

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF AGGRESSIVE, LUDIC AND BULLYING BEHAVIOURS WITHIN SCHOOL*

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Abstract

In this study, we aimed at assessing the manner pupils manage their conflict situations and verifying how bullying occurs with them. Fifty-nine students, boys and girls, aged between 7 and 10 took part in this study. Thus, we could verify the students involved with bullying by using the Dan Olweus's questionnaire, adapted by Nogueira (2007). We could also observe the PE lesson time informally, i.e. during the break, for four months. By using the Smith's criteria (2004), any behaviour defining schoolchildren as 'aggressors' was not identified. Concerning boys, was also observed that they like playful games with physical shocks and know the difference of a serious fight, revealing clearly that they know the limits for games and aggression.

Keywords: Human Development - Bullying - Aggressiveness - Playful

Introduction

Nowadays, one of the matters that have arisen interest and curiosity from professionals in the fields of education and health, worldwide, is the school bullying (LEVANDOSKI, 2009). Probably, one of the reasons for such interest is due to the psychologically and physiologically drastic bullying effect on subjects' health. Children victims of bullying, as everyone knows, have high probability to suffer from problems of physical, psychological, and social health (WOLKE et. al. 2001). Adversely, the media have concomitantly explored the school with news discussing the school environment as a violent place, which includes fights, invasions, and depredations; often causing deaths (MARRIEL et. al. 2006).

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The term school violence, initially, regards to all aggressive and anti-social behaviours, e.g. interpersonal conflicts, public property damage, criminal acts (LOPES NETO, 2005). Sundry situations, as those ones, depend on external factors, and its interventions can be beyond school education authorities' ability and capability and its employees. Nogueira, (2007) also mention that not always the school violence includes irregular situations and nor near the term delinquency or crime. Hence, we preferred bullying, which is one of the systematic and intentional ways of violence, neutralising the victim's defence possibility. It is important to point up that the fact of only performing violent behaviours cannot be confused with the bullying event.

For Ferreira Neto et. al. (2006), the bullying behaviour has been more and more present in school breaks as an acute problem. They also consider the forms, types, associated factors and other places more affected by such behaviour. Thus, bullying is a set of aggressive, intentional and repetitive attitudes, which occurs without obvious motivation. Most often, it is performed by some students against other ones (OLWEUS, 1994), causing anguish and a terrible lonely suffering and wounding such victims. Consequently, it causes psychological blocks and loss of quality for human development.

Bullying practice occurs in many ways, namely, (a) direct actions: physical aggressions and (b) indirect actions: verbal aggressions and malicious words, both with the purpose of wounding victims. The direct form includes open attacks to victims with individual or in-group actions (also known by the term in pairs) against only one person. There is also other less proactive form, which involves actions of social isolation and exclusion within social group (PEREIRA, 2002).

For Williams and Pinheiro (2006), bullying studies are scarce and very recent in Brazil. Souza (2006), catalogued bibliographical studies including research on bullying practice, which intend to find out the contribution to the source of production that the physical education (PE) have developed to identify, investigate and eradicate such practice. More than 100 references for such matter were found, and 14 of them mention bullying practice differently in the field of PE. Nogueira (2007) cites a weighty answer for such result when saying that some authors most often delimit their general concept on bullying study to comprehend only some specific features. Somehow, such fact meaningfully delimits the relevance to understand the bullying in its entirety.

In this wise, the studies of Francisco (2006) reveals that only for schools from outskirts there was a reduction in the bullying occurrences with the rise in school education. It can be observed mainly when compared to schools from central region of Presidente Prudente¹.

There are growing types of violence manifestations in school environment effecting children's school performance. Thus, it is necessary helping professional in such field to identify, investigate and solve such problem. Acting this way, a better socialisation and learning in school environment can be provided. In this study, therefore, we aimed at assessing the manner students manage their conflict situations and verifying how bullying occurs in two small private schools at Ponta Grossa (a city in the state of Paraná, Brazil) for education system of the state of Paraná.

Methodology

This study is not probabilistic and descriptive and tried to comprehend schoolchildren's perception in primary school involving social relations that cause aggressiveness, playful situations and bullying. Fifty-nine schoolchildren took part in this study. They were at the 1st, 3rd and 4th year of the primary school from two low-income small private schools at Ponta Grossa city. The name 'small' used here was to call schools from outskirts by the urban centre, which possesses, as a main feature, few students per class.

The city of Ponta Grossa was found on 15 September 1822, particularly affected by European immigration, i.e. Dutch, Italian, German, Poles and Ukrainian. It is located in Central-South state of Paraná, with 2,068 km² for total area. The population is 306 351 inhabitants, considering that 50 211 are bona fide pupils in primary school (IBGE, 2007).

The studied group had (a) 30 boys: 8.8 for average age (roughly 1.1 y.o.) and 4.1 years for typical school attendance (roughly 1.6 years) and (b) 29 girls: 8.8 for average age (roughly 0.9 y.o.) and long school experience disclosure for both genders. The assessment to establish and find students involved in bullying was performed by using interview with professor Dan Olweus's questionnaire adapted by No-

1-Presidente Prudente is a municipality in the state of São Paulo in Brazil, with a population of roughly 207 000 inhabitants.

gueira, (2007 p. 255), Parte C: O Bullying nas escolas². Informal observation was also used during PE lessons and breaks in August, September, October and November 2007. Such questionnaire consists of 23 open questions, applied as interview during ten-minute mean time for each participant. By the content analysis method according to Bardin (2000), better categories were created to assess the quantitative results statistically, turning them into categorical data.

The collected values were organised and assessed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 14.0) for Windows, with significance level fixed at $p < 0.05$. We used descriptive statistics to identify the percentage of relative frequency for categorised information and Mann-Whitney U test (MWW) to inform the difference among groups. The school authorities were informed of procedures that would be used with the help of official documentation from Ethics Committee in Human Beings of the State University of Santa Catarina.

Results

In table 1, one can see the inquiries with answers separated by gender from inquiries that investigate the bullying practice in school. Afterwards, the difference between boys and girls are presented based on MWW, considering $p < 0.05$.

2-['Part C: Bullying in schools']

Table 1: Answer differences for boys and girls respecting bullying practice.

| | BOYS | | GIRLS | | U | P |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|----------|
| | YES % | NO % | YES % | NO % | | |
| 1. Have you ever heard about bullying? | 3.3 | 96.7 | 0 | 100 | 420.5 | 0.326 |
| 2. Do you know any form of bullying? | 3.3 | 96.7 | 0 | 100 | 420.5 | 0.326 |
| 3. Have you ever been alone because you friends did not want stay with you? | 6.7 | 93.3 | 13.8 | 86.2 | 404.0 | 0.369 |
| 4. Have you ever suffered any slander? | 30 | 70 | 24.1 | 75.9 | 409.5 | 0.616 |
| 5. Have you ever seen anyone getting a beating in school? | 86.7 | 13.3 | 34.5 | 65.5 | 208 | < 0.001* |
| 6. Do you know if teachers let pupils more violent do bad things for others? | 0 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 435 | 1.000 |
| 7. Have you ever known anyone telling teacher about violent cases? | 30 | 70 | 55.2 | 44.8 | 370 | 0.243 |
| 8. Have you ever been abused outside school? | 33.3 | 66.7 | 41.4 | 58.6 | 400 | 0.526 |
| 9. Have you ever insulted or wounded anyone? | 50 | 50 | 10.3 | 89.7 | 262.5 | 0.001* |
| 10. Have you ever made fun of anyone? | 66.7 | 33.3 | 48.3 | 51.7 | 355 | 0.156 |

For the results of table 1, we found significant differences only for questions 5 and 9. Since the other questions are insignificant, such fact can be discussed as a cultural manifestation, independently from gender selection. Thus, the percentages in the next paragraphs show all sample results.

Concerning questions 1 and 2, 98.3 % of pupils (boys and girls) answered that they did not know on that term, showing astonishment at bullying term and being curious about its meaning. Only one boy knew such term and its meaning by an electronic game.

Most pupils, roughly 93.3 % of boys and 86.2 % of girls, did not present difficulty in relating to other classmates. It is also important to mention that only one boy and two girls told that ‘few times’ they were excluded from classmate groups, due to misunderstanding for discussion in classroom.

As claimed by the interviewees, most often physical aggressions come from verbal provocations. In addition, within friendship group 66.7 % of boys and 48.3 % of girls told that they have already made



fun of someone. Thus, according to them, based on such misunderstandings, (a) physical aggressions usually starts from them, (b) all pupils who took part in the research agree with the fact that boys are more aggressive than girls, (c) 86.7 % of boys and 34.5 % of girls had already seen a violent physical fight and (d) 50.0 % of boys and 10.3 % of girls had already wounded someone in a physical fight, causing serious wound as nosebleed.

There was a consensus of 100 % for teacher or employee performances, since they acted trying to avoid aggressive acts of stronger pupils against others in school. For such violent cases, 72.4 % of girls would call teacher as a first defence action, and others 'would shout or run' before calling teacher. By contrast, for boys, 33.3 % would try to defend themselves against it, but they confessed that would attack if necessary; 43.3 % said that would attack firstly; 20.0 % would call teacher.

We realised in the answers nuances of solidarity: 90.0 % of boys and 75.9 % of girls said that they would help their classmate in physical disadvantage. Concerning the minority, they would encourage the aggressor, considering that some pupils like to laugh at this.

We asked each interviewee 'Do you see yourself as the strongest in your group?', and 23.3 % of boys and 17.2 % of girls answered yes. According to this, we realised that 34.5 % of girls mentioned 'being afraid' of pupils who said they are the strongest ones, stating intimidation regarding such self-called the strongest pupils.

Discussion

Shortly, we verified that all pupils, without gender distinction, do not know the term bullying and its performance forms (directly or indirectly), but they seem to have interest in it. We observed that 30.5 % have already wounded someone seriously; 60.1 % have already seen a fight, and when we asked about the reaction for such act, 83.1 % answered that would held the classmate in disadvantage; 57.6 % have already made fun of someone; and 49.1 % told that they did not allow someone to attack them, and if necessary, as defence, they would also attack the aggressor to protect themselves. We realised that fights always occur in classrooms caused by in-class misunderstandings most often from undesirable nicknames, considering that 44.3 % do not have it and like this, both in breaks and physical activities; 96.6 %

are not direct victims in classmate groups, but 35.6 % showed afraid from a specific classmate. Such fact clarifies a bullying occurrence as indirect actions, but that does not fulfil the existence of a bullying practice.

Based on informal observation in the school environment of this study, we realised that a great barrier found in the pupils' human development process is too much worry of teachers to avoid or control situations for physical control. Sundry of such strategies used by teachers to avoid such behaviours is against some directives for syllabus basis.

According to BRASIL (1998), the National Curriculum Parameters for PE includes activity as games and jokes, sports, dances, gymnastics and fights; and all such activities have in common the body performance with sundry aspects of human culture. However, what is the barrier to differentiate 'fight from play' or 'play from dissimulate'? It means that where is the limit for fair-play and oppression in social relations, considering that not always the results from a violent act are from physical contact. Interrupting such stage, or guide pupils to not experience specific activities (or non-recommended), e.g. play at fighting, can hinder such process. Mainly because conflict situations are necessary during such age stage so that pupils develop strategies to solve alone their daily problems.

Fighting involves movements that help to develop motor abilities, and such abilities will be able to be used as motor resources for other sports or playful activities. In addition, knowing how to fight is a feature of our instinct, which was always present in our evolution. When two children are playing at fighting, they are absorbing sundry motor movements that from such practice they will be able to hold such motor learning (SCHMIDT & WRISBERG, 2001). The problem with such activity is when the subjects stop playing and start 'fighting seriously', showing aggressive behaviours with disrespect for others.

Somehow, whatsoever cruel it may be, bullying can also be considered a game, for who practises such action. For Tannock (2008), the educators interviewed in his study believe that with tough games and aggressive jokes children learn how to adapt their game over other players' game. Such fact strengthens the idea that pupils are also learning their limits and ensuring that all players feel comfortable with the experience.

Rayburn, Goetz & Osman, (2001) studied the leadership in physi-

cal activities. They found that between men and women, for frustration with games and sports in school, women are meaningfully marked with high values ($t=-1.986$; $p=0.026$). This can be explained by broader motor experience for male gender, which boys have in comparison with girls. Such physical contact activities provide a greater exposure for wound, creating, thus, displeasure for girls who try to avoid such body activities. Such fact of pupils having the initiative to fight as a joke, however, makes them experience more situations involving control and leadership.

Comparing humans and animals to body movement practices, one can realise that animals fight for two basic reasons: to establish (a) control and social hierarchy and (b) rights to control the territory. Not all animal species show such features simultaneously (MORRIS, 2001). We, humans, present both of them, i.e. we are hierarchical and territorial, but we show such features with complexity and rationality.

For Freire (2002), the game is all our self-perception shows what is game. When two pupils are playing at fighting, they are using their thought and creating strategies to overcome their opponents' imagination, differently from animals. According to Piaget (1975), this is the difference between humans and animals. Animals perform movement with motor reflex and instinct, e.g. attacking and running away; however, they know the limit for attacking violently and not attacking violently. Thus, it is based on such imagination created within mind that allows human beings to play.

Considering the informal observation, once can realise sundry behaviour situations that simulate physical aggressions and indirect actions that perhaps can cause bullying. Such fact, however, did not represent emerging worry, since it is only simulation for fighting movements. This study brings a contribution respecting violence demonstration for pupils at such age group in schools. Nevertheless, we could not define what causes such behaviour manifestation, since the study was only for interviews based on pupils' self-assessment concerning bullying situations.

When we performed this study, somehow, we did not prove situations for aggression and victimisation. The hypothesis to clarify such fact is that with little territorial space is easy to control pupils by employees help, and difficult to access some pupils with bullying manifestation. Despite this, considering teachers' perception, was reported that a small percentage of pupils in such school environment are afraid

of a specific classmate.

Limits for this study

The tools used to identify bullying victims and aggressors are usually questionnaires, which assess six manners of victimisation managed methodologically by using infancy back-analysis and present time (adolescence). The six key points must correspond to going back to facts, broke belongings, verbal aggression, used as object of entertainment, social exclusion and gossips (WOLKE & SAPOUNA, 2007). In this study, due to assessed pupils being very young, we observed that was difficult for them to understand some terms present in the questionnaire. Such fact, thus, make us change how to manage such information to individual interview.

A huge limit is to believe that the tools will supply a result without errors or finally indicate the pupils with characteristics of aggressors and victims. The questionnaire shows such key-information and indicates factors for vulnerability on potential situations of victimisation. Somehow, however, such fact does not necessarily indicate a bullying action, which is characterised by a systematic abuse of power along time.

Conclusion

For the pupils, the concept of violence is replaced by the information showed by spoken and written media, televisions, besides the school experiences and parents' and teachers' guidance during the interview. We pointed out that primarily boys like to play at fighting and know differentiate 'fighting seriously', showing clearly that they know the limits for games and aggressions.

The school professionals should be on alert for typical manifestations of such behaviour, e.g. pupils showing skills to control classmates by using words and arguments. By using the misuse of words, pupils will be able to create situations that reveal an excessive power and even use such leadership negatively to manipulate their classmates.

Other importance is the nonexistence of tools to identify such phenomenon for the Brazilian population. A suggestion for new research is to test other research tools before an assessment that shape our cultural context. Along this study, we saw how complex is to study and

comprehend the violence as a whole. The ethical feedback for the teaching institution with the results helped to prevent against potential conducts that created such situations of fear. In addition, it prevented aggressive behaviours to lessen the situations that could make other pupils vulnerable or victims.

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