IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

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IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF BULLYING

Abstract

Bullying is a complex problem for many schools districts. The identification of bullying behavior and the creation of a successful anti-bullying program is critical in successfully dealing with the problem. This study examined the emotional consequences of bullying and the causes of bullying behavior, and identified effective programs for dealing with bullying in schools.

Bullying behavior is anything that can be reasonably viewed as “intimidating, hostile, dehumanizing, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress” (MI BOE, 2009). The causes of this behavior usually stem from lack of a quality role model at home, or even just neglect at home and the behavior is meant to gain attention.

Some of the most successful programs that deal with bullying share three characteristics: first, the program can change with the situation at hand; second, the program starts educating students at a young age; and third, there are clear expectations of students, consequences for actions, and consistent enforcement of punishments. Programs lacking all three components are not as effective. One of the best-known bullying prevention programs is the Olweus program, but it does have significant cost to the district. Other effective options exist that have little or no cost.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

School bullying has made the headlines whether on the television, or in the newspaper, mostly for the negative effects it has on students. Bullying negatively affects students on the playground, in the classroom, and on the Internet. Since educators have a responsibility to protect the children in the school setting, student bullying directly impacts the role of the educator.

Experts have had a difficult time defining the phenomenon of bullying, and it has been identified in many different ways with different terminology, meanings, connotations, and implications (Carrera, DePalma, & Lameiras, 2011). Victims of bullying have taken their own lives, and even bullied themselves. In addition, bullying in conjunction with depression results in much worse outcomes than bullying a student free of other problems (Klomek, Kleinman, Altschuler, Marrocco, Amakawa, & Gould, 2011). A school district’s job is to ensure that its students get the best education possible. To establish an effective learning environment within its district, school leaders need to establish ways to identify and combat bullying. Educational leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining environments for learning and practicing civic virtue for all stakeholders in a school (Starratt, 2004). This paper will study some of the successful programs and identify some key components involved in those programs, with the purpose of forming recommendations to create a successful program to best eliminate bullying behavior at a young age.

Background

The scientific studying of bullies started in Norway and the surrounding countries in the 1970’s (Porter, Smith-Adcock, 2011). Bullying in the United States has been recognized as a widespread problem for the last several years. As many as 70% of adolescents feel students have
been bullied (Shin, D’Antonio, Son, Kim, & Park, 2011). A nationwide survey of 15,000
students, ranging from 6-10th grade found about 20% of students were bullies at least once per
week and 17% of the students said they were victims at least once per week. About 30% of the
students reported being involved in both bullying and being bullied (Yerger & Gehret, 2011).
Bullying can take 3 forms: physical, verbal or psychological (Ayenibiowo & Akinbode, 2011).
According to a recent study 56% of students were verbally bullied, 29% excluded, 28%
physically bullied, and 22% reported extortion (Wong, Cheng, Ngan, & Ma, 2010). While
physical bullying is more straight-forward, verbal can include manipulation, controlling,
rejecting, and other exclusionary behaviors, as well as a threat to damage reputation (James,
2011). The effects of all types of bullying on the victim and the bully will be explored in this
review. Methods to prevent bullying in adolescents will also be examined.

Long-term negative effects have also been associated with bullying, including poor self-
esteeem, poor school attendance, and poor physical health. Peer bullying is associated with more
frequent and more severe health problems, as well as more frequent health visits (Knack, Jensen-
Campbell, & Baum, 2011). The severity of the effects depends on how long the bullying
occurred, how severe the bullying was, and if the person was given any help. Both the victim and
the bully suffer from the effects of bullying. Increased problems may be seen as an adult if the
bullying is chronic. As an adult, bullying behavior can continue in the form of child, or domestic
abuse. Victims of bullying are likely to develop feelings of inadequacy, and may develop mental
health problems, depression or thoughts of suicide.

Bullies are more likely to be students who struggle in schoolwork or have a hard time
dealing with conflict (Christie-Mizell, Keil, Laske, & Stewart, 2010). Typically, students pick on
others that seem weaker or who are less likely to fight back. Victims of bullying tend to be
insecure and alienated. Victims also have a tendency to be of lower social class than their bully. Students bully for many different reasons such as their family or friends. Youth with family problems bully more often than youth without those problems. A direct connection between financial and social capital is also prevalent in current research. Parents who work longer hours make more money, but that allows less time to cultivate, maintain, and invest in their child’s socialization. Many times bullies come from families with an authoritarian (using physical means of discipline) parenting style (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Often when a child experiences negative behaviors at home, those behaviors are repeated outside of the home. However, one study shows no significant effects of anger on bullying (Moon, Hwang, McCluskey, 2011).

Another important aspect of bullying is if the students are aware that bullying is occurring. A 2001 study was published in the JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association) that evaluated bullying behavior by gender and if there was a significant difference between bullying in school age boys and girls (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt 2001). The study observed that 55.7% of the students reported that they have not bullied others in the past term (9 weeks). Only 47.1% of boys said they have not bullied, but 63.2% of girls reported that they have not bullied others in the past term. The study also shows that less than 10% of the students show they have bullied others in the previous week. While bullying seems to be common in schools today this study shows that not all students feel they are bullying others, especially on a regular basis. This study also mentions that while long-term effect studies are minimal, an important part of prevention is identifying the factors that lead up to bullying behaviors in school age children.

In summary, positive behaviors are crucial to a child’s development and may help to offset some of these negative experiences. Early identification of those negative behaviors is also
vital in the discovery of bullying behavior, which may help school officials stop the bullying before it happens. The role of the administrator and teacher is to ensure that students get these positive experiences at school, along with eliminating the negative ones.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used for this research will be the behaviorist theory, developed by B.F. Skinner (Lejeune, Richelle, & Weardon 2005). The behaviorist theory states that everything we do is a behavior. Pleasant experiences are positive re-enforcers while unpleasant experiences are negative re-enforcers. A lack of reinforcement can also shape behavior. The best way to treat psychological disorders according to the behaviorist theory is by altering the behavior or modifying the environment. Altering the bullies behaviors would help get rid of bullying behavior in schools. The other way to help with bullying would be to change the environment in schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

Bullying is becoming a widely recognized problem in the world, along with being recognized as a neglected problem as well (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Over the past 15 years there are studies that link bullying others, and being bullied to both short and long term academic problems. There is a link with bullying to anger, aggression, violence, hyperactivity, and externalizing problems and also later problems such as delinquency and criminality (Olweus, 1993). In order to prevent these problems, it is important to come up with a comprehensive school-wide plan to prevent these bullying behaviors.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the emotional consequences for the students who are being bullied?
2. What are the emotional consequences for the students who are bullying?
3. What are possible causes of bullying behavior?

4. What are some effective approaches to handling bullying after it has occurred?

5. What are some effective programs and methods for prevention of bullying?

The above research questions are important to the study of bullying in several ways. If the consequences, causes, and some of the most effective programs are identified, then schools are better prepared to deal with those behaviors. This is the first step in creating a program that is giving bullying in schools full attention and trying to minimize bullying. Early identification is important to creating and implementing a bullying prevention program in schools.

**Definition of Terms**

To provide for common understanding and clarity the following definitions are used in this paper:

- **Peer victimization.** Habitual target of peers aggression (Knack, Jensen, Campbell Baum 2011).

- **Bullying.** One or several individuals aggressing on a vulnerable peer, primarily to assert control or power (Ayenibiowo & Akinbode, 2011).

- **Psychological Bullying.** Spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, or engaging in social exclusion, being the target of practical jokes, extortion, or intimidation.

- **Physical Bullying.** Hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings, excessive monitoring with a view of launching an attack.

- **Verbal Bullying.** Taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats, being shouted at or being humiliated invalid criticism, being sworn at, exclusion or social isolation, spreading rumors.
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Summary

Bullying in schools has been a problem identified by several researchers, and countless studied have been conducted to identify why. Bullying is a complex problem that must be analyzed and studied to determine how a successful program can be built to prevent this from happening as best as possible. Although bullying may not be eliminated completely, a successful anti-bullying program has the ability to change the school climate and make the school a more enjoyable place to learn. Analyzing studies and concluding what makes a bully, what are some of the consequences for bullies, and those who are bullied, and evaluating some current anti-bullying programs is one step in the correct direction for creating such a program.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Current research was examined to compare current trends in school-based bullying and how schools are dealing with bullying. Many authors have defined the nature of bullying and recommended ways to deal with it. The following provides a synopsis of this research.

Causes of Bullying

Liu and Graves (2011) analyzed the cause and effect relationship of bullying and futures problems associated with them in a quantitative study. A secondary goal was to provide information to health care professionals about bullying so the professionals can come up with strategies for prevention and intervention.

The authors suggest that bullying is such a complex issue because it involves three factors: (1) intention to cause harm, (2) the cause of that harm being attributed to the imbalance of power between the bully and victim, and (3) the repetition of the behavior over time (Liu & Graves, 2011). Their study showed that gender plays an important role in bullying: male students are more likely to resort to physical and direct bullying while females are more likely to resort to relational and indirect forms of bullying.

Liu and Graves (2011) also examined early influences and environmental factors associated with bully behavior. The study found that early behavior in children is likely to continue throughout growth and development, suggesting that early pre-bullying behavior could be useful in identifying future bullies. Their research suggests that developing and implementing bullying intervention programs is more important than ever. The study also indicated that the programs developed should reflect the community environment as well as the individual children to maximize effectiveness.
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The results of these studies conclude that as the awareness of bullying continues to increase, we are becoming aware that it starts at a young age. The study also concludes that several factors go into making what a bully is, and we need to identify as many as possible at a young age so that an intervention and program can help the student to avoid that behavior in the future (Liu & Graves, 2011).

One area of bullying that is especially intriguing focuses on the emotional abuse that goes along with bullying in adolescent children. A recent qualitative study that investigated that abuse for the purpose of preventing lasting emotional damage that can result from bullying was conducted with some interesting results (Ayeniniowo & Akinbode, 2011). The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological effects on bullying victims that were self-reported incidents. The study used 160 secondary school students that were chosen on a volunteer basis. The students were selected from 3 public schools and 3 private schools with 81 male students combined with 79 female students that ranged between 12 and 18 years of age (Ayeniniowo & Akinbode, 2011). One of the issues also measured was if males are bullied more than females, which is what was hypothesized.

The main objective of the test was to contribute to the prevention and constructive management of the emotional issues tied to bullying episodes among school children. After a thorough review of the information was gathered, the authors decided that a school needs to form policies that promote respectful treatment and at the same time define and discourage certain types of aggressive behavior (Ayeniniowo & Akinbode, 2011). The results of the study showed that the hypothesis was correct; males were bullied more than females in both public and private schools (Ayeniniowo & Akinbode, 2011). A school needs to indicate what constitutes abusive behavior and a system for students to be able to report the incident to the correct personnel. After
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the incident is reported to the correct authorities, a strict policy, in which the person who was
displaying these abusive behaviors is punished in an appropriate manner, and consistently within
the rules of the school.

Juvonene, Graham, and Schuster (2003) studied a racially diverse school to see if boys
are bullied or are bullies more than girls, and to find out some of the characteristics of these
bullies. A key component in setting up an effective school program to deal with bullying is
identifying the setting that the bullying happens, such as the cafeteria, hallway, internet, or some
other location. The study identifies some of these as well as how the students at this deal with
bullies.

Juvonene, Graham, and Schuster (2003) concluded that gender and race both played a
significant role in bullying and also found that location of the occurrence is also something that
needs to be factored when creating an effective anti-bullying program. The study shows that
boys were twice as likely to fall into the bully category as girls were. Girls were classified as
bully-victims 3% of the time, while boys were classified as bully-victims 10% of the time.

While the Juvonene, Graham, and Schuster study used data from 1985, it still holds very
valuable information to the formation of an anti-bullying program. The first piece of information
is that bullies are usually psychologically stronger than members of the class that are not
involved in bullying. Additionally they found that bullies on average hold a higher social rank
among their classmates. Schools that have strict policies in place for any type of bullying
activities (name calling, teasing, etc.) are likely to have less of these problems. The study also
indicates that Black and Latino students were more likely to be bully-victims, and Asian students
were less likely to be bully-victims. The last significant piece of information that will be used
from this study is their identification of problems that occur after both bullying, and being
bullied. Juvonene, Graham, and Schuster identified that victims suffer from both emotional distress after these episodes of bullying, and in many cases suffer from social marginalization (classmates avoid them). If a school district is able to identify some of these causes and eliminate the behavior it is again a step in the correct direction.

In many cases there is no concrete reason that a student bullies another student, but some of the possible causes can be frustration, the child being bullied themselves, poor or no role model, abuse at home, neglect at home, undue influence (bad group of friends), or the child has a conduct disorder (Bully Online, n.d.). In many cases the student is taking out there frustrations on someone that will not fight back, or is not capable of fighting back.

According to bullyonline.org, frustration can stem from a variety of sources, but in many cases the frustration occurs from an undiagnosed problem such as deafness, autism, allergies, or some other undiagnosed problem. Especially at a young age this is a popular form because the child may not understand the problem, they are just frustrated and do not know how to handle the frustration.

When a child is being bullied and there are no consequences for that student exhibiting the bullying behavior, there is a resentment that starts to build up and the child being bullied starts to resort to bullying others (www.bullyonline.org). The responsible adult in their life is either not witnessing the act and does not think there is bullying occurring, or they are not sure how to handle it when they find out their child is being bullied.

It is very stereotypical to assume that if a child is getting into trouble at school their parents are not as involved as they should be or doesn’t care about the problems at school, but that may not always be the case. In some cases parents have had bad experiences with schools when they were younger, or have never learned the correct behavior when they were growing up.
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Abuse and neglect can be a dangerous situation for schools to be involved with, but in many cases that is the cause of bullying. In the state of Michigan schools are mandatory reporters for acts of abuse or neglect and in many cases bullies can be identified by seeking out the kids with suspected abuse or neglect at home.

Consequences of School Bullying

Most of the studies on bullying focus on Caucasian-American populations, but recently Shin, D’Antonio, Son, Kim, and Park (2011) conducted a study that involved bullying and mental health outcomes in Asian Americans, and demonstrated that bullying has become a widespread problem and has shown to have a significant impact on development and mental health across ethnicities.

Shin et al.’s (2011) study examined the effect on Asian-American students because Asian-Americans are less likely to seek mental help due to a strong stigma associated with mental health issues. This quantitative study of 295 random students (157 males and 138 females) from 73 different schools explored differences in Asian American and Caucasian-American bullying (Shin, et al., 2011). The study started out by having the students involved take a bully survey that measures three aspects of bullying; being bullied, observing others being bullied, and bullying others.

The results of an additional discrimination test showed that 29.2% of the students were bullied, 74.6% reported others being bullied, and 31.5% reported bullying others, with 15.9% reported being both bullied and bullying others (Shin et al., 2011). As the researchers hypothesized, Asian-American students that were bullied experienced a higher level of depression (18.4%) higher than the 16%, which is considered clinically significant (Shin et al,
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2011). The students also found that most were bullied the more often in the hallway (58.6%), followed by the cafeteria (57.3%), and finally after school (52.3%) (Shin et al., 2011).

The study concluded that Asian-American students suffered higher level of depression than their Caucasian-American peers. The study also concluded that bullying, and the damage that accompanies it, could be reduced by encouraging more Asian-American students to seek help when behavior problems start. The study also suggests that most bullying occurs outside of the regular classroom, so students need to avoid being isolated in the cafeteria and hallways.

One of the limitations to studying bullies at a young age is the long term consequences to both being a bully, as well as being bullied. Several studies identifying what bullying is, how they are dealt with, and several others aspects have been completed, but there is limited follow-up being done to determine the long-term effects. One recently published study in the Journal of American Academy of Pediatrics by Sourander et al. (2007) examined the early adult outcome of children that were bullied at a young age. The study was able to obtain records that were used along with a current study of these young adults to determine what, if any consequences there were from the bullying behaviors. It was concluded that bullying and being bullied increased the likelihood of having psychiatric disorders as young adults. The most alarming group was that of students that were frequently both the bully and the victim. These individuals has a 30% chance of developing a psychiatric disorder, 11.5% chance of being antisocial, and almost 3% of the subjects examined were classified as young adulthood as being labeled clinically psychotic.

The article by Sourander et al. (2007) brings an interesting conclusion to bullying that has not been made in any of the previous research: bullying while thought to have long-term mental effects, leads to increased psychiatric disorders. This is significant, and should help a district justify any additional resources needed to create an effective anti-bullying program.
Effective Programs And Methods For Prevention Of Bullying

One of the ideas identified as effective in reducing the amount of bullying incidents is to reward good behavior and to promote students that make good decisions. When the students making good decisions know that they have people on their side, it’s much easier to make good decisions and not worry about negative consequences.

Perkins, Craig, and Perkins (2011) conducted an experiment comprised of 5 middle schools in New Jersey grades 6-8 and all of the participants were between the ages of 11 and 14, and predominantly white. The study had the students take an on-line survey titled Survey of Bullying at Your School. The researchers wanted to see if after a year of posters and positive reinforcement the students would feel better about their school, friends, and themselves and if their actual score would improve on the test (Perkins et al., 2011).

The result of the study reported that in all instances the perception of bullies was reduced (Perkins et al., 2011). The fact that the initial study made students feel like the students were in a better place, made the students adapt to the social norm and when asked to take the survey again, the results showed a better place than on the initial test.

The identification of bullying definitions of the school and making the students aware of these behaviors seems to be effective in this circumstance. In many cases students do not realize that they are affecting others when using playful comments, and simply making them aware is a start to creating an effective anti-bullying program in an elementary school. One can conclude from this research if we can communicate to students that the social norm is better than what their norm is, we can improve behavior and reduce bullying. It is important to communicate to the students that the average students are good, and therefore bullying other students is not the normal behavior. It is believed that this will help to reduce the bullying behaviors in the school.
Yerger and Gehret (2011) examined 2,500 Norwegian students who participated in the Olweus Bully Prevention Program. Research shows a 50 percent reduction in bullying, antisocial behavior and the schools showed overall improvement. The Olweus Bully Prevention Program has 4 key principles: (1) warmth, positive interest and involvement from adults, (2) firm limits on unacceptable behavior, (3) consistent application of non punitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior or violation of the rules, and (4) the involvement of adults who act as authorities and positive role models. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program requires involved adults, measures at the school level, which include having student fill out a questionnaire and whole school review of the results, and forming a Bully Prevention Committee.

Steps to Respect was designed by students for grades 3 through 6. This program works on a policy school wide for anti-bullying, training parents and staff and teaching students to recognize, refuse and report any bullying that happens (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Yerger and Gehert (2011) show that a school can have success with an anti-bullying program, depending on what the school’s focus is, and the enforcement policies by the school.

The overall result of this study was that teachers and administrators play a crucial role in bully prevention. Parents and their perception also play a large role in bullying at school. When parents are alerted to bullying at school, they reported an increase in avoidance by students (Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2011). Making a connection with parents is important in prevention and awareness. All of the programs looked at in the research shows that teachers who correctly practice both consequences and reinforcement techniques are best able to avoid bullying. The students want to feel safe in and out of school. Managing conflict is important because negative actions will adversely affect teacher and student performance (Green, 2009). One study that was effective in identifying success, pointed out that schools that are composed of
grades K-7, or K-12 (small schools) have better attendance, fewer suspensions, and higher standardized test scores (Farmer, Hamm, Leung, Lambert, & Gravelle, 2011).

A variety of methods that schools can use to reduce bullying and the behaviors associated with it are currently being practiced. The responsibility of the administrator and teacher is to find those methods and practice them to ensure that the students are as safe as possible.
Chapter 3: Methods

This study utilized library research of current findings related to the causes of bullying and effective programs to prevent it. The study focused on possible motivations for bullying behavior, in particular with those factors that cause a student to bully another student. I found in research that there are several factors that may weigh in on this, but the social status and several other factors all weigh in to impact the amount a student both exhibits bullying behavior as well as is a victim of bullying.

There is an overwhelming amount of data available on bullying, and there are also a lot of opinions out there about what to do when you learn about a student being bullied. The majority of the studies rely on information that is given by schools and then recorded afterwards. I was able to look through several studies and determine which studies were done that were accurate in my opinion, and which ones had to big of a variance for me to use in this study. I decided to break this down into areas of bullying: (1) The reasons for bullying if any; (2) The act of bullying itself, and finally; (3) The consequences that result from the bullying. When combining these three areas, I was able to break down how an effective program could both eliminate these behaviors before they start, and also come up with an action plan when a student is displaying these behaviors.

In helping to understand the entire process a little better I decided to focus on the emotional consequences of bullying at first and then moved on to the other consequences for the purpose of this study. After identifying some of those consequences, I went back to figuring out why the act of bullying occurred, and finished with effective approaches to handling bullying and how a program could be set-up to effectively deal with and hopefully eventually eliminate bullying. While conducting research I focused on web-based material, but also used some paper-
back research to assist in coming up with the consequences and helping to develop a plan for prevention.
Chapter 4: Results

Bullying behavior has emotional consequences not only for the bullied student, but also for they bully. This chapter explores these consequences, as well as the underlying causes of bullying behavior. It concludes by examining different programs designed to prevent bullying, and identifies those programs with the greatest efficacy.

Emotional Consequences for the Students Who are Being Bullied

My first question when research the topic of bullying is why are we trying to prevent it, which led me to research what is going on with the students who are being bullied. There are several short term and some long term problems that are being associated with bullying in school. The first problem that I researched was that of depression and anxiety, which fall under the broader umbrella of psychological problems. Victims also frequently suffer from headaches and stomachaches at the beginning of the school day. Another problem that bullies suffer from is that of sleep problems. In many cases the sleep problem can be tied back to the psychological problems associated with bullying. Another consequence from bullying is that the student who is bullied may suffer from low self-esteem. While many professionals have identified this as a result of bullying, it is also one of the main reasons a student is targeted for the act of bullying by another. An additional consequence of bullying is that of lower academic achievement. One of the reasons for this low academic achievement is poor attendance due to avoidance of a bully.

In addition to the emotional consequences to bullying, students also have to deal with some of the consequences that those behaviors are often accompanied by. One of the most significant and impactful consequences of this behavior is suicide. According to the Center for Disease Control (2011) bullying is the third leading cause of death for young people with 4,400 deaths per years. Additionally the CDC also claims that bully victims are 2 to 9 percent more
likely to commit suicide than students who are not bullied. This is a serious problem and again I feel that bullying is something that can be stopped or at least minimized with the proper program in place. In many cases the students that are bullied resort to violence, in most cases aimed at the bully and end up getting themselves in trouble as well. Research also suggest that students who are bullied also have higher anxiety, sleep difficulties, and more general tension than their peers, which makes it harder to maintain healthy lifestyles. The bully victims are in many cases isolated from friends, and the result from the stress level, accompanied with being alone leads students to become overweight (Moon et al., 2011).

**Emotional Consequences for the Students Who are Bullying**

The students that are bullying others usually have some underlying emotional issues as stated earlier, but there are also long term affects for them. One of the studies examined show that students who bully, have a greater chance at developing long term psychological impairments. If a student both bullies, and gets bullied they are at much higher risk for long term psychiatric disorders.

Although the causes of bullying are not the underlying question, it could be labeled as a secondary question in this instance for a couple of reasons. The first reason for this is that many causes of bullying also result in long term emotional issues. Of the seven reasons given earlier that a student bullies, most of them come with some sort of long-term problems, which is why this goes hand in hand with reasons for bullying.

In addition to some of the emotional consequences, if a student exhibits bullying behavior at a young age they are more likely to have a criminal record when they are older. Studies suggest that one out of every four students that are bullies at a young age have a criminal record
by the time they get to age 30 (Moon et al., 2011). In many cases bullies are found to also have antisocial disorders, which may increase the amount of bullying behavior in large groups.

**Possible Causes of Bullying Behavior**

Several factors contribute to bullying behavior, but there does not seem to be one specific factor common to all cases. Frustration, either at school or at home, is an indicator for bullying behavior. In schools, this is one of the main causes and many times results from the students having some sort of learning problem. Frequently, the school either does not identify the problem, or is not meeting all of the students needs to reduce the issue. For example, when a student is unable to perform an academic task, such as reading; they are more likely to avoid the task. The result is oftentimes bullying of other students.

Another factor that contributes to bullying is abuse or neglect at home. In most cases, the child that is being neglected or abused at home tries to take control of another part of his or her life, usually at school. The child often has poor role models at home who display violent or inappropriate behavior, and the student comes to school and models that behavior. When those behaviors are demonstrated at schools they are often times done in a manner that is classified as bullying.

Bullying behavior can also be a response to being bullied. When students are being bullied and there is not a program or person to help the victim, the victim sometimes becomes the bully. Without outside support mechanisms, bullied students may feel isolated and like they have nowhere to go, so the victim may start bullying others in turn. In many cases the victim tries to impress the bullies by bullying others to gain social approval.
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Another cause of bullying can be attributed to conduct disorders. In many circumstances students who bully have an underlying disorder that is undiagnosed and they may continue this violent behavior for many years.

Effective Approaches to Handling Bullying After it has Occurred

According to bullying interventionist Ken Rigby, there are six major approaches to dealing with bullying in schools. These include:

1) The traditional disciplinary approach;
2) Strengthening the victim;
3) Mediation;
4) Restorative practice;
5) The support group method; and finally
6) The method of shared concern (Rigby, 2010).

Traditional Disciplinary Approach. This approach deals with the student who is demonstrating bullying behavior, and earns the consequences from that behavior. Typically, the inappropriate behavior is identified to the person, the reason the behavior is a violation of schools rules is made clear, and then the student is informed of the punishment. After appropriate punishment, the individual is informed of the consequences for the next offense. Interestingly according to Rigby (2010), 75% of teachers around the world use this approach, but this approach may be the least effective in discouraging bullying behavior.

Strengthening the Victim. This approach is designed to give equalize power for the student who is being bullied, and can be effective if executed in the correct manner. This approach is to have the victim confront bullying attempts with a direct and obvious response. It is designed to help them annoy the bully in some way and to have the bully stop the behavior.
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Mediation. This approach is one in which a school employee, usually a principal or counselor, sits down with both the bully and the victim and tries to mediate without escalation. This can be effective way to handle a situation when emotions are not high and is especially effective when the bully is not intending to bully another student.

Restorative Practices. This is designed to restore the damaged relationships that may have occurred due to bullying. For this approach to work, it is essential that at least one party must admit to wrongdoing, and also acknowledge they have done harm to the victim. This is technique is also effective in preventing further bullying from happening.

Support Group Method. According to Rigby (2010), this is a seven step process that includes: 1) Talking with the victim; 2) Convening a group meeting; 3) Explaining the problem; 4) Promoting shared responsibility; 5) Asking for ideas; 6) Leaving it up to the group; and 7) having a final meeting. This approach is especially effective when there is a large group of students who feel they are the target of a bully and can meet to discuss the problem. In many circumstances, the group comes up with a collective plan in which all members of the group deal with the bully the same way in hopes of eliminating the behavior of the bully.

The Method of Shared Concern. The method of shared concern is a several step process that has the “targets” of the bullying meet and assist in identifying a group of bullies. After identified, the group meets the bullies in a productive fashion. After meeting with the bullies and targets several times, the group attempts to develop an understanding and plan for prevention. This technique is effective in identifying what causes the bullying behavior and potential triggers for that behavior.
Effective Programs and Methods for Prevention of Bullying

One of the leading bully prevention programs in the world today is the Olweus (OL-VEY-us) Bully Prevention Program (OBPP), founded by Dan Olweus, who has studied bullying for decades (Bully Online, n.d.). The program focuses on students and adults working together to make the school a safe place to learn. There are three major goals of the program: 1) Reduce existing bullying problems; 2) prevent the development of new bullying problems; and 3) achieve better peer relations at school.

This program claims that it will help students assist others when there are bullying problems, but more importantly help a school to eliminate the bullying behavior before there is a problem. The program also claims that it can help reduce other behavioral problems that are closely associated with bullying behaviors. Research findings indicate that this program has been the most successful in eliminating bullying, but there are some additional effective programs that primarily focus on early intervention. Both the Olweus and the other programs that were researched involve communication between a couple of significant groups; parents, students, and the school. The three have to be on the same page in identification of bullying and what are the consequences of the bullying behavior. Students who feel like they have the support of the school and their parents are better able to deal with bullies, and the behaviors associated with them.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Summary

The primary goal of every school district in the country should be to give their students the best education possible. If there are barriers to providing that education a plan needs to be put into place to eliminate those barriers, so that educational time can be maximized. Bullying can be classified as one of those barriers, and the following may be some ways to reduce the barrier of bullying.

Emotional Consequences for the Students Who are Being Bullied

The emotional consequences are a serious problem that can only be fixed by creating a program that fixes the problem before the bullying occurs. Depression and anxiety as well as several other short and long term problems can occur for the students that are being bullied. The most important role for a school to play is that of preventing the action the best they can.

Emotional Consequences for the Students Who are Bullying

While there may be fewer emotional consequences for students who bully others than there are for students who get bullied, there is usually some connection between the bullying behavior and long-term mental problems such as schizophrenia, or bi-polar disorder. Students that both bully and get bullied, are also far more likely to develop long term emotional problems.

Causes of Bullying Behavior

The causes of bullying can often be identified at an early age and most often stem from problems at home, such as no adult role model, neglect, falling in with the wrong crowd, or just having a poor role model to follow. Schools need to identify these causes and identify the behaviors at a young age, so they are able to eliminate the bullying behavior at school.
Effective Approaches to Handling Bullying After it has Occurred

Some of the leading experts on this subject agree that there are a variety of ways to remedy bullying, and all can be successful or unsuccessful depending on the situation. These include a traditional disciplinarian approach, mediation, strengthening the victim, support groups, restorative practices and shared concern. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the incident any of the preceding may be the most appropriate.

Effective Programs and Methods for Prevention of Bullying

Identification of an appropriate in-school anti-bullying program is critical for success. There are many approaches designed to handle bullying after it has occurred, but I would like to focus on a program to prevent the act of bullying.

Almost all education professionals agree that bullying is a complex and significant problem in schools today. There are two different programs that I would recommend for a school trying to eliminate bullying: 1) The Olweus Program, and 2) The state of Michigan anti-bullying policy. Since the Olweus program has cost associated with it, I will outline the state of Michigan Program, which is very similar to the Olweus program, but free of charge.

The state of Michigan has developed a list of what is considered to be bullying behavior and what is harassing behavior (Appendix 1). In my opinion, is the first step in an effective anti-bullying program is defining the meaning of bullying. Subsequent steps include:

- Printing the definitions of bullying and discussing them with both parents and students at the beginning of each school year;
- Ensuring that students, teachers, administrators, and parents are all in agreement and understand bullying behaviors.
IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION OF BULLYING

• Implementing consistent consequences for similar offenses. Some of the examples of the acceptable punishments for the first violation would be: removal of the classroom, loss of some privileges, or even in or out of school suspension just to name a few. If students are also on board and understand the program and consequences they can assist in enforcing it as well. If the program is effective, parents understand the consequences when their child demonstrates this negative behavior and is able in conjunction with the school effectively deal with their child. As time passes and all stakeholders can properly identify bullying behavior, the task of enforcement will also become easier. As a school is able to get the students looking out for that bullying behavior, and assisting in pointing out the students that are demonstrating the negative behavior the school becomes a more pleasant place to attend, therefore making education the top priority and all students are able to learn equally, which should be the number one goal of all school district.

• I would also suggest that students hand out a school climate survey at the beginning of the program to help the students understand that there is bullying and harassing going on in their school, and ask what they can do to help.

Suggestions for Future Work

Additional research is needed on the long-term effects of bullying on students as they age. Although bullying research has been going on for many years, the literature is mostly silent regarding the long-term effects on both the bully and the victim. Studies of recall of bullying events by older adults who were both bullies and bullied as children, and how those experiences affected their lives, would provide useful information to social scientists.
Summary

Bullying is a problem that effects a majority of the youth in the world today and, as educators, it is part of our responsibility to minimize these occurrences. Implementation of successful programs can help to avoid some of the negative behaviors at a young age, which in turn may help to minimize emotional consequences for both the bully and victim. An effective program is important to start at a young age, in many cases as early as kindergarten, and follow through all the way until they have graduated from high school. Consistent and fair consequences are important as well as follow through from students, parents, and education professionals in order for these programs to be effective.
References


Downloaded from http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/434/Bullying_at_school:_tackling_the_problem.html


Appendix: State of Michigan Bullying and Harassment guidelines

“Bullying” is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- Is directed at one or more pupils;
- Is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- Adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities by placing the pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress; and,
- Is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

“Harassment” is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- Is directed at one or more pupils;
- Is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
• Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;

• Adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,

• Is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics (Michigan State Board of Education, 2009).