PREVENTION OF BULLYING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract
The phenomenon of bullying in educational institutions represents a threat to the entire educational endeavor and can manifest itself both physically and verbally, socially or online. The protagonists of bullying are: the aggressor, the victim and the observer. The typical profile of the aggressor is that of an irritable person, with poor self-control, vindictive, rigid, and the typical profile of the victim is that of a vulnerable, silent, solitary, insecure person, there being the submissive and defiant victim category. The effective prevention of bullying actions is possible in a multidisciplinary team effort, and the process must take place on multiple levels: individual, family, school, class, relational, curricular, by involving all professional and civil organizations, interest groups and companies that have a relationship with the school and students, including social services and organizations dealing with health and crime.

Key words: bullying, cyberbullying, aggressor, victim, prevention.

INTRODUCTION
The phenomenon of bullying was always present in the dynamics of students, aggressions often being "hidden"\(^1\), and with the advent of the Internet and implicitly of e-mail, messenger and social networks, the phenomenon took on a new dimension, which aroused intense interest scientific and social.

Bullying is one of the biggest threats to children's educational and personal development, and today's schools and society as a whole are increasingly talking about adolescent aggression and the harm it causes.

\(^1\) Palaghia,C., The phenomenon of school bullying. Victimological and criminological perspectives in University Journal of Sociology, 1, 2019, 121
There are serious forms of violence that occur within the school, acts that are rarely sanctioned and that escape judicial denunciation, considered both brutal and chaotic aggression, and the repetition of several stressful events.

Bullying is not an individual characteristic, but rather a social strategy in the school community, the purpose of which is to gain peer acceptance, to gain dominance, and ultimately to own certain resources.

Between 15% and 20% of students frequently bully other classmates and between 15% and 25% of students have been bullied at school because of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability².

Worryingly, 25% of teachers see no problem with bullying or humiliating behavior among students, and therefore only intervene in 4% of bullying cases; more than 60% of students say that adult intervention is rare and unnecessary, and they fear that by telling them, they will be bullied even more in the future³.

The proportion of bullied students, like the proportion of bullying participants, decreases significantly with age. Therefore, victimization is more common among primary school students than in high school classes.

In a meta-analysis involving 28 studies, a significant but weak correlation was found between students' socioeconomic status and certain roles in bullying. Low socioeconomic status was associated with a higher risk of becoming a bully or victim, with early experiences (parental neglect, abuse) playing an important role. The protective power of higher socioeconomic status comes from easier access to intellectual resources (general and specific knowledge, norms, values, problem-solving ability), which support the development of social skills and coping strategies, reducing the likelihood that the child will have relationships problems with colleagues. The results draw attention to the fact that the lower material situation of families in our country can be considered a risk factor in itself in terms of peer bullying⁴.

In 1998, the World Health Organization carried out an international survey: "Health behavior of school-aged children", on 15,686 students from the 6th grades. 29.9% of students in the sample reported being involved in bullying - 13% as aggressors and 10.6% as victims of bullying, 17% of students reported being bullied during the researched period, 19% mentioned having former aggressors.

² Palaghia, The phenomenon, 125
³ Grădinaru,C., Stănculeanu,D., Manole,M., Bullyingul în rândul copiilor. Studiu sociologic la nivel național realizat de Organizația Salvați Copiii, 2016, 9
1. The concept of „bullying”

Criminologists use the term "terrorism"\textsuperscript{5} to refer to bullying, that is, to the situation where there is a report of persecution in which the bully bullies, humiliates and deprives a particular student, and repeated bullying becomes terror.

Dan Olweus first developed a definition of bullying in 1978, delimiting with this type of behavior the situation in which a person or a group causes or intentionally tries to harm another person, the victim being subjected to aggressive actions of injury, persecution, bullying repeatedly and over a long period of time.

Olweus distinguishes between: "rough play", "real fight" and "bullying". In rough play, children are friendly, there is a relative balance of power in their relationships, no intent to harm is present, and the disposition is "friendly, positive, and reciprocal" (eg: situations where they struggle to recover a ball, when "they can happily engage in rough play"). The real fight belongs to children between whom there is no friendship, but there is a balance of forces, and this situation is characterized by spontaneous and unRepeated behavior, but the intention to do harm is present, the mood is negative, tense and aggressive (for example: when a conflict on the field of play, after a competitive match and the opponents are involved in a real fight)\textsuperscript{6}.

Bullying actions represent an aggressive exercise of power over another person, having the following characteristics: it is a deliberate, repeated phenomenon; the children involved are usually not friends, but there is an imbalance of power and resistance between the actors of this type of behavior; the intention is to harm the other and the behavior of the aggressor differs from that of the victim.

Bullying includes three "key elements: intent to harm, power imbalance, and repeated aggressive actions or threats"\textsuperscript{7}. Children who bully may do this continuously, hurting others without feeling remorse, regret or pity.

It is important to make a conceptual distinction between rudeness, meanness, violence and bullying so that teachers, school counselors, school administrators, the Police and all professionals who work with young people, parents and children know "what to look out for and when to intervene"\textsuperscript{8}.

Unlike aggressive behaviors, which appear spontaneously in children as a result of intense emotions (e.g. anger, frustration, fear, etc.) and are eliminated as the intensity of emotional experiences decreases, bullying behaviors do not disappear by themselves, representing a relationship problem, which always

\textsuperscript{5} Palaghia, The phenomenon, 121
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 123
\textsuperscript{7} Whitson:S., Le phénomène de l'intimidation, 8 stratégies pour y mettre fin, Bucarest, Édition Herald, 2017, 22
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 25
requires a solution that involves changes in the relationships between the children and in the group dynamics.

2. THE DIMENSION OF BULLYING

Bullying can manifest itself in a multitude of types:

1. Direct physical, which includes, but is not limited to: physical assault, hitting, spitting, slapping, pushing, injuring, obstructing, stabbing, crushing, destroying or throwing personal items, stealing, threatening with weapons, touching of a sexual nature;

2. Non-physical/direct/verbal, including but not limited to: insult, mockery, offense, threats, yelling, sarcasm, insult, teasing, humiliation, intimidation, nicknames, slander, refusal to comply with a request, transmission of messages with homophobic or racist content;

3. Non-physical/direct/non-verbal, which includes, but is not limited to: lewd gestures, intimidation, humiliation, tongue pointing, rolling eyes;

4. Non-physical/indirect/verbal, which includes but is not limited to: persuading another person to insult someone, discrimination, racial slurs, spreading bad rumors, manipulating friendships;

5. Non-physical/indirect/non-verbal, often hidden, difficult to identify or recognize, carried out with the aim of destroying a person's social reputation; includes, but is not limited to: deception with the purpose of placing the victim in a situation of public humiliation or creating embarrassing situations, belittling, intimidating, manipulating, moving or hiding personal belongings, deliberately excluding from a group or a activities, rejection, social marginalization, silent treatment, ostracism;

6. Cyberspace is, nowadays, the environment in which socialization takes place, especially for children, which makes the presence of a new form of bullying felt among students, cyberbullying, also called "cyber aggression", hidden or open, represented by bullying through digital technology (mobile phone, computer, laptop, tablet), which includes but is not limited to: repetitive, intentional and harmful behavior: websites, blogs, emails, blogs, posts, messages, images, movies with abusive/offensive content, deliberately excluding a child from the online space, removing the password from personal accounts (email, social media, etc.), publishing rumors about a person, threats, malicious remarks, false statements about the victim's personal information. Cyberbullying generates virtual intimidation, whereby a person is tormented, harassed, humiliated, placed in an unpleasant situation or victimized.

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9 Palaghi, The phenomenon, 125
10 Onofrei, L, Violența în spațiul public. Derapajele comunicării, Iași, Editura Fundației Academice AXIS, 2015, 162
In the online environment, the aggressors are "protected" by creating fake accounts behind which they hide their identity; the weak, who can be victimized in real space, "can turn into ferocious aggressors in virtual space"\(^{11}\).

### 3. The Actors of Bullying in the School Environment

Bullying affects a large number of children and young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and shows a strong correlation between: bullying behaviors and negative psychosocial functioning characterized by: low self-esteem, high levels of depression, anxiety, feelings of loneliness, suicidal ideation and high rate of school absenteeism.

In a study of 4,000 Norwegian middle school students, it was found that the role of reactive (spontaneous) bullying in the victimization of others is decreasing, and that of proactive bullying in the case of aggressors is increasing. This means that school bullying in the early years is more likely to be committed out of anger, but the older bully acts more "in the cold": bullying therefore becomes a basic social strategy over time; the roles - including that of the victim - become more and more fixed\(^ {12}\). The indirect/contact bully is often a popular person with high social intelligence who can manipulate their peers.

The main participants in bullying actions are: the aggressor, the victim and the third party, the observer. But, in addition to these protagonists, attention was also paid to a "mixed" type\(^ {13}\), who moves between the role of abuser and that of victim. Thus, perpetrators and victims are not two distinct, radically different groups, but there is an overlap between them. Students with higher aggression can be aggressors, but they can also be victims.

The victim of bullying gives an aggressive response to victimization, that is, he himself begins to abuse others. In the literature, this role player is referred to as the "bully/victim" or "reactive bully". Some researchers speak directly of an "aggressor-victim continuum," referring to the fact that the victim who never assaults others in any way is rarer. "Continuum" refers to an alternation between two roles and includes the continuity and change that this actor maintains in the series of bullying events\(^ {14}\).

The bully likes to have an audience; therefore, in 80-85% of bullying incidents, other actors are also present. The bullying event can also be understood as a demonstration of the aggressor's power, a repeated ritual, whose function is to raise awareness of power relations and to reinforce them repeatedly in the community. Witnesses are in a key position: they are the ones who could stop the abuser if they convey to him that they do not recognize his power and disapprove of his actions. But the majority of witnesses to bullying behave in a way that

\(^{11}\) Palaghia, *The phenomenon*, 130

\(^{12}\) Buda, Kőszeghy, Szirmai, *School*, 379

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 377

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
perpetuates it rather than preventing it: 20-30% of those present support the bully, 25-53% are neutral, do not participate in the events in any way, and only 17-25% are those who protect the victim in some way. An insecure child may fear that he also will become a victim.

It has been observed that, in school practice, boys are more exposed to bullying than girls, both as victims and as aggressors, a marked trend especially in the upper grades, where the number of bullied students is higher. Thus, it was found that, among the 8,273 teenagers examined, six times more boys than girls were classified as victims of bullying.

Bullying between girls is characterized by more subtle and indirect means, such as manipulating friendships, spreading rumors and slander. It was also discovered that the most widespread form of bullying in the school environment is the verbal one. Over 50% of girls bullied were primarily bullied by boys and only 15-20% were bullied by both boys and girls. On the other hand, among boys, more than 80% are bullied mainly by boys, with relationships between boys being much harsher and more aggressive than those between girls.

3.1. Profile of the aggressor in the school environment

According to Olweus, the typical aggressor is impulsive and has a positive attitude towards violence. If it's a boy, he's usually stronger than the bullies. The aggressor is prone to anger easily, has poor self-control, may exhibit vindictive, rigid or compulsive behavior, may misjudge the intentions of others, has mental problems, depressive symptoms, suicidal experiences, substance abuse, eating disorders, deviation from the norm, has friends who are big abusers, starts dating early, is aggressive towards partners, does not show compassion, has parents with authoritarian style, parent-child communication is weak, has no role model in life; come from a hostile environment, where they were abused as children; academic performance and school adjustment are low.

Bullies have a strong need for dominance and power, they want to be in control and see others in submission, getting satisfaction when they cause hurt and pain to others; they often force their victims to give them cigarettes, money, alcohol and/or other valuables, thereby gaining social prestige.

When a group of students engages together in bullying behaviors towards another student, certain social/psychological mechanisms may occur, such as: decreased control or inhibitions against aggressive tendencies, gradual cognitive changes in the victim's perception of bullying, and diffusion of responsibilities; all

15 Ibid., 380
17 Buda, Köszeghy, Szirmai, School, 376
18 Grigore, Violența, 78
of these mechanisms explain why certain students, who are generally not aggressive, may end up participating in acts of bullying\textsuperscript{19}.

In families of abusers, inconsistent parenting/discipline, lack of acceptance, lack of patterns of cooperation and constructive problem solving, mental and physical abuse are more common. Regarding the social environment, it represents a risk factor if the child joins a violent, deviant group\textsuperscript{20}.

\textbf{3.2. The profile of the victim of bullying in the school environment}

Two types of victims are observed\textsuperscript{21}:

1. The passive or submissive victim, who conveys to others through attitude and behavior that he is an insecure person who will not react to bullying. This type of individuals are weaker than their peers, both physically and emotionally, have a low level of physical coordination, are weak in sports activities, lack social skills, are passive, have low self-esteem, get angry and cry easily, have difficulty defending themselves in front of others when attacked, can communicate better with adults than with peers, have suicidal ideation, symptoms of depression, anxiety, certain mental problems, low popularity, mood disorders nutrition, they are quiet, withdrawn, insecure, joyless, underestimate themselves and often have no friends\textsuperscript{22}.

Because of bullying, the victim feels “anger, frustration, humiliation, isolation, despair, and their mental state is affected; they show psychological and somatic disturbances, they are no longer interested in school and often face failure”\textsuperscript{23}, may experience stress and negative feelings, anxiety and isolation increase and a vicious circle of victimization develops. During bullying, the power of the aggressor increases and that of the victim decreases\textsuperscript{24}.

Victims usually have overly caring parents or teachers and therefore do not develop strategies to deal with conflict situations. Most want the bully's approval, even after the bully has rejected them, with some still trying to interact with the bully\textsuperscript{25}. Since they have no friends, they are drawn to their violent peers, who satisfy their need for power through aggression. Of course, there are cases where students can be victimized by their peers just because they are different, with physical or mental disabilities, or belonging to a different religion or ethnicity, etc., but there are cases where violent students focus on a particular

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 79-80
\item \textsuperscript{20} Buda, Kőszeghy, Szirmai, \textit{School}, 381
\item \textsuperscript{21} Palaghia, \textit{The phenomenon}, 128
\item \textsuperscript{22} Grigore, \textit{Violența}, 78
\item \textsuperscript{23} Irimescu,G, \textit{A new image of violence against children – bullying type behavior/ Une nouvelle image de la violence contre les enfants - comportement de type intimidation in Annales scientifiques de l'Université "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Iași, Volume IX, 1, 2016, 11
\item \textsuperscript{24} Vármai, Zsiros, Németh, \textit{Broader}, 66
\item \textsuperscript{25} Jigău,M., Liiceanu, A., Preoteasa,L., \textit{Violența în școală}, Institutul de Științe ale Educației, București, Editura ALPHA MDN, 2006, 82
\end{thebibliography}
classmate without a special reason, and the victim feels that something is wrong with him and tends to blame himself.

2. Challenging victims are much less numerous and are characterized by anxious and aggressive behavior, most of them being boys, who are often tempted to react violently in situations where they are or feel victimized. Those in this category have an angry temper, are hyperactive, have difficulty concentrating, lack tact, have habits that irritate those around them, not having the ability to develop relationships with children and adults, including teachers, and may take it out on younger children to work out their frustrations stemming from victimization.

The student victim of bullying in the school environment usually goes home with books, clothes or other objects destroyed, has unexplained injuries, bruises or scratches, never brings his friends home after school hours, spends his free time alone. He finds school unfriendly, even scary, seems afraid to go to school, takes a longer or unusual route to school, has no appetite, has headaches and/or stomach aches, especially after school from school, sometimes asks for more money than parents usually give, is despondent, unhappy, depressed and cries when he comes home from school, mood swings, irritable, often in a bad mood, no he sleeps well, loses interest in school activities and, as a result, experiences a decline in school performance; it may happen that they talk about suicide or even have such attempts.

Victims of school bullying are more dependent on the protection of adults and less safe than their peers. The more often the child is a victim, even in cases of minor bullying, the more opaque, disorganized and violent the world seems to him, his school performance is affected, absenteeism sets in, the risk of dropping out of school, the desire to run away from school and/or home or even joining delinquent groups.

Students who are victims of bullying often have problems with concentration, difficulties with writing and reading, they often behave in ways that can cause tension, some of them can be described as hyperactive, their behavior can cause negative reactions from their peers.

Symptoms of post-traumatic stress can affect the overall development of bullied students in the school space, as they become unable to establish healthy relationships²⁶.

Children and adolescents with disabilities, mental health problems, overweight, from ethnic minority groups are at high risk of being bullied by their peers²⁷.

²⁶ Ibid., 83-84
²⁷ Palaghia, The phenomenon, 130
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4. CAUSES OF BULLYING

Bullying has causes at the individual, family, group, school and society levels. So there is no single cause of bullying, but all these factors that lead to the risk of a child or young person becoming a bully. Aggressive behaviors are linked to other problem behaviors, including vandalism, fighting, drinking, truancy, dropping out of school, and other antisocial behaviors. Both perpetrators and victims have significantly poorer psychosocial adaptability.

Various school problems and more frequent drug use are more typical for victims of bullying. Bullies have a higher risk of health-damaging behaviors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, or other risky behaviors.

In some countries and regions, victimization is linked to family well-being, with children from wealthier families having a much lower risk of becoming victims of peer bullying.

5. SHORT AND LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES

Researchers have discovered the existence of a link between the suffering caused by bullying and certain psychological and social disorders: depression, loneliness, general and social anxiety, reaching suicide attempts or even suicide.

Students - victims of bullying - are more marginalized, weaker, more likely to smoke and drink alcohol. Bullies are more likely to drink, smoke and use drugs, and are more likely to bring a gun to school than victims or other peers.

Successful bullying makes it more difficult for the bully to acquire socially adaptive behavioral strategies, so they are more likely to gravitate toward deviant groups.

Bullying negatively affects the development of students' personality, lowering their self-esteem, socialization; it can cause them psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, sleep problems, stomach pains, enuresis, feeling tired, other disorders in the functionality of organs, including the nervous system) and various ailments; it can affect them psychologically (they become sensitive, lose self-control, feel powerless) and behaviorally (they stop attending classes, their attention is disturbed).

"Aggressive children are at high risk of becoming aggressive adults who engage in physical violence and criminal behavior."

In a survey of 15,288 adults in England, it was found that those who were bullies/victims at school were particularly at risk of becoming victims at work.

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28 Grădinaru, Stănculeanu, Manole, Bullyingul, 9
29 Vármai, Zsíros, Németh, Broader, 67
30 Ibid., 68
31 Buda, Köszeghy, Szirmai, School, 382
32 Palaghia, The phenomenon, 127
29% of unemployed adults surveyed reported being bullied at least once during their teenage years\(^\text{33}\).

Those who are able to learn more success strategies can break out of the victim role, and those who are not can remain victims even into adulthood.

**6. STATISTICAL DATA AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

HBSC international research has been conducted in cooperation with the World Health Organization for more than 30 years, with 44 countries currently participating. In the study carried out in Romania\(^\text{34}\), the most recent nationally representative data collection took place in 2014 among students in the 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th grades. The statistically processed sample size was 6,153 persons and was drawn up using a stratified sampling procedure to ensure national representativeness\(^\text{35}\).

Thus, our country ranks third in the European ranking of the 42 countries in which the phenomenon of bullying was investigated. 17% of 11-year-olds and 23% of 13- to 15-year-olds admitted to bullying other students at least three times in the previous month. Out of a total of approximately 1,300,000 middle and high school students: 400,000 are excluded from the group, 325,000 are humiliated in public, 390,000 are threatened with hitting or beating, 220,000 are repeatedly beaten by their peers.

Almost 50% of students were victims of bullying, having devastating consequences on the educational process, the school dropout rate, their physical and mental health.

According to a study carried out by the "Save the Children Romania" Organization\(^\text{36}\), 16% of teenagers feel tense when they are present at school, 12% scared, 5% sad, more than 4% say that they spend their breaks alone, without communicating with other colleagues.

"Face to face with the phenomenon of bullying" is the first sociological study in Romania, carried out in 2019 by Asociatia Telefonul Copilului (ATC)\(^\text{37}\), which follows the perspective of children, teaching staff and parents regarding bullying, including both a quantitative research and a qualitative research, which approached four case studies, developed on the basis of 50 interviews. The results revealed that 60% of the behaviors of witnesses who intervened in the defense of the victim or notified a teacher/adult in the school went unnoticed, 21%...

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\(^{33}\) Buda, Köszeghy, Szirmai, *School*, 383


\(^{35}\) Reprezentare proporcională a tuturor tipurilor de școli și așezări, precum și a tuturor regiunilor geografice


\(^{37}\) http://www.telefonulcopilului.ro/arhiva-noutati?id=3027
believe they were seen as heroes, 16% were considered turners, and 10% they were also then assaulted. 72% of children have experienced aggression directed against them at least once. Of the total number of bullied children interviewed, only 40% had the courage to recognize their status as a victim, 51% believe that the main reason for bullying is their physical appearance, 62% were bullied by another student, 33% were bullied by a group of students.

Cyberbullying took place on the online platforms most used by students: Facebook (23%), WhatsApp (21%), Instagram (19%).

From the perspective of the aggressors, 50% considered that the victims deserved this treatment, 36% stated that they were also assaulted by the person in question and felt the need to take revenge, 29% felt the need to assert themselves, 15% stated that several colleagues behave this way with that person and they did the same, 11% did it for fun, 6% stated that such behaviors are something common in the school where they study and do not consider that they did nothing out of the ordinary.

The perspective of teachers, students and parents: 7 out of 10 teachers recognize the presence of the phenomenon of bullying in the school where they teach, 81% of the students and all the teachers interviewed believe that it is necessary for the teacher/director to talk to them about bullying in class, while teachers, and the school curriculum to include details about this phenomenon.

Regarding the gender distribution in bullying, 14% of boys and 8% of girls were aggressors towards other peers, 12% of boys and 11% of girls were victims; in terms of cyberbullying, 8% of boys and 4% of girls were bullies towards other peers, 6% of boys and 3.8% of girls were victims.

7. BULLYING PREVENTION METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Bullying is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that includes the individual and family situation of the student, the atmosphere, the conditions, as well as the wider social environment of the school, aiming at a favorable school climate, an inspiring learning environment, supervision, parental involvement, the role to help colleagues.

In recent decades, numerous anti-bullying prevention and intervention programs have been developed around the world. Although Olweus reported that his intervention program reduced the incidence of bullying in schools by 50%, this result was not repeated38. Any program is likely to be effective in the short term, as general attention to the problem and effort to change can bring results in themselves.

The development of adolescents' social skills is important throughout the entire educational process, because they first acquire social skills in the family,
then develop them at school and in society, and thus their unacceptable, inappropriate or intolerable behaviors will be prevented.

7.1. Individual level

In order to create friendly and pleasant relationships with peers, it is important that a teenager can initiate communication, listen to his interlocutor, know how to share with others and be able to control his negative emotions.

The methods of preventing bullying at the individual level are as follows:
- Identifying and assisting the students involved, as well as the causes of bullying manifestations, by consulting students, teachers, specialized staff (psychologists, social workers) and parents/relatives;
- Development and implementation of individualized assistance programs in bullying situations among students (perpetrators or victims), aiming at: guiding students to acquire knowledge about the formation of negative attitudes towards bullying, developing tolerance, responsibility towards their behavior and the consequences of inappropriate behavior on others (colleagues, teachers, parents, friends, etc.); preventing the appearance of negative affective states (resentment, excessive suspicion, irritability, hostility, negativism);
- Involvement of students who repeatedly commit acts of physical or psychological violence in assistance programs run in partnership with other specialized institutions: Police, General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), Church, other organizations specialized in programs for the protection and educating children and young people;
- Capitalizing on the interests, skills and capacities of students exposed to the risk of bullying behavior, in school and extracurricular activities (sports, arts, etc.);
- Accountability of students who behave violently by applying intervention measures with educational and formative potential; avoiding focusing exclusively on the sanction and eliminating from educational practice some sanctions that go against the pedagogical principles (eg: sanctioning violent behavior through grades, repetition, expulsion, etc.);
- Encouraging students to behave according to the moral norms established in society.

7.2. Society level

Responsibility is a very important factor in the prevention of bullying at the level of society. The degradation of the family, the destruction of the community spirit, the lack of public responsibility towards the behavior of each citizen lead to an increase in the share of the young population that exceeds the values of social norms.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{39}\) Palaghia, C., *Dimensions de la déviance scolaire*, București, Editura PROUNIVERSITARIA, 2016, 23
OLWEUS Antibullying Program is the most recognized antibullying program, initiated by D. Olweus in 1983 in Norway. Its goals are: understanding the phenomenon, the active involvement of parents and teachers in the targeted program, the elaboration of clear rules directed against bullying in schools, the support and defense of bullying victims. The basic ideas of the program have been taken up in several countries (Austria, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Iceland, etc.). In Portugal and England there are similar programs - "Safe Schools Program", in Sweden - "Farstal", in the Netherlands - "Peaceful School", etc.

The European Antibullying Network (EAN) project, carried out in several countries, focused on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, states that bullying and violence in school are problems of violation of children's rights.

In Romania, the specific legislation is Law no. 221/18 November 2019 for the amendment and completion of the National Education Law no. 1/2011, which provides for combating bullying in educational institutions, but Law no. 272/21 June 2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights.

The methodological rules of application/May 27, 2020 of Law 221/2019 state that each educational unit must introduce the objective "school with zero tolerance to violence" into the Internal Order Regulation, an anti-bullying action group must be created and implement a plan based on the following: information and awareness activities on the phenomenon of bullying; intervention procedures in bullying situations; mobilizing teaching staff regarding immediate intervention in reported or identified bullying situations; the organization of activities such as: forum, theater, contests, etc., aiming to encourage compliance with the stated mission and values of the school; activities to assess the impact of the actions included in the anti-bullying plan and the effectiveness of the action group.

The School Safety Police was established by MAI Order no. 1842/September 8, 2020, at the level of the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, involving public order, traffic, anti-drug, local, gendarmes, psychologists. This institution deals with the prevention and combating of bullying in schools, drug trafficking in schools, but can also intervene in cases of family violence.

In 2017, the National Strategic Campaign for Awareness, Prevention and Combating Bullying was launched, within which, in October 2022, the application "Education without bullying" was launched, the only application that helps to prevent and combat bullying in Romania; it is created by the specialists who worked on the Bullying Prevention Law in pre-university education units;

41 Alevizos, S., Boldrini, F., Strategia EAN-document de opozitie, 2014, 87
provides easy access to bullying legislation; it is intended for both students, teachers and parents; it can be downloaded for free from Google Play or the App Store; preserve the user's anonymity; it is very easy to use; helps the user to reach directly the institutions capable of offering solutions in the case of aggression or specific bullying and cyberbullying; it is designed as a tool to help victims and witnesses of bullying; has multimedia content useful in education and counseling regarding bullying and cyberbullying situations and includes a guidance tool for solving cases of violence in schools, based on the legal framework in force, which relates to the user's home and the complexity of the case.

Asociatia Telefonul Copilului (ATC) - 116.111 - offers real and immediate support to children in situations of violence, free assistance, as follows: information and advice on the promotion and respect of children's rights; guidance to institutions capable of providing the necessary assistance; tracking how cases are resolved; monitoring the respect of children's rights following registered cases and informing the competent institutions about the problems encountered by children.

Against the background of the registration of an increasing number of requests for counseling and guidance from children and adolescents (between November 2001 and December 2020, ATC received 2,636,108 calls), the Association Telefonul Copilului initiated in Romania "Stop bullying" - the first project that aims to draw attention to bullying.

The Government of Romania initiated for the first time, in 2021, the National Support Program for children "Out of care for children", in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic, whose priorities are: protecting the psycho-emotional integrity of children by creating evaluation and intervention mechanisms for ensuring their mental health; the development of a mechanism for both prevention and multidisciplinary intervention for cases of physical, sexual and emotional violence in the family, community, institutional and online settings.

The main measures of the Program are: 70,000 hours of psychotherapy and psychological counseling for children diagnosed with psycho-emotional disorders caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic; the introduction, by the Ministry of Education, into the school curriculum of psycho-emotional education, emotion management, online safety; providing training sessions for at least 7,000 specialists in the field of emotion and relationship management, identification methods and intervention in psychoemotional disruptive situations; creating hearing rooms for child victims of crimes in each county; development of an integrated computer system for intuitive analysis and sorting of images and video clips of an abusive nature against children; implementing a real-time alert mechanism for missing children; development of the resource platform

43 http://www.telefonulcopilului.ro/stop-bullying
44 https://dingrijapentruclupii.gov.ro/1/
dingrijapentru Confidential gov.ro intended for children, but also for specialists and parents.

As part of this Program, the new children's telephone number – 11945, was launched in 2022, which supports all children who are victims of violence of any type, including through immediate interventions by the Police or medical teams; is operationalized by the Special Telecommunications Service; callable 24/24, free of charge, from any fixed or mobile phone network; operated by DGASPC advisers.

The "Save the Children" association implemented advocacy campaigns to improve Law 272/2004 by: prohibiting all forms of violence against children; the development and improvement of public policies in this sector; increasing the level of awareness among the population regarding the negative consequences of violence on the healthy development of children.

### 7.3. Family level

The methods of preventing bullying at the family level are as follows:

- Programs based on information and training components: courses with parents on various topics focused on child psychology and ways to identify specific elements of school violence; presentation of cases of aggression; offering possible ways to solve typical bullying situations and to assist the victim;
- Informing parents about bullying incidents, cooperating with them and offering effective help to their children;
- Family education in the spirit of improving self-image (positive self-attitude, correct assessment of personal qualities and flaws, positive perception of life experiences, projecting positive experiences for the future); the development of autonomy (resistance to the evaluations of others through the crystallization of positive personal values); acquiring self-control over momentary impulses and the capacity for self-analysis; modeling a behavior characterized by compassion and respect towards any person; developing behavioral skills that give safety: tolerance, strengthening self-confidence, esteem, promoting communication and cooperation.

### 7.4. School level

"In all civilized societies, the school is a child protection institution".46 It is necessary to ensure an adequate school environment for the development of didactic activities in optimal conditions by: avoiding overcrowding of groups of students, both at the school level and at the class level; security service; surveillance equipment and functional security, in order to monitor audio-video in public spaces within the perimeter of educational institutions.

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45 [https://www.sts.ro/ro/comunicate-de-presa/119-numar-unic-de-telefon-la-nivel-national-pentru-cazurile-de-abuz-impotriva-copiiilor](https://www.sts.ro/ro/comunicate-de-presa/119-numar-unic-de-telefon-la-nivel-national-pentru-cazurile-de-abuz-impotriva-copiiilor)

According to the Regulation on the Organization and Operation of Pre-University Education Units, approved by OMEN no. 5447/2020, with subsequent amendments and annexes, and the Student Statute, approved by OMEN no. 4742/2016, every student has the right to non-discriminatory treatment, the school being obliged to ensure that no beneficiary is subjected to bullying by another student, teaching staff or auxiliary staff.

It is important to develop in all schools a universal practice of preventing bullying towards colleagues\textsuperscript{47}. Antibullying programs with a predominantly interventionist or therapeutic focus can be designed according to the school's involvement in bullying. Treating social inequalities, like other public health problems, can have a positive effect.

It is necessary to create a safe social environment throughout the school. All members of the school community must know how to react and behave in the event of bullying. Teachers must assess the magnitude of the bullying problem, organize conferences on the topic, help create school behavior rules, form watchdog groups, and learn how to observe and respond appropriately to student behavior.

The teacher has a central role in the prevention of bullying\textsuperscript{48} and it is necessary for him to have the necessary knowledge and experience to support the self-confidence of students, help them get to know each other, find common points, encourage the formation of friendships, strengthen the collective, improve the classroom climate, form and strengthen students' social skills, to develop a tolerant and positive attitude towards acceptable social communication and a negative attitude towards bullying.

School counselors have a relevant role, but they are assigned too many students and too few counseling hours per student to make real positive changes in school climate. Counseling is "a method of psychosocial intervention to induce a change in the client's attitude and social situation"\textsuperscript{49}. The objectives of school counseling are: "to carry out counseling activities, individually or in groups, with students and their parents, to support the school adaptation of students with problems, both at school, at home or in the community, and to identify school resources and / or of the community, necessary to achieve the objectives of school education"\textsuperscript{50}.

The cognitive-behavioral approach is distinguished by techniques in which the school counselor identifies problematic behaviors, their antecedents, which are based on false beliefs, then, in collaboration with the student, parents, friends and

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\textsuperscript{47} Várna, Zsíros, Németh, \textit{Broader}, 75
\textsuperscript{48} Malecová, B.V., \textit{Possibilities of Bibliotherapy in the Prevention of Bullying at Elementary School} in \textit{Scientific Studies of the Faculty of Education of Catholic University in Ruzomberok}, Volume 3, 2021, 122
\textsuperscript{49} Neamtu, C., (coord.), \textit{Enciclopedia asistenței sociale}, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2016, 238
\textsuperscript{50} Neamțu, C., \textit{Specificul}, 836
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teachers, manages to reduce bullying through appropriate behavior. "As the student learns, unlearns or relearns specific behavioral ways, the counselor acts as a teacher, consultant, support person, facilitator"\(^{51}\).

The school counselor must assume a proactive role in the school community, by disseminating the offer of psychological support and by getting involved, outside the school office, in identifying and solving bullying situations.

Extremely effective in school is conflict mediation, which creates a peaceful environment, reduces tensions and helps to identify problems before they become a source of bullying by encouraging the parties involved in the conflict to "focus on the problem rather than the to see themselves as enemies"\(^{52}\), giving them the opportunity to present their own version of the event and listen to the other side's story, to learn that there is a possibility to resolve a conflict constructively, to change their behavior, if they realize how they influence others. At the same time, the parties involved are more likely to support a decision in which they participated and to identify solutions appropriate to the situations in which they find themselves.

The internal order regulation is an effective means of preventing bullying through: the functional and clear definition of school discipline and school conduct criteria for all factors (students, teachers, auxiliary staff); adapting the provisions to the specific context in which the institution operates; the involvement of factors at the school level (students, teaching staff) in the application of its provisions.

The agenda of the school's formal meetings (Board of Directors, Teacher's Council, Student Council, Parents' Committee) to include topics related to bullying, aimed at raising awareness of the scale of the phenomenon and analyzing the forms, actors and causes of situations that may arise at the level the institution; the development of coherent prevention and intervention mechanisms, the initiation of programs that respond to specific cases of the educational unit (identification of risks in the context of the school, of people with violent potential or at risk of becoming victims), with the active involvement of students as partners.

It is necessary to improve the communication management between all the factors at the school level, by identifying the main communication barriers and by diversifying the strategies and communication channels with the students, by carrying out more informal activities, so that the student-teacher relationship is improved, and the students recognize the teacher as a person they can turn to for any problem; to create a group of students at the class level to give aid and provide assistance to victims; to promote cooperative learning that includes all


\(^{52}\) Gîrleanu, *Consiliere*, 210
students in social groups; to carry out activities that support the integration and adaptation of all students.

The prevention of bullying among students is effective when teachers apply pedagogical measures such as: promoting positive student behavior, creating a safe environment, communicating individually with students, educating them and their parents about socially acceptable communication, seeking help, organizing various activities to help develop students' social skills.

Increasing the transparency of the assessment of student results (criteria, methods) is aimed at reducing the tensions that lead to bullying situations (between students and teachers or between students).

It is important that schools pay more attention to the training of social skills at all levels of schooling, which help to develop the ability of students to protect themselves in unpleasant situations. Teachers should assess the student's social skills and identify those that need to be developed. For this, the teacher can apply the observation method, regarding how the student responds to a colleague's challenge, how he reacts to failure or success. A student who develops strong moral and civic attitudes and social skills can gain more self-confidence, control their emotions and behavior more easily, which will help them resist the challenges of bullying.

7.5. **Class level**

In order to avoid bullying, rules of behavior are established at the class level, which are developed by the students together with the teachers, rules that define their behavior - positive, desirable and friendly. Also, teachers create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. It is very important for teachers to introduce students to different cultures and religions as thoroughly as possible, so that they understand that we are different, but each person must be respected.

At the same time, it is necessary for teachers to spend enough time in the classroom so that students can discuss the relationships between them and the phenomenon of bullying, and leadership classes and social education lessons emphasize the established rules for communication between students.

Capitalizing on the results of the Report on the implementation of the Students' Status at the National Level, 2021, carried out by the National Council of Students\(^{53}\), their representatives developed the following recommendations: the application of sanctions for teachers who perform discriminatory behaviors at the school level, according to the code of ethics of the teaching staff; supporting, during management hours, some information sessions on the negative effects generated by the perpetuation of the phenomenon; the gradual sanctioning of students who adopt discriminatory and/or aggressive behaviors, so that the

aggressor is treated with zero tolerance; streamlining the commission to prevent and combat violence in the school environment.

7.6. Curricular and extracurricular level

The methods of preventing bullying at the curricular and extracurricular level are as follows:
- Debating, during the counseling and guidance classes, the bullying situations observed in the school or in its vicinity and encouraging the expression of the students' opinion regarding these cases, with possible solutions;
- Capitalizing on topics relevant to the issue of bullying, which do not yet exist in the curriculum of school subjects, through the use of active-participatory strategies (case study, role play, critical analysis of audio-visual messages with violent content, problematization, etc.), which to generate students' awareness and development of a critical attitude towards the issue of school violence;
- Carrying out extracurricular programs and activities on the topic of combating bullying;
- Organization of information programs for students regarding the appropriate ways to manage concrete situations of bullying, focused on the development of skills of understanding and self-control, negotiation of conflicts, communication, means of self-defense;
- Initiating intra- and intergenerational education and parental education programs aimed at improving relations between children-parents-teachers-school management;
- Raising teachers' awareness of the issue of bullying (forms of bullying, generative causes, prevention mechanisms, improvement strategies, legislative and institutional framework) through training activities carried out at the local level: training courses, thematic pedagogical circles, experience exchanges;

7.7. Interinstitutional collaboration level

Effective prevention and combating of bullying actions is possible in a multidisciplinary team effort, in an inter-institutional network and in partnership with the family; broad social cooperation is needed: the involvement of all professional and civil organizations, interest groups and companies that have a relationship with the school and students, including social institutions and organizations dealing with health and crime.

Parents must be informed about the services that the school can offer in order to prevent bullying and cyberbullying and improve parent-child relationships (counseling, psychological assistance); the involvement in such activities of specialized staff (psychologists, social workers); providing support to families requesting assistance and directing them to specialized services; the school's collaboration with the families of students with violent potential or who have committed acts of violence, in all phases of their assistance process (information, establishment of a common intervention program, monitoring of reported cases); the organization of visits to families, school meetings,
extracurricular activities with the participation of all categories involved: students, parents, teaching staff and specialists from other sectors of activity; identifying parents to be actively involved in prevention actions or in solving bullying situations.

It is necessary to organize informal activities for students-teachers-parents, as well as to initiate programs for parents, focused on awareness, information and training regarding the difficulties of adapting children to the school environment and various aspects of school violence, respectively bullying (forms, causes, methods of prevention, partners).

The school has the responsibility to report cases of families with repeated violent behavior towards children, to get involved in solving them (in extreme cases, participating in procedures for establishing family placement) and to collaborate with institutions with responsibilities in this field - DGASPC, Police, etc.

**CONCLUSIONS**

*Nowadays, the aggression of children and young people is increasing, which can often turn into bullying. The longer the bullying continues, the more difficult it is to manage and the more serious the consequences for the victims.*

*Bullying must be treated as unacceptable and intolerable behaviour. For all the children involved (victims, aggressors, witnesses), it is necessary to ensure: unitary and specialized interventions in educational and health contexts; access to assistance and specialized services; stability and continuity in care, growth and education.*

*The best interest of the child must be considered in all actions and decisions that concern him, respecting confidentiality and professional deontological norms, without prejudice to the activity of reporting situations of violence or handling cases.*

*Each person is called to contribute to the development of a culture that encourages the inhibition of such violent behavior, a culture of acceptance of all individuals, regardless of their intrinsic characteristics, by forming their own mentality in this regard, and then convincing others to follow the same example.*

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