Cross Different Countries Views of Bullying Within School Environment

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Abstract

The main component of bullying according to many definitions is the imbalance in power. This paper has mentioned statistics of bullying that happened in countries including Korea, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, India, European countries and North America, and different African regions. This indicated that bullying is a widespread phenomenon that needs to be examined more by conducting different research. Moreover, this paper has discussed accurately four main types of bullying including physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, and cyber bullying. In addition, causes include misconception of bullying, poor social skills, school or home-related struggles, lack of empathy, video games that include violence, and attention-seeking were discussed to show how these factors contribute to bullying. The paper found that long-term consequences would affect the victim such as poor social adjustment and low psychological well-being. Also, Negative consequences would affect the bully in a way that they have the probability to develop suicidal thoughts. Through the investigation of the literature review, some risk factors of being a victim of bullying were examined. The risk factors such as poor parenting style would increase the probability of being a victim. Eventually, the papers have discussed an intervention method used in Holland. This method relies upon involving teachers, parents, and students, in addition to establishing effective projects. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the bullying issue in a way that increases the awareness of all people especially people who are working in educational settings.

Keywords: Bullying; Victim; Bully; Widespread; Self-Esteem

Introduction

Recently, bullying is considered to be the most widespread violence within the school environment, which makes it a recognized global concern [1]. For almost 44 years, the phenomenon of bullying in school environments has been studied. School bullying started to be deeply discussed in Olweus' book Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys which were published in 1978 [2]. According to research that has been conducted in Russia, all participants in bullying including victims, observers, and aggressors, will be negatively affected by bullying Harlanova E, et al. [3]. Negative consequences included increasing levels of stress and anxiety, and a decline in academic achievements and emotional intelligence [3]. A study shows that 50 percent of students in one way or another will experience bullying within the school [4]. This topic is very essential to be discussed and studied as the phenomenon of bullying is increasing in schools all around the world. In addition, the purpose of this paper is to discuss bullying from different aspects to increase

awareness of the issue. In this paper, a literature review of bullying-related topics including definitions, prevalence, types, causes, consequences, risk factors, and prevention of bullying will be discussed. This paper has collected data from different countries and different school-age groups.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying has been defined as an intentional ongoing verbal, physical, or social action in which the power is misused and results in harmful physical, psychological, or social consequences ("Definition of Bullying | National Centre against Bullying", 2022). This can be done by a group or individual to harm an individual or group of individuals in which the main character is the imbalance of power ("Definition of Bullying | National Centre against Bullying", 2022). In addition, bullying has been defined as the behaviors that either threaten or hurt the people who are less powerful Rigby K, et al. [5]. It is essential to clarify the differences between conflict and bullying. Both of them would include aggressive actions, but in the case of bullying, there will be an imbalance in the power between the two sides [6]. In addition, many studies have indicated that bullying is characterized by repetition of the aggressive action. However, other studies have rejected this view, because one time an aggressive behavior from a bully would have an intense and repetitive fear from the victim that he/she would experience that again [6].

Classifications of Bullying

There are many different types of bullying that have been examined in different studies. Bullying is not one fixed type, instead; there are many different types including verbal bullying, Physical bullying, relational bullying, sexual bullying, prejudicial bullying, and cyber bullying.

First, physical bullying is a harmful act that includes a violation of a person's body ("What Is Bullying") [7]. This can include kicking, pushing, or hitting. In addition, many studies have included stealing or destroying victims' belongings and inappropriate hand gestures as a part of physical bullying ("What Is Bullying") [7]. Studies have suggested that male students are more likely to involve in physical bullying in comparison to female students Iossi Silva et al. Moreover, research has illustrated that male students aged between 7 to 14 years old, were engaging in acts of stealing others' belongings, and punching and kicking more than female students from a similar group age Iossi Silva, et al. Besides, studies show as people grow up, and as a result of developing emotional, verbal, behavioral, and cognitive resources to deal with conflicts in a more constructive way rather than engaging in physical fights to solve the issue (World Health Organization) [8]. As a result, statistics show that school

bullying will begin at the elementary level, and will start to decrease by the level of middle school [9].

The second type of bullying is verbal bullying. This indicates utilizing either spoken or written words for the purpose of insulting or frightening the victims [10]. In addition, teasing, name-calling, or even threatening can be good examples of bullying [10]. Research has suggested that verbal bullying is more likely to be used by male students Iossi Silva, et al. In addition, verbal bullying appeared to be the most common type for the group age range between 7 to 10 years old children Iossi Silva, et al. Interestingly, verbal bullying in most cases cannot be recognized as it takes place in the absence of authority figures [10]. In addition, the complex part of verbal bullying is that it cannot be proven, which will result in long-term consequences such as anxiety and stress [10].

Third, relational bullying is a type of bullying when the victim is being bullied to harm his/her relationship with others Rigby K, et al. [5]. Relational bullying can be referred to as social bullying, and it is related to the intentional harm to the victim's reputation or relationships ("What Is Bullying") [7]. Moreover, purposely ostracizing people out of the group, spreading rumors, embarrassing victims in public, and intentionally isolating them from the social situation are all good examples of social/relational bullying [10].

Fourth, cyberbullying refers to the intentional harm that happens via electronic devices including smartphones, tablets, or computers ("What Is Bullying) [7]. Cyber bullying has different forms, including either posting or sending harmful content (pictures, messages) and sharing personal information that it is resulting in humiliation ("What Is Bullying) [7]. Interestingly, cyber bullying can be started at young ages, as research has proved that 15 percent of children aged 9-12 years old have experienced cyber bullying [10].

Causes of Bullying

The misconception about bullying can contribute to being a main cause of bullying. People who are coming from different backgrounds would perceive bullying in a different way. A research paper suggested that teachers perceive bullying as physical and verbal as more common and serious in comparison to social/relational bullying [11]. The misconception of bullying is forming a huge risk as some people would perceive bullying as a small issue between children. As they see it as a small issue they would not interfere or try to eliminate the behavior [4]. In addition, some educated people such as teachers, have reported that bully is needed in the real world and children have to learn how to confront and be used to such an environment where the bully is the winner [4].

There are many causes of bullying that have been discussed in the literature, considering that there is no fixed and well-defined reason for why someone is bullying another. First, a bully can be a way for the student to express frustration or anger that comes from the school or home-related struggles [7]. Second, poor social skills consider a limitation for the individual to positively communicate with the surrounded people (family, teachers, peers), which eventually results in aggressive behavior and being a bully [12]. Third, reasons related to upbringing can be correlated with bullying [7]. The main issue would be that the child has never learned about caring, empathy, or respecting the feelings of others. Fourth, video games or movies that included violence would play the main role in encouraging young people to bully others Tidy C, et al. [7]. Fifth, bullying can be expressed as a way of attention-seeking from others, where they have a lack of attention gained from the home environment [7].

Risk Factors of Being a Victim

One important factor of being a victim of bullying is because of the loneliness of the student. Studies show that a person who is engaged with a group of friends is less likely to be bullied. Parenting style and family environment affect and can predict a person's behavior Jan A, et al. [13]. Therefore, it was proved through research that low parental care and the harsh discipline used by the parents would increase the possibility of the person being a victim of bullying [13]. In addition, a person who is in poor physical condition is more likely to be a victim of bullying as the power is an imbalance between two sides [13]. A combination of society norms, and specific personality characteristics would be the reason behind being a victim of bullying. On one hand, the society will have such norms including dominance on power, status, absence of teacher interference, and enhancement of peer-group ideas [14]. On the other hand, personal characteristics include a lack of social relationships, sensitivity, and shyness [14]. These social and personal characteristics-related factors will increase the probability of being a victim.

Consequences of Bullying Affecting the Victim

Bullying that happens at young ages in the schools, can have negative consequences that last until adulthood [15]. An important indicator of bullying to happen is the imbalance of power between the victims and the aggressors [5]. Obviously, when the power is equal between two-sided, the consequences will not be similar to the case when the power is imbalanced [5]. In case of an imbalance of power, the dominant feeling of the victim will be helplessness [5].

First, victims will suffer from low psychological well-being [5]. More specifically, a study that has been conducted in Norway proved that children who were victims of bullying were having long-lasting rates of lower self-esteem [5]. Moreover, denial as a psychological mechanism would be used by the victim. In one study 36 percent of male students and 26 percent of female students have reported not being bothered by being victims of bullying [4]. Furthermore, from another psychological aspect, a study conducted in Indian schools, proved that frequent bullying would result in depression, suicidal thoughts, and psychosomatic disorders [15].

Second, bullying would result in a poor social adjustment for the victims [5]. Students from all school years were more likely to be unpleasant from school as they are being victimized [5]. In addition, a study that has been conducted in Australia illustrates that many victims tend to have a high rate of absence [5]. The deception was used by many victims to convince their parents of serious reasons to give up sending them to school [4]. Statistics in a study conducted in Australia proved that 5 percent of male students and 8 percent of female students tend to have fake reasons to prevent going to school after being bullied [4]. Also, in the same study statistics shows that 12 percent of male students and 18 percent of female students have thoughts about avoiding going to school after experiencing bullying [4]. Eventually, many students who were victims of bullying decided to change schools [4].

Third, mentioning the academic aspect, many students who were the victim of bullying, had concentration problems during the lesson [4]. Interestingly, some victims of bullying tend to isolate themselves more and focus on studying and reading [4]. In both cases, the students will have negative emotional and social development [4]. Eventually, as long-term consequences, victims of bullying were suffering in making healthy relationships even in their adulthood life [15].

Consequences of Bullying Affecting the Bully

There are many consequences of bullying affecting the bully. First, a study that has been conducted in Norway proved that the students who were reported to be bullied in grades six to nine were four times more likely to be accused of delinquency in the country's courts [5]. Second, a study that has been conducted in the United Kingdom has proved that men who were bullies at schools have a higher possibility of having children who exhibit aggressive behavior [5]. Third, depression and suicidal thoughts were highly experienced by children who are bullies [5]. This can be explained either because of the guilty or shameful feelings experienced by children when they bully others or because they are already victims of domestic violence [5].

Bullying as a Global Concern within Different Countries

The main discussed fact in this part is that bullying is existing all around the world. Moreover, a study that has been conducted in Korea shows that approximately 40 percent of the students, who participated in the conducted survey, were playing a role in bullying in the school environment [15]. In addition, the same study shows that 23 percent of students were victims of bullying actions [15]. Furthermore, a study conducted in Jordan which involved 2,197 students group aged 13-15 years old, showed that 46.7% of students have at least one involved in a physical fight [16]. In addition, the same study has revealed that 13.3% of students has involved in bullying behaviors such as kicking, hitting, and locking indoors [16]. A study conducted in different countries in the Arab regions to examine the phenomenon of bullying proved that bullying prevalence was the highest in Jordan with a percentage of 44.3% [17]. In addition, bullying also was existing with high percentages in other Arab countries including Morocco at 31.9%, Oman at 38.9%, Lebanon at 33.6%, and the United Arab Emirates at 20.9% [17].

A study has been conducted in 3 different schools in rural areas in India and included a total of 500 students which there were 312 females and 188 boys and their age range were between 8-12 years old [15]. The result of the study showed that 31.4 percent of the students within the study were victims of bullying, where the victims were 68 male students and 89 female students. In addition, this study indicated a higher percentage of bullying among male students (36.2%) in contrast to female students where the percentage of bullying was 28.5% [15]. Additionally, a research conducted in 42 European countries and North America; by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2013-2014, proved that approximately 11 percent of female students of age 11 and almost 14 percent of male students of age 11 were victims of bullying at least twice within 2-3 months (World Health Organization) [8]. In addition, another study that has been conducted in the Western nations has proved between 4 to 9 percent of young students were perpetrators as they showed bullying actions [6]. Also, the same study has shown that from 9 to 25 percent of school-age students were victims of bullying [6].

By examining the African literature related to the bullying issue, the following was found. Statistics show that bullying in South Africa, specifically in Tshwane, reached the percentage of 61% of high-school students Townsend L, et al. [18]. In addition, in another area of South Africa, Cape Town, bullying within grade 8 was approximately 52% [18]. Research conducted in Africa has shown that the victims of bullying are exhibiting some aggressive behaviors in society such as antisocial and risk-taking behaviors [14]. In addition, they were more likely to use tobacco or have suicidal thoughts [14]. Interestingly, in Cape Town in South Africa, female students who were victims of bullying were more likely to drop from school in comparison to male students Townsend L, et al. [18].

Holland School's Bullying Prevention Program

It was discussed that the violent behavior that developed in early childhood, will continue and be more intense while the person is moving toward late childhood and adolescence which make the interventions against bullying within the school harder [19]. According to study prevention of bullying in the school rely on two main components, starting by replacing the culture that promotes violence within the school by setting peaceful norms, and educating students to meet their social needs without involvement in violent work [19].

According to Van der Meer, schools should apply the 5 pillar method to prevent bullying within the school environment. Many schools in Holland have adopted the method by starting with members of the school council who should structurally commit to banning and stopping bullying within the school environment [20]. Also, the school council should agree not to tolerate any form of bullying [20]. Eventually, forms of action should be developed to confront bullying [20]. The first pillar of the method can be done by educating the teacher and training them about bullying-related issues [20]. Second, education and advice should be provided to the parents about bullying, and where to seek help if their child is being a bully or a victim [20]. Third, by applying projects that involve the whole class, such as through the usage of theatre, children and adolescents can get experience about how to react when someone is bullying them or when they see a victim bullied by a bully [20]. Fourth, informing the bully about the school rules behind bullying and the punishments as a consequence in involving in bullying or other violent behavior [20]. Fifth, educating the victim of bullying about how to respond and from who to ask for assistance when he is bullied [21].

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has discussed the issue of bullying by analysis of different aspects. The main idea behind bullying is the existence of imbalanced power between two parties. Through this main idea of bullying, it is expected that the consequences for the victim will be very extreme. This paper has discussed how bullying would result in low self-esteem. A person with low self-esteem will suffer in all life aspects including social, academic, and developmental. In addition, negative consequences that affect the bully included having suicidal thoughts. This is due to the sense of guilt that

would raise. In a conclusion, bullying is an issue that needs to be solved as it is affecting both the bully and the victim. The school environment should be a safe environment for everyone. Therefore, programs and seminars that increase awareness regarding such issues should take place in different educational settings. Also, these seminars should provide education for parents, teachers, school administrators, and students. In addition, the paper has proved through a deep investigation of the literature that the issue of bullying is widespread in all the countries around the world. Therefore, further research and studies should be established in different countries. More investigation into the effect of cultural differences on the issue of bullying would help in generating effective bullying prevention plans. Eventually, further research about the connection between violent games and their effect on the bullying issue would help conduct education programs within the schools.

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