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SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR BULLYING PREVENTION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article studies the problem of the prevention of school bullying. It was revealed that bullying is a conscious, systematically repeated aggressive behavior directed at one or more people, and based on the inequality of forces. The motives of school bullying can be completely different: revenge, envy, competition, rivalry, attracting attention, personal dislike for the object of bullying, and other motives. The pedagogical communication style of an elementary school teacher can also increase the risk of bullying in early school age. The analysis of the recommendations and existing programs for the prevention of bullying showed that there are many separate exercises, recommendations, and scenarios of "class hours" dedicated to the prevention of bullying in primary school. At the same time, as a rule, these recommendations and scenarios are not systematized within the framework of a ready-made bullying prevention program for children aged 7–11 years. The following are identified as effective forms of bullying prevention: collective creative activity, the method of group projects, and the formation of traditions in the student group. An important component of bullying prevention is the psychological education of teachers and parents.

Keywords: Aggression, bullying, bullying, primary education, primary school student

1. Introduction

In the school environment very often there are various forms of conflicts and manifestations of aggression. In almost every class there is a situation where students become victims of aggression from their peers. The objects of bullying are more often children who are different from the majority, with clearly manifested specifics: ethnic characteristics, the material wealth of the family, and school performance.

Already in elementary school, stable relations among students are manifested, when the personality of the children, their attitude to the world around them and themselves are formed. At primary school age, interaction develops between students who come from different micro-societies with different life experiences and sometimes weak communication skills. The main task for primary school teachers is to teach children to behave tactfully in a group and show a friendly attitude towards each other.

It has been proven that any elements of violence at this age can significantly affect the character of the children in the future, their moral ideas, and behavioural patterns. Younger students can develop stable behavioural and emotional patterns and follow them throughout their life. A younger student can try on the image of an aggressor, a follower of an aggressor, a victim, or a passive observer of violence.

The problem of school bullying among children of primary school age has not been sufficiently studied by domestic researchers. In connection with this circumstance, there is no program for the prevention of bullying in primary school age. A set of measures is needed, which would be aimed primarily at developing a system of relationships and cohesion in the school community, as well as educating employees of an educational institution in the field of developments aimed at preventing bullying.

2. Problem Statement

The research problem is the search for socio-psychological conditions that affect the occurrence of bullying in a school group, and which can become the basis of a system for preventing school bullying in primary education.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the research is the process of bullying prevention in primary education.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to identify socio-psychological conditions for the prevention of bullying in primary education.

5. Research Methods

The following research methods were used in the study: theoretical analysis of psychological, pedagogical, methodological literature; comparative methods when comparing domestic and foreign bullying prevention programs; empirical and mathematical-statistical.

6. Findings

In the modern domestic psychological and pedagogical field, concerning manifestations of aggression, there are the following concepts: aggression or aggressive behavior, bullying, bullying, and violence. However, the concept of "bullying" is becoming more and more popular. English bullying is translated as "mockery" from the bully – "hooligan, bully, bully, bouncer." In the modern world, this word means physical or psychological intimidation, the forcible submission of one person to another. Until the end of the 20th century, this term was a simple everyday concept. Since the beginning of the new century, bullying has been actively used in psychology and pedagogy (Mastyukova & Moskovkina, 2021). Today, this phenomenon is actively discussed in the pedagogical and scientific community, by parents and students themselves, on the Internet large international portals are dedicated to it: www.bullying.org, www.bullyonline.org, www.bullying.co.uk, www.nobully.org.nz, www.bullying awarenessweek.org.

According to the specifics of the content, the following types of school bullying are distinguished:

i. verbal bullying – name-calling, insults, ridicule, intimidation, racist statements, verbal humiliation;

ii. physical bullying – beating, hitting, infringing rights, pushing, or damaging a person's property. This type of bullying causes both short-term and long-term moral and physical damage;

iii. socio-psychological or indirect – the so-called social bullying. This type of bullying is more difficult to recognize and prove, most often the actions take place behind the back of the victim. It harms social reputation and well-being and (or) causes humiliation (gossip, rumors, ignorance, exclusion from the group and common affairs, ridicule, boycott, manipulation);

iv. Cyberbullying is bullying using the Internet, which is carried out to frighten or injure the victim.

Like any process of aggression, bullying has a circle of participants. This is the aggressor, the object of attack (victim), observers, and society. The behavior of each group determines how far the "hooligan" will go in their actions. For a conflict to fall into the category of bullying, the following signs must be observed:

i. inequality of forces (it is obvious that the weak cannot cope with the aggressor);

ii. aggression;

iii. recurrence of incidents over time;

iv. susceptibility of the victim (acute emotional reaction);

v. premeditation, malicious intent on the part of the aggressor.

Children of primary school age are characterized by physical manifestations. Students concerned about their peers will implement bullying with the help of pestering, pushing, pinching, and beating. Harassment by theft is usually carried out "openly": aggressors often take things right in front of the owners (they can even snatch them out of their hands). Lying has as much use in primary school children as physical methods. It happens that the aggressors lie so convincingly that the teachers believe them more than the victim.

An increase in the risk of bullying in primary school age may be the pedagogical style of communication inherent in a primary school teacher.

Alexandrova and Prikhodko (2016) believe that the reason for the manifestation of bullying can be:

1. Raising children.

2. Differences in height, weight, physical endurance, and even intelligence.

3. Social inequality, material values, manifested in clothes, accessories, the cost of things and school supplies, and the social status of parents and relatives (Alexandrova & Prikhodko, 2016).

Krivtsova gives an example of the actual pedagogical factors of school bullying:

    i. Lack of control over behavior during breaks in "hot spots": toilets, locker rooms, canteens, secluded corners, gyms;

    ii. An attitude of indifference to peer violence: they don't know what to do and don't believe they can help;

    iii. Indifferences of teachers: lack of control over behavior during breaks and in "hot spots": toilets, locker rooms, canteens, secluded places;

    iv. The lack of an understandable system for protecting justice (honor and dignity) of every child and every adult in the school (Kravtsova, 2005).

Grishaeva (2015) believes that victims of bullying as a rule, but not always, are children who are sensitive and unable to stand up for themselves. Almost anyone can be a victim. This child can be both a physically strong child and a child who learns well and is liked by teachers. There can be almost any criterion, it is enough to stick a label.

Aggressors can commit actions aimed not only at their peers but also at the teacher. Bullying toward teachers is a little-studied phenomenon but it can be found in schools.

Novikov and Rean (2019) consider the school climate, in particular its components such as the relationship of children in the group, the relationship between the teacher and the student, sociometric status in the group, directly or indirectly related to the prevalence of bullying. Bullying is always closely related to the characteristics of the social situation and does not occur outside of it. The involvement of students in bullying depends on their social status in the classroom (Novikova & Rean, 2019). We rely on the data of Novikova and Rean (2019). We believe that relationships in the group, as well as sociometric status in the school group, are directly or indirectly related to the prevalence of bullying.

Let us consider the methods of rallying the student group. Formation of the value system of the children's group. Values are formed during discussion with younger students about attitudes, patterns, and guidelines that are generally accepted in our culture and society. The values that the school should form in students, recommended by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, should be formed in

the classroom, the educational activities of an educational organization. Increasing the cohesion of the children's team. In a close-knit team, the students feel emotionally well, are comfortable, pleasant to be in the classroom, and communicate with classmates and teachers. They have a positive emotional background, and a calm, even mood that ensures the assimilation of the school curriculum. In a disorganized team, students are often in a state of stress. And for younger students, even light stress does not have a motivating effect, as it does for adults but a destructive effect. Namely, skills and abilities in a stressful state in children are formed more slowly than in a calm, comfortable state. For cohesion, some schools use the method of organizing class competitions. In a situation of competitive struggle, the students of the class are united, rallying for the sake of defeating another student team, winning.

Sundeeva and Rakhimova (2017) points out that the following contribute to the increase in the cohesion of younger students:

i.   involvement of children in setting a group goal;

ii.   teaching schoolchildren interaction in a group, the rules of teamwork;

iii.   obtaining a preliminary agreement and the consent of schoolchildren to perform certain actions and group work in general.

One of the significant criteria for cohesion, and improvement of relationships in the group, is the definition of one's positions with oneself and other members of the group. With a low social status, a child tends to experience insecurity, laziness, aggressiveness, pessimism, stiffness, and passivity (Kohn, 2006).

In the framework of foreign studies, the concept of "cohesion", as a rule, is considered from the point of view of the socio-communicative approach (manifested in communication and communication links between group members). In domestic psychological research, the term "cohesion" is considered in line with the active approach.

Almost all forms of joint activity contribute to the formation of favorable development of the school group. Teachers can start their work by establishing class traditions: various holidays (for example, the Autumn Festival, Birthday Day), excursions, trips, as well as competitions, and quizzes. Such activities can successfully unite children. Here you can see a child from a completely different side, which has rarely been shown before. For the formation of a cohesive team of students, various kinds of psychological training, which can be carried out after school hours, are important.

One of the directions in the activities of the teacher, associated with solving problems in the formation of a children's team, is the organization of the collective creative activity of children. Among the effective methods of increasing relationships in the children's team include the method of projects.

To increase the level of cohesion in the team of younger students, it is necessary to create situations in which younger students can ask each other questions and answer them, and these questions should be about themselves. Then the children will learn more about each other, and they will have the opportunity to discover the similarity in habits, interests, and character traits, and similarity is the basis for the emergence of sympathy and emotional rapprochement of people. Thanks to positive interpersonal relationships, the cohesion of children in the group will increase and the psychological climate will become more favorable, the experience of interaction with their classmates will expand.

In addition to school bullying in children's relationships between peers, there is also bullying in the system of "teacher-child" and "child-teacher" relationships. The reason for the occurrence of bullying in primary school age may be the pedagogical style of communication inherent in the primary school teacher. An increase in the risk of bullying among younger students is the unfavorable psychological climate of the class.

An analysis of bullying research suggests that the main socio-psychological indicators of a student group are as follows: sociometric status, level of cohesion, satisfaction with relationships with a teacher and classmates are significant factors in the occurrence of bullying in younger students.

Many schools are facing the problem of bullying and are trying to solve it. In our opinion, it is more effective to conduct preventive classes with younger students than to make efforts later to solve such a serious problem in high school. By preventing bullying in the children's team, we can avoid similar situations in the future.

Many schools need bullying prevention, and many foundations and specialists working in the field of psychology pay attention to this problem. Some educational institutions work with individual organizations dealing with the problem of bullying prevention, and psychologists who are already dealing with specific cases.

There is an extensive world of experience in the prevention of bullying in education.

In 1980, in Finland, a professor of psychology at the University of Turku, Kristina Salmivalli, specifically investigated the attitudes of other students towards the persecutors and victims in a bullying situation. Under her leadership, in 2006, the state program KiVa (short for "kiusaamista vastan" – Finnish for "against bullying") was developed, which describes concrete steps for the school administration to overcome school bullying (Hazelden Foundation, 2020). The program contains material for teachers, students, and parents.

A center for the development of preventive measures against school bullying is being created at York University (Canada) (headed by Peper). In England, Smith and his colleagues created the Sheffield project, within which they analyzed the scale of the problem, and the characteristics of the main participants, and created recommendations for the prevention of mobbing. In Australia, the Cross group became interested in the health problems of victims of mobbing (Shalaginova, 2019).

The experience of studying bullying in Japan is important, where the entire education system firmly implants the ideology of collectivism. In these conditions, school bullying is widespread, takes sophisticated forms, and even has its name "Ijime." This is a severe psychological and physical violence of a group against one person, which, however, is perceived not as a mockery but as an "adjustment" of an individual (student) to the traditions of the team.

Bullying research in the new century is characterized by the emergence of major national anti-bullying programs, the most significant of which are OBPP (Hazelden Foundation, 2020), the Finnish KiVa program already mentioned, and the American Positive Action program. All such programs have common features that allow seeing a transnational movement to counter school bullying. As a rule, they include regular meetings with psychologists and/or educators with parents; conducting training sessions; increased intensity of work with representatives of schools and children; considerable duration of programs; and introduction to the work of disciplinary methods.

It is important to note that the hallmark of most anti-bullying programs has not become so much dealing with the phenomenon of bullying as dealing with any deviant or aggressive behavior. Another important achievement of the creators of international anti-bullying programs was the fundamental promotion of preventive work that prevents future crises.

Danish specialists from the Mobbeland organization focus on the social and psychological nature of the development of bullying and, within the framework of their programs, work with classes, without highlighting the role of an aggressor or a victim (Mastyukova & Moskovkina, 2021).

Recent studies show how the characteristics of family relationships affect the likelihood of participating in school bullying as an aggressor or victim. Especially important, for example, for younger students is counseling parents on the use of the Internet, working with teachers. Studies have shown that an important factor in reducing bullying is the fundamental intolerance of teachers to bullying. Many programs include mandatory training for teachers on prevention and countering bullying. Especially important, for example, for younger students is counseling parents on the use of the Internet, working with teachers.

Studies have shown that an important factor in reducing bullying is the fundamental intolerance of teachers to bullying. Many programs include mandatory training for teachers on prevention and countering bullying. In our country, there are currently a large number of organizations, programs, and projects that can help the school overcome bullying or carry out preventive work. Among them are the following: the "Everyone is Important" program at the Jewish Tolerance Center, "Be Courageous", "Hate.net", a specialized Facebook support service, and even the Gerda-bot system, which allows parents to track the behavior of children on the Internet.

From the primary school bullying prevention programs described above, we found a large number of individual exercises, recommendations, and classroom scenarios. However, as a rule, these recommendations and scenarios are not systematized within the framework of a ready-made bullying prevention program with a specification for the age of children 7–10 years old and with the necessary structure (relevance, explanatory note, goals, and objectives, thematic planning).

A study to identify the features of bullying in primary school age was carried out based on the Municipal Budgetary Educational Institution, Secondary School No. 8 in Grozny. The study involved 33 students in the third grade, 17 boys, and 16 girls, average age of 9.5 years. The research took place in 2021 in three stages: ascertaining, forming, and control. According to the results of diagnostics at the ascertaining stage, the following results were obtained: the coefficient of satisfaction with the relationship of students is predominantly low, there are potential bullies and victims in the group; the opinion of parents and teachers confirms the presence of bullying in the group, there is a request for preventive work.

To conduct the formative stage of the experiment, we developed and tested a program aimed at preventing bullying and forming a cohesive group, improving relationships among a group of younger students, and raising their sociometric status. The program is designed for 1 academic year and includes blocks of work with parents, teachers, and students. At the end of the formative stage of the experiment and the re-diagnosis of younger students, the indicators of the level of physical aggression and verbal aggression decreased. A comparison of the sociometric indicators of the psychological climate before and

after the formative stage of the experiment showed an increase in the level of reciprocity, a coefficient of satisfaction, cohesion, and a decrease in the number of children excluded from joint activities.

7. Conclusion

Under the prevention of bullying in primary school age, we mean a system of general and special events, which, by its characteristics, is distinguished by its complexity, consistency, differentiation, and timeliness.

Mathematical and statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon t-test that we used in this study showed a significant downward shift in indicators of bullying manifestations, and an increase in indicators of satisfaction and class cohesion, which confirms our hypothesis about the importance of socio-psychological conditions for the prevention of bullying in primary education.

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