CAUSES OF BULLYING, DIFFERENT REASONS FOR BULLYING AND CHARACTERISTICS - IDENTITY OF THE VICTIMS ACCORDING TO THE BULLIES (HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS)

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Abstract:

The research presents the results from the completion of a questionnaire exclusively by the participants of the study who have been perpetrators of acts of bullying. The results showed that the bullies to a small extent acknowledged that they became bullies because they felt powerful, because they like to dominate/oppress others, because they wanted recognition of their authority from their classmates, because they were afraid of becoming victims and because they had had previously been victims of bullying (in all cases the average value is equal to 2.0). Also, the results showed that the most important reason that pushed the bullies to bully was some particular characteristic of the victim (Mean=3.0, SD=1.0) and to a lesser extent identity -ethnicity, race, sexual orientation- (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0, Mean=2.0, SD=1.0, Mean=2.0, SD=1.0) respectively. According to the perpetrators, they bullied more often boys (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0), and students of their school (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0). Finally, it emerged that the most frequent form of bullying

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was derogatory comments (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0) followed by physical violence (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0).

Keywords: learning difficulties, ADHD, victimization

1. Introduction

1.1 Bully profile

International literature and research activity come to the conclusion that people who were bullies during their childhood or adolescence faced serious problems during their adulthood (Smith, & Sharp, 1994, Whitney, & Smith, 1993). Olweus (1993) in his long-term research records how of the children who were perpetrators, 55% by the age of 24 had shown provocative-delinquent behavior, 36% of them committed at least three criminal acts, while in contrast only 9.8% of people charged with a criminal offense had not been involved in a bullying incident (Olweus, 2013).

Regarding why a person becomes a bully there are two conflicting opinions. According to Olweus (1993), bullies have at least increased social skills, and in no case are they behind their peers. On the contrary, Suckling & Temple, (2001) argued that bullies show a deficit in social skills, score lower in self-esteem levels than their peers (despite their efforts to make it seem the opposite), and are possessed by a feeling of inferiority. All of the above mentioned by Suckling & Temple (2001) completes the profile of a complex individual and are a significant predictor of aggressive and antisocial behavior in adulthood (O'Moore, 2000; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998. Giannouli, V. & Pavlidis, G. Th. and Garner, P., 2013. Giannouli, V., Pavlidis, G. Th., & Price, G., 2014)

Abusers are essentially vulnerable emotional individuals, they are weak and because of these characteristics, they try to balance their psychological gaps through the manifestation of behaviors characterized as violent and aggressive (Herbert, 1998). But what is it that pushes a part of students with the characteristics of the bully to bully their peers, what is it that they seek by bullying? Obviously, there is more than one reason, it is a multifactorial network of causes that act either individually or in combination and result in the aggressive behavior of the victims.

Bullies seek social recognition and recognition, they are narcissists, they constantly want their power to be recognized by their peers, to be in the foreground in every social activity (even in those activities they are indifferent to or even hate), bullies feel that by their violent and aggressive behavior their popularity levels are constantly rising and therefore they continue their bullying work relentlessly (Olweus, 1993; Pavlidis, G. Th., 2011; Suckling & Temple, 2001).

In the majority of them, the abusers practice their intimidating practices (as a result of their individual characteristics) from an early age. The above claim is confirmed by the research of Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt (2000), which was carried out on a sample of 1639 children aged 6 to 9 years, and showed that adolescent bullies show problematic behavior since childhood. Many of the student bullies have been victims in

the past and in their attempt to break the wall of social marginalization, increase their popularity and feel socially successful, they bully their classmates over whom they are superior in power (offender-victim); (Pavlidis, G. Th., 2014. Roediger et al., 2011; Asimopoulos, 2008).

Much research reports an "externalizing of aggressive behaviors" as being related to the psycho-emotional background of the bullies, their characteristics, and temperament (Liu, 2004).

With the term "externalizing behaviors" we refer to a set of behavioral problems that children manifest outwardly as a result of their reactions to the negative components exerted on them by the external environment (Liu, 2004). Liu (2004) considers the terms "antisocial" and "externalizing behavior" to be synonymous. We must also mention that the inability to pay attention, impulsivity, hyperactivity together with a good physique are also some of the common characteristics of bullies (Ivarsson, Broberg, Arvidsson, & Gillberg, 2005).

The most common externalizing behavior of abusers is delinquent behavior. Abusers can be either boys or girls, they are self-confident individuals, have domineering tendencies, desire, and enjoy oppressing and torturing those around them (Kumpulainen et al., 2000). Boys bully more often than the other sex engages in physical bullying, while girls are more guilty of verbal and indirect bullying, i.e., spreading slanderous rumours, swearing verbally, behaving in an inelegant and often rude manner (Kumpulainen et al., 2001).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The sample

A total of 700 high school students attending secondary schools in Western Thessaloniki participated in the survey. Specifically, 339 boys (49.1%) and 351 girls (50.9%) participated, of whom 172 (24.57 %) were students with diagnosed special learning difficulties, 70 students (0.10 %) declared that they have special learning difficulties without a diagnosis, 26.4 % of them declared that they have diagnosed distraction, while 27.7 % of students stated that they do not have a diagnosis of distraction.

2.2 Research tools

To collect the data, the questionnaire of Professor G. Th. Pavlidis for Bullying (2016) was used. The questionnaire on bullying consists of three parts: 1st part: all students answer, 2nd part is answered by: students who are victims of bullying, 3rd part: answered by students who are the perpetrators of bullying. In the 2nd part of the questionnaire, the students who were bullied were asked to answer about the type and form of bullying they experienced, how many - who and what age were the perpetrators, who the observers were and what attitude they took, if they talked about the violence against them and who the perpetrator was, their feelings immediately after their victimization and finally how their past victimization affects them psycho-emotionally in the present.

The research was carried out in Secondary Education schools of Western Thessaloniki after first obtaining permission to enter schools from the IEP, the consent of the Principals and the Teachers' Association as well as parental consent. After relevant information on the objectives of the research, the days and hours of employment of the students were determined according to the terms of the approved proposal. The administration of the questionnaire was group-based, i.e., the questionnaires were administered to all students of the school class during a teaching hour in the presence of the researcher (after the permission of the class teacher).

2.2 Way the research data was analyzed
The statistical package SPSS (version 27) was used for the statistical processing of the data of this study. In the context of the descriptive statistics for the quantitative variables, either the mean and the standard deviation (SD) or the median with the interquartile range (IQR=Q1-Q3) were used, depending on the condition of regularity. In addition, the frequencies with the corresponding percentages (n(%)) were used for the qualitative variables. Bar graphs were used to graphically display the results. Then, for the inductive statistics and the investigation of correlations between the quantitative and qualitative variables of the sample, either the parametric tests t-test for independent samples (Independent Samples t-test) and analysis of variance by one factor (One-way ANOVA) were used or the non-parametric tests Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test. In the case of a statistically significant result in the analysis of variance and Kruskal-Wallis tests in order to identify where this came from post-hoc tests were performed according to the Bonferroni correction. In the present research work, we chose to present mainly the correlations between the factors of self-concept, learning difficulties, ADHD bullying, victims, perpetrators, observers, demographic characteristics, class, and gender of the students. Finally, to investigate correlations of a quantitative variable with a multitude of independent variables, linear regression models were used. The normality test was performed with the Shapiro-Wilk test and by making the necessary graphs (Histograms and Q-Q plots). Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha index. Satisfactory values of Alpha were considered those that were greater than 0.7. All tests performed were two-sided and relationships with a p-value less than 0.05.

3. Results

The questionnaire was completed only by the participants of the study who have been perpetrators of acts of bullying. Answers ranged from 1 to 5 (1= Not at All, 2= A Little, 3= Moderate-Fet, 4= A Lot, 5= Very Much). The mean and standard deviation (SD) were used for the descriptive analysis of the data.

Table 1 presents the questions regarding the reasons that led the participants of the study to become perpetrators of acts of bullying. The results from the responses of the offenders show that in all cases the average value is equal to 2.0. These results essentially show that the bullies to a small extent recognized that they became bullies in

acts of bullying because they felt powerful, because they like to dominate/oppress others, because they wanted the recognition of their authority by their classmates, because they were afraid of becoming victims and because they had been victims of bullying in the past.

Table 2 presents the questions regarding the seven possible different causes that became the reason for bullying by the students/perpetrators of the sample. The results showed that the most important reason that pushed the bullies to bully was some particular characteristic of the victim (Mean=3.0, SD=1.0). To a lesser extent, bullies were motivated to bully by the victim's country of origin (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), by the victim's race (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), and by the victim's sexual orientation (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0). Finally, the bullies reported that religion was never a reason for bullying other students (Mean=1.0, SD=1.0).

Table 3 presents the results for the questions concerning the ten different ways in which bullying was practiced. The results showed that the most common form of bullying was derogatory comments (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0) followed by physical violence (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), threats (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), offensive expressions and insults (Mean=2.0, SD=2.0), internet-mobile threats (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0) and the spread of false rumors aimed at isolating victims (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0). Finally, the perpetrators reported that they did not engage in any bullying in the form of vandalism (Mean=1.0, SD=1.0), theft (Mean=1.0, SD=1.0), destruction of objects (Mean=1.0, SD=1.0) and sexual harassment (Mean=1.0, SD=1.0).

Table 4 presents the results for the questions concerning the characteristics of the victims in the acts of bullying incidents according to the perpetrators. The results show that the perpetrators chose more often to bully boys (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0) and students of their school (Mean=3.0, SD=2.0). While more rarely they chose to bully girls (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), boys and girls (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0), or students outside their school (Mean=2.0, SD=1.0).

Table 1: Descriptive analysis results for the causes that led students to become bullies

Questions for bullies / Question number	Description of Questions	Average (mean)	Standard deviation (SD)
1	What were the reasons that led you to become a **victim** of bullying? **Because I felt strong.**	2.0	1.0
2	What were the reasons that led you to become a **victim** of bullying**?** **I like to owner - I press others.**	2.0	1.0
3	What were the reasons that led you to become a **victim** of bullying? **I wished recognition of my authority by my classmates.**	2.0	1.0
4	What were the reasons that led you to become a **victim** of bullying? **For fear of being their victim.**	2.0	1.0
5	What were the reasons that led you to become a **victim** of bullying? **Because I had been a victim of bullying before.**	2.0	1.0

Table 2: Descriptive analysis results for the reasons that led students to practice bullying

Questions for bullying perpetrators / Question number	Description of Questions	Average (mean)	Standard deviation (SD)
7	The violence you used is believed to have to do with the different: **Country of origin of the victims**	2.0	1.0
8	The violence you used you believe had to do with the different: **Their race**	2.0	1.0
9	The violence you used is believed to have to do with the different: **Their religion.**	1.0	1.0
10	The violence you were inflicting was related to the different: **Their sexual orientation**	2.0	1.0
11	The violence you were inflicting was related to the different: **Some particular characteristics of the victim (fat, short, bad student, etc.)**	3.0	1.0

Table 3: Results of a descriptive analysis of the forms of bullying carried out by the perpetrators

Questions for bullying perpetrators / Question number	Question Description	Average (mean)	Standard deviation (SD)
13	Physical violence (kicks, punches, pushes)	2.0	1.0
14	Threats	2.0	1.0
15	Derogatory comments (nicknames, mockery)	3.0	2.0
16	Offensive expressions and insults	2.0	2.0
17	Vandalism	1.0	1.0
18	Stealing	1.0	1.0
19	Destruction of objects	1.0	1.0
20	Sexual harassment	1.0	1.0
21	Online threats – mobile phone	2.0	1.0
22	Spreading false rumors about isolating them	2.0	1.0

Table 4: Descriptive analysis results for victims' characteristics

Questions for bullying perpetrators / Question number	Question Description	Average (mean)	Standard deviation (SD)
24	The Victims of Bullying were: **Boys**	3.0	2.0
25	The Victims of Bullying were: **Girls**	2.0	1.0
26	The Victims of Bullying were: **Boys and girls**	2.0	1.0
27	The Victims of Bullying were: **Students of the school**	3.0	2.0
28	The Victims of Bullying were: **Extracurriculars**	2.0	1.0

4. Discussion

Abusers usually come from oppressive family environments and many times even abusive ones, of low socio-economic educational level. As result of their oppressive and sometimes abusive treatment is the manifestation on their part of unnecessary and repeated and sometimes aggressive action (Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

Also, the bullies show low levels of empathy, they do not have the acceptance of the teachers (for this reason they consider the school as an unsafe environment, an environment that rejects them), they do not achieve learning goals (they usually lag behind their peers academically), they cause pain and negative emotions to others (Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

It is noteworthy that the abusive treatment of abusers by their families in many cases refers to the exercise of physical violence by their parents on them (Smith & Brain, 2000). In summary, abusers want to be the leaders of the group, to feel that everyone serves and serves their needs, to initiate the developments themselves, to enjoy social acceptance, to insatiably feed their narcissistic mood (usually they are physically dirty) and they don't care about how their victims feel (Graham & Bellmore, 2007).

Finally, it is important to point out that bullies enjoy in most cases when they bully the acceptance and emotional support of the bystanders, which confirms the claim that bullying is not the manifestation of aggressive behavior of an individual or a group of bullies, but is a result of the collective behavior of those present (Barboza, Schiamberg, Oehmke, Korzeniewski, Post, & Heraux, 2009).

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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