

ROLE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN COMBATING BULLYING

РОЛЬ ВЧИТЕЛІВ ТА ШКІЛЬНИХ ПСИХОЛОГІВ У ПРОТИДІЇ БУЛІНГУ

In the present era, bullying represents a pervasive and significant issue. This form of psychological violence is most common among adolescents in middle and high school. There are a number of factors that contribute to the prevalence of bullying in adolescent social groups [5]. To a significant extent, the development of this phenomenon is promoted by an upbringing in the family and the atmosphere of the educational institution where children study. In middle and high school, adolescents typically seek approval and support from individuals with whom they have significant relationships, including peers, as well as parents, and teachers. This article examines the various factors that contribute to the proliferation of bullying in the school setting, with a particular emphasis on the influence of the microclimate of the educational institution. This article aims to examine the role of teachers and school psychologists in addressing bullying in educational settings. The relevance of the topic is due to the spread of bullying in the school environment during the war, which is a consequence of high levels of anxiety and stress. The methodology employed encompasses an analysis of contemporary foreign studies on the subject of bullying in educational environments, coupled with the presentation of the findings from our own empirical research. The article provides a concise overview of the primary characteristics of this issue, delineating the underlying causes of bullying. It is observed that the prevalence of bullying in educational institutions has a significant impact on the psycho-emotional state of students, their psychosocial health and the general climate of the school environment. The necessity for educators to develop skills to address bullying and the pivotal role of educational institution management in bullying prevention is emphasised. Further study of the problem and the development of preventive measures aimed at preventing the emergence and development of bullying among students are recommended. The results of the research confirm the importance of improving the qualification of teachers and school psychologists in the field of bullying prevention, emotional competence development, and the implementation of specialised training programmes.

Key words: *bullying, teachers, school psychologists, counteraction, educational environment.*

У наш час булінг є поширеною і суттєвою проблемою в закладах освіти. Найчастіше ця форма психологічного насильства притаманна підліткам середньої та старшої школи. Існує ряд факторів, що зумовлює поширеність булінгу в підліткових соціальних групах [5]. Значною мірою зростанню цього явища сприяє виховання в сім'ї та атмосфера навчального закладу, в якому навчаються діти. У середніх та старших класах підлітки зазвичай шукають схвалення та підтримки від осіб, з якими вони мають значущі стосунки, включаючи не тільки однолітків, але й батьків та вчителів. У цій статті розглядаються різні фактори, які сприяють поширенню булінгу в шкільному середовищі, з особливим акцентом на вплив мікроклімату навчального закладу. Метою статті є вивчення ролі вчителів та шкільних психологів у протидії булінгу в освітньому середовищі. Актуальність теми зумовлена поширенням булінгу в шкільному середовищі під час війни, що є наслідком високого рівня тривожності та стресу. Використана методологія включає аналіз сучасних зарубіжних досліджень на тему булінгу в освітньому середовищі, а також представлення результатів власного емпіричного дослідження. У статті подано стислий огляд основних характеристик цієї проблеми, окреслено основні причини булінгу. Зазначено, що поширеність булінгу в закладах освіти має значний вплив на психоемоційний стан учнів, їхнє психосоціальне здоров'я та загальний клімат шкільного середовища. Наголошується на необхідності розвитку у педагогів навичок протидії булінгу та ключовій ролі керівництва навчального закладу у запобіганні булінгу. Рекомендовано подальше вивчення проблеми та розробку превентивних заходів, спрямованих на запобігання виникненню та розвитку булінгу серед учнів. Результати дослідження підтверджують важливість підвищення кваліфікації вчителів та шкільних психологів у сфері профілактики булінгу, розвитку емоційної компетентності та впровадження спеціалізованих тренінгових програм.

Ключові слова: *булінг, вчителі, шкільні психологи, протидія, освітнє середовище.*

UDC 159.922.6:173
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5208.2024.68.11>

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The problem of violence is considered in many branches of scientific knowledge: philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and others. It is a serious socio-pedagogical problem that has affected educational institutions abroad and in our country. One of the manifestations of violence is mobbing. The importance of studying this phenomenon is very significant, as the consequences of bullying for its participants can be dire, ranging from psychological trauma to the consolidation of the behaviour patterns of the victim or aggressor and even suicide.

Taking into account that Ukraine is in the third year of the war, the problem of bullying, as well as problems with the psycho-emotional state of schoolchildren, is growing [7].

In the psychological literature, the term bullying is generally understood as a set of various social, psychological, and educational problems that cause a process of long-term (group or individual) physical or mental violence against an individual who is unable to defend himself in a particular situation [1]. In recent years, there has been growing concern

that bullying victimisation can have negative consequences not only during childhood but also throughout one's life [8].

Modern socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions contribute to the formation and development of distorted forms of individualism, leading to the emergence of violence and cruelty in human relations. These characteristics are reflected in adolescents' school environments. Various forms of conflict are common among adolescents. One of the forms of conflict interaction is bullying. This phenomenon is characterised by the severity and duration of its consequences, which are manifested in all its participants. Bullying in the school environment has a negative impact on the development of the adolescent's personality. The prevalence of this phenomenon among adolescents calls for research into practical forms of educational work.

Bullying is not a behaviour but a form of interaction in which different types of behaviour are manifested. Bullying has a structure characteristic of conflict, but it has specific features (prolonged, repetitive nature of bullying, the power imbalance between perpetrator and victim, and bullying structure includes several different behaviours).

The bullying structure includes fixed types of participants – bully, victim, witness, bully's assistant, victim's defender), distinguishing bullying from other forms of conflict interaction. Thus, bullying is understood as a type of destructive conflict interaction in a group in which the perpetrator uses repeated violent actions against the victim, who is unable to defend himself, over a long period. When bullying occurs in the classroom, a bullying structure emerges – a social system that includes bullies, their victims, and observers. The leading type of activity in adolescence is intimate personal communication in the process of performing collective practical activities; the adolescent severely experiences any violation of the process of communication, which affects the development of his personality.

Adolescence is a time when bullying is most likely to occur and when the consequences of bullying can be highly damaging. The main factors that contribute to bullying among adolescent students are

- Individual (aggression, victimisation, adolescent conformity).
- Group (antisocial group activities, unformed value-oriented unity of the group, lack of self-determination of personality in the group of its participants, unfavourable social and psychological climate of the group).

The emergence of types of deviant behaviour in adolescents, which manifest themselves in bullying, creates the conditions for its

emergence in the classroom. The following types of deviant behaviour are used in bullying: aggressive, victimising, and conformist. Depending on the type of deviant behaviour, a young person may be a bully, a victim or a witness to bullying. Bullying allows the bully to maintain a high status in the group for a long time because of the significant power imbalance between the bully and the victim. Bullying shapes and maintains the structure of the group. Relationships in bullying are built according to the rules of humiliation, rejection, violence, persecution of the victim, deflecting aggression away from oneself, etc. Mobbing is used as a means of creating and maintaining a group structure. In this respect, the participants in the bullying structure (the bully, the bully's assistants) must act violently against the victim to maintain a high status in the group. If teachers do not pay the necessary attention to the development of the student group, the group may develop in-group aggression. It should be noted that everyone wants to achieve their goals at the expense of other group members, in-group antipathy, cruelty and group bullying of the weak reign in the group. Such characteristics are acquired by a group of pupils if there is no healthy core in it, if it is not educated, and if the pupils are left to themselves. A bullying structure can become the basis of an informal classroom structure. In cases where there is no formal structure in the classroom or one that minimally mediates student interactions, bullying can become the basis of all classroom relationships. Such a classroom structure has a negative character and hinders regular socialisation and individual and group development. In addition, relationships based on bullying in the classroom hurt the learning process: they divert children's attention, preventing them from learning; they spoil the psychological climate in the school, preventing them from cooperating and solving learning tasks together. 'Because experiencing bullying may threaten adolescents' overall life satisfaction, finding ways to build adolescents' resilience against exposure to school bullying may help prevent reduced life satisfaction [11].

If, for some reason, the teacher does not stop such situations, they contribute to the teacher's feeling of helplessness, powerlessness, incompetence, ineffectiveness, increased stress and decreased work motivation, which increases the likelihood of professional burnout and resignation from the profession or termination of adequate performance of professional duties.

We conducted a school climate survey of teachers in several schools (93 people). This study is an integral part of analysing the overall climate in educational institutions and provides a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social environment in which

students live. Teachers, as direct participants in the educational process, provide valuable information about relationships between students, incidents of bullying, the level of support from the administration, and their stress levels and willingness to deal with bullying issues (Table 1).

The analysis of the teacher survey results shows that most teachers rate the overall level of safety in schools as high or medium, which indicates a positive perception of the

school environment. However, a number of teachers consider the level of protection to be low, indicating the need for increased safety measures. The survey showed that although bullying is not an everyday occurrence, it still happens regularly. Teachers reported that they witness bullying on a weekly or monthly basis. This indicates that there is a problem that needs to be addressed systematically. The survey results suggest that not all teachers

Table 1

Teacher survey results. School climate questionnaire

№	Question	Answer Options	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
1	How do you rate the overall level of safety in the school?	Very high	25	26.9
		High	40	43.0
		Average	20	21.5
		Low	8	8.6
2	How often do you witness bullying at school?	Daily	5	5.4
		Weekly	15	16.1
		Monthly	20	21.5
		Never	53	57.0
3	Do you have enough resources to respond to bullying cases?	Yes, always	30	32.3
		Sometimes	40	43.0
		Rarely	15	16.1
		Never	8	8.6
4	How do you assess the relationships among students in the classes you teach?	Very good	22	23.7
		Good	43	46.2
		Satisfactory	20	21.5
		Poor	8	8.6
5	Do students participate in extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?	Yes	65	69.9
		No	28	30.1
6	How often do you feel supported by the school administration?	Always	28	30.1
		Often	40	43.0
		Rarely	15	16.1
		Never	10	10.8
7	How often do you experience stress because of work?	Daily	12	12.9
		Weekly	35	37.6
		Monthly	33	35.5
		Never	13	14.0
8	How often do students come to you for help with bullying incidents?	Daily	8	8.6
		Weekly	20	21.5
		Monthly	25	26.9
		Never	40	43.0
9	Do you believe the school has effective methods to combat bullying?	Yes	55	59.1
		No	38	40.9
10	How often do you participate in training or workshops on bullying issues?	Annually	22	23.7
		Semi-annually	28	30.1
		Monthly	13	14.0
		Never	30	32.3
11	Do you have sufficient knowledge and skills to handle bullying cases?	Yes	60	64.5
		No	33	35.5
12	Does the school support programs or activities aimed at combating bullying?	Yes	58	62.4
		No	35	37.6

have the resources to respond effectively to bullying. Only some respondents said that they always had access to the resources required, while others said that they did not have enough resources.

Most teachers consider the relationships between pupils in their classes good or satisfactory, indicating a relatively positive social atmosphere. Some educators, however, believe that these relationships are inadequate, suggesting conflict situations among the students. According to many teachers, students actively participate in extracurricular activities. This could indicate that students are very interested in extracurricular activities, which could help them integrate socially and lessen bullying. The survey results show that administrative support is not always sufficient. Teachers indicate a certain level of support, but lack of it can be a factor that increases stress and reduces the effectiveness of work on bullying. Many teachers experience job-related stress, which can hurt their professional performance and the overall school climate. This factor requires attention from the administration to ensure appropriate support and stress reduction. Teachers indicate that pupils rarely ask them for help in cases of bullying. This may indicate a lack of trust or a lack of effective communication channels between pupils and teachers. Some teachers do not believe that the school has effective anti-bullying policies in place, highlighting the need for further work in this area. Teachers rarely attend training or seminars on bullying, which can hurt their competence in dealing with the issue. Not all teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to deal with bullying effectively. This points to the need for additional training and professional development. Teachers indicate that not all schools support anti-bullying programs or activities. This highlights the need to strengthen such initiatives in schools.

The preventive activity of a teacher can be based on the ideas and principles of pedagogical support. Namely, support is an activity of professionals – representatives of the educational institution, aimed at providing preventive and prompt assistance to children in solving their problems related to physical and mental health, successful progress in learning, practical business and interpersonal communication, and life self-determination.

The appropriateness of using pedagogical support in the context of bullying is justified by the uniqueness of the processes that contribute to the emergence of this phenomenon in adolescence. The problems adolescents face in the communication process are individual, so the teacher should pay attention to each case in bullying prevention. The activity of the class

teacher in preventing bullying among adolescents includes helping adolescents overcome the influence of individual and group factors that contribute to the occurrence of bullying in the school class, the development of the school class community and the humanisation of interactions between pupils [10].

It is essential to note the importance of teachers' interaction with school psychologists and the need for measures to be developed and proposed for inclusion in school anti-bullying programmes [9].

Firstly, work should start not from the bullying situation but from the root causes that provoke any manifestation of aggressive behaviour. Disciplinary methods can be an option, although their effectiveness is controversial and not always legitimate. The most effective measure for today can be considered the constructive adoption of school-wide rules by all participants in the educational process, whose transparency and clarity will improve the school climate indicators and reduce the risk of acts of aggressive behaviour. And reduce the risk of bullying behaviour.

Second, it is working with peers. Psychological support for the victim and improving the psychological climate in the team through 'active friendship' skills are very effective ways of dealing with bullying situations. These skills can be taught during games, breaks and extra-curricular activities in school. Training in empathy, constructive communication and non-violent methods of resolving conflicts or controversial situations can be taught in secondary schools [12]. Working directly with the aggressor. It should be said at the outset that there is no universal and effective way of working with the perpetrators of bullying. The use of disciplinary sanctions is a complex ethical issue about the contingent of students. It is essential to understand that all participants in the educational process should be involved in solving the problems of bullying and its consequences, including parents – or legal representatives. If parents are not involved in this process or disagree with the school-wide decision, punishing the child who initiated the bullying may be inappropriate.

Specific teacher training. It is essential to recognise that teachers should be at the forefront of implementing school anti-bullying policies and take a moral stance against this phenomenon. Teachers should receive timely and systematic professional development in anti-bullying issues to keep abreast of new forms of bullying and ways of working that are constantly emerging [3]. The development of school-based anti-bullying programmes should consider all participants' interests in the educational process: peer work, disciplinary methods, restorative

approaches (rehabilitation), the role of parents, the role of teachers and their training. In addition, the effectiveness of anti-bullying programmes depends on the stage of their development or adoption: whether they are based on research materials, whether they have undergone a 'pilot' phase with subsequent adaptation, or whether they have been borrowed without adaptation to the school context, socio-economic situation and socio-psychological situation in the team [4].

Informative discussions with parents are an essential aspect of bullying prevention. All participants noted that individual counselling for parents is available in their institutions. Information on anti-bullying is also available to parents in social networking groups or the school's parent groups (using messengers). About counselling for parents whose children have been victims of bullying, such interventions take place only at the direct request of the parents and, in most cases, as a private conversation with a psychologist [6].

Bullying prevention is essential at the educational level because it can not only lead to a reduction of such cases in academic institutions but also contribute to preventing the existence of such a phenomenon within the walls of an educational institution.

A comprehensive approach to working with young people who are involved in bullying has significant potential to improve their psychological state. The implementation of specific interventions is effective in reducing aggression and increasing self-esteem and stress resistance, indicating the need to continue and expand anti-bullying programmes in schools.

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