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Šikanovanie na základných školách z pohľadu učiteľov základných škôl

Bullying in Primary Schools from the Perspective of Primary School Teachers

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Abstract

One of the most common types of aggressive behavior among school-aged children is bullying which is no longer just a matter of the army, prison, or the lives of people in borderline life situations. It is not infrequently encountered by pupils and teachers in our schools as well. Nowadays, this phenomenon is moving from the age of adolescence and puberty to increasingly younger age groups - even to the younger school age or pre-school age. This paper deals with the issue of bullying among pupils of younger school age. The aim of the presented contribution is to present the experiences of primary school teachers with bullying among pupils and to map what forms of prevention they use in their practice.

Keywords: Bullying. Aggressive behaviour. Prevention of bullying.

Introduction

Pupils in the first grade of elementary school are a vulnerable group in terms of bullying, as they cannot fully evaluate what they are exposed to with their intellect. It may happen that in the family environment of some children there are aggressive patterns of behavior that the children uncritically accept and act according to what they see. In our schools, situations are appearing more and more often, the solution of which requires cooperation with experts such as school psychologists, special pedagogues, pedagogues, educators. Among these problems, we include, among others, the aforementioned aggression and bullying. Most educators are aware of the situation and know that it is necessary to deal with this problem. Many educators are of the opinion that the current social climate, changes in the ranking of recognized values, growing egoism of individuals and the breakdown of family and group ties play a major role in the development of bullying and aggressive behavior. In the following lines, we will therefore focus on the influence of the environment on the aggressive behavior of pupils.

The influence of the environment on pupils' aggressive behaviour

The social environment by its influence on the individual causes his transformation into a unique personality. This influence takes place through social channels, which are found in the family, in acquaintances and also in the social group to which the person belongs. This is where the individual acquisition of attitudes, habits, values and verbal skills takes place. The high level of tolerance of violence in the culture, through the upbringing from parents and the aggression offered through television and movies also contribute to the reinforcement of aggression (Heretik, 1999). Children and youth are saturated with violence offered through computer games, magazines and the aforementioned television. In this climate, the young person does not develop compassion, pain and understanding for suffering. The feeling of experiencing guilt is doformed along with the conscience (Kolář, 2005). Violent and also aggressive behavior in a child does not occur overnight, and even after one encounter with violence. It is a long-term transformation that is conditioned by social experience, i.e. social imitation. The child imitates the behavior models of people in his social environment. In the first place, these are parents, older individuals or peers. The child absorbs their behavior based on their social learning. It adopts their system of behavior in specific situations, takes over their opinions, attitudes and often inappropriate expressions (Hanuliaková et al., 2016).

Acquiring behaviour patterns, ways of communicating and opinions is a long-term process. It requires regular interaction and time. This rule also applies in the other direction. If a society wants to re-educate a person with wrong habits, it is a long run. It requires a lot of effort, exertion and patience. There is a high probability that what the child acquires in the environment in which he grows up, he will take with him into his adult life.

The influence of the family environment, especially if we are talking about a failing family, has negative effects on the child. A child in such a family experiences low interest from parents, humiliation, indifference, emotional coldness, physical punishment, etc. A child who comes from such a family shows signs of increased irritability and expressions of anger even at small stimuli (Šimegová, 2007).

The influence of peers in the issue of aggression and bullying also has its justification. It cannot be ruled out that what children have observed in their parents, they bring as equipment to the peer group. In the case of a family in which violent behavior occurs, we are talking about the generational transmission of aggressive behavior. If the child then finds himself in a party or group, he has ideal conditions to further practice and adopt such behavior, which includes bullying. With this equipment, he then enters into relationships at school and in the class he attends.

Bullying manifests itself in a direct form: physical attacks, insulting nicknames, swearing, taunting, harsh orders from the aggressor to do a certain

thing against the victim's will, stealing things, etc. Bullying can also manifest itself in indirect forms, e.g. by overlooking and ignoring the victim (Metodické usmernenie č. 7/2006-R). Kováčová (2014) operates with the term latent aggression - it means hidden or unseen in the sense that it is not physical violence against a person. This latent form of aggression is carried out either verbally or non-verbally with the sole aim of causing harm. It is carried out both covertly and indirectly. The most common manifestation of this form of hidden aggression is slander, i.e. spreading false and often negative information about the victim.

So we see a causal connection between the social environment in which the child grows up and his behavior. However, it is not a rule that a child from a socially weaker background must automatically be prone to aggressive behaviour.

Occurrence of bullying in the school environment and its prevention

This paper focuses on the issue of bullying and its occurrence in the school environment.

Our aim was to find out the experiences of primary school teachers of the first level with bullying among pupils and what forms of prevention they use in their practice. Data were collected through Google forms, an online questionnaire was filled in by 178 respondents. The largest group of teachers according to the length of teaching experience was those whose length of teaching experience was in the range of 1-5 years, 29.8% of the respondents. This was followed by respondents 16.9% with teaching experience ranging from 6-10 years. The least represented category was educators with 26-30 years of teaching experience – 7.3%.

We were interested in whether the respondents involved in our survey had personal experience of bullying. Based on the responses, it was found that 129 respondents had already personally encountered bullying among pupils and 49 respondents stated that they had not yet had personal experience of bullying. In the questionnaire survey, we investigated the types and forms of bullying that teachers had encountered. The responses showed that psychological and verbal bullying was the most prevalent among pupils. Among pupils, this manifests itself in insults, name-calling, teasing and ridicule. As many as 109 respondents mentioned this option. Threatening, intimidation and blackmailing were also numerous, cited by 60 respondents, as well as deliberate disregard or exclusion from the group, cited by 61 respondents. Pétiová (2016) conducted research where she focused on the most common forms of bullying. Our intention was to look into the current situation (in 2022) and see what changes have occurred in the area of bullying in the school environment. In terms of results for comparison, Pétiová(2016) also reported in her research that the most common forms of bullying were just name calling, insults, ridicule and

ironic remarks. 69 respondents have encountered manifestations that belong to physical bullying during their teaching practice, namely hiding or destroying personal belongings. Another such manifestation was punching, kicking or scratching, which was mentioned by 51 respondents in the questionnaire. Five respondents reported that they had encountered serious types of bullying such as fractures and pupils' knocked-out teeth.

We were also interested in how the teachers found out about bullying among pupils. More respondents – 59 - said that they found out about bullying mainly from pupils. The option that they found out about bullying most often through their own discovery was indicated by 45 respondents, and 20 teachers indicated that they found out about bullying from the parents of pupils, while the fewest respondents indicated that they found out about bullying from their colleagues.

We also focused our attention on ways, practices of dealing with bullying. Most of the respondents – 110 said that they solved the situation by personally talking to the victim and then to the aggressor. Contacting the parents of the parties involved is another common practice, 104 respondents indicated this practice. Finding witnesses was chosen by 67 respondents and providing protection for the victim by 62 respondents. According to our survey sample, a less used procedure for dealing with bullying is contacting a pedagogical-psychological counselling centre or the police, which is largely related to the forms and manifestations of bullying reported by teachers. Thirty-six of the respondents keep records of bullying.

In our survey, we also focused on the different forms of bullying prevention used at the school where the respondents who took part in our survey work. The largest number of respondents – 147, indicated that they also take pedagogical supervision in the corridors, cafeteria, and playground as prevention. Another frequently used form of prevention is classroom lessons, used by 127 respondents. Other forms of prevention used include lectures or discussions, indicated by 107 respondents, and more intensive communication with parents is used as a form of prevention by 89 respondents. The least used forms of prevention are class trips, indicated by 54 respondents, and competitions and games, used by 46 respondents.

We were also interested in whether respondents thought they were sufficiently informed about the issue of bullying. More than half of the respondents, 101, thought that they were sufficiently informed about the problem of bullying in schools and 72 of the respondents said that although they were informed about the issue, they did not think they were sufficiently informed.

Last but not least, we also asked whether the respondents were aware of any of the projects that are dedicated to and help prevent bullying in schools. The most well-known prevention programme among the respondents was a project called „Stop násiliu a šikane“, which was known to 73 respondents, the second well-known programme was "Zdravie a bezpečnosť na cestách", which 49 respondents had encountered during their work experience, and 52

respondents gave the answer that they did not know any of the programmes mentioned above, which was also the second most frequent answer to this question. Only two respondents indicated that they were familiar with and had encountered the „Zippiho kamaráti“ program.

Emmerová (2021) states that in order to implement effective preventive action, it is necessary to monitor the occurrence of undesirable phenomena, to forecast the likelihood of the occurrence of the phenomenon in question, and to think through the choice of methods and forms of action in primary and secondary prevention in the school environment. Bellová, Siváková, Tišťanová (2019) state that it is advisable in the relationship not only teacher-pupil, but also parent-child, to create clear rules, maintain open communication and, last but not least, to understand the child.

Conclusion

Due to the facts found based on the results of the questionnaire, we recommend applying the following procedures in practice:

- before enrolling a pupil in primary school, instruct parents about the internal regulations of the school, which do not allow aggressive behaviour,
- maintain regular communication with the pupils' parents, not only about the pupil's performance but also about the pupil's behaviour,
- to strengthen friendly relations in the classroom and between classes through various social and sporting events,
- to have regular class lessons aimed at allowing pupils to express their observations and attitudes about the school,
- giving pupils the opportunity to contact a competent person if they are victims or witnesses of aggressive behaviour,
- encourage the school to engage in prevention programmes or to set up its own programme,
- support and assist teachers with short teaching experience in solving problems, including those related to bullying.

We should counteract aggression and bullying educationally by creating a positive atmosphere in schools and classrooms, by creating a real emotional environment - something that is extremely lacking in schools at the moment, by using group and cooperative teaching methods, by teaching pupils to resolve conflicts with each other, and so on. These are also ways of eliminating aggression from our schools. Jablonský (2006) writes about many educational aspects. If they were appreciated in schools, this would be reflected not only in the area of knowledge but also in behaviour.

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