Family Risk Factors for Bullying in the School Environment

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Abstract

The article gives a small overview that bullying is today a very serious problem faced by teenagers in school. This problem lies not only in the relationship of children with each other, but also originates from family relationships.

Keywords: *Bullying; Family; Victimization; Siblings*

In recent years, the problem of bullying in the educational environment (school bullying) is increasingly worrying not only the administration of educational organizations, but also parents, teachers, politicians, and members of the public. Despite the fact that all over the world there are more and more studies and publications that consider the phenomenon of school bullying and the subsequent victimization of a child after bullying, the problem still remains completely unsolved.

It is proved that one of the main reasons why some schoolchildren are bullied is the presence of some "perceived differences" related to their gender, race, family origin, appearance, material wealth, and many others [1,2,8].

Recent studies have tried to systematize and present the entire set of distinctive characteristics of a child that determine the risks of victimization in a bullying situation, including: behavioral characteristics; unformed social competence; inadequate self-esteem; low level of social intelligence, etc. [2,5].

Bullying is not only a behavioral act, it is a complex form of relationship in which various forms of experiences and behaviors are expressed and manifested. Bullying has a structure that is characteristic of conflict, but this structure has characteristic features: long-term repetitive nature; fixed types of participants (victim defender, victim, witness, abuser, buller's assistant). It is noteworthy that in contrast to the conflict, in bullying, there is a strong imbalance in the distribution of forces between the victim and the aggressor.

The psychological consequences of bullying are very serious and sometimes have a tragic outcome. It was revealed that bullying victims stop going to school, hate lessons and their classmates, start learning worse, etc. Also, victimization after bullying can be associated with severe emotional experiences, suffering, depression, anxiety and even with the appearance of suicidal thoughts and intentions in children who are victims of bullying [5].

At the same time, the socio-psychological factors that determine the risks of "choosing the role" of buller or victim in the situation of school interaction have not yet been fully investigated in science. Among the totality of psychological and socio-environmental factors of victimization of children and adolescents in the situation of bullying, we would like to highlight the factors of the family, namely the presence of aggressive manifestations and violence in its system.

Children are subject to varying degrees of violence within their own family. According to 2015 statistics, in the United States, 17% of children are subjected to serious forms of physical violence, 62% to corporal punishment, and more than 75% of children are subject to psychological violence [4]. In Russia, there is a similar picture, although there are no exact statistics, as it is very difficult to investigate and clearly determine. In addition to the fact that children are often subjected to abuse in the family by their parents, they can also witness violence between parents, participants in conflicts between parents and siblings, and witnesses of violence between siblings.

It has been proven that children who experience domestic violence or witness domestic violence have serious difficulties in building interpersonal relationships. Adolescents who were victims of physical domestic violence are more prone to aggressive behavior during the game, often assessed as "aggressive", "conflict", "mean" peers, more likely to have disciplinary action in school and different forms of behavior disorders. Recent studies have also shown that children with experiences of domestic violence have a low level of social sensitivity, have a low level of social intelligence, are poorly able to distinguish between other people's emotions, are not always able to understand complex social roles, and are less capable of empathy [3].

Moreover, it is increasingly discussed in the scientific literature that the parenting style also affects the role that a child chooses in the bullying process. M. M. Kravtsova identifies family factors that contribute to the manifestation of violence in children, among which the author highlights:

1. Single-parent families;

2. Families in which the mother has a negative attitude to life;

3. Powerful and authoritarian families;

4. Families that are characterized by conflict family relations;

5. Families with a genetic predisposition to violence [1].

Some foreign studies show that children who are subjected to authoritarian parenting styles, inadequately harsh and inconsistent punishment, are more likely to attack their peers. Bullers are more likely to experience humiliating, dismissive, and hostile parenting and discipline practices during their adulthood. Conversely, children who perceive their parents as authoritative, especially those who support their independence and autonomy, are less likely to participate in bullying in school [6].

Adolescents who report that they "bully" and bully their peers are more likely to have insecure relationships with their parents, characterized by inconsistent parental attention to the needs of children, alienation and even rejection, emotional insensitivity to the problems of the child, and have less affectionate and supportive fathers [7].

Since the time of A. Bandura's work, it is well known that children form behavioral patterns through observation and subsequent modeling of behavior. It is well known that both parental divorce, parental stress, and child abuse are associated with aggression in children. Children who live in an aggressive family environment are at greater risk for violent, aggressive behavior outside the home. Children who bully and attack others at school often have parents who teach them to be violent and unapologetic in a situation of resentment. Our research has revealed that children who become bullers are much more likely than others to perceive their family as less cohesive, preoccupied with each other's problems and needs. The style of family education also has an impact on how the child reacts in a situation of aggravation of relations with peers.

Conclusion

In our opinion, a furthermore informed understanding of the psychological mechanisms of adolescents' propensity to victimization, including those related to family factors of their victimization, will contribute to solving the problem of preventing and correcting personal (school) maladaptation of students.

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Volume 11 Issue 10 October 2022