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The nature of bullying in schools

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Abstract

Bullying is one of the leading social problems facing young people today. The negative consequences of bullying affect everyone – the bullies, the victims, the bystanders, the school, parents, and the community. According to Barton (2003), absenteeism due to bullying occurs among 6% of boys and 9% of girls on a weekly basis. Due to the alarming statistics and long-term effects of bullying, it is imperative that school personnel and parents help prevent bullying by knowing the facts. This author has chosen to concentrate on the various types of bullying, as well as the characteristics of bullies and vulnerability to bullying. The effects of bullying will also be addressed. Finally, individualized roles in relation to bullying and specific school anti-bullying interventions will be discussed.

THE NATURE OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

A Research Paper

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Master of Arts in Education

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Abstract

Bullying is one of the leading social problems facing young people today. The negative

consequences of bullying affect everyone—the bullies, the victims, the bystanders, the

school, parents, and the community. According to Barton (2003), absenteeism due to

bullying occurs among 6% of boys and 9% of girls on a weekly basis. Due to the

alarming statistics and long-term effects of bullying, it is imperative that school personnel

and parents help prevent bullying by knowing the facts. This author has chosen to

concentrate on the various types of bullying, as well as the characteristics of bullies and

vulnerability to bullying. The effects of bullying will also be addressed. Finally,

individualized roles in relation to bullying and specific school anti-bullying interventions

will be discussed.

According to Rigby (2004), "Bullying involves intentional, aggressive behavior. Generally, it is conceived as aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between aggressor(s) and victim, and moreover, the aggressive acts are deliberate and repeated" (p. 287). Garrett (2003) reported that bullying among elementary students has been recognized as a precursor for more violent behavior in later years. The following excerpt from *Bullying: The Bullies, the Victims, the Bystanders* (Harris, & Petrie, 2003) exemplifies the definite action needed to end purposeful harassment and bullying in schools:

> *"I killed because people like me are mistreated every day....I am malicious because I am completely miserable,"* said Luke Woodham, sixteen-year-old of Pearl, Mississippi. On October 1, 1997, he killed his mother, then killed two students and wounded seven others. Newspaper headlines reported that Woodham was occasionally bullied (p. vii)

Unfortunately, in the 21st century, there appear to be more students like Luke than there have ever been before. They feel alone, depressed, and rejected. It is critical that school personnel and parents reach out to these students by providing some sort of connection and opportunity for them to discuss what they are experiencing.

Generally, bullying occurs during childhood (Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano, & Slee, 1999), and is twice as high among elementary students as contrasted to secondary students. According to Pepler, Craig, & Ziegler (1993), 18% of elementary children (grades 1-5) reported that they had been bullied at least once a week and 9% of those reported bullying others. More specifically, bullying occurs daily at a rate of once

every 7 minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom (Pepler, et al., 1993).

The purpose of this paper is to increase awareness about bullying. The many aspects related to bullying that will be addressed include the types of bullying, types of victims, characteristics of bullies, vulnerability to bullying, the effects of bullying, individualized roles in relation to bullying, and the need for specific school response. Additionally, the purpose of this paper is to provide information on the importance of knowing every aspect of bullying and how to help rectify the issue in school settings. With this knowledge, both school personnel and parents will be able to recognize bullying and utilize the appropriate steps to intervene in bullying situations before they escalate. The ultimate goal is for school personnel and parents to take every possible measure to help prevent bullying before unnecessary tragedies occur.

<div align="center">Types of Bullying</div>

Verbal Bullying

According to Rigby (2001), verbal bullying is the most common type of bullying in schools. Perhaps this type of bullying is the most frequently used because children think they can easily get away with verbal attacks if no adults are present. Due to this, children may be repeated targets and often get hurt. As Coloroso (2003) noted, verbal bullying accounts for 70% of reported incidences. Verbal bullying is the easiest to inflict on other children, occurs in the least amount of time available, and its effects can be far more devastating than physical bullying (Lajoie, McLellan, & Seddon, 1997).

Rigby (2001) noted that verbal bullying includes name-calling, insults, sarcasm, put-downs, teasing, unfair criticisms, swearing, spreading rumors, threats, and

anonymous phone calls and e-mails. Since verbal bullying can vary in complexity or subtlety, it may be difficult to detect. Due to this, there are many conflicting factors that may constitute a verbal bullying exchange. First, the verbal remark may be seen as teasing or playfulness, depending on the social level or popularity of the bully or the victim. If a higher status student ridicules a lower status student, it most likely will be taken as an attack. Secondly, the content of a verbal remark may predict how it is intended or received. For example, a male may see a sexual innuendo as humorous or playful, whereas a female may see it as harassment. Finally, self-confidence and personality may play a major role in the perception of verbal bullying. Some students possess the ability to use humor to deflect hurtful remarks while other students lack perspective or tolerance. Ironically, these are the students who become the targets for jokes and bullying (Hoover & Oliver, 1996).

Physical Bullying

The most obvious form of bullying to detect is physical bullying and can consist of kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling, elbowing, throwing things, using a weapon, and removing or hiding belongings (Rigby, 2001). Since physical bullying is easily identifiable, most school communities agree that this type of bullying is the least commonly practiced or at least reported (Lajoie et al., 1997). However, that is not to say the incidences do not occur. Most likely, the children who are being physically bullied may be afraid of further unfair treatment and may be less likely to report the incidents.

As Olweus (1993) stated, males are four times more likely than females to engage in physical bullying. Of those, 62% reported being physically bullied throughout the

school year. Often times, physical bullies do not intend to cause serious physical harm, but rather the intent is to intimidate or scare the victim (Hoover & Oliver, 1996).

Garrett (2003) reported that psychological changes begin to happen by age twelve and that bullying becomes more violent at that time. The use of weapons and sexual abuse become more prevalent. In fact, to illustrate the increase in violence, murder among children was up 36% by 1997 (Garrett, 2003). These aggressive characteristics become more apparent as the bullies become adults.

Relational Bullying

Relational bullying includes acts such as spreading rumors, teasing, creating or joining cliques, gossip, and exclusion or rejection of a certain person(s) to cut the victim off from his or her social connections (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003). Relational bullying is linked to verbal bullying, but occurs usually when children spread rumors about others or excludes a friend from the peer group (Lajoie et al., 1997). According to Olweus (1993), girls are more likely than boys to use relational bullying by spreading rumors, and manipulating friendships.

According to Dellasega and Nixon (2003), a strong predictor of future social maladjustment for children in grades three through six, over physical aggression, are incidences of relational bullying. The two also report that girls are more likely to use relational bullying within their own friendship circles, whereas boys tend to aggress outside of their friendship circles. Relational bullying can have the most devastating effect at a time when children most need their social connections (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003).

Sexual Bullying

Similarly to bullying by verbal, physical and relational means, sexual bullying should be considered when a person or school considers what can be done to stop bullying. Sexual bullying (also called sexual harassment) is any unwelcome behavior such as sexual advances, unwanted sexual comments, and demands for sexual favors, touching, deliberate staring to embarrass, and accusations of homosexuality (Rigby, 2001). Sexual harassment can and does take place between people of the same gender, as well as between males and females. For example, many girls experience the embarrassment of having their bra snapped by a male bully. Another example of sexual bullying that occurs frequently between students of the same gender (mainly adolescent males) is that of homosexual accusations (i.e. "You're gay!").

Characteristics of Bullies

Physical Characteristics

Male bullies tend to be physically mature and dominant. They usually are athletically coordinated, but not necessarily involved in organized sports. Female bullies may be strong, but are just as likely to be small since their bullying is done verbally or relationally and focuses on social dominance over physical dominance (MacNeil & Newell, 2004).

Psychological Characteristics

Bullies tend to have average or above average self-esteem, contrary to many popular opinions (Macklem, 2003). A study of forth to sixth grade boys indicated that aggressive boys could be very popular and accepted by the other children in the school. The aggressive boys were good at sports and were considered cool, tough, and skilled in

exploiting others. They were not, however, considered good students. Bullying just happened to be a major part of their social status. Studies such as this one indicate that students with strong, positive self-perceptions behave more aggressively (Macklem, 2003).

According to Olweus (1993), bullies seem to enjoy being in control and have a strong desire for power and dominance. Bullies are often described as oppositional toward adults, may be antisocial around certain adult groups, and are more likely to break school rules than are other students (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Young children who are aggressive and bully others run a high risk for engaging in problem behaviors such as criminality and alcohol abuse in later years. Approximately 60% of boys characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24 and 40% of former bullies had three of more convictions at this same age (Olweus, 1993).

Cognitive Characteristics

Some bullies are more socially intelligent than others. In fact, Rigby (2002) reported that physical bullying is directly correlated to lower test scores. Physical bullies usually are cognitively underdeveloped, whereas verbal bullies are cognitively smarter. Bullies usually are inferior academically as well. Bullies may not understand what is being said, have low reading comprehension, show poor judgment by not being able to think ahead, lack insight and creativity yet appear to be intelligent, however perform poorly (Rigby, 2002).

Familial Characteristics

According to Barton (2003), the importance of consistent parenting is a factor that provides an explanation for bullying behaviors. Parents who fail to meet their child's

needs appropriately place their children at a higher risk for bullying interactions. The role a parent takes, whether it is authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive, seems to be related to bullying.

Authoritative parents provide their children with structure and appropriate guidelines while also providing warmth. Children in this type of environment usually are firmly grounded and can make sound decisions. Authoritarian parents demonstrate poor parental monitoring, little warmth, and low levels of tolerance. They also offer few decision-making opportunities. Often times, children who grow up in this type of environment are at risk for giving in to peer pressure and developing victimization behaviors or will dominate their peers (Barton, 2003).

Permissive parents provide low levels of monitoring for their children. There is very little parental control, few to no guidelines in the home, and low parental warmth. Since very little guidance is offered in permissive households, children lack the ability to problem-solve and make decisions. Often times, children who grow up in this type of environment are at a high risk for engaging in aggressive and uncontrollable behaviors (Barton, 2003).

Bullies may have been raised in homes where parents frequently fight, according to Barton (2003). Also, bullies often come from families where there is little to no communication and where relationships are poor (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Whatever the family environment may be, children tend to model behaviors in school and in social situations. Monitoring a child's activities reasonably well is a responsibility of the parent. Often times, bullying tends to take place when the parents do not know what the child is doing, or when they or other adults are absent (Olweus, 1993).

Types of Victims

Passive Victims

The majority of victims of bullying are passive (Olweus, 1993). Passive victims are victims who usually react by crying or withdrawing. Rigby (2001) indicated, "during bullying, the victim may appear zombie-like or alternatively wildly emotional" (p.13).

Harris and Petrie (2003) reported that passive victims usually are anxious, insecure, quiet, afraid of confrontation, cry or become easily upset, and have very few friends. Due to a lack of skills and a fear of retaliation, passive victims rarely report incidences of bullying, therefore making them susceptible to multiple acts of bullying.

Physically, passive victims are often smaller and weaker than the bullies and are fearful of standing up to them. Many victimized students, especially passive victims, have somatic complaints, which may be better described as anxiety symptoms (Macklem, 2003). According to Rigby (2001), due to the smaller physical nature, lack of appropriate confrontation skills and self-confidence, the passive victim's reaction may reinforce the bully's behavior. Also, when the bullying occurs, dominance increases if bystanders give approval by not intervening.

Provocative Victims

Although they too are anxious, the provocative victims are more active, assertive, and fairly confident (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Provocative victims tend to annoy and tease classmates until they retaliate again. Even if the provocative victim is losing, he or she will try to prolong the fight. Provocative victims may employ several ways of coping, including escaping the scene, fighting back, acting cool, distracting, and in very few incidences, seeking help (Rigby, 2001).

According to Lajoie et al., (1997), provocative victims are usually impulsive and react quickly to both intentional and unintentional physical encounters. Due to the impulsivity and other disruptive behaviors, the provocative victim generally is the least popular person with classmates. This hyperactive type of behavior allows the entire class to react negatively, thus resulting in harmful actions from a large part of, or even the entire class (Olweus, 1993). Although provocative victims are the least popular, they do not appear to have a low self-esteem (Ross, 1996).

According to Harris & Petrie (2003), many provocative victims may have a learning disability or lack the ability to be sensitive to others. Due to this, the provocative victim may not be able to walk away from a situation or seek help.

<div align="center">Vulnerability to Bullying</div>

Behaviors

Thompson, Arora, & Sharp (2002) noted that the most obvious aspect of a victim is his or her appearance. Often times, if a child dresses or looks differently than the majority crowd, he or she becomes a potential victim of bullying incidents. However, Olweus (1993) stated that bullying on the basis of physical appearance and what a person wears is on the decline.

Victims are often identified by the way they move, such as the way he or she walks. According to Lajoie et al., (1997), a potential victim's walk is not purposeful, but rather rushed and light-footed. These victims tend to also walk on their toes and with their heads down. Potential victims give off apprehensive body posture and language. For example, a prospective victim may walk with shoulders hunched as he or she stoops slightly forward when walking.

Given that bullies seek power, they usually send a message of self-assuredness and confidence in the way they carry themselves. This is usually the reverse for likely victims of bullying. Macklem (2003) stated that most victims appear to lack confidence and try and make themselves invisible so they look weak to bullies.

Eye contact is also crucial for a potential victim in being aware of who and what is around him or her. Victims rarely make eye contact with anyone they know. According to Lajoie et al., (1997), victims tend to direct their eyes downward and edge by unknown large groups, avoiding conversation or polite, excusing statements.

Effects of Bullying

Bullying affects more than just the victims and the bullies. The enormity of bullying has increased across schools and an overwhelming 90% of young people that reported being bullied believed it caused them problems. The problems varied, but social and emotional problems ranked among the top (Hazler, 1996). The effects of bullying are immeasurable, but it creates both physical and psychological problems that can also carry into adulthood. Bullying may be a precursor for unnecessary retaliation or tragic school violence. Hazler (1996) reported that bullying is to blame for school truancies and dropouts and that suicide can be a direct result of bullying. Whatever the effect, each has lasting short and long-term negative consequences.

Physical and Psychological Problems

Some victims of bullying may show more problems to their general health than peers who have not been victimized. According to Sharp and Smith (1994), bullying victims may report physical symptoms such as sleeping problems, stomachaches, headaches, nightmares, palpitations, and frequent panic attacks. Victims of bullying are

three times as likely to report reoccurring headaches and stomach aches and two times as likely to wet the bed (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

While physical impairment can take its toll on victims, emotional scars may have longer lasting and more devastating effects. Being bullied in school is a strong predictor of social problems within adulthood (Ross, 1996). Children who have been bullied tend to have higher levels of depression, feel isolated or rejected, and tend to have lower to no social skills and conflict management skills. According to Macklem (2003), these depressive symptoms are more likely to exist when bullying is chronic. Also, girls have been found to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of bullying and often times develop eating disorders (Macklem, 2003).

Many times, victims do survive the torture and humiliation of bullying, even through the emotional turmoil and scarring (Garrett, 2003). Some victims, however, do not. The constant rejection and stress that bullying causes impels a victim to resort to suicide. Rigby (2002) stated that there is a direct link between suicide and peer victimization.

School Violence

When bullying incidents occur, a whole school has the potential to become involved. In order to deal with being bullied, some children seek revenge. As seen in the most recent years, some children's anger leads to violence (Garrett, 2003). This type of violence due to bullying is exemplified in the following excerpt taken from *Kids Killing Kids: Managing Violence and Gangs in Schools* (Capozzoli & McVey, 2000):

"On January 18, 1993, Scott Pennington, 17, of Rush, KY shot and killed a

teacher and a janitor at East Carter High School. He then held 22 classmates

hostage at gunpoint for about 15 minutes before finally surrendering. Pennington

was described as a quiet and bright student who had few friends but was passive.

People who described him said that even when ridiculed or hit by other students,

he remained passive. Pennington was convicted as an adult and sentenced to life

without parole." (p. 10).

According to Macklem (2003), there is a strong relationship between school

attendance, truancy, and high school drop out rates and peer victimization. One reason

that 15% of children nationally did not attend school claimed they were frequently

bullied (Macklem, 2003). Being verbally bullied resulted in students strongly disliking

school, and being physically and relationally bullied resulted in students staying away

from school (Macklem, 2003).

<div align="center">Individualized Roles in Response to Bullying</div>

It is evident that the effects of bullying are taking a toll on our youth, which carry

into adulthood. As exemplified in this excerpt taken from *Bullying: The Bullies, the*

Victim, the Bystander by Harris and Petrie (2003), "Gail, a thirty two year old woman

reported that she only remembered two things from elementary school…being bullied

and feeling sad. She reported the bullying and teasing to her teacher, but her teacher did

nothing about it." (p. 11).

It is imperative school personnel and parents monitor children's behavior in and

out of school and are cognizant of signs of bullying. In addition, rather than becoming a

spectator of bullying, which may prolong the bullying, school personnel and parents need

to be cognizant of their individual roles when intervening and reporting bullying.

Victim's Role

Often times, children may not be aware of the measures they can take to help prevent incidences of bullying. Some of the techniques may seem too straightforward when viewed by adults, but simple skills need to be taught to potential victims of bullying. Potential victims need validation about the feelings they may be experiencing as a result of being bullied. They need reassurance that it is normal to feel angry, sad, fearful, and depressed and that they should not feel ashamed or embarrassed if they are being bullied. Victims also need to know that they do not deserve to be bullied and that there is nothing wrong with them. In addition, the victim may find comfort in realizing that the bullying is not permanent.

According to Langan (2004), victims need to know several facts about bullies. First, bullies often are lonely and insecure people and when they pick certain victims, it deviates the bullies from becoming targets. Although bullies may not feel safe, strong and in control in general, they do experience these feelings when they are picking on victims. Secondly, bullies often desperately want to be accepted by others. Due to this, bullies increase attacks on victims when bystanders are present. Last, bullies enjoy the high status they are receiving in school because of the bullying.

Telling someone else—a friend, a trusted adult, or school official—about bullying is yet another individual action students may take to help prevent bullying. Langan (2004) stated that telling someone else about the bully might help other students who are in need. Chances are the same bully who picks on others also attacks the victim's peers. Most likely by telling someone, victims feel relief. Additionally, by speaking up, they may prevent an unnecessary tragedy from happening. As previously stated, school

violence and suicide happen many times every year because victims are too afraid to speak up about the occurrences. Victims may have a difficult time approaching an adult during the school day, but they can speak to someone privately after school, write a letter, or make a phone call to ensure anonymity.

Langan (2004) noted that verbal responses may work when a bully confronts potential victims. By being aware of specific responses, victims and potential victims may have the power to prevent or even stop current bullying from happening. Langan (2004) offered a variety of specific responses to use in dealing with bullies. First, laughing with the bully can take away the bullies' power. This reaction suggests to others that the teasing does not bother the victim. Victims may also change the subject. This may help distract the bully and maybe buy time. Next, victims may try agreeing with the bully's teasing remarks. This type of reaction also steals the bully's power and enjoyment. In addition, being assertive or rejecting a bully's insults or comments may work to defuse some bullies. This style is a bit more confrontational and may work if the bully does not expect resistance. Finally, the victim may learn verbal self-defense tactics. Bullies typically want to see victims get emotional, but by staying calm, victims deny the bully the pleasure of the verbal attack.

Bystander Role

Bullying usually does not occur in isolation. In fact, 87% of all bullying occurs within peer group interactions. Barton (2003) noted that an astonishing 85% of bystanders reported feeling discomfort while watching the bullying episodes. Bystanders may be perceived as acting in agreement with the bullies just by watching and not reporting the acts. Bystanders are neither victims nor bullies, but witness the act of

bullying. According to Garrett (2003), all children, including bystanders, are affected negatively by the acts of bullying.

Harris and Petrie (2003) noted that bystanders are negatively affected emotionally by observing another child being bullied. Often times, a bystander feels anger, sadness, fear, and indifference when viewing bullying. Some may feel guilty when they cannot help the victim, while others may feel fearful that the same bullying may be projected unto them. In fact, like victims, bystanders may begin to repress feelings of empathy for others if exposed to acts of bullying over an extensive period of time (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

There are productive steps a bystander may take to help decrease acts of bullying. One way to help them intervene is to help them recognize the feelings they are having when they witness the bullying. Since bystanders feel afraid, embarrassed, and inadequate about their non-response to the abuses they observe, it is important for counselors, teachers, and parents to validate these feelings. Bystanders need to be reassured they are not the only ones with these feelings. Providing group awareness for bystanders and recognizing their feelings sets the groundwork for them to become actively involved in helping to prevent bullying (Hazler, 1996).

According to Langan (2004), refusing to join in, walking away, and distracting the bully are other ways a bystander may become actively involved in helping to reduce bullying incidents. Given that bullies are almost always accompanied by followers who join in, which encourages the bully, bystanders may want to consider refusing to participate. This is also true when walking away from witnessing bullying in that when a bystander removes him or herself, the amount of attention a bully receives is lessened.

parental involvement is a significant component in effectively changing bullying (Hazler,

1996).

<div align="center">School's Role in Response to Bullying</div>

Playground and Lunchroom

Recess is the number one targeted place where bullying occurs. Often times it is

due to ineffective or insufficient supervision. Another reason the playground and

lunchroom are major areas for bullying is due to boredom, overcrowding, and

opportunities for exclusion. On the playground, children who do not excel in sports or

physically coordinated activities are leading targets for exclusion. In addition, when

children are forced to compete for space and equipment, bullying may exist. In the

lunchroom, the same inadequate supervision takes place (Barton, 2003). Frequently,

lunchroom supervisors have had no formal training in behavior management, therefore

some of the tactics lunchroom supervisors employ will actually cause the students to

behave worse (Sharp & Smith, 1994). In both situations, it is vital that supervisors

exchange information about what is taking place during recess and lunch if intervention

is necessary. Many times bullying can be detected at its earliest stages if supervisors

utilize specific intervention to bullying.

Teacher's Role

Victims and bullies alike need teacher support and guidance. If teachers are

aware that bullying exists, they have the ability to help change the situation. However,

many teachers are unsure of their role in addressing bullying. Often times, teachers hold

beliefs that are not supportive of change. Horne, Bartolomucci, and Newman-Carlson

(2003) gave some commonly mistaken beliefs teachers hold in regard to bullying. First,

As few as 11% of children reported they almost always tried to stop bullying (Garrett, 2003). Again, many bystanders are afraid to intervene for fear of what may happen to them as a result of reporting the bullying. Another way bystanders can intervene in bullying situations is to speak out and report any bullying they may see. As a result of reporting it, many people may turn on the bully and be less likely to hurt others. According to Langan (2004), the last thing a bully wants to happen is for others to turn away.

Family Roles in Response to Bullying

Parents

Parents are key catalysts in anti-bullying efforts. According to Lajoie et al., (1997), adult intervention is often the only way victims can get relief from bullies. Listening objectively to a child speak about bullying incidents is perhaps the most crucial action a parent can take. Listening and being supportive will allow children to feel free to open up about the bullying (Garrett, 2003). It is very difficult for a child to talk about bullying for fear of further aggravation; therefore, parents should take children's complaints of bullying very seriously.

Garrett (2003) stated that parents should consult with their child before speaking out about the bullying. Additionally, Garrett (2003) stated that it is important to keep written records of names, dates, and circumstances of the bullying incident and to make copies to distribute to appropriate individuals. After listening and providing support and encouragement, parents should immediately report bullying concerns to school personnel. Asking teachers and administrators about bullying may help in the development of a school policy regarding zero tolerance for bullying, if one is not already in place.

According to Langan (2004), joining groups such as sports teams, clubs, drama, or school organizations allows a child to become apart of a community that is likely to watch and protect its members and may decrease the likelihood of being a victim of bullying. In addition, parents may encourage positive ways to resolve arguments without violent words or actions. Teaching the appropriate social skills may help a child become assertive versus aggressive in reacting to bullying. Parents can model appropriate social skills their child may need to make new friends. As Garrett (2003) stated, a confident child who has friends is less likely to be bullied or to bully others.

Garrett (2003) noted that 89% of students said they had engaged in bullying behavior while only 18% of parents thought their child would bully others. Many parents are defensive about the idea that their child could be a bully. Often times calling the parents of the bully is ineffective because parents may view criticism of their child as disapproval of their parenting. It is best for concerned parents to set up an individual meeting time with school personnel and the bully's parents to ensure proper facilitation and avoid further escalation. The ultimate goal is to come up with a plan for solving the bullying problem as well as fostering a positive relationship between both sets of parents, as well as between the bully and the victim (Olweus, 1993).

Parents also have an obligation to seek out new information regarding bullying. Repeating what has always been done is not likely to change the trends. Parents may seek information from the school or community library on such topics as school policies, family interactions, and appropriate child development. Frequent visits to the school counselor and other teachers will add to a parent's repertoire of ideas. Knowledgeable

that bullying is just a normal part of childhood and that children often outgrow bullying (i.e. "boys will be boys"). In reality, unless attention is paid to the problem, there is little chance children will outgrow bullying. A second misconception is that everyone knows what bullying is and the characteristics that surround it. Unfortunately, not all adults who supervise children can differentiate between rough and tumble play and physical aggression. When adults are aware of the terms surrounding bullying, incidents drastically decline. The last misconception teachers may hold is that only a small number of children are affected by bullying. In fact, the bullies, victims, and bystanders are all affected by the fear, guilt, and humiliation associated with bullying. Teachers can be on the front line in reducing acts of bullying so that fewer students are affected.

School Interventions

Student-Based Programs

Empowering students to become active in the fight against bullying may help with the decline. In addition, unexpected school violence may deteriorate by engaging students in such programs as peer helpers, conflict resolution, peace pals, and assertiveness training. Establishing a caring community among students allows each person in the school to have a mutual understanding and commitment to basic moral values. Community is not so much a place as it is an experience; the feeling of being valued, connected, and responsible to others (Schaps, Watson, & Lewis, 1996). Establishing this type of community is essential to the prevention of bullying in schools.

Zero Tolerance Policies

According to Johns & Keenan (1997), in developing school safety policies, a variety of individuals should be included if at all possible — staff, students, parents, and

members of the community. In addition, the policies must be explained to everyone so there is a mutual understanding about why such policies exist and to ensure that the policies will be utilized. In 2004, the Governor's Office and Iowa Department of Education stated that bullying is not only unsafe but also interferes with student learning (Vilsack & Pederson, 2004). In order to combat bullying in schools, the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Governor's office promoted a sample local board policy that prohibited harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other intentional victimization based on real or perceived sexual orientation, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, or disability (Vilsack & Pederson, 2004). When anti-bullying policies are written in collaboration with a number of varied individuals, there is a sense of ownership.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Bullying is a destructive social problem that needs attention. Schools have the responsibility to create a safe place where students can learn without fear. Importance should be placed on the individual types of bullying, characteristics of bullies and victims and susceptibility to bullying. Greater awareness of the issue and a focus on prevention can begin to secure that our schools are safer learning environments for our students and school personnel.

The short and long-term effects of bullying are endless. Bullying can result in both physical and psychological problems that can carry into adulthood. Bullying is a precursor for unnecessary retaliation or tragic school violence. School truancies, dropouts, and even suicide can be a direct result of bullying. Whatever the effect, each has lasting short-term and long-term negative consequences.

Bullying encompasses verbal, physical, relational, and sexual intimidation and may have both short and long-term effects on the bullies and the victims. Since bullying is such a significant problem in schools, it is up to school personnel, parents and students to join together to take specific action to help prevent bullying. It is possible that students will feel empowered just by the fact that someone cares enough to address the bullying issues that they are dealing with on a regular basis. When everyone joins together, bullying can be minimized or prevented.

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