BULLYING IN SCHOOLS, TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND REACTIONS

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the connection between bullying and the students' perception of the level that this negative habit is present in schools, and also the teachers' reaction to this phenomenon, whether they take certain steps to prevent it or they are indifferent to it.

Currently 140 students in three primary schools (Naim Frashëri, Cyril and Methodius, Istikbal) in Tetovo were asked if they were bullies or victims using the Illinois Bully Scale as a questionnaire. Moreover, 46 teachers participated in the sample of our research. They responded on how they would react to bullying. For this, we used The Handling Bullying Questionnaire (HBQ).

The data gathered from the surveys and interviews revealed that bullying is not in fact present in schools of this study. Furthermore, 80% of students said that they neither were bullied nor bullies. The 11% of the sample shows only once or two times of bullying experience, the other 3% three or four times, and just 2% five or six times, and 4% more than seven times of being bullied. The results from The Handling Bullying Questionnaire shows that 60% of teachers in our sample of study affirmed that they would definitely do something to prevent bullying in schools, 8% probably would attempt to do something, and 22% of them are unsure what they will or have to do. Just 5% probably would not do anything, and the other 5% perhaps will do nothing.

Keywords: bullying, agression, school, teacher, students

Introduction

> *'Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent. Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have an obligation to be one.'*
> Eleanor Roosevelt

The school is an educative institution, where from the very beginnings, the social relations change diametrically. In these new relations that are created, various problems arise, including the appearance of bullying.

Rejected by the group, felt alone without any friends; we all went through this during certain periods of life, either at the beginning of primary school or at a slightly older age, i.e. in puberty. There are many factors that can affect the appearance of bullying in schools, namely in elementary schools. Some examples of such factors may be social relationships, student's economic status, appearance, student's weight, success at school, etc.

But what will teachers do to deal with such situations, how will they manage and prevent bullying?

During the preparation of this paper, the situation of the schools, namely of the elementary schools, specifically of the ninth grade, will be presented in terms of the problems that occur among the students and the role of the teachers in preventing them.

The results of this research, gained frrom the data collection on the presence of bullying in schools, and the teachers' and students' attitude on this phenomenon, will pave the way for working towards identifying the problem of this very negative phenomenon.

One aspect that deserves special attention is the problem of how to check on and discover the bullying students.

Of all the other processes that the teacher has to carry out in the teaching process, he should also register, analyze, and judge, what measures and instruments he will use, to be able to identify the bullying student or students in the classroom for any type of bullying.

According to various researchers (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Roland, 1989; Hazler, 1996; Rigby, 1996; Ttofi et al., 2008), bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour, which occurs between children, mainly in school. It is deliberate and it causes physical or psychological damage and it can be expressed individually or within a group. Usually it is persistent, since it is repeated and it can last for weeks, months or even years. Bullying behavior derives from a need to abuse power over others and a desire to dominate them. There is an inequality (imbalance) of power between bullies and victims.

What is meant by bullying?

According to various researchers (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Roland, 1989; Hazler, 1996; Rigby, 1996), bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour, which occurs between children, mainly at school.

A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and overtime, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another - basically what is implied in the definition of aggressive behaviour in the social sciences (Olweus, 1973b). Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or unpleasant gestures, spreading rumours, and intentional exclusion from a group. Although children or young people who engage in bullying are very likely to vary in their degree of awareness of how the bullying is perceived by the victim, most or all of them probably realize that their behaviour is at least somewhat painful or unpleasant to the victim.

Three groups of individuals are directly involved in bullying: Bullies are the perpetrators of bullying behaviour. Olweus (1991b), argues that the main characteristics of bullies are impulsivity, aggressiveness, physical strength, and dominant behaviour. They appear to have a positive perception for violence, and adopt exclusively aggressive strategies in negotiating their interpersonal conflicts, because they lack alternative skills for conflict resolution (Hoover et al., 1992; Wolke et al., 2004). Victims are the targets of bullying behaviour. Victims tend to show increased symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hodges & Perry, 1999), they usually have low self-esteem and poor social skills (Egan & Perry, 1998), they have difficulties to remain in school (Reid, 1983), they do not actively participate in school activities (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997), and they show psychosomatic symptoms, as well as low self-confidence (Boulton & Smith 1994). Bully/Victims are children who are involved in bullying both as bullies and as victims.

The researcher characterizes different forms of bullying: physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying, cyber bullying and gender bullying.
a) Physical bullying entails the use of a physical ability or strength by a student to hurt or control another student (Rigby, 1996; Radtke & Stam, 1994). Physical bullying is overt in nature, includes open attacks and is usually caused by immediate spontaneous anger

(Rigby, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Some scholars on bullying (Sharrif, 2008; Owens et al., 2001; Rigby, 1996; Olweus, 1993) assert that forms of physical bullying are more prominent among boys than girls. In addition, Sharrif (2008) contends that, although physical bullying is observable, it is also termed hidden bullying because it often happens in the absence of adults, teachers, and supervisors.

b) Verbal bullying occurs when a student or a group of students use (s) language to hurt another student or group of students (Culpeper, 2011). Direct verbal bullying happens when the expression used by a student does not conform to the values and norms of a cultural group (Culpeper, 2011). In the case of verbal bullying the audience or hearer perceives the utterance as ostracizing, painful, and negative (Sharrif, 2008).

c) Social bullying - Field et al. (2009) define social bullying as a "behaviour that seeks to destroy a person's social status through attacking his/her social and sexual reputation". Social bullying is a nonverbal form of bullying which cannot be heard or seen because its aim is to hurt silently (Culpeper, 2011; Anderson, 2007). Field et al. (2009) state that if social bullying involves a larger group, some victims will find it difficult to understand their fault or know the perpetrator.

d) Cyber-bullying - Hinduja and Patchin (2009) and Meyer (2009) define cyber-bullying as the use of an electronic medium of communication such as emails or text messages to threaten or harm others. Computers, cell phones, emails, Facebook, and YouTube, can be used for hate speech and offensive and improper comments, and video clips and photographs by a student to hurt other students (Meyer, 2009; Shariff, 2008).

e) Gender bullying occurs when a student hurts another as a consequence of adhering to the acceptable or traditional sexual norms, dominant sex culture, or male domination practices (Stromquist & Fischman, 2009). Consistent with the latter, Bhana et al. (2009) found that the teachers involved in their investigation asserted that males have to dominate and view gender bullying as triggered by female disrespect for males.
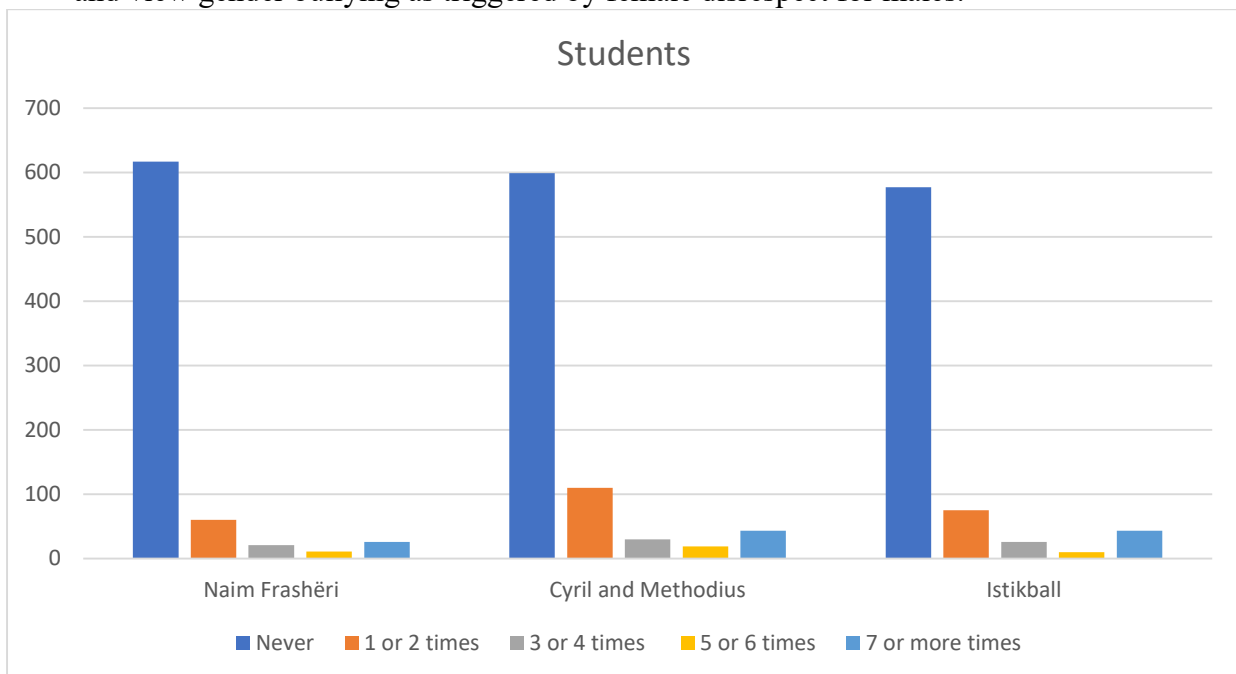

Figure 1. Graphical presentation of the results of the survey on how much the students are bullies and how many of them are victims of bullying in all the three schools.

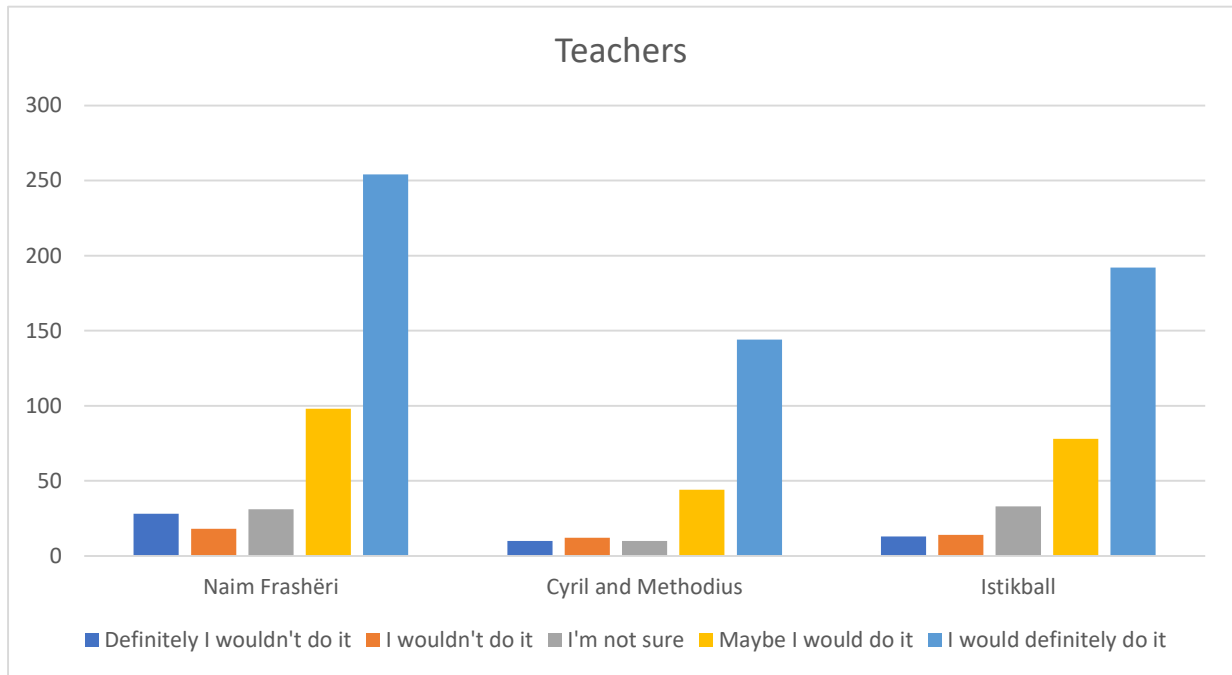| Students	Never	1 or 2 times	3 or 4 times	5 or 6 times	7 or more times
Females	1038 (86%)	97 (8%)	24 (2%)	12(1%)	30 (3%)
Males	755 (73%)	148 (14%)	53 (5%)	28 (3%)	56 (5%)
Total	1793	245	77	40	86
Percentage %	80%	11%	3%	2%	4%

Figure 2. Graphic presentation of the results of the survey on how much teachers can prevent bullying and their attitude towards this phenomenon.

Table 2. Total results obtained from the teachers' survey in the three primary schools in Tetovo: "Cyril and Methodius", "Naim Frashëri", "Istikbal".

Teachers	I would never do it	I wouldn't do it	I'm not sure	Maybe I would do it	I would definitely do it
Total	51	44	74	220	590
Percentage %	5%	5%	8%	22%	60%

Research process

On bullying, as a present and negative phenomenon, it was unnecessary to do a research in our country, namely in Tetovo. The purpose of this survey was to: gather accurate data on how present the phenomenon is and how the teachers would react to this phenomenon. We have put forward some hypotheses such as: Bullying is present in schools, there are gender differences in the presence of this phenomenon.

As a sample were taken 140 primary school pupils of the 9th grade, as this category was the most appropriate one, and 46 teachers of this grade.

The data was collected from 8 March until 16 March 2018 in three primary schools: Cyril and Methodius, Naim Frasheri, and Istikbal. From the processing of the data we found that 80% of students never exercised bullying and neither were victims of bullying, 11% (1 or 2 times) were bullied and or were victims of bullying, 3% (3 or 4 times) were victims or bullies, 2% were (5 or 6 times) victims or bullies and 4% (7 or more times) have exercised bullying or have been victims of bullying. While 60% of teachers would definitely have helped the student if he was a victim of bullying, 22% might have helped the student victim, 8% are not sure on how they would act, 5% would not have helped, and 5% definitely would not have helped the student.

Recommendations

- Based on the data collected from the research, as well as based on the conclusions drawn, we recommend:
- Although it was found that most of the students are not bullies or victims of bullying, in order to prevent any case of bullying, we need to identify it and certainly prevent the bullies from doing it.
- There should be organized different activities about what bullying is and its types, since it is a phenomenon not very well known to students but also to teachers in school, and may therefore result with the worst consequences.
- There should be more collaboration between school staff and parents.
- To have internal school regulations and reports of students who are bullies, so that the students who have violated the rules may be reasonably disciplined.
- Bullying behavior and its various aspects to become part of the curriculum.
- At school, a safe environment for the student must be established. Security begins in the classroom, in the yard, in cabinets, in sports halls, in corridors, in toilets, and so on.
- Teachers each month should organize different games on how to resolve conflicts, so that students have a clear idea of what are the negative sides if they are aggressors or victims. These situations that students will create through games, will make clear to teachers what is happening in their classroom but will also help students feel safer and more supported.
- Students who are only observers (neither aggressors nor victims) make up the majority of students and should therefore be encouraged to assist in adapting and improving prevention and intervention. However, students may not know what to do in such situations, so the various discussions and actions taken in the classroom can help them develop appropriate measures that they can take when they are witnesses or victims of bullying.
- Teachers must face the aggressor privately, because meetings in the presence of other students may lead to greater aggressiveness.
- Teachers should develop strategies to reward students who show positive behaviors, such as distributing certificates of appreciation, praise, and so forth.

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