

Bullying Among the 5th Grade Students in Primary School and Preventive Measures

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to study the prevalence phenomenon of bullying among the 5th grade students of primary school, and the use of measures for its prevention.

Research was conducted in two stages. The aim of the first stage was to understand the extent of bullying in these classes, identifying bully students and students, victims of bullying. For data collecting in this phase, were used teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires. The aim of second phase was the application of preventive measures, based on the Olweus program for the prevention of bullying in schools. Implementation of preventive measures was conducted at individual and class level.

The Results of the first phase showed that bullying is widespread among students in these classes. Teachers and students were able to identify bullying students, respectively, students who are potential victims of bullying. The Results of the preventive measures showed teachers and students greater awareness, more frequent reports of bullying cases, activation of considered "neutral" students and the most frequent responses of students who were considered victims of bullying.

Keywords: *Bullying, bullies, student victims of bullying, Olweus program.*

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Introduction

Bullying means when a student (or students) consistently and repeatedly is subjected to negative actions by one or more students who are physically more powerful. These negative actions intend to cause injuries, in physical and psychological aspect¹ too. It can be said that bullying as a problem has co-existed with the school and the students, but the interests and scientific researches on this phenomenon have begun in the 70th by Dan Olweus, to be intensified in the 80's and especially in the 90's, the years when shots and multiple murders would occur through various American schools, but also others that would be caused by students or even persons, who through various stages of their education, have been victims of bullying by their peers, their brothers or sisters, or even the victim of any form of domestic violence.

In one of the first studies carried out on bullying at school, and conducted by a questionnaire in 1980, with 150,000 Scandinavian students, turned out that approximately 15 % of students aged 8-16 are involved in the bullying problem in school.² In another similar study, conducted in 2001 with 5,171 students from 37 schools, carried out by the same author and with the same questionnaire, significant changes were observed. Number of students who had trouble with bullying was increased, and approximately 30 % of students were involved in the problems of bullying, either as bullies or as a victim of bullying or both bully-victim³ roles. The two studies showed that boys are more frequently molesters compared with girls. However, bullying is present within girls, especially in verbal (call names, distribution of rumours, etc.) and social form (exclusion from the group), in contrast to boys who dominate the physical forms of

¹ Dan Olweus, *Bullying at school: What we know, and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993, p 16

² Mona E. Solberg and Dan Olweus. "Prevalence Estimation of School Bullying With the Olweus Bully / Victim Questionnaire". *Aggressive Behavior*. 2003: p. 29

³ Ibid

bullying. A better understanding of this phenomenon by researchers will affect them to develop more programs for prevention and intervention against bullying in schools.

Despite the interest and attention paid to bullying in the world, this cannot be said for Kosovo, where until recent years the phenomenon was almost entirely ignored.

The lack of phenomenon research in Kosovo does not mean that the phenomenon does not appear in our schools. However, there is an opinion that the bullying phenomenon is widespread in our schools and educational institution, too. This comes based on reports that show rising violence in schools.⁴

Based on the fact, the main purpose of the study was to study the phenomenon of the bullying prevalence with the fifth grade students of Primary school (Primary school "Hilmi Rakovica" - Pristina), and intervention through effective strategies for preventing and reducing this phenomenon.

Methodology

The study is based on the use of mixed methodology, qualitative and quantitative. The sample selection for this purpose was made by the target technique, in accordance with the aim of the study. The sample consisted of three 5th grade classes and their teachers, from an elementary 9 - year-school from Prishtina. The environment in which the school was located was a mixed environment with new arrivals from various parts of Kosovo, which was known as a problematic environment, including problems based on violence.⁵

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase purpose was to answer the question of whether bullying is widespread among students in these classes? Then, who were the students who were known for frequent behaviour characteristic for bullying? And who

⁴ UNICEF. *Hulumtim mbi Dhunën ndaj Fëmijëve në Shkollat e Kosovës*. Prishtinë: 2005, p. 45

⁵ Kosovo Police. *Statistical Report, 2012*. Department of analysis and crime. Prishtina, 2012

were those students who were the most frequent victims against whom bullying was posed? Interviews with teachers and student questionnaires were used for collecting data at this stage. This made it possible to compare the data, in connection with prevalence, but also to identify bully students as well as victims of bullying.

For this, teachers were initially interviewed, where through the interviews, basic information was taken about the situation in terms of bullying that exists in these classes, or what they think about bullying, is the bullying present and what is prevalence of it in their classes? Also, it was required for each class to identify three students who these classes think are the most frequent bullies, moreover, to identify the three students in each class who were known as the most frequent victims of bullying. Through the questionnaires specially prepared for this purpose, the information was also collected from the students on what they really think about this phenomenon, about the prevalence of bullying in their classes, and who are three students they identify as the most bullies, and three students who were the most frequent victims of bullying.

Whereas, the second phase was based on the results of the first phase, where, according to results and based on the Olweus program is build an intervention program to prevent and reduce bullying, the purpose of the implementation program of these classes was prevention and reduction of bullying.⁶ The intervention program was modified and adapted by certain measures provided in two levels, class level and at the individual level. Classroom measures level included:

- Establish classroom rules for bullying
- Regular class meetings
- Role plays on bullying topic

Whereas, in the individual measures included

- Individual meetings (conversations) with bully students
- Individual meetings (conversations) with students who are bullying victims.

⁶ Dan Olweus, "Bully/Victim Problems at School: Facts and Effective Intervention". *Reclaiming children and youth*. Spring, 1996, p. 21

After completing the intervention roundtable discussions were conducted with students and teachers, in order to see the results of the intervention and impact that has had on students and teachers.

Results of the first phase - Baseline

Conducted interviews with teachers, noted that there is bullying among students in their classes. Obviously they were able to identify the bully students, identifying each of them three bullies being more active in the phenomenon. Also, each of the teachers identified three students who they think that they are most often victims of bullying and assaults of other students. One important fact that might be seen from interviews with teachers is the fact that they identify as victims of bullying the students who are known as the students who have learning difficulties, then student suffering from any disease, with difficulties in speaking, etc., which is a characteristic for bullying.

Agim is a child who has difficulties in pronunciation of some words. He is frail and does not do well in school. Often he becomes the object of ridicule of other students, especially of a group who behave as they are the most important in the classroom. (Teacher, class V2)

The fact shows that teachers have understood students who can be the victims of bullying among students, or who are at risk of being bullied, but also teachers realised those who bully others. If we look in gender terms, the data collected from teachers indicate that the prevalence is more present in boys than in girls (at least it is more visible).

Approximately the similar information gave us the students through 98 completed questionnaires. The characteristic is that the majority of students (over 80), on the question of whether there is bullying in their class, the answer was yes. Also, students were able to identify students with bullying behavior towards others and the most frequent victims of bullying. In addition, data from the questionnaire evidenced a phenomenon, which often happens that bully students also often can be as a victim of bullying. The group of students was in

the middle of the nomination for bullying behaviours, and bullying victims as well.

However, what was significant, is the fact that the results obtained by students through questionnaires, were harmonized with those obtained from the teachers for both, bullying prevalence and identifying students as a bully and victims of bullying, including their gender.

Phase Two: Intervention

After analysing the results of the first phase and designing the intervention program, the first step of the intervention was to establish classroom rules against bullying. According to the program, the rules have to be created and put together by students, through debates and discussions that will take place in the classroom. This is important because rules created by students will be clearer and in an understandable language for children, in particular, it will make students feel they have made the rules themselves and that they have a responsibility to stick to those. In addition, students should discuss the sanctions that will be used on someone who breaks rules. Sanctions should not affect the dignity of the student or the regular curriculum. It should be more like something that deprives the student of any privilege that he has in the classroom.

Before starting the discussion about rules, students were initially informed about the situation of the prevalence of bullying in their classrooms based on the results of questionnaires and what might be done to improve the situation. This was also a warning and awareness about bullies that bullying will not be tolerated, but also as an encouragement for students who were bullying targets that someone cares about them.

As a starting point for drafting the rules against bullying, three main rules have been taken against bullying from Olweus program⁷

1. Should not bully others

⁷ Dan Olweus, *Bullying at school: What we know, and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993, p. 82

2. *Should help students who are bullied*

3. *Should try to include them in the group, students who are excluded from the group*

Through them it is intended to include both forms of bullying, direct and indirect, like being forms of isolation and exclusion from the group. The drafts of the rules are created through discussions with students, and then from the cluster of rules, are chosen the best rules. The rules were more direct, better in the sense of simplicity and might be easily identified, so students may easier identify each bullying act that goes against the rules. Some of the rules that were created in one of the three classes were:

Should not bully each other;

Should not insult each other;

Should not humiliate each other;

Should not mock each other;

Should not make friend as the toy;

Should not be beaten at school or on the way home;

Need to help students who are bullied;

Every case of violence between students should be reported;

A student who breaks these rules will be punished...

The rules did not differ much from class to class. They were written by students in a large sheet and put in a place visible to all students. The aim was the students have something written at any moment that will remind them to stop acting like that, whenever they are in such a situation.

However, with the creation and deployment of rules does not end the work. They constantly monitored and discussed how the students were obeying them. This was done through regular class meetings and through program implementation. During the discussions, are given proposals for sanctions to those students who have broken the rules, and on the other hand, praise for students who have contributed to the prevention of bullying.

The next step, according to the program was *the role play by students through a skit*. For this measure, teachers together with some students prepared a skit containing a bullying situation in the classroom. And these sketches were played to the scene of the class in

the front the other students. The purpose of these sketches has been to encourage feelings and open discussions of students how they feel in situations like those where students are in the role of bullies, the victim, or even like passive observers of that situation.

After the role play there was a discussion with students about what they have seen. First, from the students who have played sketches requested to show how they felt in their roles and second commenting and discussing with other students, how they would have felt if they had been in such situations of real bullying and what can be done to prevent that situation. This discussion has served to increase students' awareness that violence between them is a bad thing and intolerable.

The individual intervention with students who are identified as violent is concentrated within individual conversations. The purpose of the conversations was to understand the causes which affect their behaviour and also to impact into behaviour changes. Also, such conversations are conducted at the individual level with students who are the victims, respectively, to those who are the target of attacks by other students. The purpose of these meetings was to support and strengthen them in case they encounter bullies, or at least to report cases if they are bullied and attacked by other students.

Role-playing and discussion about it was the end of intervention that was based on the program developed by Olweus. However, compliance monitoring of the rules and discussing about them as well as conversations with students who are identified as users and victims of bullying should be done consistently.

Results of Intervention

When we talk about the intervention results we can also talk about two kinds of results. Talking about the impact of the intervention in reducing the level of bullying among students and how teachers who have been implementing the intervention program have benefited.

If we talk about the intervention results in reducing bullying level among students, we cannot talk in figures, because there has been no direct measurement with any questionnaire or something else.

However, during the discussions and conversations with students and teachers, are extracted some interesting information, showing the impact that intervention has had.

During the discussion done in class, when teachers have established classroom rules, a student (class V1) said:

We have no rules in the classroom. When someone bullies one of our friends, I do not know how to help him.

Whereas, another student (class V3) says:

Well now, let anyone dare to bully Agim, I will immediately inform the teacher and will punish the person who bullies Agim.

Similar discussions, but clearer, which expressing students' willingness to take any action to prevent bullying, are seen especially in the debates after the role-play. So, there was a sketch in one of the classrooms about mediation by a "neutral" student in the bullying situation, a student (class V3) has pointed out as follows:

One day, after we finished school, two friends from our classroom Xeni and Petrit have gotten in Besi's way. One of them had grabbed his bag and the other one had grabbed his hands and didn't let him go. They shouted and swore at Besi, who kept his head down and did not speak at all. I was scared and just passed quickly, running away home not telling anyone about this. If I see them again, I will go back to school and tell the teacher either at once or tomorrow, when I come to school.

Teachers confirmed that reports of bullying cases were increased. Two of the three teachers, think that after intervening positively in class the situation has changed, whereas one of the teachers is more sceptical. She sees the situation improved more in terms of awareness, but not in reducing the bullying and she is based on the fact that students now report cases more often than before. This is proven by two other teachers, but the fact they link with greater awareness of students about bullying and awareness of respecting the rules in the classroom. According to them, students now speak more openly about such problems, being able to know who is breaking the rules and when they are broken. Furthermore, they speak about situations when "neutral" students protect students who are physically weaker, and

who are attacked by other students. As regards this, one of the teachers says:

Two students from my class one day have grabbed the pen of another student and didn't let him complete the tasks that he hadn't finished yet. Seeing this situation another student together with his mate, gave the student his pencil. Then one of them sits on the bank with bully victim and another goes to the table, not letting them to clear the table.

Besides the impact that intervention has had to the students, it has also contributed to the teachers as well. In connection with this, three teachers accepted, they have benefited new knowledge regarding the phenomenon of bullying, moreover, they neither heard about the phenomenon before, nor have been trained for it.

In the beginning, when we started to talk about bullying, I had no idea about bullying term, but from discussions here and especially from searching in internet I realized what we have to do, and the consequences it has for the students. I often recall such situations when I was a student, but also situations when my students behave in that way (Teacher of class V1).

Also, teachers emphasized they are now equipped with the skills and tools for the future to deal with bullying. They further point out that this was a new and very good experience for them that will help a lot in their work in the future.

When the students have complained that another student is bullying them, or similar things what I've done reprimands the student on the spot, but nothing more. Now I understand that the problem is very deep and for this matter more should be done every day. I think that I will proceed further with such an intervention (teacher, class V3).

Discussion with conclusions

The results of this study show the phenomenon of bullying is present among the students of three classes of fifth grade. Teachers and students have proven this. In addition, they are also able to identify

students who are characterized with bullying behaviour toward other students, as well as students who were the most frequent target of attacks by other students called the victims of bullying. The significant fact is that teachers and students had identified almost the same students who behave as a bully were also bullied victims, who shows that both sides were aware about the phenomenon present among them, but till then nobody cared about it.

Another conclusion that came out of this study was the impact that intervention program had on both sides. The first noticeable impact might be seen on the awareness of both sides, on the consequences and the need to prevent such phenomenon. There were more frequent reporting cases by students, activation of neutral students in such situations, either through reporting or through direct responses, and teachers' consistency to deal with the phenomenon.

Besides positive results, as any other study, the study had its limitations. The first limitation is the scope of the study in only three classes. So, the results are not representative and have lack of comparison with an inclusive school program, in which will be engaged everyone.

Another limitation was the short intervention period. The intervening period of study lasted 3 months and somehow has limited result of the intervention. The results would be much more reliable and more valid when the intervention would last at least one school year and will include the whole school. However, the study and its results can serve as awareness for teachers and other professionals in the field, there is an immediate need to begin to think and deal with a phenomenon such as bullying, because failure to address it, would have a lot of consequences, not only for students but also for the whole society.

Recommendations

When we are talking about bullying, much more can be done with relatively simple tools, just a greater commitment is needed.⁸ The problem exists and preventive measures must be taken. According to this, is recommended;

- Teachers and stakeholders training for the purpose of awareness of bullying, its consequences and implementation of preventive measures in order to reduce bullying in schools;

- Provide funds and investing in various interventions' program, which should be adapted to our culture, life conditions and circumstances, in order to prevent bullying in schools. These programs should have whole school approaches;

- Creating a multi-professional teams in schools, including psychologists, social workers, teachers and other professionals. These teams would help all stakeholders in schools, including students, teachers, parents and others.

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⁸ Dan Olweus, *Bullying at school: What we know, and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993, p. 86

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