

Chapter 2

Types and Consequences of Youth Violence

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The term “youth violence” includes physical assault and weapons possession on one end of the spectrum and pushing, taunting, and socially isolating classmates on the other. Although school shootings have shaken America during recent years, violent acts such as those in which students seek to randomly harm others are actually extremely rare. When students take weapons to school, it is more likely to be related to a desire to retaliate against another student, to show off, or to seek a way of protecting themselves. It is not school violence but rather the nonlethal physical fights, the classroom misconduct, and the psychologically damaging verbal and relational aggression that teachers and administrators must face daily that impedes teaching.

Violence continues to be the second leading cause of death for youths, and bullying and other forms of aggression are both serious and prevalent; therefore, research on how to prevent the problem has intensified during the past decade. A basic approach to prevention of violence uses the public health model, which comprises four stages: definition of the problem, definition of risk factors, development and evaluation of interventions, and implementation of successful interventions on a large scale.

This chapter addresses the first two stages of this prevention model. Key research studies have been selected from the wide spectrum of the literature regarding the problem of bullying, aggression, and violence in schools. These studies are summarized and critiqued by the four researchers, who also comment on the action steps that are implied by the research.

The first section is an essay, “Bullying and Other Forms of Aggression,” that reviews several research studies to discuss the differences between bullying, aggression, and violence as well as the definition of bullying. It also provides examples of the magnitude of bullying on school campuses and indicates the emotional and physical consequences of bullying. Next is a research summary that discusses one instrument for determining the prevalence of bullying. Developed by Dan Olweus, a pioneer researcher in the area of school bullying, the Bully/Victim Questionnaire measures bullying and victimization in terms of frequency and duration. The article points out that the way bullying is defined and identified is important in selecting appropriate interventions.

Following this is a review of a book chapter that also discusses definitions of bullying and some science-based school bullying prevention programs. Together these summaries introduce educators to the topic of aggression and bullying.

The fourth article is a research summary that focuses on a more subtle type of aggression, called relational aggression. It emphasizes how important it is that teachers prevent and stop not only overt aggression (e.g., hitting, pushing, teasing) but also relational aggression (e.g., passing rumors, isolating someone). The research evaluates the association between children’s social adjustment to the class and three variables: overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior.

Finally, another type of aggression — sexual harassment — is defined and differentiated from the larger topic of sexual violence. Girls and women are

usually the victims, although some boys are also victimized, most frequently by other boys and men. The summary also discusses the high prevalence of this problem, the consequences to the victims, and what school administrators and teachers should do to prevent it and address students' complaints when it does happen.

What this chapter underscores is that all forms of aggression produce harm to the victim and may have significant short- and long-term negative effects. All aggression should be taken seriously and efforts to reduce its occurrence implemented.

Bullying and Other Forms of Aggression: Essay

Michael J. Furlong, Ph.D., Pamela Orpinas, Ph.D., Jennifer Greif, and Angela Whipple

Extreme forms of youth violence have been a serious concern for decades, while less attention has been devoted to lesser forms of violence, such as bullying. In the United States, only during the past decade have aggression and bullying in schools moved from being considered a normal part of growing up to a public health problem that must be addressed and solved. (School bullying has been the topic of research in Europe, Australia, and other countries for much longer.) This change in perspective has been fostered by research showing the high prevalence of physical, verbal, and relational aggression in schools and the

emotional and physical damage caused by all forms of aggression at school.

The distinction between bullying, aggression, and violence among youths is not always clear, and educators, researchers, and politicians may define these behaviors in different ways. Schools must correctly label a behavior before they can address its prevention and correction. Aggressive behaviors are considered less extreme than violent behaviors (e.g., homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and include physical, verbal, relational, and sexual aggression. Table 2 provides definitions and examples of these types of aggression.

Table 2
Types of Aggression

Physical aggression: The intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm.

- Biting
- Burning
- Choking
- Damaging property
- Forcing someone’s head into the water or mud
- Hitting, punching, or slapping with hand or fist
- Hitting with an object
- Kicking
- Poking with hands or objects
- Pulling hair
- Pushing or shoving
- Throwing objects with the intent to hurt
- Forcing someone to do any of the above

Verbal aggression: The intentional use of words with the potential for causing psychological or emotional harm.

- Blackmailing
- Coercing
- Encouraging others to fight
- Hassling
- Putting down, insulting, or name calling
- Making racist and sexist taunts
- Teasing, ridiculing, taunting, or provoking
- Threatening to physically harm
- Threatening to use a weapon
- Yelling or shouting angrily

Relational aggression: Behaviors that harm others through peer relationships.

- Disclosing personal information inappropriately
- Excluding someone from a group
- Gossiping
- Isolating during lunch or sports
- Keeping others from liking a student
- Leaving a student out of an activity
- Sending negative notes about someone
- Spreading rumors
- Withdrawing friendship

Sexual harassment: Any unwelcome and unsolicited words or conduct of a sexual nature.

- Being forced to do something sexual
- Engaging in indecent exposure
- Staring at body parts
- Peeping into dressing areas
- Making unwanted or unsolicited sexual comments or jokes, sexual propositions, suggestive gestures, suggestive facial expressions
- Touching, pinching, grabbing, or fondling; pulling on someone’s clothes

Bullying

Educators continue to recognize that bullying is a prevailing problem that adversely affects the long-term development of children. Successfully preventing and intervening in bullying involves an accurate definition of this behavior, a determination of the functions that bullying serves, and uses of that information to select and implement empirically validated targeted interventions. Rather than indiscriminately conducting violence-prevention programs, school personnel are encouraged to develop an operational definition of bullying that distinguishes it from other forms of peer aggression.

For many European and American researchers, bullying is considered a subset of aggression (Smith et al. 2002; Horne & Orpinas 2002). Bullying is a type of aggression in which the bully (the aggressor) is stronger or more powerful than the victim, and the aggressive behaviors are committed repeatedly and over time. Thus, a working definition of bullying is *repeated acts of aggression, intentionally designed to harm a person who is weaker than the bully* (Olweus 2001). Viewed in this manner, bullying may be viewed as an exploitive *relationship* between students rather than as a single event. Hawker and Boulton (2000) describe bullying as including physical, verbal, indirect, and relational aggression.

Extending this work, Newman, Horne, and Bartolomucci (2000) define bullying as meeting the “double I/R” criteria, meaning that the behavior is intentional, imbalanced, and repeated. Distinct from other forms of peer aggression, only aggression that

meets these three criteria should be called “bullying.”

In addition, Horne and Orpinas (2003) describe two types of bullies: aggressive and passive. Aggressive bullies, the most common type, initiate aggression through physical and verbal attacks. They like to dominate others and will show little empathy for their victims. They tend to believe that they are being attacked in situations where there was no intention to hurt. Teachers are more likely to be aware of this type of behavior, but bullies attempt to keep it hidden from adult supervision. In contrast, passive bullies are described as students who follow along or encourage bullying, but they do not initiate aggression. They are more likely to use relational aggression or to join in when a fight has already started.

Current research shows that students tend to dislike students who are victims of bullying. Effective prevention programs should work toward developing social norms that prohibit bullying and encourage supportive behaviors by students. This approach includes addressing all students involved in the various roles portrayed in Olweus’ (2001) “Bullying Circle” (see Figure 1).

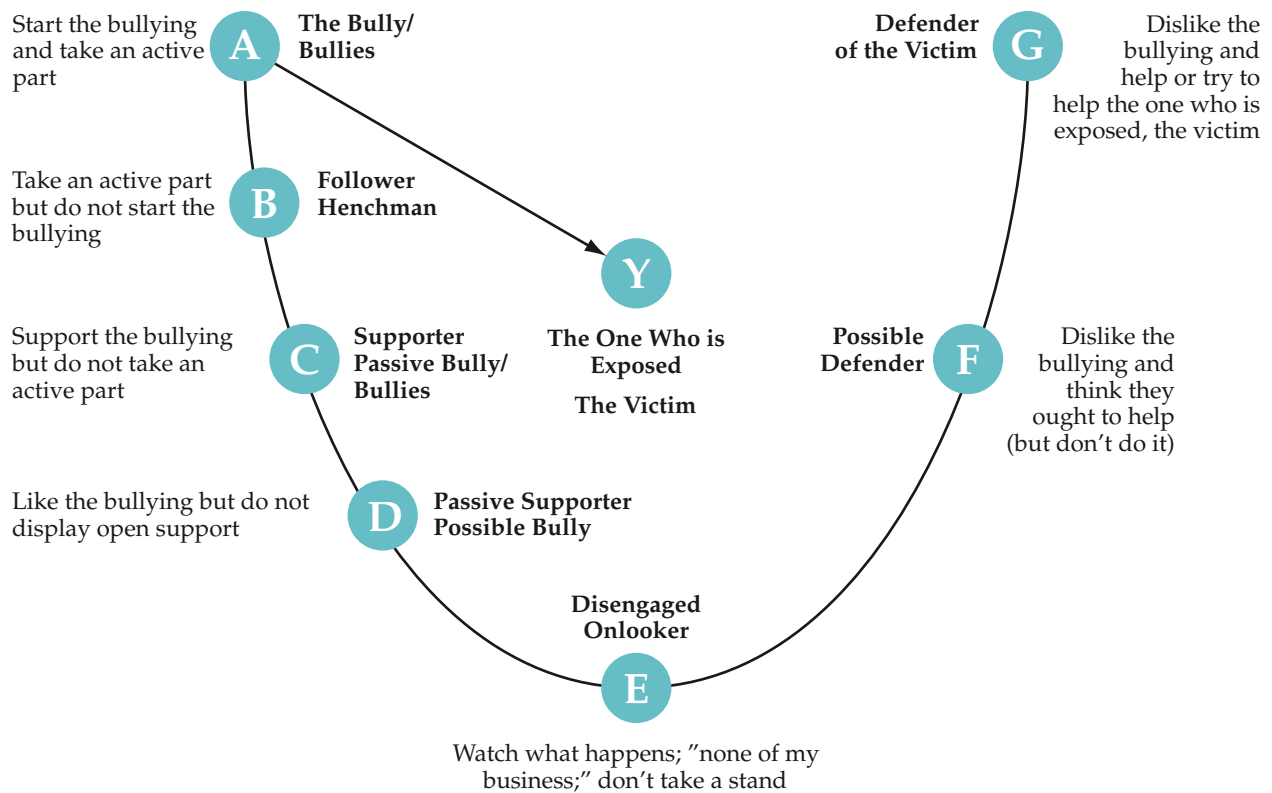
Approaching these behaviors as a series of interactions has implications for planning interventions that will be the most effective. In particular, schools are encouraged to implement programs that guide and educate (rather than punish) bullies on appropriate social interactions. Overall, programs need to address a primary function of bullying, which is the use of

power over other students to meet a need for control of others.

In addition, it is important that schools do not underestimate the impact that chronic victimization has on children who are

bullied. These students are at an increased risk of poor developmental outcomes. Although in extreme cases victims of bullying may commit homicide or suicide, the vast majority of children who are bullied suffer in silence.

Figure 1
The Bullying Circle: Students' Modes of Reaction/Roles in an Acute Bullying Situation



Source: Reprinted with permission (Olweus 2001b)

Prevalence and Consequences of Bullying

There is still limited evidence on the prevalence of bullying in schools, but the existing findings suggest that bullying is a common occurrence in American schools. Consequences of being the victim or the target of aggression can range from

minor emotional or behavioral problems to major forms of violence, depending on the frequency and intensity of the bullying as well as the personal and social characteristics of the victim. The most tragic consequences are homicide and

suicide. In a study conducted by the FBI, it was found that over two-thirds of the incidents of school shootings by students against fellow students had in common the acting out of anger or revenge for having been victimized by other students in the school. Commonly, the victim of bullying is likely to suffer from depression, somatic complaints, low self-esteem, and feelings of loneliness. In addition, both victims and bullies are likely to miss class because of feeling unsafe at school.

One study of the prevalence of bullying in American schools (Kaufman et al. 2000) found 10 percent of 6th and 7th graders reported being bullied, but higher prevalence rates were reported when students were asked about specific behaviors that are related to bullying.

Nansel et al. (2001) utilized a national sample of U.S. students in grades 6 to 10 and examined their bullying experiences

at school. They found that about three out of ten reported moderate to frequent involvement as a victim (10.3 percent), perpetrator (13.0 percent), or both (6.3 percent). *Both bullying and victimization were higher among boys than girls and were highest in 6th grade and declined as students got older.*

A recent study collected peer reports of those who bully and those who are victims of bullying among low-income urban 6th grade students (Juvonen, Graham & Schuster 2003). The researchers found that 22 percent of their sample was involved in bullying as perpetrators (7 percent), victims (9 percent), or both (6 percent). Bullies were psychologically the strongest and enjoyed high social standing among their classmates, while victims were emotionally distressed and socially marginalized. Bully-victims were the most troubled group and had the highest level of conduct, school, and peer relationship problems.

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Prevalence Estimation of School Bullying with the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire: Research Summary

Summary by Michael J. Furlong, Ph.D., and Jennifer Greif

This study is designed to examine how the measurement of school bullying impacts its prevalence of perpetration and victimization. Using a sample of Norwegian students, the authors explore cut points in determining the relationship between

frequency of bullying and outcomes for bullies and victims. In addition, this article provides information that speaks to prevalence rates of bullying for children across age and gender.

Importance of the Study

Prevalence estimates produced by researchers have an impact on the assessment and prevention of bullying and related policy. The extent to which prevalence rates in bullying studies have varied in the past poses a problem for researchers and practitioners because the variation influences perceptions about the severity of this problem and what

should be done to prevent it. Without appropriate estimations of rates of student bullying and victimization, the specific impact of bullying will be difficult to determine, and an incorrect estimation of bullying or victimization may lead to misunderstanding and misallocation of resources.

Sample and Methods

Study participants were 5,171 students in Norway, ranging in age from 11 to 15. In a two-hour time period, the students were asked to complete questionnaires measuring bullying, internalizing problems (social disintegration, global negative self-

evaluations, and depressive tendencies), and externalizing problems (general aggression and antisocial behavior). The measures of bullying included a description of bullying designed to capture its characteristic elements: intentionality,

repetition, and a power imbalance. Seven items asked about specific types of bullying and victimization. For each type, students were asked to indicate the frequency of behavior by using the following scale: “not been bullied” (or “not bullying other students”), “only once or twice,” “2 or

3 times a month,” “about once a week” (or more often). In addition, students were asked to specify the duration of the victimization, ranging from “I haven’t been bullied at school this term” to “it has gone on for several years.”

Findings

Solberg and Olweus (2003) found that students who reported that they had been bullied more frequently also reported higher scores on measures of internalizing emotional problems. Students who reported that they bullied others more frequently reported higher scores on measures of externalizing behavior problems. The frequency with which students had been bullied was significantly related to the duration of bullying. Students who were bullied more frequently had been bullied for a longer period of time.

Using several statistical analyses, the authors determined that the frequency of bullying “2 or 3 times a month” was a reasonable cutoff point for classifying students as “involved” or “noninvolved” as bullies and victims. When students were divided at this cutoff point, there were the

largest differences between “victims” and “nonvictims” and between “bullies” and “nonbullies” on the outcome variables.

Using this criterion, Solberg and Olweus examined the prevalence of bullies and victims in their sample. Overall, 10.1 percent of all students were classified as victims of bullying (11.1 percent of boys and 9.1 percent of girls), 6.5 percent of students indicated that they bullied other students (9.7 percent of boys and 3.0 percent of girls), and 1.6 percent met the criteria for being both bullies and victims of bullying (2.3 percent of boys and 0.9 percent of girls). In general, students at younger ages reported being bullied more often than did older students. Boys, in particular, reported increases in bullying others at older ages.

Strengths and Limitations

This study addresses important questions about prevalence estimates and the idea that the cutoff for determining which students are being bullied or are victims should not be arbitrary. The data highlight the importance of recognizing the impact that the repetitious nature of bullying has on bullies and victims. The negative outcomes associated with being a bully or a victim increase substantially as the frequency and duration of bullying increase. In addition, by using a large sample of students, Solberg and Olweus were able to draw reliable conclusions about prevalence rates across gender and age.

Although Solberg and Olweus describe the utility of obtaining self-reported data from students, little is known about the possible problem of students overreporting or underreporting their experiences as bullies and victims. Cornell and Brockenbrough (2004) describe the discordance between student self-reports of bullying and victimization and reports by their peers and teachers. They argue that obtaining information from multiple informants is important in determining each student's bully and victim status.

Meaning for Practitioners

1. Solberg and Olweus found that the frequency and duration of bullying has a significant impact on the experiences of bullies and victims. As practitioners work with students, it will be helpful to recognize whether the behaviors that they are engaging in or experiencing are part of a pattern. Realizing the potential differences between students who experience one-time events and those for whom bullying is a regular occurrence will aid practitioners in developing appropriate support and interventions for students.
2. When hearing prevalence rates of bullying, practitioners should be aware that the percentage of students designated as bullies and victims will depend on the ways in which this status is determined. For example, if studies simply ask about the experience of teasing or negative behaviors, then the outcomes reported may not be related to internalizing problems in the same way that Solberg and Olweus suggest.
3. This study suggests that the experiences of bullying and being bullied vary in relation to age and gender. Understanding these differential patterns of behavior can assist practitioners in implementing programs that are geared toward supporting victims (particularly for younger students) and guiding bullies to change (particularly for older students).

4. Differences in bullying and victimization patterns across gender suggests that bullying may serve different developmental functions for boys

and girls. Interventions that fail to acknowledge different gender patterns across different ages are less likely to be successful.

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Preventing Bullying and Victimization of Children and Adolescents: Review

Summary by Michael J. Furlong, Ph.D., and Jennifer Greif

Experiences of peer aggression can undermine one's sense of safety at school and compromise the healthy development of students. This chapter (Horne & Orpinas 2003) provides an overview of bullying, a specific form of aggression experienced by children and adolescents. Bullying is defined within an

ecological model (examining bullying in the context of variables, including child, family, school, community, culture, and their interactions). Empirical evidence for bullying interventions is discussed with a description of the role of the school and school personnel in halting aggression.

Importance of the Study

Accurately defining bullying is essential to the development of targeted intervention programs. Understanding that bullying is a specific form of peer aggression that is characterized by repetition and a power imbalance is an important piece of defining bullying as an aggressive form of an ongoing social relationship rather than as a singular event. This process-oriented view of bullying has implications for the types of interventions used and the school's philosophy in program implementation. The repeated aggression by one student against another, more vulnerable, student is the key element in the harm that occurs to both bullies and victims. Bullies learn the powerful impact that repeated

aggression can have on a weaker party and come to see this form of coercion as an effective social tool. Victims experience chronic aggression and intimidation, which increases their sense of vulnerability and often leads to the development of emotional and psychological problems.

Several interventions have been developed that target school-based bullying. It is important that school personnel are familiar with empirical evidence in order to select an intervention for their school that has the "best fit" with their school ecology. This chapter discusses evidence for different programs and suggests strategies, derived from recent empirical studies, for preventing aggression in school.

Sample and Method

Horne and Orpinas use recent literature from the fields of education, psychology,

and medicine to craft a review and discussion of issues related to bullying.

Findings

Through reviewing the related literature, Horne and Orpinas address some of the principal issues underlying bullying and bullying interventions. The following is a summary of their findings and the literature that they included for consideration.

Theories. The authors highlight an ecological model as a framework for evaluating the phenomenon of bullying. This model is described as concentric circles representing multiple levels of risk factors and interventions that can influence students facing aggression: individual level (cognitive and physical characteristics), family level, school level, community and peer group level, and the larger culture. Educators should be aware that the origins of bullying are often complex, and therefore strategies to reduce its incidence require flexibility to accommodate possible intervention resources. When developing programs to reduce bullying, school personnel should consider each of these areas and their interactions.

Research. Several bullying intervention programs have been examined by empirical studies. However, of those studies, only a few have demonstrated that they are effective by strict evidence-based standards. The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has identified ten programs that meet high scientific standards for program

effectiveness. Many of these programs have been designed to affect school violence or aggression rather than intervene in specific bullying situations. Programs that are briefly reviewed in Horne and Orpinas include the *Norwegian Campaign Against Bullying*, *Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways*, *Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum*, *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program*, and *BullyBusters*.

Strategies That Work. Horne and Orpinas also identified effective strategies for reducing and preventing violence. These include:

- Support from school administration and teachers
- Heightened awareness of the problem
- Development of a code of conduct that clarifies expectations
- Training of teachers and staff to handle behavioral and classroom management problems (one program that does this is BullyBusters)
- Skills training for students

Ignoring the problem or offering short-term or one-time solutions to bullying is generally not effective. It is most helpful when educators acknowledge that bullying occurs on their school campus and become

aware of its warning signs and impacts on the bully, the victim, and bystanders.

In addition, a particularly noteworthy study by Turpeau (1998) found that group counseling that included only bullies did

not effect schoolwide change in reducing bullying behaviors, primarily because it ended up providing a support group for bullies and reinforced their aggressive behavior.

Strengths and Limitations

This chapter draws on many current sources to summarize the research on bullying and aggression. This is an important topic to address in schools, as research increasingly indicates that there is a high prevalence of this kind of victimization in the United States. Research reviewed in this chapter provides practical guidance to educators working to prevent and reduce bullying.

However, due to restricted space, the discussion in this chapter is somewhat limited, particularly regarding empirically supported interventions that specifically address bullying. Given that the authors' introduction highlights defining bullying

as a specific form of aggression, this approach would be useful in the research and intervention sections of the chapter as well. Similarly, the importance of accurately assessing bullying behaviors and determining what types of bullying exist in a particular school is not emphasized.

A strength of this chapter is that the programs described by Horne and Orpinas have targeted bullying in children of varying ages, ethnic backgrounds, and from diverse locations. However, the chapter does not include a discussion of the impact of these variables (age, gender, ethnicity, race, urban/rural location, etc.) on the selection of appropriate programs.

Meaning for Practitioners

Accurately defining and identifying bullying as a distinct form of aggression is important for schools in forming interventions to address bullying. Instead of asking if bullying is occurring, educators should assume that bullying is occurring in all schools. The type and frequency of bullying that occurs should be identified. The following conclusions that are applicable to practitioners can be drawn from Horne and Orpinas' chapter and more

generally from the existing literature on bullying:

1. Educators should continue to be aware of current research on the prevalence and impact of bullying.
2. Determining the type of bullying exhibited and the function(s) that bullying serves can guide schools toward specific and targeted interventions.

3. School interventions that are inclusive of, and supported by administrators, teachers, and students are more likely to be effective in reducing bullying behaviors.
4. Schools will be best served when there are multiple options for interventions from which personnel can select the optimal alternative for a particular bullying situation.
5. Experiences of bullying and the efficacy of intervention programs will vary as a result of individual and culture variables that affect students and the school community.
6. Because research shows that students tend to dislike students who are victims of bullying, effective prevention programs should work toward developing social norms that prohibit bullying and encourage supportive behaviors by students.
7. Bullying is the abuse of power by one student over a weaker peer, which is the most negative type of aggression for youths to learn. There is the potential for these behaviors to lead to lifelong involvement in abuse or power-seeking relationships.

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The Role of Overt Aggression, Relational Aggression, and Prosocial Behavior in the Prediction of Children's Future Social Adjustment: Research Summary

Summary by Albert D. Farrell, Ph.D.

Previous studies have shown that boys and girls tend to exhibit different forms of aggressive behavior. In contrast to boys, who tend to display overt forms of aggression that produce physical harm or physical threats (e.g., hitting, pushing), girls are more likely to use relational forms of aggression that harm others by damaging

peer relations (e.g., excluding someone from group activities, spreading rumors or gossip). This longitudinal study examined the extent to which overt and relational aggression and prosocial behaviors, such as being helpful to peers, were related to future social adjustment in a classroom setting over the course of a school year.

Importance of the Study

This article broadens the study of aggression to include less obvious forms that may be particularly salient to girls. The study demonstrates the negative

consequences of relational aggression and its impact on social adjustment in classroom settings. The study also highlights the importance of prosocial behavior in social adjustment.

Sample and Methods

A sample of 245 children in the 3rd through 6th grade in two elementary schools were assessed on measures of aggression, prosocial behavior, and social adjustment at the beginning of the school year, one month later, and at the end of the school year. Measures were based on peer nominations

and ratings by teachers. Ratings of overt and relational aggression and prosocial behavior at the beginning of the school year were used to predict subsequent changes in social adjustment during the school year. Separate analyses were conducted for girls and boys.

Findings

Teacher and peer ratings of overt and relational aggression at the start of the school year predicted children's social adjustment at the end of the school year. Boys who engaged in high rates of overt and relational aggression based on teacher and peer ratings at the start of the school year were likely to be rejected by their peers at the end of the school year. Girls with high rates of overt and relational aggression based on peer ratings were more likely to have poor social adjustment (i.e., higher levels of peer rejection and lower levels of acceptance) at the end of the school year. Teacher ratings revealed a similar pattern for girls' overt aggression but not for relational aggression.

Prosocial behavior at the start of the school year was also an important predictor of social adjustment at the end of the school year. Boys and girls who displayed high levels of prosocial behavior at the beginning of the school year, such as helping their peers, were more likely to be accepted at the end of the school year than those displaying low levels. This finding was true regardless of their level of aggressive behavior. In other words, even aggressive students were more likely to be accepted if they engaged in high rates of prosocial behavior.

Separate analyses examined the extent to which aggression and prosocial behavior at the start of the school year could predict changes in social adjustment during the school year. This approach made it possible to determine the extent to which the relation between behavior at the start of the school year and social adjustment

at the end of the school year represented a continuation of a pattern already evident at the start of the school year (e.g., that children perceived as aggressive at the start of the school year are less accepted, and that remains true at the end of the school year) or whether behavior at the start of the school year was related to changes in social adjustment (e.g., children perceived as aggressive at the start of the school year become increasingly more rejected at the end of the school year).

For boys, neither peer nor teacher ratings of overt or relational aggression predicted changes in social adjustment. Boys with high levels of aggression were more likely to have poor social adjustment at the start of the school year, and those with low levels of aggression were more likely to have good social adjustment; this difference was not any more pronounced at the end of the school year. In contrast, peer ratings of boys' prosocial behavior at the start of the school year were associated with decreases in peer rejection at the end of the school year. Boys with high levels of prosocial behavior at the beginning of the school year were more likely to show improvements in their social adjustment at the end of the school year compared with those with low levels of prosocial behavior.

For girls, both overt and relational aggression were associated with future changes in social adjustment. High levels of overt aggression were associated with decreases in peer acceptance for both teacher and peer ratings. High levels of relational aggression were related to decreases in peer acceptance for peer

ratings and to increases in peer rejection for teacher ratings. Prosocial behavior again emerged as an important predictor of social adjustment. Girls engaging in high rates of prosocial behavior at the beginning of

the school year showed improvements in their social adjustment during the school year (i.e., increased peer acceptance and decreased peer rejection) even if they displayed aggressive behaviors.

Strengths and Limitations

The use of a longitudinal design and collection of data from both peers and teachers were significant strengths of this study. This design made it possible to examine changes during the school year. Because the study was conducted at schools

in a medium-sized Midwestern town, it is not clear how well the results would apply to other more diverse samples of students. The extent to which these findings with elementary school students would generalize to adolescents is also unclear.

Meaning for Practitioners

1. The focus of most prevention efforts has been on more apparent, overt forms of aggressive behavior. This study demonstrates the importance of considering more subtle forms of aggression, such as relational aggression. Such forms of aggression have a significant impact on children's adjustment, particularly for girls, and should be considered by developers of prevention programs.
2. This study also highlights the unique role of prosocial behavior in predicting social adjustment. Findings of the relationship between prosocial behavior and changes

in social adjustment suggest that getting children to increase their use of prosocial behaviors can lead to increases in their acceptance by peers. This is true even among those children whose aggressive behaviors have caused problems with their social adjustment. These findings underscore the need for prevention efforts that attempt to promote prosocial behavior and not just decrease negative behaviors, such as aggression.

3. Schools should also be mindful that all schools have some popular students who engage in aggressive behaviors.

Reference

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Classrooms and Courtrooms: Facing Sexual Harassment in K–12 Schools: Research Summary

Summary by Paul M. Kingery, Ph.D., M.P.H.

In this review article Nan Stein (1999) covers a wide range of topics important to those who are working to prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools. She reviews the magnitude and dimensions of the problems in terms of levels, types, and outcomes; discusses legal issues and their practical implications; considers risk and protective factors that are important intervention points; and examines programs designed to address

the problems. The climate of a school may be the most important risk factor, determining which behaviors are tolerated, what remedies are available to victims, and the level of respect required between individuals. Early intervention is needed for behaviors seen in elementary grades. She provides useful commentary, drawing the pieces together and filling in the gaps in research where possible.

Importance of the Study

Although sexual harassment and sexual violence have often been examined among adults, particularly in workplace and domestic settings, they have been little studied among youths in schools. Legal pressures on schools to protect children from these problems have increased as a direct result of a recent Supreme Court decision and by other pressures

for progress in this area. The push for improvements in prevention in the absence of solid reviews of the science and practice in this area leaves a great void that Stein fills from available evidence. Readers gain an understanding of the types of problems that predominate, the conditions under which they flourish, and the programs and strategies that are important for prevention.

Sample and Methods

The first step in a new field of study should always be to review what can be gleaned from multiple existing databases, from the literature, and from the professional wisdom of colleagues studying the problem. Stein's review paper achieves this by presenting information from the National Adolescent Student Health Survey, the National Crime and Victimization

Survey — School Crime Supplement, a Louis Harris study of randomly sampled U.S. students in grades 8–11 (“Hostile Hallways”), several state-level surveys of self-reporting students, and a number of other sources. She further gleans qualitative findings from several different studies to present a fuller picture.

Findings

Stein finds the problem of sexual harassment and sexual violence in school to be larger than was anticipated, to be little addressed through effective prevention techniques, and to take on dimensions that were entirely unexpected.

Harassment and violence. Differentiating carefully between the linked problems of sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, Stein draws from court distinctions that have practical significance in schools. Harassment is unwelcome and unwanted behavior of a sexual nature, whether in the form of overt behavior or a hostile environment, that interferes with the right to receive an equal educational opportunity. In practice, a threshold is set by the courts for remedies to sexually harassing behavior that is explicitly sexual, unambiguous, repeated, and of a serious nature.

Sexual violence may be clouded in definition, but Stein brings greater clarity here. The damage may be physical, emotional, psychological, and/or material,

of the mind, body, or trust, whether through action or word: “Within the range of behaviors that are considered to be sexual harassment fall some that are sexually violent. The distinguishing feature is one of liability: sexual harassment places liability on the school while liability for sexually violent behavior falls initially on the individual through criminal prosecution, though civil actions may also be pursued.” Most acts are perpetrated by men and boys against girls, although boys also become victims, most often by other boys and men. An element of purported “self-defense” enters into the rationale for a significant portion of sexual violence.

Prevalence. Girls most often report sexual comments, gestures or looks, and being touched, pinched, or grabbed, usually in public with others present, often as a daily occurrence. Girls tend to respond to harassers with clear messages to stop, sometimes with physical resistance, and by telling friends, parents, and teachers. Most

events occur in the classroom, although hallways, parking lots, and playing fields are also implicated.

The magnitude of sexual violence in schools is little known because reporting mechanisms are conceptually murky to nonexistent and administrators underreport the problem. For this reason, large variations in estimated levels are seen from one source to another. The “Hostile Hallways” study found that 65 percent of girls were “touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way.”

Surprisingly, two-thirds of all boys and more than half of girls in a Harris study in 1996 admitted they had sexually harassed someone in a school setting. Students report that “It’s just part of school life,” “I thought the person liked it,” “I wanted a date with the person,” or they were pushed by others to do it. Victimization reports run as high as 92 percent among females and 57 percent among males in school-based self-report studies.

The problem seems to grow in 7th grade and continues throughout high school. Both boys and girls are victimized. Victims are usually known casually or well by perpetrators.

Outcomes. The most common outcomes of sexual harassment include feeling embarrassed, self-conscious, less confident, afraid or scared, doubting whether one can have a happy romantic relationship, avoiding the person, staying away from certain places, not wanting to go to school, not wanting to talk as much in class,

finding it hard to pay attention in school, staying home from school, or cutting class, among others. Evidence is presented that the problem is serious and pervasive and that students can suffer poor outcomes as a result.

Actions. A student complaint, usually a female student, triggers an investigation and a course to set a remedy, which are required by law and good judgment. When the threshold set by the court for sexual harassment is met, immediate remedies are required for victims, perpetrators, and witnesses. Remedies may include counseling, education, punishment, restrictions on rights, security precautions, and strategies for preventing further manifestations of the problem while addressing the underlying issues. Prevention efforts are little studied in this area.

A strong case is made that student appeals for help are often minimized or dismissed by teachers and administrators who choose to cast the purported assaults as playful, mutual, or as a form of courtship. Stein labels this behavior as neglect and denial and calls for more serious attention to the problem. This attention would include heightened awareness of all school staff, collaboration between schools and domestic violence/sexual assault organizations in the community, a school-based version of a temporary restraining order, expanded eligibility for temporary restraining orders to include noncohabitating minors, funding, a single federal definition of “sexual violence,” increased reporting, redesigned surveys, and other approaches.

Strengths and Limitations

This review draws from many sources to present the best information on the subject of sexual harassment, but that information

is of variable quality and lacking in many respects, as the author points out.

Meaning for Practitioners

1. Women who serve on school staffs are more likely to support in-service training on these topics than are men, according to research reviewed by Stein. Their resources are most often in social assistance groups in the community that do not traditionally work closely with schools. School staff members may claim to know more about the subject than they actually know and claim greater skill in the area of prevention than is evident in their performance. Considerable ignorance and tolerance seem to prevail, which indicates that the subject has not yet been met squarely as a problem to be addressed.
2. Raising awareness of students and staff is indicated, along with a broad range of disciplinary and preventive policies, strategies, and interventions. This effort may start with a presentation from a guest speaker; a video shown in a health, social studies, or other class with

guided discussion; counseling sessions for victims and perpetrators; referral to area agencies providing resources; rules added to the school conduct code; educational sessions; improvements to reporting and referral procedures; and involvement of parents, police, and other authorities.

3. Educators are urged to regard events from the student's perspective, consider the impact of even one event on the overall climate of the school, think about the broader message that the school's reaction or lack of reaction conveys to the students, and to regard a student's complaint as worthy of investigation. A few programs are available for implementation although their effectiveness is not well understood yet. In this void, community groups may be sought for help, and experts such as Stein may be sought for consultation. This area of study is badly in need of attention.

Reference

Stein, N. (1999). *Classrooms and courtrooms: Facing sexual harassment in K-12 schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.