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AGGRESSIVE BULLYING-TYPE BEHAVIOUR: APPROACHES, CHARACTERISTICS, CONSEQUENCES

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In this article, the problem of aggressive bullying behavior is addressed. The approach is based on the analysis of international policies in the field of preventing and reducing aggressiveness and violence in educational institutions promoted by the UN, the Council of Europe, UNICEF, etc. Emphasis is placed on the definition and characterization of key notions regarding the targeted issue: aggressiveness, violence, bullying and others. The consequences of aggressiveness and bullying-type aggressiveness in school are also extensively argued: psycho-physiological plane, psycho-somatic plane, including mental health, educational and school performance plane, legal norm plane. Some results of the express study on the manifestation of aggressive behavior by lyceum students: student-student, student-teacher, teacher-student and their involvement in acts of violence are also presented. The data obtained are commented on and corrective conclusions and general suggestions are made to prevent and reduce the phenomenon of aggressiveness and bullying-type aggressiveness.

Keywords: *aggressiveness, bullying, violence, aggressive behavior, aggressor, victim, deviance.*

COMPORTAMENTUL AGRESIV DE TIP BULLYING: ABORDĂRI, CARACTERISTICI, CONSECINȚE

În articolul dat se abordează problema comportamentului agresiv de tip bullying. Abordarea se întemeiază pe analiza politicilor internaționale în domeniul prevenirii și diminuării agresivității și violenței în instituțiile de învățământ promovate de ONU, Consiliul Europei, UNICEF etc. Se pune accentul pe definirea și caracterizarea noțiunilor cheie privind problematica vizată: agresiune, violență, bullying și altele. Pe larg sunt argumentate și consecințele agresiunii și agresiunii de tip bullying în școală: plan psiho-fiziologic, psiho-somatic, inclusiv sănătatea mintală, plan educațional și al performanțelor școlare, plan al normei juridice. Se prezintă și unele rezultate a express-studiului privind manifestarea de către elevi-liceeni a comportamentului agresiv: elev-elev, elev-profesor, profesor-elev și implicarea lor în acte de violență. Datele obținute se comentează și se fac concluzii reflective și sugestii generale de prevenire și diminuare a fenomenului de agresivitate și agresivitate de tip bullying.

Cuvinte-cheie: *agresivitate, bullying, violență, comportament agresiv, agresor, victimă, divianță.*

Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by the increase in aggressiveness and violence at the global level, but also at regional, community, institutional level, generated by the contemporary world challenges: crises, wars, propaganda, extremism, etc.

- In this context, the issue of aggressiveness and violence has become a priority for several international organizations: the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the European Council, etc. We note only a few international turning points in addressing the issue of aggressiveness and violence, including at school.

- The Utrecht conference (1997) organized by the European Council with the theme „Safety in School”.

- World Congress (2001) organized by the European Observatory on „Violence in Schools and Public Policies”.

- Conference of the European Council (Brussels, 1998) with the theme „Violence in Schools: Awareness, Prevention, Penalties”.

- United Nations Global Study on Violence (2002).

- World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, 2002).

The problem of aggressiveness and violence is widely addressed and practiced in all European countries, including Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Here we can talk about the first national study „Violence in School", carried out by the Institute of Education Sciences (2006). In 2007, the Romanian Ministry of Education elaborates the „Strategy Regarding Reduction of School Violence Phenomenon. The second Report developed by the Institute of Education Sciences in 2018 entitled „Nonviolent Learning Environment for All Children", in which it is found that about 70% of all students have been subjected to violence or have been involved in a situation of violence.

In the Republic of Moldova, the problem of school violence is also in the sights of the government. In 2014, the Child Protection Strategy 2014-2024 and the „Intersectoral Cooperation Mechanism for Identification, Assessment, Referral, Assistance and Monitoring of Child Victims and Potential Victims of Violence, Neglection, Exploitation and Trafficking" were drawn up and approved. In the composition of these documents' analysis, it is found that about 75% of the children were subjected to different forms of violence: psychological, physical. And 60% of the graduates were involved in a violent situation.

In all policy documents with reference to combating violence in school, but also in society in general, it is found that violence and aggressiveness damage health, emotional well-being, ability to learn and socialize. In other words, aggressiveness, violence and, above all, bullying have negative consequences on the student's development and socialization. In this context, a contradiction is identified between the persistent promotion of policies to prevent and reduce aggressiveness and violence in school at all levels and the alarming growth of this phenomenon in educational institutions. This contradiction generates several problems, including of a scientific nature: what are the theoretical and methodological approaches to the prevention of violence and aggressiveness, such as bullying in educational institutions.

The aim of this study is to characterize the phenomenon of "bullying" and to study the consequences of this phenomenon as a premise for building a psycho-pedagogical mechanism to prevent aggressiveness and violence in school, including bullying.

Bullying-Type Aggressiveness as Pedagogical Problem

In specialized literature we find a number of notions/terms that in one way or another reflect the meaning of aggressiveness: deviant behavior, school violence, bullying. Most authors believe that the difficulty of formulating a unitary definition of aggressiveness is related to the complexity of this phenomenon's manifestation. It is obvious that the delimitation of these notions' concept will create more objective premises to build a more effective mechanism for preventing and reducing the phenomenon of inclusive violence/ aggressiveness such as bullying. It is known that violence, aggressiveness and bullying are deviations from established norms in the given society. This deviation from social norms/rules characterizes deviant behavior. Deviance has acquired dominant social and legal meanings.

Radulescu S. defines violence as „any social behavior and any social act that are different from the general behaviors and actions of the members of a society and that risk, through this difference, causing hostile reactions or sanctions from the collective [11]. Deviance is a concept that encompasses multiple behaviors of the individual categorized as deviations in relation to the social norm [6].

Aggressiveness is still a deviation from social, moral, behavioral norms, but similar to other human traits, it is a dynamic and complex behavior, which is based on biological mechanisms and the social environment. In this context, Mitrofan N. defines aggressiveness as „any form of behavior directed with intention towards objects, persons or oneself, in order to produce prejudices, injuries, destruction and damage" [9].

A more comprehensive definition of aggressiveness incorporates the connection between the psyche and the physical and highlights the psychological component of aggressiveness through the processes that are involved in the aggressive act. From this perspective, aggressiveness is defined as „a state of the psycho-physiological system, through which the person responds with a set of hostile behaviors in the conscious, unconscious and phantasmatic plane, with the aim of destroying, degrading, coercing, denying or humiliating a being or thing invested with significance, which the aggressor feels as such and represents for him/her a challenge". In some situations, the motive that triggers the aggressiveness is at the level of the meanings that the individual attributes to the reactions of other people, situations, objects that represent a challenge for him/her.

Other authors define aggressiveness as “the tendency to attack either people or inanimate objects that stand in the way of the immediate, compulsive satisfaction of some needs or desires” [5]. „When it is manifested, aggressiveness gives rise to oppositional behaviors, marked of irritability, of intolerance. Being most often latent, it can be expressed through defiance, irony, causticity. Analyzing these definitions, we notice again that aggressiveness is seen as something that exists in our nature and can be expressed through different reactions, from a state of irritability, intolerance to malicious behavior towards others [3].

Aggressiveness manifests itself in different forms: physical (hits, injuries); verbal (threats, irony, nicknaming); affective (intimidation, indifference); social (gossip, damage to reputation).

In the school environment, the following forms of aggressiveness are distinguished: proactive aggressiveness/reactive aggressiveness; instrumental aggressiveness/hostile aggressiveness; affective aggressiveness/aggressiveness... Eibl-Eibesfeldt believes that aggressive behavior can be converted into ambition, courage, exploratory curiosity [3].

It is important to distinguish the notions of „aggressiveness” and „violence”, some authors believe that aggressiveness represents a subtype of violent behavior. Grădinaru T. and others use it as a synonym with reference mainly to the school environment. However, if we accept that aggressiveness is an innate drive, like hunger, fear (Lorenz, 1969), while human violence „is the form of manifestation of aggressiveness, which, as a social phenomenon, appears as a problem of ontology (it is taught life long) [13]. So, we can conclude that aggressiveness and violence can be diminished through education, learning and culture.

At the current stage, in the eyes of researchers and specialists in the educational field appears the problem of „bullying”, which is the most complex form of aggressiveness and violence. Craig and Pepler define bullying as „a repeated form of physical or verbal aggressiveness directed at a person or group of people where there is a power differential [2]. As a rule, bullying has the following characteristics:

- It has a systematic character and is carried out regularly;
- It is executed over a longer period of time;
- It aims either to harm or to gain image.

In other words, most authors who address the problem of bullying characterize this phenomenon as follows: exposure to negative actions, harmful actions, abuse of power, harassment, hostility, etc. Research on cyberbullying, violence on information technologies is also current. Willard Nancy states that cyberbullying consists of being mean to another person by sending or posting domineering material or engaging in other forms of social aggressiveness using digital technologies in one way or another. This type of violence turns into „real online social aggressiveness” [17].

The analytical framework of the problem related to aggressiveness, violence, bullying, creates pedagogical premises for the prevention and reduction of this phenomenon in educational institutions.

Some Characteristics of Manifestating Bullying-Type Behavior in Students

The manifestation of aggressiveness, including bullying-type aggressiveness, largely depends on the student’s personality and the factors that influence this process: family, school, community. There are differences in the manifestation of aggressiveness in girls and boys. Girls are able to regulate emotions better, so aggressive manifestations are less than in boys. Boys show their aggressiveness predominantly physically, and girls verbally towards members of the same gender.

Manifestations of student aggressiveness are associated with the following conditions:

1. the existence of emotions or situations (anger, frustration, anger, abandonment, the need for revenge, etc.);
2. the existence of some models of violent behavior (in the family, in the group of friends, relatives);
3. the existence of conditions that facilitate the discharge of aggressiveness (noise, heat).

In this sense, a profile of the aggressor is also taking shape [6]:

- the inclination towards aggressiveness, latent or manifested, which is based on a background of hostility and denial of social values;
- the emotional instability resulting from a fragility of the ego and from deficiencies in education;
- the social maladjustment resulting from the exacerbation of the feeling of insecurity, which the individual seeks to suppress (for example, through vagrancy, avoiding organized forms of life and activity);

- the duplicity of conduct, reflected by the discord between the behavior preceding the wrongdoing and the behavior of relating to society through which he/she uncovers his/her illegalities;
- the existential imbalance expressed through passions, vices, perversions, absurd waste of money, etc.

Current approaches to aggressiveness, including bullying, pay a lot of attention to aggressiveness: low learning outcomes, educational failure, negative image, etc.

Consequences of Aggressive Bullying-Type Behavior

Analysis of different studies [15; 16; 6; 1] allows us to find:

1. that the effects of aggressiveness can affect several segments of life, psycho-physiologically, educationally and legally;
2. if the violence and aggressiveness are serious and persistent over time.

The negative consequences are equally serious, primarily those related to the psycho-physiological sphere. As Limber S. states, „victimization is closely related to low self-esteem, high rates of depression and anxiety, and increased frequency of suicidal ideation [7]. Aggressiveness and especially bullying affects psycho-social health. Therefore, aggressiveness is considered as a destructive phenomenon. Victimized students can also carry the fear of bullying into adulthood. In addition to the psycho-physiological consequences of aggressiveness, those related to educational institutions are also strengthened: school adaptation, the attractiveness of studies, school performance.

Lessne and others state that school adjustment is associated with a reduced frequency of aggressiveness in students [8]. And others found that aggressive students are twice as likely to express their negative feelings, including towards attractiveness, towards school, than students who feel happy in school, have a good mood.

Aggressiveness and bullying-type aggressiveness also strongly affect school performance. A study conducted by Ortega R. and Lera M., (2000) and another study conducted by Skrxypiee G. (2008) demonstrated this fact: victims of aggressiveness showed a decrease in interest in learning, they recorded a high number of school failures, school dropout increased, the contexts of interaction and communication with other students were limited. Bullying also generates absenteeism which directly affects the learning process and results of students.

In this context, it is important to estimate the role of the learning environment and the psychological conditions in which students learn. The aggressive environment generates stress, anxiety, which affects students' learning and motivation to learn.

The consequences of bullying aggressiveness are also related to judicial norms. Farrington D. (1991) states that society is the biggest victim of bullying because school bullies are prone to acquiesce to their wives and children in adult life. He is of the opinion that bullying aggressiveness paves the way for delinquency and crime in the case of children who have a pro-violent attitude [4]. In general, the manifestation of bullying-type aggressiveness with serious consequences falls under the judicial rules, which are elaborated in most territories of the world, including in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Knowing the phenomenon of bullying aggressiveness and the consequences of this phenomenon, we can build effective anti-bullying in school.

Express-Evaluation of Certain Aspects of Oppressive/Violent Behavior in School Environment

Express-evaluation of school aggressiveness and violence in high school education is part of a larger study of the targeted issue. The purpose of this assessment is to identify some trends in the manifestation of aggressive behavior by lyceum students and to establish the consequences of these manifestations.

The following items were taken from the „Questionnaire for Evaluation of Violent Behaviors in School Environment", developed by Sisan M. and Rosan A:

- what are the forms of violence that you observe in school/high school?
- what situations occur between your mates?
- have you personally found yourself in one of the situations below?
- what are the forms of violence/aggressiveness that your mates show towards teachers in school?
- in school, are you pressured by the violence of some mates/teachers?

The questionnaire was applied to 43 graduates from Romania.

Table 1. Results Recorded For Question What are the forms of violence that you notice in school/ high school?

Item	Appreciation				
	Not at All	Very Rarely	Rarely	Often	Very Often
Violence between students	0	0	45%	35%	20%
Students’ violence towards teachers	0	20%	20%	30%	30%
Teachers’ violence towards students	0	50%	40%	10%	0

The analysis of the answers to the first question regarding the dominant forms of violence in school allows us to find that violence between students dominates (35% - often and 20% - very often) and student violence towards teachers (60% - often and very often) and more the violence of teachers towards students is rarely recorded, which is also natural. Although any warning from the teachers regarding the observance of some school rules was interpreted by the students as professional violence.

Table 2. Results Recorded For Question What situations occur between your colleagues?

Item	Appreciation				
	Not at All	Very Rarely	Rarely	Often	Very Often
Offensive expressions between students, with reference to different physical or mental traits	0	0	20%	40%	40%
Offensive expressions between students regarding the material, familiar situation	0	15%	60%	20%	5%
Swearing/bad language	0	0	16%	30%	54%
Arguments/conflicts	0	0	5%	30%	65%
Offensive expressions between students regarding ethnic belonging	0	20%	0	0	0
Fight between students	0	20%	50%	15%	15%

The answers to the question „what situations are manifested between your mates?”, lead us to the following findings and conclusions: 80% of students indicated that they were offended by other students regarding different physical or mental traits. There is a very large number of these students which indicates that the psychological climate is alarming. In this class there is also a high level of quarrels and conflicts between students, which are recorded between 84% and 95% - often and very often. At the same time, there is no record of a large number of insults, bad language, related to the students’ material condition and ethnicity.

Table 3. Results Recorded For Question What are the forms of violence/aggressiveness that your mates show towards teachers in school?

Item	Appreciation				
	Not at All	Very Rarely	Rarely	Often	Very Often
Indiscipline	0	5%	50%	30%	15%
Absenteeism, running away from classes	0	25%	25%	40%	10%
Ignoring the message sent by the teachers	0	10%	40%	30%	20%
Helpless attitudes	0	30%	15%	35%	20%
Ugly verbal insults	0	40%	40%	15%	5%

Nonverbal aggressiveness	0	20%	30%	30%	20%
Tendency to hit	0	50%	40%	5%	5%

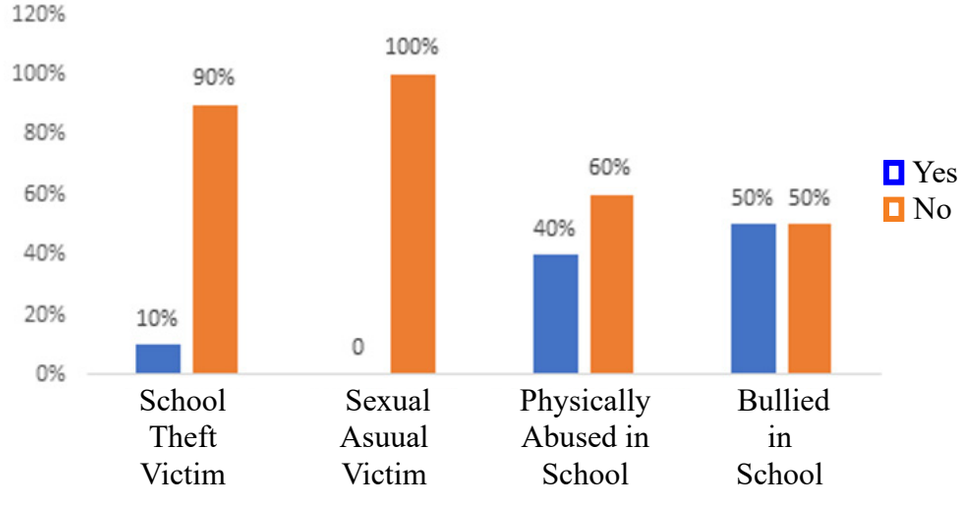
The results obtained after completing the items in the question related to the forms of violence shown towards teachers by students convince us that there are several contradictions between teachers and students regarding the understanding of violence. Many requests from teachers (such as to learn better or reproduce the material learned, etc.) are perceived by students as violence or punishment. However, the large number of students who show violence towards teachers is highlighted: running away from class 50% (often-very often), ignoring the teacher's message 50% (rarely-often), helpless attitudes 55% (often and very often). It is positive that the number of students who show verbal insults towards teachers is small.

Table 4. Results Recorded For Question Have you personally found yourself in one of the situations below?

Item	Appreciation	
	Not at All	Very Rarely
School Theft Victim	10%	90%
Sexual Assault Victim	0	100%
Physically Abused in School	40%	60%
Bullied in School	50%	50%

Analyzing the data in response to that question allows us to find that most students have not faced theft in school, sexual abuse. But half of the total number of students indicated that they were physically assaulted and bullied in school as a result these students cannot say that the school is dangerous or the psychological climate is favorable for them.

Fig. 1. Answers to Question of Whether Student Was a Participant in One of Situations Presented.



Conclusions

Approaching aggressiveness and bullying-type aggressiveness from the perspective of phenomenon's complexity, in terms of the diversity of manifestation forms, causes and risk factors, as well as negative consequences, allows us to conclude that the phenomenon of bullying in school constitutes a challenge and a social problem, psychological and pedagogical. Knowing the forms and ways of manifestation of violence, aggressiveness, including bullying, by teachers and managers, will contribute to the search for new strategies to reduce and prevent this phenomenon. All educational actors will be aware of the multitude of consequences generated by aggressiveness and violence and will form a positive and active attitude towards this phenomenon.

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