

BULLIES AND THEIR VICTIMS:
IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTIONS

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The literature review concluded that environmental factors play a strong role in the development of bullying. Parenting style and methods are at the root of the development of a bully, therefore it is a learned behavior. This behavior can be unlearned through social skills curriculum, guidance from parents and educators, and clear boundaries that identify and enforce what type of behavior is acceptable.

The study also evaluates causes and characteristics of a victim. It was found that victims are chosen due to their vulnerabilities. Vulnerabilities allow a bully to abuse a victim without retaliation. The literature supports that social skills intervention and counseling as well as support and guidance through parents and educators can provide these children with the necessary skills to improve self-esteem and improve their assertiveness skills.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Say the word “bully” to almost anyone you know, and the stories will flow. Whether it was from a personal experience or something they read or heard on television. The stories we hear cause considerable alarm in parents and teachers. Teachers, parents, and students believe that young people have the right to feel safe, secure, accepted, and valued at school. Creating this atmosphere has become a challenge.

Sheras, (2002) reported every two seconds of every school day, according to the National Education Association, another student is physically attacked in school. A typical schoolchild has a nearly 25 percent chance of being involved in bullying on school grounds, teasing or taunting on the bus, sexual harassment, “flaming” on the internet, and beatings or gang activity (Sheras, 2002).

Parents, teachers, and even legislators have responded to the acts of violence occurring in the schools. In a few states legislators have even introduced new laws cracking down on harassment, hazing, and violence in schools (Sheras, 2002). What is still lacking is a clear understanding of what bullying is, how and why it occurs and which techniques are most effective in stopping it.

Several experts have taken a closer look at this behavior to determine the cause of bullying, and how we may correct it. Even more importantly how we may empower the victim. In the article, “Overcoming Bullying Behavior,” (Clare & Hibel, 1997) bullying was described as “one or more individuals inflicting physical, verbal, or emotional abuse on another-including threats of bodily harm, weapon possession, extortion, civil rights violation, assault and battery, gang activity, attempted murder and murder.” Other

experts add sexual harassment to the list of bullying behaviors. Victims not only get victimized by the bully, but they get revictimized by a portion of their peer group as well. Children become less sympathetic to victims as they grow older; almost one third of adolescent surveyed said they could understand why the bully chose the victim (Greenbaum, Turner, & Stephens, 1989).

DeHaan (1997), defined bullying as ranging from teasing, to stealing lunch money, to a group of students physically abusing a classmate. DeHaan feels bullying is very similar to other forms of aggression, but there can be some distinctive features:

- The intention of bullying behavior is purposeful, rather than accidental.
- The goal is to actually gain control over another child through physical or verbal aggression.
- Usually bullies make their attack without any real reason, other than they see their victim as any easy target.
- Bullies are usually more popular with their peers than children who are simply aggressive.

Beane (1999), also felt bullying was an attempt to feel “power”, and they have learned that bullying strategies work. He also felt what distinguishes them from someone who teases occasionally is a pattern of repeated physical or psychological intimidation. The overall pattern of a bully is to gain power over someone else. Most experts agree it is a learned behavior, which must be unlearned. Unfortunately bullies don’t grow up and “grow out of it”. They must be taught better ways of relating to others (Beane, 1999).

Due to the extreme bullying situations such as Columbine this behavior has gained national attention. These extreme behaviors of violence have alerted many parents,

educators, and other adults to the fact that bullying is not an inevitable behavior or a harmless part of growing up. It is abusive and unacceptable behavior.

Parents and teachers need guidance to better understand bullies and victims. Educating parents and staff about bully/victim characteristics are not only necessary in identifying potential bullies and victims but is vital in how to intervene.

Statement of Problem:

In a society with laws that protect adults from crimes such as theft and assault and battery, why are children who are less vulnerable not granted the same rights? An adult who hits another adult can be arrested and charged with assault and battery. Why does this law not provide children with the same protection? The purpose of this study was to examine the ever growing epidemic of bullying and to determine the necessary interventions required to create a bully-free environment. To accomplish this goal, educators, parents and society at large need to develop a better understanding about what bullying is. At one time, bullying was determined to be a “natural part of growing up.” However, with the recurring acts of violence that schools are too frequently reporting, educators as well as parents are beginning to change their mindset about this issue.

According to Peter Sheras (2002) research has shown that bullies whose behavior is not corrected in childhood often become criminals as adults and the victims who fail to find relief frequently experience depression and severe drops in self-esteem that could negatively affect their later years.

Learning about the characteristics of a bully/victim, and the parenting styles that might influence a child to become a bully or a victim. May lead educators and parents to

various interventions that will not only create a bully-free school, but will teach our children to be respectful, productive citizens of society.

Chapter 2

Review Of Literature

Bullying behavior has become a hot topic in our society as well as one of great concern in our schools. It is an issue that needs to be addressed by the community, schools, and parents. It has become evident that bullies are trying to gain power. We now know that this behavior is learned behavior. Parents need to learn preventive parenting skills that encourage their children to develop positive relationships. Schools and parents must also learn to recognize bullying characteristics, and not discard them as a “natural” part of childhood. Effective intervention techniques implemented by parents and schools are needed before the situation escalates into physical or emotional violence.

Together, parents and school staff are able to set the climate in a positive manner through modeling and acceptance themselves. Treating others with kindness and with respect sets an example for our youth about what is wanted and expected from them. Setting guidelines and rules also defines clear expectations of expected behavior.

Many schools are beginning to adopt a zero tolerance policy for weapons and violence. This policy may incorporate a safe environment, but

it doesn't teach children how to correct their behavior. This policy in conjunction with parents and schools working together to model acceptance behaviors is critical. In addition, teaching conflict resolution skills and social skills will encourage healthier choices and assist in the development of a healthier environment.

Bullies

Many of us question the difference between a bully, an aggressive child and everyday teasing. You also may wonder whether the aggressor is wholly at fault or the victim is contributing to the abuse in some way. Toddlers routinely grab toys from other children, bite and push when they are angry and refuse to take turns. Kindergartens do enjoy excluding others from their groups. Preteens and adolescents can become masters at spreading malicious gossip, ganging up on young children and sexually harassing or labeling vulnerable peers. Much of this behavior has its roots in normal childhood development. Toddlers generally can't comprehend others' needs, desires or points of view. Kindergartners who exclude others are expressing their expanding social awareness and their fascination with figuring out who they are. Adolescents who gang up on others are exploring similar social issues on a more sophisticated level, and those who engage in sexual bullying are often responding to a surge in hormones.

Olweus (1993) feels this behavior is normal behavior development, again he emphasized the capability of human beings to rechannel these aggressive urges in more positive ways. Toddlers can be taught to use words instead of striking out, and kindergartners can learn tactful ways to limit the members of their group. Teenagers can establish and maintain social status through kindness and positive achievement instead of bullying and can find harmless ways to attract the opposite sex.

Olweus (1993) states as the other experts have stated bullying is occurring when the child is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Negative actions are any physical, verbal or social action in which the bully intentionally causes injury or discomfort. This definition should serve as a guideline while distinguishing between normal behavior, a person being victimized or acting as a bully.

Approximately one in seven schoolchildren are a bully or a victim, and the problem directly affects about five million elementary and junior high students in the United States (Fried & Fried, 1996). For fourth through eighth graders, 22 percent report academic difficulties resulting from peer abuse (Sheras, 2002). Therefore, the chances of a parent receiving a phone call suggesting their child is a bully, or a victim in a conflict in school is

quite high. Parents may feel embarrassed, ashamed, and even resentment especially if the behavior involved cruelty towards others, but parents should consider this early intervention as a time to empower their child, or to teach them to channel their energy in a healthier manner.

There isn't a clear reason why a child may become a bully, but Fried and Fried (1996) felt environmental factors can lead to the development of bullying behaviors. The pattern of behavior can begin as early as age two; the older the child becomes, the more difficult change will be. Fried & Fried (1996) also felt child bullies are at greater risk for problems in the future. For example, by age thirty, 25 percent of the adults who had been identified as bullies as children had a criminal record.

Batsche and Moore (1992) suggest the following environmental factors may contribute to the development of bullying behavior:

- Too little supervision of children and adolescents. Children need to get the message that bullying behavior is not okay.
- A "payoff". When parents or other adults give in to an obnoxious or aggressive child, the child learns to use bullying to get what he or she wants.

- Aggressive behavior in the home. Some children are more likely than others to imitate aggressive behavior. Watching adults bully each other gives children the tools they need to become bullies themselves.
- Harsh physical punishment. Bullies often attack smaller, weaker children to model what happens to them in their homes. The worst possible punishment for bullies is physical.
- Abusive peers. Children may be bullied by their “friends” or may be encouraged to bully to be part of the group.
- Constant negative feedback. Bullies feel that the world around them is more negative than positive as a result, they use negative behavior to feel important and get attention.
- Expecting hostility. In many ways, the bully’s philosophy is “the best defense is offense.” They attack before they are attacked, and assume hostility where none may exist.

It is difficult for any of us to comprehend why anyone would deliberately torture a classmate. The fact that a bully can take practically any form makes the situation even more confusing. The tormenter could be a tough-talking boy from a broken home, or a cheerleader who spreads cruel rumors. Some bullies earn poor grades and struggle with drug and alcohol problems, or it could be the star football player who is on the honor roll. Social status

or economic status doesn't play a role in the qualifications of a bully (Ross, 1996).

Ross (1996) clearly feels something deeper than economic disadvantage or lack of popularity is at work when a child feels compelled to abuse others. To better understand the causes she subdivided bullies into dominating bullies, anxious bullies, and bully-victims. Dominating and anxious bullies frequently come from homes in which power issues dominate and in which sibling interaction is more powerful than child-parent relationships. Parents who rarely talk as equals with their children and expect their demands to be met without question, for example, might encourage bullying behavior in a child. A child who gets into the habit of dominating a sibling and whose parents fail to intervene may also grow up assuming that physical, verbal, social or sexual abuse are both effective and normal. They felt it was easy to imagine a wide variety of "types" who might fit into this category: the child of a dominating parent who punishes frequently and praises rarely; the privileged girl whose parents rarely make an effort to curb her aggressive behavior. Ross (1996) used a variety of examples to emphasize the fact, that it is impossible to judge a bully by outward appearance alone.

Bully-victims are children who have been victimized themselves, by peers or adults, and whose pain and frustration have led them to escape their

situation by bullying others. In many cases, they also come from households where they are rarely supervised, parenting and discipline are inconsistent, and parental warmth is low or absent. In other words they received little or no adult help when they themselves were victimized. A number of studies have shown that the most common response to victimization is anger. Without adult help in channeling their anger in positive ways such as getting their abusers to stop, expressing their feelings through words or positive actions, bully victims rid their feelings of victimization by picking on other children. Ross (1996), consider bully-victims the most potentially violent type of bully. The type to reach for a weapon or join a gang, because their rage is high and their support system is weak.

Sheras (2002) have found male bullies outnumber females at a ratio of about five to four. They reported studies described male bullies as dominating, disruptive in class, unable to concentrate and behaving in a “tough” manner. Female bullies have been described as talkative, rude, dominating and using bad language.

Olweus (1993) has defined bullies as children who consistently try to control peers through verbal or physical aggression to relieve their own feelings of inadequacy. He feels a bully, as opposed to a child who is generally aggressive, is likely to:

- target only those children who are perceived to be weaker in some way
- be unwilling to accept others' ideas
- be unwilling to negotiate during play
- often oppress or harass others in either a physical or mental way
- be of average or above-average popularity

The statistics have demonstrated the daily occurrences of bullying behavior in the schools. This may occur for several reasons such as a child trying to gain a specific social status, or the fear they may be bullied themselves. Studies have found the majority of bullying takes place on school property, but 50% of elementary students and 35% of high school students go to a parent for help, very few see a teacher. An estimated one-third of victims have some contact with a school counselor, social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist (Harvard Mental Health Letter, 2001). The statistics communicate the need for parents and teachers to have a clear understanding of bullying and victim characteristics and interventions techniques, which would de-escalate the situation.

Bullies come in practically all shape, sizes and personality types, but according to Sheras (2002) there are certain characteristics that most bullies exhibit and that you can look for in a child. He feels the central issue for all bullies is their inability to channel their anger or frustration in acceptable

ways. Remember...anger is not a problem, how the anger is expressed and channeled can be a problem. Sheras (2002) felt a child's inability to respond in better ways can be broken down into four subskills. While evaluating a child's ability to respond to others ask yourself the following questions:

- Does she recognize and understand her own and others' emotions?
- Does she recognize that emotional "triggers" often lead to her aggressive behavior?
- Does she have the social skills she needs to manage her emotions in noncruel ways?
- Does she have the ability and the option of communicating her feelings to others when she feels them getting out of hand?

If a child lacks any of these skills or opportunities, Sheras (2002) feels they are at risk for bullying

behavior. He also feels the child is at even higher risk if she is familiar with and comfortable with violence or other types of cruelty.

Many people assume that bullies behave as they do out of a deep sense of inferiority or low self esteem. Much research has shown, however, that this is not the case. Most bullies have been shown to have better than average self-esteem and to enjoy average or better than average popularity until their later teens. (Sheras, 2002) In a Harvard Mental Health Letter (Nov. 2001) They

also felt bullies had a high self-confidence, but stated they also had a high rate of depression, almost as high as the rate among their victims. This article also stated the high use of corporal punishment, marital conflict, alcoholism, and uncontrollable tempers are common amongst families of children who are bullies.

Parents

Parents need to observe their child's behavior and determine if they have the potential of becoming a bully or if they're a bully. There are common signs to help parents to determine if there is a need for concern. First, they should consider the basic personal skills described earlier. Most children do exhibit difficulties at first, but with time and practice their basic personal skills should improve. Sheras (2002) suggest you take a closer look at your child's social behavior no matter how he tries to explain these symptoms:

- general unhappiness or anger
- poor grades
- a tendency to act out physically instead of using words, often with adults as well as other children
- smoking or drinking alcohol

- reports of behavior problems at school
- destruction of property
- intimidation of younger children
- rudeness, use of bad language
- shortened attention span

Many experts stress the importance of spending time with your child and his friends. Offer to drive them to the movies or have your child invite his friends over to play. While observing your child interacting with his friends. Sheras (2002) suggest asking yourself: Does he try to dominate the others? Is he able to be patient and wait his turn? Is he willing to negotiate and listen to others' viewpoints in conversation? If someone asks him to stop doing something, does he stop? When others act in annoying ways, is he quick to lose his temper? Is he preoccupied with appearing invulnerable or tough? Does he constantly blame others when things go wrong? If you see that his social style tends toward dominance and he has difficulty listening to or respecting others views, then chances are greater that he does engage in bullying behavior when you are not present. Now would be a good time to start teaching him more positive ways to interact.

If a child continues to bully even after his parents interventions, outside assistants may be needed. Parents may seek help from school counselors, principals, or a counselor.

Olweus (1993) feels there are specific parenting styles that encourage a child to become a bully. The four factors in the home environment that researchers have identified as most likely to encourage bullying behavior are:

- lack of involvement or warmth on the part of the child's primary caretaker
- a permissive or "tolerant" attitude toward the child's abusive behavior (no clear limits set on bullying behavior in the home)
- use of physical punishment or emotional outbursts, when disciplining children
- a parenting style that does not suit the child's natural temperament

Research has found the most effective parenting style is not an authoritarian, nor permissive, but what psychologists call authoritative parenting. Authoritative parents take responsibility for their role in teaching their child how to behave and to interact with others. Sheras (2002) also feels they teach the child how to make decisions for themselves.

Victim

In 1993, Olweus defined victims as those who continue to be exposed to aggression from others over time. A victim is likely to:

- be shy, fearful and/or anxious
- have low self esteem
- be socially isolated
- be physically weak
- be emotional

Less is known about victims than about bullies. Children are victimized because of their physical appearance, mannerisms, or just because they don't fit in. In fact, one survey shows that "not fitting in" is the most common reason why children are abused by peers. (Hoover & Oliver, 1996) In 1996, Fried and Fried found that children with disabilities or a chronic illness are common targets. Other victims are the children of overly protective or domineering parents.

In 1996, Ross found that the reasons why certain children become victims run deeper than gender, appearance, or race. In their study they classified victims as provocative victims and passive victims. Provocative victims seem to actively draw bullying responses to them through repeatedly

pestering, baiting, insulting, invading another child's personal space and so on. Children with social or behavioral difficulties experienced by many children with ADHD and most behavior disorders lead to victimization in another way. They unintentionally annoy their peers and as a result are more likely to be abused by them.

Passive victims are frequently shy, anxious or afraid. They generally possess some form of weakness, or perceived weakness, in relation to the bully. They may be physically smaller, of lower social rank, poorer or unwilling to fight back, but it is their shyness, anxiety or fear more than any of these traits that renders them victims. An unattractive girl may avoid being bullied, if she has a healthy self-image and good social skills.

Research shows that children who are frequently victimized are more likely to "reward" bullies physically and emotionally (by giving up their lunch money or bursting into tears) and less likely to fight back.

Children become victims for so many reasons that it is foolish and destructive to make stereotyped assumptions about any child's experience. The only common characteristic they possess is the need to remedy social skills. Their need will vary; some may need emotional support, confidence building and the protection of adults. A few more will require a psychologist or a medical intervention.

Sheras (2002) feels the essential quality a bully looks for in a victim is not difference, but vulnerability. Vulnerability allows a bully to abuse a child without retaliation. A child who wears less fashionable clothes, but has good social skills including friends isn't as vulnerable to attack. A child who wears less fashionable clothes, has poor social skills and is isolated is an excellent target for a bully.

Studies have shown that the following additional characteristics, all of which signal vulnerability to a bully, are the most likely to lead to a child's victimization:

- physical weakness
- small stature
- shyness
- low self-esteem or lack of confidence
- lack of family communication and support
- unwillingness to respond aggressively to aggressive behavior
- anxious or fearful response to bullying
- poor self-control or other difficulty with social skills
- possession of material items that a bully might want

In reviewing this long list, it is easy to see that the children bullies choose to pick on are those least likely to fight back. Sheras (2002) points out

shyness, a lack of friends and absence of adult support will make her an especially likely target.

Parents

It is difficult for parents to view their child objectively, but viewing your child personal style and social skills is a vital first step in protecting them from bullies. If you are unsure if her personal style isolates her from peers. Ask teachers or other parents who know your child about her social and behavioral skills. As suggested earlier, encouraging your daughter to invite friends in or offering to drive them to movies will provide an open opportunity to observe her in a social context.

Most children who are victimized are ashamed and embarrassed to tell their parents. Sheras (2002) believes if your child is being victimized, they will not tell you about it. In order to protect your child. You will have to take an active role in observing his behavior, talking with him in ways that encourage him to discuss his problems, and demonstrating your ability to help him stop the bullying quickly and permanently so that he can get on with his life.

Sheras (2002) feels the following warning signs may indicate that your child is being victimized at school, at home, in the neighborhood or elsewhere:

- Acts reluctant to go to school
- Complains of feeling sick; frequently visits the school nurse's office
- Show sudden drop in grades
- Comes home hungry (because bullies have stolen his lunch money)
- Frequently arrives home with clothing or possessions destroyed or missing
- Experiences nightmares, bedwetting, difficulty sleeping
- Acts afraid of meeting new people, trying new things or exploring new places
- Refuses to leave the house
- Waits to get home to use the bathroom
- Acts nervous when another child approaches
- Show increased anger or resentment with no obvious cause
- Makes remarks about feeling lonely
- Has difficulty making friends
- Acts reluctant to defend himself when teased or criticized by others
- Shows a dramatic change in style of dressing
- Has physical marks-bruises, cuts, etc.-which may have been inflicted by others or by himself

If your child exhibits any of these symptoms, he needs your help. Be prepared to investigate further if your child doesn't provide an explanation. Questioning adults who spend time with him such as, his teacher, school bus driver, and friends whether they have noticed any incidents involving him. If they haven't noticed anything don't assume nothing is wrong. Levine (2002) stated teachers accurately identified 50 percent of the bullies, but were able to pick out only 10 percent of the victims. The victims' classmates were even less accurate in identifying which children suffered abuse.

All children, no matter what their age or situation, want their parents to know how they are and would love to be able to rely on them in times of trouble. Levine (2002) stated victimized children and teenagers who lack adult interest are most likely to turn to drastic remedies as suicide and other forms of violence.

Sheras (2002) believes teaching your child to recognize a bully and how to differentiate it from "just kidding around." Is empowering your child to protect himself and he's acquiring a life skill. Let's face it even as adults we encounter a bully occasionally. When discussing such behavior, ask her the following questions:

- Did the child hurt you on purpose?

- Did she do it more than once?
- Did she make you feel bad or angry?
- Did she know she was hurting you?
- Is she more powerful than you in some way?
- Did you hurt her first?

Recognizing a bully is a valuable tool for any child, but if the child is left unprotected, recognition is not enough. A parent should ensure the child is properly supervised on the playground, while walking home and any other areas you feel the bullying may occur.

Experts have found most children prefer handling a bullying situation themselves, but warn if the situation is already physical than adult intervention is necessary. Most experts agree there isn't a clear-cut solution while dealing with a bully.

Schools

Olweus (1993) has stated children cannot learn effectively if they fear for their safety. Troubled young people both bullies and victims need a supportive environment to learn and grow. He feels every individual should have the right to be spared oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation, in school and in society at large.

Beane (1999) stated federal and state legislation is helping to support the idea of bully free schools. Some experts have suggested that prevention of bullying may become a legal obligation of schools. On February 4, 1997, Part of President Clinton's "Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century" delivered to congress as the State of the Union address. Calls for "strong, safe schools with clear standards of achievement and discipline." The Clinton administration strongly encourages a Zero Tolerance policy for classroom violence and weapons in school.

Sheras (2002) feels that in the wake of the recent mass shootings and other violent incidents at United States schools, education officials have attempted to ensure students' safety in a variety of ways. He feels one of the most effective methods for controlling school violence and other forms of cruelty is the institution of a school-wide intervention program aimed at educating children about bullying and its effects and restructuring the social environment so that bullying is no longer accepted at the school.

Sheras (2002) suggested programs to meet those needs are "No More Bullying," "The Bullying Project", "Peace by Piece," "Dare to Care," and "Bully Proof Your School". These programs share a number of common features and are similarly effective. When successfully instituted in the school as a whole, they have been shown to create:

- marked reductions in both direct and indirect bullying incidents
- reductions in other negative behaviors not related to bullying, such as vandalism, theft and truancy
- a more positive attitude toward social relationships, academic work and the school itself
- increased student satisfaction with school life
- no increase in bullying in other venues away from the school.

Olweus (1993) who designed the prototype on which many current programs are

modeled, and whose research on the effects of such programs continues to influence educators today, has established certain key principles that must be a part of any such initiative. These include:

- the creation of a school environment characterized by warmth, positive interest and involvement from adults
- sufficient monitoring and surveillance of the students' activities in and out of school
- firm limits to unacceptable behavior
- nonhostile, non-corporal punishment when limits violated.

According to Sheras (2002), instituting such a program increases students' awareness of bullying and its effects increases enormously, and

tolerance for bullying behaviors plunges. Bullying is no longer seen as “funny” or “cool,” and students are much more likely to help and support a victim than they might have been before. Through class discussions and counseling sessions, students learn a great deal about the dynamics of aggression and the importance of addressing problems before they grow worse. Olweus (1993) programs have demonstrated a decrease of bully/victims problem by approximately 50 to 70 percent over the course of two years. Teaching children social skills not only helps children solve immediate problems, but also helps create a better community environment as well.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Literature Review Procedures:

This study involved the analysis of bullying, and also the victims of bullies. Possible causes were examined and the characteristic of bullies and their victims. Suggested school programming was evaluated and the positive effects the program had in the educational environment. To accommodate the purposes of this study, the following were used.

1. Examination of the research evaluating the differences between bullies, and
an aggressive child and normal development.
2. Examination of the characteristics bullies possess, which differs them
from their
peers.
3. Examination of the environmental factors that influence a child to
become a bully.
4. Examination of the research evaluating the parenting styles of children
who are bullies.

5. Examination of the research to determine which behaviors encourages a child to become a victim of a bully.
6. Examination of the characteristic on what constitutes a victim, which differentiate them from their peers.
7. Examination of the research evaluating the characteristics which encourage bullying.
8. Examination of the research evaluating the environmental factors influencing children to become a victim.
9. Examination of the research evaluating the parenting styles of children who are victims.
10. Examination of the research to determine the factors that have an impact on a “Bully Free” school.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter presents an analysis of the literature review. A variety of information was presented to gain a better understanding of bullying and their victims:

Olweus (1993) states bullying is occurring when the child is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students. Negative actions are any physical, verbal or social action in which the bully intentionally causes injury or discomfort.

Ross (1996) approximately one in seven schoolchildren are a bully or a victim, and the problem directly affects about five million elementary and junior high students in the United States. For fourth through eighth graders, 22 percent report academic difficulties resulting from peer abuse (Sheras, 2002).

Research has shown that environmental factors can lead to the development of bullying behaviors. Fried & Fried (1996) felt a pattern of behavior could begin as early as age two; the older the child becomes the more difficult it is to relearn behavior. They also felt child bullies are at a greater risk for problems in the future. For example, by age thirty, 25 percent of the adults who had been identified as bullies as children had a criminal record (Fried & Fried, 1996).

In 1996, Ross conducted a study on bullies. She divided bullies into three groups; dominating bullies, anxious bullies, and bully-victims. Dominating bullies and anxious bullies frequently come from homes in which power issues dominate and sibling interaction is more powerful than child-parent relationships. She also found that parents who rarely talk as equals with their children and expect their demands to be met without

question, for example, might encourage bullying behavior in a child. A child who gets into the habit of dominating and whose parents fail to intervene may also grow up assuming that physical, verbal, social or sexual abuse are both effective and normal.

Bully-victims are children who have been victimized themselves, by peers or adults, and whose pain and frustration have led them to escape their situation by bullying others. In many cases, they also come from households where they are rarely supervised, parenting and discipline are inconsistent, and parental warmth is low or absent. Studies indicate that the most common response to victimization is anger. These bullies lack adult help in channeling their anger in positive ways such as getting their abusers to stop, or expressing their feelings through words or positive actions. Therefore, the bully victim rids their feelings of victimization by picking on other children. Ross (1996) consider bully-victims the most potentially violent type of bully. They identify this type as those who will reach for a weapon or join a gang because their rage is high and their support is low.

Studies have found that the majority of bullying takes place on school property, but 50% of elementary students and 35% of high school students go to a parent for help (Beane, 1999). Very few seek out a teacher. An estimated one-third of victims has some contact with a school counselor, social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist (Harvard Mental Health Letter, 2001). The statistics communicate the need for parents and teachers to have a clear understanding of bullying and victim characteristics and intervention techniques, which would de-escalate the situation. Obviously, a team approach is needed to ensure a “Bully Free” school.

Sheras (2002) feels there are certain characteristics that most bullies exhibit that you can look for in young children. He feels the central issue for all bullies is their inability to channel their anger or frustration in acceptable ways. Sheras (2002) felt a child's inability to respond in better ways can be broken down in to four subskills. He suggests while evaluating a child's ability to respond to others, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does she recognize and understand her own and others' emotions?
- Does she recognize that emotional "triggers" often lead to her aggressive behavior?
- Does she have the social skills she needs to manage her emotions in noncruel ways?
- Does she have the ability and the option of communicating her feelings to others when she feels them getting out of hand?

If a child lacks any of these skills or opportunities, Sheras (2002) feels they are at risk for bullying behavior. He also feels the child is at even higher risk if she is familiar with and comfortable with violence or other types of cruelty.

Olweus (1993) defined victims as those who continue to be exposed to aggression from others over time. A victim is likely to be shy, fearful and/or anxious. Many are socially isolated from peers and have a low self-esteem. They may also be physically weak and emotional.

Sheras (2002) feels the essential quality a bully looks for in a victim is not difference, but vulnerability. Vulnerability allows a bully to abuse a child without retaliation.

Levine (2002) stated victimized children and teenagers who lack adult interest are most likely to turn to drastic remedies such as suicide and other forms of violence. He

stated that all children, no matter what their age or situation, want their parents to know how they are and would love to be able to rely on that parent in times of trouble.

Olweus (1993) has stated children cannot learn effectively if they fear for their safety. Troubled young people both bullies and victims need a supportive environment to learn and grow. He feels every individual should have the right to be spared oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation, in school and in society at large.

Sheras (2002) feels one of the most effective methods for controlling school violence and other forms of cruelty is the institution of a schoolwide intervention program aimed at educating children about bullying and its effects and restructuring the social environment so that bullying is no longer acceptable at school.

Olweus (1993) programs demonstrated a decrease of bully problems by approximately 50 to 70 percent over the course of two years. Teaching children social skills not only helps children solve immediate problems, but also helps create a better community environment overall.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate bullies, their characteristics and how these characteristics are developed. It also examined victims, their vulnerabilities, and how these vulnerabilities set them up to be bullied.

The study consisted of a review of the literature, which was conducted during the spring and summer of 2002. Literature from a variety of sources from 1992 to 2002 was collected and examined.

From the research the following information emerged:

1. Bullies are kids who need to feel powerful. They have learned that bullying works. What distinguishes them from someone who teases occasionally is a pattern of repeated physical or psychological intimidation.
2. There is no one reason why a child may become a bully, but environmental factors can lead to the development of bullying behaviors. Because this behavior is learned it can also be unlearned.
3. For both girls and boys in elementary and middle school, the most common form of bullying is, in fact, teasing. However, physical abuse (for boys) and social ostracism (for girls) are in second place. Most researchers believe that bullying involves an imbalance of physical or psychological power, with the bully being stronger (or perceived to be stronger) than the victim.
4. According to Clore & Hibel (1997), every two seconds of every school day, a student is physically attacked in school.

5. A typical schoolchild has a nearly 25 percent chance of being involved in bullying on campus, taunting on the bus, or sexually harassed (Sheras, 2002).
6. Every child suffering harassment or abuse needs adult support. It is vital to ask questions and otherwise involve yourself in your child's life. Children's fears and resistance can be great, but in most cases, children hope their parents will continue to question until they win the battle of bullying.
7. Chronic bullying is a profoundly alienating experience that can lead to suicide or extreme violence against others.
8. Teaching children social skills which encourage healthy relationships, self-esteem,
9. Sheras (2002) feels that bullying must not be tolerated by adults on campus, on school buses or at the bus stop. Bullying behavior must consistently meet with negative nonhostile, nonphysical consequences whenever it occurs. As many important studies have demonstrated, this type of organized effort to change the social climate of the school leads to measurable improvements not only in student safety, but in academic performance, school morale, school attendance and behavior in general.
10. According to Beane (1999) principals who appear to be ineffective or invisible to students, report more violence in school.

The findings suggest children learn to become bullies, due to environmental factors. Sheras (2002) identifies the environmental factors to be a lack of involvement or warmth on the part of the child's primary caretaker, a permissive or "tolerant" attitude toward the child's abusive behavior, use of physical punishment or emotional outbursts when disciplining children, and a parenting style that does not

suit the child's natural temperament. Beane (1999) indicates that the pattern of behavior can begin as early as age two.

Some studies found the most effective method for controlling school violence and other forms of cruelty, is a schoolwide intervention program. The program is aimed at educating children about bullying and restructuring the social environment so that bullying is no longer acceptable at school.

Studies identifying young children as a victim or a bully failed to provide information on children receiving social skills intervention at a young age. Researchers have identified environmental factors encouraging children to become bullies, but have failed to identify programming for parents to improve their parenting skills.

Based on this information, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. Conduct research of "bullying" to determine the appropriate time to intervene and the effectiveness of early intervention.
2. To continue research on the parenting styles of children who are victims or bullies.
3. Offer programs through schools that teach parenting methods that empower children to make healthy decisions and develop healthy relationships.
4. A follow up study evaluating the child's behavior to determine if the program is working.

Bullying is an issue that requires a team approach in our society. Children who feel safe in their environment, not only succeed academically, but socially and emotionally as well. To ensure our children are given this opportunity, it takes a concentrated effort on behalf of the school as well as parents.

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