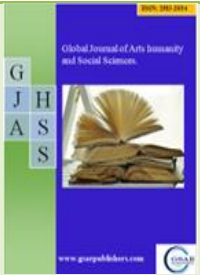
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STUDENT VICTIMIZATION IN MODERN SCHOOL

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Abstract

This article studies the multidimensional phenomenon of school bullying, which has increasingly emerged within schools in recent years. In this context, the concept of school bullying and the forms in which it is expressed in the school environment are discussed. There follows a presentation of the consequences on the victimized students in terms of their psychosocial development and their school image, identifying the characteristics they appear, in an attempt to point out that these effects are long-term for their mental health all the way through to adulthood. Finally, reference is made to the role of school in preventing the phenomenon and establishing an environment that supports and empowers the recipients of bullying incidents, so that they do not feel insecure.

Keywords: school bullying, victimized students, psychosocial development

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Introduction

In recent years, the school community has been increasingly concerned about the increase and rapid spread of school bullying. It is an extremely interesting and topical issue, with many implications for the emotional, learning, and social development of students, as the school, which functions as a small reflection of society, depicts the major social problems that plague adult society on a daily basis. Children adopt these problems, reproducing attitudes and roles, which intensify the problem of school bullying, rendering it a social phenomenon with alarming dimensions both for the student community and society. This article deals with the concept of school bullying and its forms and focuses on victimization based on the characteristics exhibited by students who experience school bullying. Concurrently, it aims to present the effects on the academic, emotional, and social development of student victims that victimization appears to cause or may cause. The ultimate goal of the article is to highlight the important role played by the school in preventing and dealing with the phenomenon of school bullying, by adopting an attitude that is not passive but active, decisive.

1. School bullying-definition

School bullying is not a new phenomenon. It is a perennial problem, which has been on the rise in recent years, with a continuous increase in cases both on a global scale and in Greece (Aivaliotis, Vorvi, Kartsaka, & Krystallidou, 2016). It causes concern in the scientific community around the world and reflection, particularly in the school community, plaguing students, teachers, and parents, as it is a significant form of school violence. (Smith, Schneider, Smith, and Ananiadou 2004) define the phenomenon of school bullying as a "particularly brutal type of aggressive behavior which, in relation to other forms of aggression, is distinguished by repeated actions at the expense of weaker victims who are unable to adequately defend themselves". This repetitive form of aggressive behavior is manifested in people who are perceived to be weak either physically or psychologically (Olweus, 1991, op. cit. in Asimopoulos, Chatzipemos, Soumaki, Diareme, Giannakopoulou & Tsiantis, 2010). It is done consciously, as a dominance behavior of the aggressor against the victim (Lee, 2006), with the aggressor excelling in power over the victim of his negative actions (Triga-Mertica, 2011), intimidating and oppressing him. According to Olweus (1980), "An action is



considered negative when someone intentionally harms or attempts to harm or inconvenience another." Therefore, according to Olweus (1994), school bullying can be considered a form of abuse or mistreatment. In addition, it is a social phenomenon, socially determined (Artinopoulou, 2001), and not an isolated situation that takes place in the school environment, as the school functions as a small representation of society, in which the major social problems that plague us on a daily basis are reflected adult society. Children reproduce attitudes and roles that intensify the problem of school bullying, making it a social phenomenon with alarming dimensions for both the student community and society.

Forms of bullying

School bullying manifests itself in many forms. A first classification distinguishes bullying, as an act, into direct, which usually manifests itself as interpersonal victim-offender contact, and indirect bullying, without a personal victim-offender confrontation. However, based on some specific characteristics, bullying is distinguished into physical, with the exercise of physical violence, such as hitting, pushing, and verbal, with the use of abusive, ironic, or even threatening vocabulary, with the main goal of humiliating and underestimating the target of the aggressor (Artinopoulou, 2001). These are considered the two most basic forms of bullying.

However, with the entry of new technology into the everyday life of students, cyberbullying is gaining ground in recent years, taking on particularly worrying dimensions. This is the form in which the abuser blackmails, threatens, terrorizes his victim through electronic media. Social or emotional-psychological bullying is manifested by isolation. It excludes the victim from social activities, company, play, leading to marginalization and contempt (Lee, 2006).

Based on several characteristics of the victim, we additionally identify racist bullying, in which the victim is targeted because of language, skin color, sexual preference, religion, different cultural background and manifests itself in the exercise of violence and intimidation (Gavriiloglou & Barba, 2014; Karga, 2013). While, based on sexual preference, we distinguish sexual bullying, which takes the form of verbal or physical violence but with a sexual predisposition (O' Donohue, Downs, & Yeater, 1999). It manifests itself with unwanted touching, commenting negatively on some special features of the victim's appearance.

2. Identifying the student victim

Victimization is closely related to the conditions and patterns of the child's family environment. It concerns people who have close emotional ties with their mother. It also concerns people who come from overprotective families with an insecure attachment bond (Nikiforou, Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2013). It is also closely related to people who present a low physical, social, and psychological condition (Slee, 1994). These people show a lot of anxiety, insecurity, depression, indifference to everything, introversion, or even a calm attitude towards everything (Tsiantis, 2008). According to Rigby (2002), they manifest undeveloped social skills, while they are particularly sensitive, unable to defend

themselves, due to the repeated threat they experience at school (Boivin, Hymel & Hodges, 2001). They also exhibit low school performance. Many times they refuse to go to school, often cry, show a lack of concentration, lack of motivation to participate in the lesson, repeated absences. They present an increase in stress, insomnia, eating disorders, stomachaches, with a greater frequency among students in the first grades of elementary school, and in extreme cases, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal tendencies (Besag, 2006; Weckert, 2007; Poteat & Rivers).

Finally, there are also cases where victims become hyperactive and nervous, causing irritation and creating negative emotions, as they reciprocate a negative behavior and aggression towards other children that makes them less popular and desirable (Olweus, 1994). Based on the above characteristics of the victimized students, the scope of the unpleasant effects of school bullying on their psychology can be perceived. Children with psychological traumas, some of who, suddenly, become disorganized and lose control of reality (Hatzichristou, Kati, Georgouleas, Lykitsakou, Yfanti, 2012). Children who need help and support in order to be empowered, not to feel unprotected and insecure, to build a healthy personality in the future, as adults.

3. The role of school in preventing and dealing with victimization within the school community

The negative effects of school bullying are varied and significant, which often appear in the individual's distant future (Davis & Davis, 2007). That is why it is considered equally important that every school unit takes care to plan and structure appropriate interventions, adapted to its needs, to prevent, deal with and solve incidents of bullying in the best possible way. That school environment works in this direction, where a positive collaborative climate prevails between the principal and teachers and also among teachers, as the way in which they will react to any bullying situation significantly affects the manifestation of non-bullying behaviors in the school environment, according to Gendron et al. (2011).

School-family cooperation is decisive in reducing the phenomenon. Constructive discussion with parents, informing them, counseling intervention, encourages parents to recognize and manage the signs of victimization, encouraging their children to talk about anything that concerns them, and empowering them. But also on their part, parents themselves inform school of anything that comes to their attention, they participate in the actions organized by school and which concern matters of dealing with school bullying. School needs their cooperation and participation, in order to lead them to a common course of tackling and reducing the prevalence of the phenomenon.

The basic need of the victims is to feel supported and to be empowered so that they do not feel insecure and have the confidence that the abuser will be punished. After all, according to Zafeiriadis (2002), a teacher with a high degree of acceptance can help his students more effectively. In this direction, he focuses his



teaching on teamwork and applies teaching practices that allow the perpetrators to take the place of the victims, cultivating mental empowerment, bringing competence to students with mental resilience deficits.

The role of training managers and teachers at a practical and theoretical level is important for the management of bullying incidents in an effective way, aiming to support students both academically and psychologically. Olweus (1991), after all, points out the possibility on the part of teachers to be able to deal more effectively with an incident of school bullying, when they have appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience. The role of educational activities is also crucial, in terms of informing students and parents about bullying, with the aim, above all, of raising their awareness and developing empathy and social sensitivity. Therefore, the cooperation of all those directly involved in the educational process brings desirable and long-term results to the burning issue of school bullying, so that there is a common approach to recognizing, handling, and dealing with its incidents.

4. In place of epilogue

School bullying is a multifactorial phenomenon, a complex reason, as it is related to the personality and special characteristics, such as gender, skin color, disability of the person who is likely to be bullied, his temperament, ethnocultural origin, religion, family environment in which he lives and develops, and his relationships with others (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). The effects are incalculable, on the psyche and on the building of a healthy personality of the victimized children, as they are not limited to childhood, but follow them in all stages of their lives. Victims' psychological breakdown, marginalization, stigmatization, emotional insecurity, and hypersensitivity lead to adults having difficulty managing and coping with stressful situations and resorting to abuse and substances to help (Tsiantis, 2008). School units that plan actions to deal with school bullying significantly reduce the occurrence of intra-school bullying incidents. Therefore, it becomes imperative to organize and implement appropriate tactics and ways of dealing with aggressive behavior within the school unit, so that the phenomenon of school bullying can be prevented and limited as much as possible, helping the victims to become, in the future, self-reliant, mentally healthy, socially integrated, productive members of a healthy society.

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