

Bullying Reduction and Prevention in a Holistic Positive Intervention Perspective

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Abstract—Bullying is pervasive intentional repeated aggressive behavior among youngsters, involving power imbalance. It includes threatening, spreading rumors, physical-verbal attacks, and group exclusion on purpose. Victims are all ages, school degrees or backgrounds. Bullied children are always at risk for chronic multiple problems and social, emotional and behavioral disturbances. Research was conducted with 507 scholars, 267 female, 240 male, from Uberlândia (Brazil), assessed through EAB - Escala de Avaliação Bullying Escolar, (a 47 yes-no statements in a questionnaire base) for bullying prevalence, and victims/bullies existence. Results showed 10% victims, 18% bullies in girls; 8% victims, 29% bullies in boys. Holistic intervention is under development to empower children, prevent school violence and guarantee improvement in their holistic and educational aspects.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a repeated intentional aggressive behavior among school aged children and teenagers involving real or perceived power imbalance. [1,2]

It includes actions such as teasing, making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, excluding someone from a group on purpose, exposing unwanted and non consent videos or images (ciberbullying), and many other forms. [2, 3, 5]

Bullies and victims are all ages, all school degrees, races or backgrounds. Bullies are youngsters who systematically victimize a target group of their peers. They are people who purposely hurt other person over and over or make them feel uncomfortable. [3, 4, 6]

Some children are more likely than others to be victimized because of their appearance (small/big, thin/fat, weak/strong or “different” from peers), due to their behavior (insecure, sensitive, submissiveness, low self-confidence, anxiety, fearfulness) or their attitude (sexuality, political believes, social groups belongingness).

Bullied children suffer a wide range of harmful effects—both immediately and for years to come. The consequences of bullying can be severe in terms of young people’s mental wellbeing, culminating even in suicides. [2, 3, 9]

They often feel tense, anxious, tired, sad, do poorly in school or refuse to go to school, lose their confidence, become socially isolated. All of these can cause physical and emotional damages. [9]

In a holistic intervention, there is the internal support (self esteem enhancement, group empathy) and the external support (community reissue of competence and social skills programs). Interventions and preventions studies in schools show that training programs influence the development of children’s level of empathy, self confidence and self esteem. Adults’ support can help them name their feelings and express their emotions in a healthy and polite way [10,11]

An holistic view of both bullies and bullied, can be an strategy to empower children, to improve their health-enhancing behaviors as an intervention program proposal to reduce or prevent the school violence. [7, 8, 12]

A training program which teaches coping strategies and resilience improvement help children overcome adversities against bullies, enlarge social competence and demonstrate positive adaptation despite traumas. [12, 13, 14, 15]

The main goal of this research was to create a safer learning environment in school and detect incidence and prevalence of Bullying in Brazilian academic classes, besides investigate genders differences and implement anti bullying programs, based on holistic program.

2. METHOD

A cross sectional study was conducted with 507 teenagers both sexes, 11-17 years old, from public and private schools in Uberlândia (southeast from Brazil), during 2015 and 2016.

They were assessed through EAB - Escala de Avaliação do Bullying Escolar, which is a likert scale with 47 statements in a questionnaire basis, asking students about trivialities in their day life routine at school. The sum of the individual score gives you an indication of a bully or a bullied child.

After investigation and detection of bullies, victims and bystanders, we proceed to the holistic intervention, with students, teachers, the school staff and parents, to be held during the school year, in meetings previously agreed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This report provides robust evidence that systematic bullying does occur among under-school-age children in both kinds of schools private or public.

According to this research, the results showed that 10% from 267 girls and 8% from 240 boys were victims. The bullies represent 18% in the female sample and 29% in the male group.

The results of this study also indicate that intensity and frequency of insults and physical aggression seems to reduce as long as the students are getting older and are closer to the university entrance exam, around 16, 17 years old. [6]

Boys and girls have different patterns to face violence. The most common form of bullying among girls was exclusion from peer relationships and sometimes it's difficult to notice, because it's hidden, not shown, while boys presented tendency of physical aggression in a clear way. [7]

The 2nd part of this study, the holistic intervention is still under construction and development yet with children, parents and the school staff, however in the 4 months post holistic intervention there was an increasing of resilience acquisition and bullying reduction. [15]

These interventions promoted increasing of resilience, self-regulation skills that facilitate children's adaptive abilities, such as self-control, social competencies, emotion regulation and acceptance of others, by appreciation of the values each individual brings to group.

And it's positive that we can't help children if we don't take time to listen to them. And besides it's necessary to avoid common sense attitude such as telling them "Just ignore it," "Just get over it," "Just calm down." or "It's ok to happen. It's a child's life thing."

The issue of Bullying is complex, due to the fact that Brazilian culture mostly ignores its impact in the scholars' mental health and the severity of damages and internal bruises it can cause for the child's life. [1]

It's taken seriously, only when children develop some kind of problems, stress or any pathology from the DSM-5, or a tragedy call the media attention.

Students can be happier and healthier if they were taught to respect differences, limits and laws, accept frustration, and increase tolerance. This will turn more effective and positive the ways of interacting, and surely the pacific social coexistence improves their holistic and educational aspects.

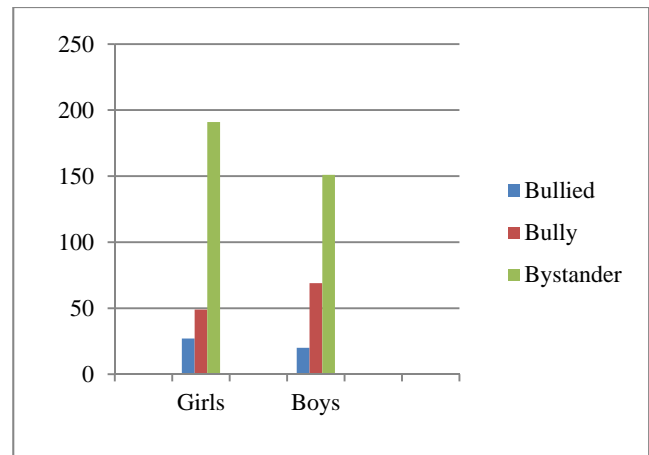


Fig. 1: Bullying evidence at school

4. CONCLUSION

The present report demonstrates the effectiveness of the EAB Scale in selecting bullies and bullied children and the effectiveness of the holistic intervention program in producing positive changes in school practices, student knowledge and behaviors.

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