxënësve në shkollë”

Sources online:

Save the Children “Dhuna ndaj fëmijëve në shkollë”, Tiranë 2017

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

<http://www.portalishkollor.al/kuriozitet/bullizmi-ne-shkolla-si-mund-ta-parandalojme>

<https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/bullisim-edmond-dragoti/3805517.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/03/10/president-obama-first-lady-white-house-conference-bullying-prevention>

<http://www.slideshare.net/ALO116/alo-116-bullizmi-raport-analitik-janar-qershor-2012>

<http://www.popcenter.org/problems/bullying/>

http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/archivestory.php/aid/434/Bullying_at_school:_tackling_the_problem.html

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html>