

Bullying behaviours and gender differences among adolescents of ages 11-13

¹Ida Kruti, ²Klevisa Muça, ³Zhaklina Paskali

¹Head of department of psychology, ²Lecturer, ³Researcher,

¹ Department of psychology, ² Department of psychology, ³ Department of psychology
College University "Wisdom"

Email - ida_t2002@yahoo.de; klevisa.muca@yahoo.com; zhaklina.paskali@wisdom.edu.al

Abstract: *The phenomenon of bullying is very worrying in Albanian schools. Recently public opinion has been shaken by bullying events or episodes. For professionals it is also a major concern. The study is a modest attempt to empirically understand this phenomenon in our schools, on the prevalence of this phenomenon and gender differences. The purpose of this paper comes from the necessity to conduct a study on the phenomenon of bullying in our context. It aims to make an analysis of the knowledge, frequency and nature of the phenomenon of bullying in some of the Albanian schools through a quantitative study, as well as the knowledge of the attitudes and reactions of teachers on this phenomenon, and how these cases are treated by conducting a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews.*

The study provides some recommendations regarding the prevention and treatment of bullying at the school and classroom level, which can be used by teachers, school principals, parents, psychologists, and school social workers.

Key Words: *Bullying behaviour, students 11-13 years old, victims, aggressors, teachers, management and strategy.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Bullying in schools is not a new phenomenon, but today it is not considered a phenomenon which leads to increasing marginalization of individuals within the school environment, despite the fact that this behaviour is seen as unbearable behaviour, which poses a threat to the well-being of children (Sebastian Wachs S. and Schubarth W.2021) Bullying refers to the repeated attempt to harm another person, leading to an imbalance (imbalance) between two forces, the bull (tyrant) and the victim.

Exchanging replicas without malice, hostile harassment, harassment of someone who is less strong, someone who is isolated, is little known by others, use of swearing because of race, ethnicity, religion should not be tolerated, but the dividing line between them is somewhat difficult. Although bullying can occur wherever people interact with each other in social groups such as at work, in universities, in the family, in kindergarten, in re-education institutions, or schools as an institution they always remain the centre of studies of such bullying.

According to Alber, Brown & Jones, (2003) in a longitudinal study spanning a two-year period, which focused on a sample of students from 1st grade to 6th grade found that aggressive children who teachers were taught conflict management strategies, renounced the path of aggression and violence. Silence about aggression and bullying, can be considered by students as an approval given by the teacher.

Bullying acts are often justified as sporadic acts of age, occurring among children without considering the possible consequences for both parties, the aggressor and the victim, but also other actors in this environment.

The social environment in which they interact, such as schools or classrooms, brings cooperation from other students, or spectators of these events, but also the families of victims are people who express their concerns and seek solutions from the school institution, where they think the problem has started.

This view changes not only because of the perception that school from a place of imparting knowledge and qualifications to a place of social interaction and growing awareness of the issue, where bullying is not a peripheral problem but a risk to the child's well-being, as and a burden on the entire school community.

This paper will shed light on the elements of development and typical age characteristics, growth factors that make the age group of 11 - 13/14 years vulnerable to bully behaviour.

Starting from the problem, we decided to shed light on the current state of the problem in a limited sample, as well as the real role that the school can play not only in eliminating this worldwide phenomenon, but also preventing bullying behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW / THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE :

Bullying as a phenomenon is more the cause of several complex social factors than simply the cause of a single event (Macklem, 2003).

Ecological model theory emphasizes that human actions and experiences are not only guided by their own characteristics.

According to Philip, (2009) Sanders, (2010) Sullivan, (2004) it is believed that an individual who is exposed to violence at an early age is more likely to become an aggressor compared to someone who grew up in a family where violence has not been present.

Referring to Bandura theory, children learn the displayed aggression. Studies have found that children who are victims of domestic violence try to be aggressive even in school, seeing it as a way to get them out.

According to Olweus (1978, 2010) bullying is understood as a specific form of interpersonal violence in which a weaker person repeats for a long period of time harmful actions to one or several individuals

Bullying and violence have elements in common, as both phenomena relate to a different level of expression of power. Aggression can occur between two people, mostly with the same force, compared to aggression and violence, bullying is defined as such only when it occurs repeatedly, while aggression and violence occur sporadically (Olweus 1978). Referring to the literature, bullying can be expressed in the following ways (Bradshaw et al. 2015; Olweus 2010; Scheithauer et al. 2006):

1. Physical bullying which involves physical injury to the target person, accompanied by kicks, or in women may be accompanied by actions such as pulling hair.
2. Verbal bullying is characterized by offensive statements, insults about race, social status, injuries, verbal threats, etc.
3. Relationship bullying is characterized by the destruction of social relations e.g. deliberate concealment by a peer group, fabricating stories, or spreading gossip.
4. Cyber mobbing is a trend in today's society, not only for children but also for adults. The fact of having a very fast and simple access through the internet today makes it one of the most usable and quickly accessible. Some of the most common ways of virtual or cyber bullying are: threatening through messages / chat room, fake phone calls, publishing and distributing illegal images and threatening through a social network.

Skin colour, appearance, physical problems, beliefs, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status, become objects of bullying.

According to the literature bullying individuals are not born with bullying traits, despite the fact that aggression or violent behaviours are characterized by biological factors. A bully may have become such as a result of the role models of the authoritarian figures they have in their life, under whom pressure they experience psychological and emotional problems. Bullying students are characterized by low self-esteem, like to feel powerful and in control of others. They behave aggressively and manipulatively with others, often they come from families, in which physical violence is used to discipline their children. They are not motivated to attend school and mostly their academic achievements are low. At school they have difficulty concentrating, at the same time displaying their characteristic complaints from health problems.

Bullied students, on the other hand, are usually insecure, self-centred, isolated, have low self-esteem, and are often unable to defend themselves or oppose others. Bullied students often find their parents' intervention useless and rarely talk about their problems, usually when parents notice a change in behaviour, such as refusing to go to school, have suicidal thoughts, are dependent and submissive to others, show symptoms of anxiety disorders, lack of focus on learning, even marked decline from lessons, as well as unusual nerve outbursts and emotional problems mainly in places where they feel safe.

Dr. Peter Paul Heinemann (1972), a physician and Holocaust survivor, developed a theory about bullying as a result of observing the local community's hostility toward his adopted son, who was a person of colour. He studied the behaviour of humans in parallel with the observation of the instinctive violent behaviour of a group of birds within their community, which in ethology is called "mobbing" (mobbing), who attacked the weakest member of their flock.

Bullying and the forms of its manifestation in school

Bullying at school comes in many forms. Referring to the literature (Frude & Gault, 1984) the following groups result:

1. Teacher versus students
2. The student versus the teacher
3. Student to a student

This study identifies the forms of bullying, which is divided into the following two categories:

- a. direct, e.g., hitting, pushing or kicking.
- b. not direct, e.g. spreading malicious rumours causing them
- c. emotional suffering victims.

Gender and Bullying (mobbing)

Studies conducted in Norway and Sweden (Olweus, 1993) showed that boys were more exposed to bullying than girls, especially during primary education. Referring to gender, 80% of victims are male. Meanwhile, 60% of bullied women were harassed by male bullies. They engage in more indirect bullying, such as social exclusion, or mockery of victims.

According to Taper and Boulton (2004) boys are more often involved in bullying situations.

Referring to Solberg and Olweus (2003) among the victims of bullying there is a greater number of boys than girls with significant differences between the two groups. The prevalence of this difference is independent of age.

Boys present aggression rates two or three times higher than girls. In the case of victims it turns out that these are mostly male (Espelage, Mebane & Adams, 2004). According to Veenstra (2005), the study conducted with a sample of adolescent students found that passive victims are mostly female.

Factors influencing bullying behaviours

According to Schwartz (2000), aggressive and bullying behaviours in modern societies are treated as key factors of these behaviours:

Family, as studies on family life have shown that aggressive children have parents who use equally similar tactics when confronting others. While the children of abused mothers also reflect aggressive behaviour.

People living in areas where violence is present every day are more likely to act violently than those living in low crime areas.

The media has been treated for years as a promoter of aggressive, anti-social and bullying behaviours. The level of physical violence in cartoons is also an element, which has recently raised discussions in the public debate, not only in our country but also beyond. Movies on television show violence, which is often portrayed as a behaviour acceptable especially to heroes, who never face the consequences that come as a result of their actions.

Prejudices, where children belonging to these groups are ridiculed by peers, given offensive epithets or excluded from the group of peers to which they belong, due to prejudices and stereotypes that exist in the respective societies where the child lives.

Family and lifestyle within the family. According to Harris & Reid, (1981), Morton, (1987), Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsay, (1989), Patterson & Yerger, (2002), Farrington, (2005) identify several factors, which influence the violent behaviour, like: loss of family, change of traditional roles, lack of attention to children, abuse and violent role model within the small family, where the child learns to resolve conflicts using physical injury, or verbal aggression, family role models, where it is taught that power is exercised by the strongest individual, with a lack of negotiation and dialogue, raising children with unstable practices, restrictive practices, in some cases through, lack of love between spouses, lack of emotional warmth, or lack of security.

School

The school as a social institution has undertaken to educate and protect children (Morrison, 2001) Bullying is a phenomenon that is more evident everywhere in schools (Graham & Juvonen, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1979) based on his studies argues that after the family, school is a comprehensive context for examining child development, believing that the school environment should be studied as part of the microsystem in which children are raised and educated. Referring to Gershoff & Aber (2006), school context, school size, classroom geographical area, and academic level may be some of the reasons for the emergence of bullying.

Referring to Ayres & Hedeem, 1996 schools that have a challenging school curriculum and have high expectations for their students tend to have fewer cases of bullying than schools with poor academic quality. Violence is high in schools with students with very low academic achievement.

According to Sanders & Phye, 2004 high academic expectations discourage aggressors from bullying other students, because students who are under pressure to get high grades in classes are too busy and do not have time to

look around to find potential victims. Other studies have found that students who have low academic achievement, become aggressors, bullying because of the frustration caused by their low academic results.

According to Brady, 2001 the frequency of bullying is also related to the climate that is created in the school. The school climate includes discipline, regulation enforcement, communication, school morale, support system and its physical structure.

The influence of teachers on the development of an aggressive culture

According to Smith, (2000) the teacher plays a key role in identifying signs of bullying and in breaking the culture of silence of victims and observers. An analysis of several studies concludes that an important element in achieving successful outcomes in reducing bullying in school is related to teacher involvement in ending violence (Pepler; Smith; Rigby, 2004)

According to psychologist Sullivan, 2004, he categorizes the teachers who help develop a bullying culture in the following categories:

Authoritarian teacher includes those teachers who administer and control the classroom based on autocracy.

The narcissistic teacher, whose strategy is to seek popularity, manipulating the social dynamics of the class, having favourite students, and embarrassing the victim.

The active aggressive teacher is the opposite of the narcissistic teacher, he bullies, despises, causes constant bullying in the student.

The indifferent teacher, who mocks students and never pays attention to their problems.

The tolerant teacher allows bullying to occur through disinterest and uses a careless management style.

Group as motivating factors

Peer group influence is an indicator that precedes the development of violent behaviours (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Violent young people associate with friends who have behavioural problems and by being together this reinforces their antisocial behaviour. A group of friends with behavioural problems have a negative impact on the school, this begins and is expressed with absenteeism in school, disrespect for the authorities, lack of commitment to studies, etc.

3. METHOD :

This study is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative part consists in collecting quantitative data from students whereas the qualitative part of the study relates to interviews with teachers about attitudes, perceptions, reactions that teachers have to cases of bullying and regarding the ways in which these cases are currently treated in the reality of Albanian schools, ie, consequently, the problems they encounter in everyday life in dealing with such cases. The instrument used for the quantitative measurement is the Bullying Victimization Scale, the data were analysed through SPSS (20). For the qualitative part of the study was used a thematic guide with 12 questions. Prior to the study, permission was sought from school principals, who were selected to participate in the study. The school principals were required to inform students and their parents about the study and receive their approval to participate in the study.

Regarding the teachers, they verbally confirmed in advance whether they wanted to be part of the study or not. The instrument was selected as one of the most used instruments in various societies on the phenomenon of bullying in schools, it is suitable for the age group of 11 -13 years. The questionnaire could be accessed online or . The instrument has several sections, which aim to record how many times the children have been bullied, i.e. if they have been victims of bullying, as well as how much they have been bullied by others.

For the qualitative part was used semi-structured interview related to the knowledge that the interviewees (teachers) had about the phenomenon of bullying and if the answer was yes, then they were then asked for the definition, if they could give one.

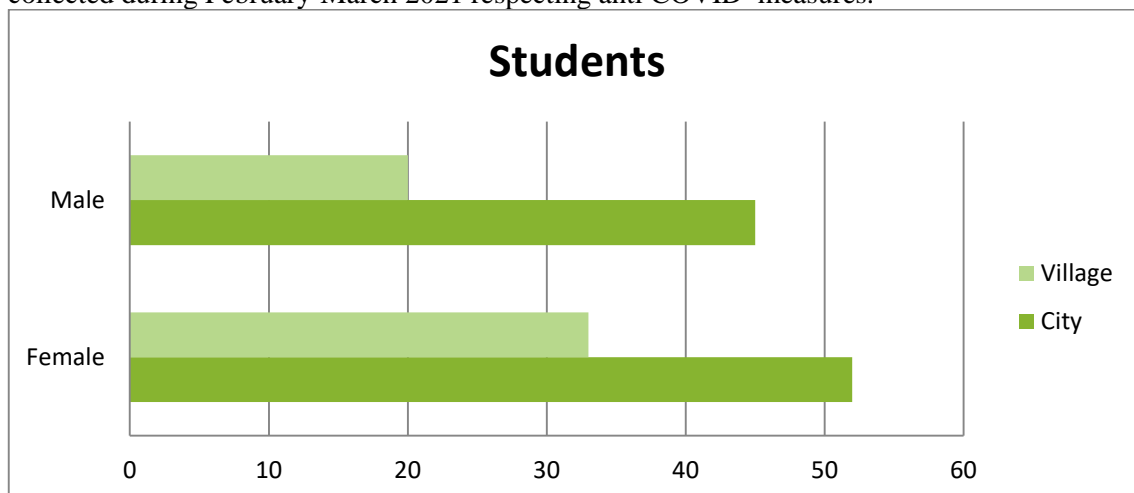
In cases when the answer was no, or even in cases when the definition meant that the respondent did not have an accurate knowledge of the phenomenon, the teacher was asked to give a brief theoretical description of the dimension of the phenomenon.

To analyse the data collected from the interviews, thematic analysis was used based on the labeling and coding technique. The interviewers' answers were first written in detail and then divided according to the topics, dealing with cases of bullying, managing and preventing bullying, then the data was interpreted.

Sample

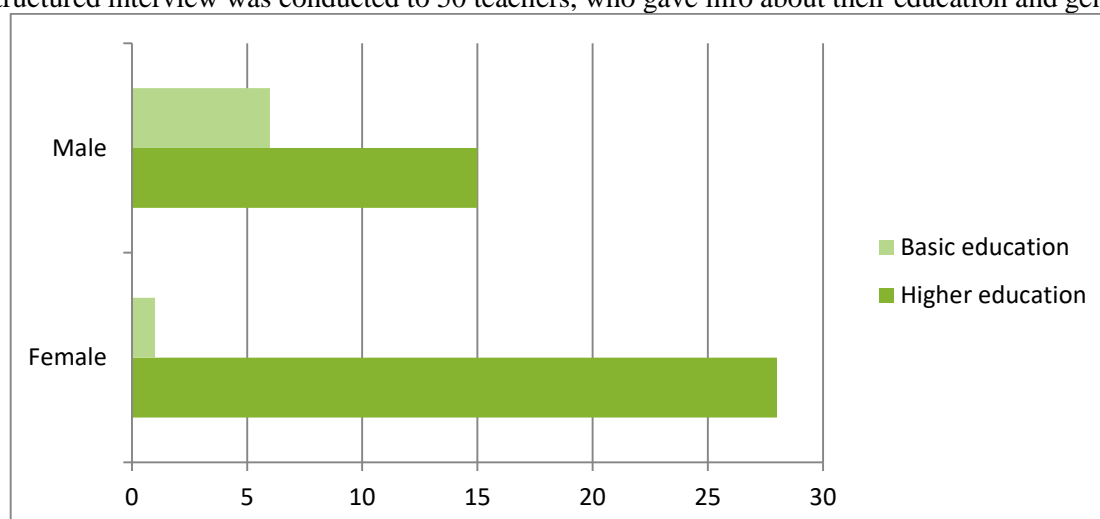
The study sample was randomly selected from three lower secondary. Qualitative data were provided by interviews with teachers.

Participants in this study were teachers of secondary school "Isa Boletini" in the Agricultural Institute of Tirana, "14-November" in Durres, "Migjeni" in Puka. The number of respondents is (N = 150), of which 85 females 65 males. Data were collected during February-March 2021 respecting anti COVID measures.



Graph 1. Demographic data of participating students

The semi-structured interview was conducted to 50 teachers, who gave info about their education and gender.



Graph 2. Demographic data of participating teachers

Hypothesis

1. Bullying is a phenomenon that is observed in men more than in women
2. Teachers tackle, manage and prevent bullying in school through prevention strategies.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS :

In the first table it is presented the analysis of the T-test and based on the T-test analysis it turns out that women and men are involved in bullying behaviour in high levels.

Group Statistics	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviations	Standard error
Bullying behaviour committed	Female	85	2,9637 3,0623	,71411	,03456
	Male	65		,75160	,03811

Table 1 Group statistics on bullying behaviour

Regarding bullying behaviours performed, gender differences result, boys report on average bullying behaviours value $Mv = 3,06$ and $Ds = ,71$ while in girls it is reflected on average with value $Mv = 2,96$ and $Ds = ,71$, where $t(150) = -2,638$ with $p = ,009$ for $p < 0.01$.

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard error
Bullying behaviour committed	Female	85	2,0008	,80025	,03873
	Male	65	2,0778	,85857	,04353

Table 2 Group statistics on victims of bullying

While both genders remain victims of bullying without any gender differences, reporting on average men with the value $Mv = 2.07$ and $Ds = 0.85$ while in girls it is reflected on average with the value $Mv = 2.00$ and $Ds = 0.80$, where $t(150) = -1,928$ with $p = ,009$ for $p < 0.01$.

Regarding the second part of the results from the structured interviews, it shows that the majority of teachers, 85% have knowledge about the phenomenon of bullying, while a small part of teachers have incomplete information. It was found that 90% of the interviewed teachers have general knowledge about the characteristics of the victim. Regarding the knowledge of how to deal with the aggressor, the teachers possess knowledge but they are not specialized in this field and they think that their actions might not be enough to help. Information and ability to treat the victim about 20% of teachers have it, the rest of the teachers have limited information.

About 15% of teachers say that they cannot be bullied, as there are other ways that the problem can be solved. 30% of teachers said that they are equipped and have experience and knowledge to deal with the phenomenon of bullying, but are open and ready for workshop training to specialize in this field.

The often formulated assumption that teachers rarely intervene in case of bullying cannot be confirmed based on empirical findings from the teachers point of view.

Research on the impact of certain variables such as gender and age on these behaviours needs to go deeper.

Regarding Hypothesis II, according to which teachers possess strategies through which they can cope with, manage and prevent bullying in school. The results show that a very small percentage of teachers (30%) think that they have the competencies and strategies to manage and prevent bullying in schools, as they consider themselves incapable of protecting victims.

These findings tell us that teachers tackle, manage and prevent bullying in school not through genuine prevention strategies.

5. DISCUSSIONS :

Scientific research on bullying is quantitative in nature. This is often related to the fact that by definition, bullying is a phenomenon that is measured by the frequency of episodes of violence, the time progression of violence, the number of individuals involved in bullying, the number of different factors that affect the origin of bullying, etc.

According to Smith and Brain (2000) most scientific research on bullying has relied on quantitative paradigms and very little on qualitative studies. Qualitative research on the phenomenon of bullying would be very useful to enable the understanding and meaning that bullying behaviour has for the bully himself and other related actors, improving the knowledge of researchers about the phenomenon itself.

The results show that this study is in line with some studies according to which the phenomenon of bullying has increased in children of both sexes and in boys it turns out that it is displayed at higher levels than in girls, confirming the first hypothesis of this study according to which bullying is a phenomenon that is observed in men more than in women.

A study used globally by WHO for students aged 11 to 15 for the school year 2017/2018, both shows that 8.3% of students during that year were bullied, 3.9% were a bully students and 1.1% where both being bullied and a bully. These data show a declining trend of this phenomenon after interfering with certain programs in schools.

In the study conducted by HBSC, 2002 and 2018 in Germany (Fischer et al. 2020) for the six-year period the percentage of students who reported that were being bullied was (from 9.5% to 8.3%), the percentage of students who bullied others (from 13.2% to 3.9%) the percentage of students who were both bullied and a bully ranged from 3.7% to 1.1%). School children are affected by various forms of bullying around the world. On average 8% of 15-years-old

students surveyed in OECD member countries reported that they were bullied within a year with significant variations in prevalence rates between schools within a country and between countries as a whole. The lowest frequency of bullying was in the Netherlands (2 %) and highest in New Zealand (15%). In a comparison with European countries like Germany (6%), Austria (7%) and Switzerland (7%) are slightly below the OECD average (OECD 2019).

Despite the importance of the personal experiences of students involved in bullying, their parents, teachers and school administration as well as school support systems, much remains to be done in terms of genuine quality research (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005).

Whitted & Dupper, (2005) claim that the most successful programs to prevent bullying are those that seek to change the culture and climate of the school, while from interviews with teachers of our study it was found that this climate is not always friendly.

Institutions and society needs to be made aware that intervention programs to be effective must involve the school, family, class and the individuals. Rigbia, Smith and Pepler (Rigby, Smith & Pepler, 2004) describe this method as a "school-wide approach", where all elements of the curriculum are carefully selected and coordinated at different levels in both school policies and rules. within the classroom.

In order for teachers to be effective in preventing and dealing with incidents of bullying, they must be able to identify them.

Pjotrowski and Huti (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008) stated that teachers and their attitudes towards bullying carry the greatest weight to change the situation, but, in order to do so, they need training to identify bullying behaviours. understand the causes and take concrete steps to challenge it.

Researcher Yoon claims that teachers' perception of the seriousness of a bullying incident can help reduce it. Due to its apparent nature, physical bullying is perceived by teachers as the most important and where punitive measures should be taken against aggressors. Most studies have shown that when teachers are given a physical, verbal, social / emotional abuse scenario, they see physical abuse more as bullying, even when it is not.

According to Hazler, (2001) most teachers do not recognize verbal or social / emotional abuse as bullying, although these types are the most common.

Teacher gender differences play an important role in combating and approaching bullying: male teachers try to ignore verbal and social bullying more than women teachers (Ellis & Shute 2007).

In training teachers on bullying it would be very effective to gain knowledge about the forms of bullying, the consequences of each form and increase empathy towards victims (Yoon et.al., 2004).

This is why this study focuses on the psychological analysis of teachers' personal experiences, belonging to the above groups, to understand their ways of coping, managing and preventing bullying with the need to better understand the occurrence, the factors bullies and treatment as well as to design successful interventions to reduce bullying in school in the future.

Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme, in 2006, claim that most teachers do not think of social exclusion as bullying and tend not to intervene, despite data showing that this type of bullying has serious psychological consequences for victims within the school.

6. CONCLUSION :

The study presents a picture of bullying behaviours, victims of bullying in children aged 11-15 conducted in three AMU schools, enabling the analysis and assessment of current dynamics and trends related to the spread of bullying in schools to both boys and girls. to girls.

What is interesting from this study is the fact that we have a high level of bullying behaviours in both genders and confirmation of the first hypothesis that boys bully more than girls.

Regarding teachers, a semi-structured interview was used and it turns out that a major part of the teacher do not have standards for the management and consequently the prevention of bullying behaviours, not confirming the question and the hypothesis raised.

The studies we referred to show that in those countries where the level of bullying had decreased, policies and strategies against this phenomenon played a role. The findings and implementation of policies against bullying behaviour should be comprehensive, but before these strategies for preventing bullying can be developed, an acceptable agreement must first be reached by all researchers regarding the term, how we will define it or what it will be.

The consequences of bullying cannot be denied or minimized. There is a need for the Ministry of Education and Sports to present policies against bullying at a national level, in order to guide teachers and students on how to combat this social phenomenon.

To conclude the fight against bullying requires the involvement of many supporters, given that the Ministry of Education cannot fight the phenomenon alone, without the support of various people and organizations, teachers,

students, etc. Today more than ever there is a need to talk about this phenomenon, so that people understand its consequences and causes.

7. STUDY LIMITATIONS :

The study on the level of bullying in schools as well as the level of teacher knowledge on the preventing bully behaviours has its limitations. Although the schools had a considerable number of students only 150 students agreed to be part of the survey and 50 teachers out of 113. What stands out is that teachers who refused to participate were male. A specific limitation of this study is the generalization of the findings as this study includes only 150 children and 50 teachers. The adolescent age group that was included in this study did not refer to the data that INSTAT provides in its division into age groups. This has led to a limitation in this study in terms of participants, which included only adolescents aged 11-13 years and only in three schools, excluding the inclusion of adolescents aged 14 \ 15 to 21 years. Another limitation relates to the instrument used in the study. This measuring instrument is not standardized for the Albanian population, leading to limitations in its interpretation and consequently to its findings.

The use of the student self-report instrument carries with it risks, as the level of reporting in this case might be subjective in some occasions. No parent was involved in this study, who would probably shed light on family relationships, on other children in the family. All of these limitations affect the results of this study.

8. RECOMMENDATION :

Referring to the results of this quantitative and qualitative study on the level of bullying behaviours and their victims, as well as how teachers possess skills and strategies for managing and preventing this phenomenon are closely related to how important actors and factors cooperate in preventing these phenomena.

It would be recommended for school principals to design and approve ongoing anti-bullying programs, where students, teachers, but especially victims, know how to react when such a phenomenon occurs.

For a school to adopt a prevention program, it must conduct periodic evaluations in order to understand how well the program is working and which parts are not working and need to be changed.

School regulations should not only prescribe penalties but should describe the positive behaviours that community members are expected to have in school, and promoting a range of expected positive behaviours. Creating a safe and supportive environment at school can help prevent it of bullying.

Supporting and encouraging the involvement of parents in the education process, as well as assisting voluntarily in the development of school activities and projects.

Teachers should engage in classroom activities, as well as periodic discussions about bullying and violence, including the harm they cause, as well as strategies to reduce their incidence. These activities and discussions will help the teacher to be informed about what is happening in their classroom, but will also help the students to feel safe and supported.

Teachers should notify both the victim and the aggressor's parents, and ask that the problem be resolved as soon as possible at school. When possible, parents are invited to help create an action plan for the aggressors. Parents should remind their children that it is normal to feel upset, but it is not right to be bullied.

Teacher training would be a necessary and indispensable step for the prevention, management of such situations. Training teachers with strategies to combat bullying will benefit many teachers who struggle to deal with the complex dynamics of this phenomenon.

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