

Review

School Violence, Dealing with it and Minimizing Harm

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Abstract

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In the present study, the meaning of the term school violence, and various characteristics of it, such as its forms, factors that can lead to its appearance, ways to prevent it, and the roles of both school and family in combating it will be presented. The study focuses on what school violence is, its characteristics, its forms, its effects and ways it can be prevented. The present study consists of material found in scientific articles, books and websites related to the topic. The study of the phenomenon is important since it constitutes the base on top of which prevention schedules can be designed. It is vital that parents behave appropriately and never act violently inside their houses, and the teachers can help with the creation of friendly relations between the children. That way the isolation and abuse of the children can be limited.

Keywords: Bullying, Parents and prevention, School, School violence, Students, Teachers

INTRODUCTION

School violence is a phenomenon of our era that has internationally spread to a tremendous extent, especially in later years, while no effective way to combat it has been discovered so far. School violence and bullying have a considerable number of consequences for both the victim and the aggressor, as they will both face many difficulties, both in their smooth psychosomatic development, and their subsequent adult life (Kalantzi-Azizi, 2004).

The term school violence was formulated and first used by Olweus (1978) and refers to a process that includes acts of violence, molestation and frequent victimization of primary school students and teenagers by other students or teenagers that are of the same age, or older (Andreou and Smith, 2002). This term refers to the phenomenon of intentional physical and mental aggressiveness of a stronger child towards a weaker, aiming at the obedience of the latter. This phenomenon mostly takes place inside school facilities, while it also keeps happening after school in outside locations. (Kokkinos and Karagianni, 2017)

School violence takes place inside school facilities because there is a vast number of children there and the lack of proper teacher supervision in every part of the facilities. (Griffin and Gross, 2004) The study of the phenomenon is important since it constitutes the base on top of which prevention schedules can be designed. (Alsaker and Nagele, 2008)

In the present study, the meaning of the term school violence, and various characteristics of it, such as its forms, factors that can lead to its appearance, its effects, ways it can be prevented, and the roles of both school and family in combating it will be presented.

The methods used relied on the bibliographic search of retrospective and research studies, which were drawn from the international Medline, Pubmed and Cinahl databases and the Greek Iatrotek database, and keywords such as school violence, school, bullying, students, teachers, parents and prevention. An important article exclusion criterion was the language they were written in, except for English and Greek.

Talking about school violence

Throughout this phenomenon, a student is being bullied through the repeated violent or aggressive behavior of another student, or a team of other students. These negative actions are taken with the intention of causing harm or annoyance. The main characteristics of school bullying are: (Andreou and Bonoti, 2010)

- ✓ intention of the perpetrator child to harm or damage the targeted child,
- ✓ usual lack of excuse for the action,
- ✓ repetition of the behaviour,
- ✓ satisfaction the perpetrator derives from harming the victim.

Boys are perpetrators and victims of aggressive behavior more often, and this behavior mostly takes place inside parts of school environments that are not well supervised by the teachers, such as the school yard, hallways and classrooms during breaks. It is often repeated more than once and can take many forms. (Sapouna, 2008) Research has showcased that this might last for a short time, as in 19% of such cases bullying lasts for a year, many children have been bullying victims sometime during their school years, some are bullied many times over the course of the same week, and other have been victims for years. (Sampson, 2009)

Differences present in a student, or more specifically deviations from commonly accepted characteristics and behaviors, pose a basic element of student victimization in many cases. This is one basic reason for the common victimization of children that have a developed school culture, children descended from ethnic or religious minorities, and children that are disabled in one way or another. (Xanthakou et al., 2007)

In primary school, bullying in manifests with a variety of forms. These forms can be direct and include physical contact between perpetrator and victim, or they can be indirect and not include any personal confrontation between perpetrator and victim. Some other forms of school violence are the following: (Griffin and Gross, 2004)

- Verbal: it includes the systematic use of offensive expressions or nicknames, intending to humiliate the victim and decrease its confidence.
- Physical: it includes pushing, punching and kicking, hitting with objects, pinching and biting in order to injure the victim.
- Extortion: it includes taking away money or personal belongings, and aims at forcing the victims to satisfy the desires of the perpetrators.
- Visual: it includes the transportation of notes with content that is humiliating for the victim among the students, or even putting these notes on the back, the desk, or the bag of the victim.
- Racial: it includes the use of offensive comments because of the nationality, social origin, financial position

or differences of the targeted child, and stigmatization is usually the aim.

There are other forms of school violence commonly seen among older children and teenagers, such as sexual bullying, cyber bullying, and psychological bullying. (Vlachou et al., 2016)

Effects of school violence

Most victims are introvert children that become isolated and do not contact their teachers, or other people from their environment easily. They have a lot of insecurities, are not well accepted by their peers or are different from them in some way, such as being shorter for example, or thinner or less muscular than their peers. (Protagoras-Lianou, 2001). They also appear to be constantly afraid, have low school grades and want to completely give up on school. Children such as these are especially characterized by indifference towards hobbies, sudden changes in their eating and sleeping habits, and a rising sense of isolation and sadness (Christaki, 2007).

Children that are victims of school violence often complain about physical annoyances, such as headaches, migraines, skin issues such as eczema cases, stomach ulcer, shivering, increased pulses and panic attacks. They might show symptoms of depression and suicidal tendencies. Sadly, many children around the world have committed suicide in spite of the substantial information regarding this matter that has been quite widespread recently (Farrington and Baldry, 2010)

Mostly parents, and teachers as well, play a crucial role in dealing with this phenomenon. Parents must be close with their children, communicate with them and immediately recognize any change that might occur in their behavior. In addition, they should be worried if they witness any changes in their mood, desire to avoid going to school, or that they are suddenly no longer interested in doing things they previously enjoyed. (Georgiou and Stavrinides, 2008)

Preventing school violence

School violence has increased to a tremendous extent in recent years, prompting the educational community towards discovering ways and applying appropriate strategies in order to properly combat it. (Graig et al., 2007)

Prevention plays a crucial role in dealing with this problem as it aims at spotting and combating it early. In order for it to be effective however, it must be done in every domain of life in which children play an active part, such as family, school and community (Rasidaki, 2015).

Parents also play a decisive role in the formation of their children's character and their safety, and as such, they can take some measures that will help in the

prevention of school bullying, such as: (Papachristopoulos and Samartzi, 2010)

- ✓ encouraging their children to discuss their experiences at school, their activities, their difficulties and their interests, even the route they take to go from their homes to school.
- ✓ involvement with the school lives of their children through supervision of the lessons, and meetings with the teachers.
- ✓ creating a network with other parents where they will be able to discuss about issues such as bullying and the security that the school provides to the students.
- ✓ supervision of their children during the viewing of television programs.
- ✓ encouraging their children to participate in social events.

Parents ought to be interested about the self-esteem of their children and actively try to support it so that they will not resort to acts of enforcing themselves onto someone weak. Ensuring a climate of security and acceptance with the establishment of steady and clear limits that will have to be applied and respected will also play a positive role inside the family. (Pastra, 2015).

It is vital that parents behave appropriately and never act violently inside their houses, and encourage their children to acquire skills that will prevent the appearance of any future violent behavior. (Espelage and Swearer, 2003)

In addition, the teachers can help with the creation of friendly relations between the children. That way the isolation and abuse of the weaker children can be limited. (Kokkinos and Karagianni, 2017). Moreover, teachers must always avoid discriminating students and be equally interested in each one of their students and not neglect, or even worse target the weaker students, thus leaving them defenseless. (Perren and Alsaker, 2006) Besides, a responsible school should organize meetings related to the subject of violence taking place inside school environments, in which such situations will be discussed. (Şahin et al., 2011)

It is also recommended that after the start of the school year a conversation with the students is done, regarding the basic values of the students, who may be dealing with disputes and tension. It may be possible through conversation to develop a brochure that will be placed inside the classroom that students can resort to whenever a problem arises. A recommendation for this conversation would be to have the students arranged in a circle in order to achieve direct visual contact between them (Ken, 2009). Consequently, spotting and protecting endangered children will be easier with the proper school intervention. (Bejerot et al., 2013) Teachers should also: (Μόσχος, 2014)

- show real interest regarding the issues the students are dealing with.
- promise their students to keep their secrets when they trust them enough to tell them about an issue and

explain to them that any intervention aimed at combating issues will be done in cooperation

- be in contact with the parents of their students in regards to both their progress in the lessons, and their psychological and emotional state
- gain knowledge when it comes to handling crises

Violence prevention measures regarding the school facilities themselves can also be taken. The school environment has shown that it can affect the actions, motivation and attitude of the students. Violent behavior tends to occur in isolated areas such as the end of a hallway or a dark corner in a playground. The school should be aware of these areas and limit student access to them while increasing its security and supervision, shutting off both these areas, and the facilities themselves when they are not operating. If measures aimed at improving the school climate in its entirety and preventing minor disruptions can be taken, reducing the number of occurrences of violent behavior will be much easier. (Eisenbraun, 2007)

CONCLUSION

The problem with bullying and violence in schools is that it tends to become a timeless issue, while our society does not take enough measures to effectively cope with it. School violence still poses a sad phenomenon to this day. Cooperation among parents, teachers and students will play an important role in spotting and combating such behaviors early and effectively. Schools must provide the children with safety. The students that are the most likely to become bullying victims especially should be under the impression that they are being protected in the school. In addition, the parents of all the students, victims and perpetrators alike, must teach their children to respect the differences of others and defend kids that may become bullying victims.

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