Lesson 1: Bullying and cyberbullying: origins of the phenomenon, definitions and differences

Since it is an extremely complex and varied phenomenon, bullying lends itself to being analyzed and addressed from different points of view. It is fundamental for teachers to consider some aspects of bullying, such as disruptive behaviors in the classroom, the socio-educational distress of the bullying perpetrators, etc.; by his professional goal, teachers should look for the aspects of distress and educational deficiency in all those involved and try to think of interventions aimed at improving that aspect of the situation.

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1.1 Origins and developments of the phenomenon

Every day, the media alerts us to the increasingly urgent need to deal with a phenomenon that is rampant among young people: bullying. The exponential growth of this phenomenon, particularly in the school context, underlines the importance of addressing this issue, studying it and learning about it to prevent it from becoming a real social scourge in the future.

The first research on the phenomenon of bullying at school was developed in Norway and dates back to the early 1980s, when Olweus (1983) conducted a descriptive survey of the Norwegian school population and found a high incidence and severity of the phenomenon in all age groups.

Starting from this first survey, over the years, research has multiplied all over the world to investigate both the frequency of the bullying phenomenon and to explore the psychological and relational dynamics that are triggered between those involved in the phenomenon itself. In England, for example, Whitney and Smith (1993) conducted a survey which showed that, although the incidence of the phenomenon varied between the different types of schools studied, in primary schools the percentage of victims was never less than 19% and that of victims in secondary schools was never less than 8%. Smith and Sharp (1994) worked in 23 schools in the United Kingdom for four quarters and observed that, following their intervention, the improvement of the problem was positively correlated with the extent of the participants' commitment. In many other countries, such as Australia, Belgium, Finland, Spain and the United States, large-scale interventions have been implemented, making it possible to arrive at a series of variables that seem to be present in all the realities studied and which, therefore, make it possible to identify certain cross-cultural specificities of the bullying phenomenon. It has been shown that the percentage of behaviour that can be categorised as bullying decreases as the age of the children involved increases, but this does not imply an improvement or regression of the phenomenon, only a change. Indeed, bullying incidents become less frequent but their dangerousness and severity rate increases (Smith et al., 2008). Furthermore, it has been shown that it is usually males, with a higher percentage than females, who take on the role of bullies, but conversely it is girls who make greater use of indirect forms of bullying (Björkqvist, 1994)- such as cruel words, refusals of requests to partner on projects or participate in groups.

Other typical elements, which have emerged from the various studies conducted in different parts of the world, concern the preferential places of manifestation of bullying phenomena, which turn

out to be school spaces, but also the fact that the roles of bully and victim retain their stability over time (Menesini, 2000).

1.2 The phenomenon of School based bullying

In recent decades, there has been a significant development in the research investigating the phenomenon of bullying involving children and young people (CYP). Addressing issues which affect the well-being of CYP in school settings has become an increasing priority internationally, with a link being proposed between access safe and inclusive schooling and societal wellbeing and prosperity and by the United Nations in their recent report (O'Higgins-Norman et al., 2022). Indeed, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mandates countries focusing on the management of issues such as bullying in school settings as a priority and ensure access to equitable and inclusive education. These principles are relevant to supporting access to safe settings for all CYP in the pupil populations with SDG 16 promoting the role of education in supporting the development of peaceful and inclusive societies. According to Olweus (2013 p. 770), "being bullied by peers represents a serious violation of the fundamental rights of the child or youth exposed" and management of this phenomenon is a priority for the provision of appropriate education.

Given the priority given to the study of bullying among CYP within both the research literature and international policy priorities, it is a concern that there remains disagreement regarding how bullying is defined and conceptualised (Cornu, Abduvahobov, Laoufi, Liu, & Séguy, 2022; O'Higgins-Norman et al, 2022). Traditionally, bullying has been heavily influenced by the **definitions developed by Olweus** (1993) whose definition comprised **three criteria:**

1) **Intentionality** (desire or goal of inflicting harm, intimidation, and/or humiliation),

2) **Some repetitiveness**, and most importantly,

3) **A power imbalance** between the individuals in a shared social environment (Olweus, 1993; 2013).

The particular form of the power differential is understood as being diverse and dependent on contextual factors, such as physical disparity in strength, social group status within a peer group, or economic factors, for example. Incidence of bullying can take place during direct (i.e., face-to-face) or indirect (i.e., not involving physical proximity or direct engagement in person) interactions. It can take a range of forms such as physical (e.g., punching, kicking), relational (i.e., actions meant to damage reputations or relationships), property damage (i.e., destruction or theft of personal property), and verbal (i.e., oral or written communication meant to harm). Incidences of bullying may also occur across a range of divergent contexts such as at school, in the community (but involving CYP who know each other from school), and online in the form of cyberbullying.

Recent literature has led to disagreement among researchers regarding aspects of this definition, however. For example, some have suggested interactions may be similar but may not meet the criteria to be categorised as bullying, with conflict between equally matched individuals across the salient factors of power being proposed as a “conflict between equals” (Elliot et al., 2010, p. 534) or interpersonal aggression rather than an episode of bullying. In addition, there has also been disagreement regarding the role repetition of incidences of interactions in order to meet the criteria of being considered bullying (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). These limitations in traditional definitions of bullying are amplified given the greater prevalence and focus on the phenomenon of cyberbullying which takes place via online platforms or media. The proliferation of video content and the ability to repeatedly share messages or video files among social groupings adds to the social complexity of the bullying phenomenon and how it is conceptualised.

UNESCO’s scientific committee have recently attempted to revise the definitions of school based bullying towards a perspective they have identified as a whole-education approach (Cornu et al., 2022). This approach situates the school within the wider social context in which it exists, inclusive of the wider education community, within society more broadly and considers the technologies that support relationships in this broader conceptualisation. This approach takes a broader perspective regarding bullying and is heavily influenced by a social-ecological framework perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2004). The definition they developed defines school bullying as in-person and online behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional or social harm to targeted students. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system. School bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults (Cornu et al, 2022).

1.3 Cyberbullism- Definition of the phenomenon

It very often happens that mild or acute conflicts between peers can become acts of bullying and prevarication also carried out via the Internet, with serious amplifying effects for the targets. It is important and useful to promote and facilitate a direct confrontation between those concerned to prevent the dislikes from continuing and the situation from escalating into something more serious. The publication of photos, videos or private information of the target, the spreading of slander through technological tools and means such as mobile phones or e-mail, or the implementation of repeated threats directed at the target, are just a few examples of cyberbullying actions. The ease and competence with which the new generations use technology enables them to perpetrate cyberbullying. The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour and the target are separated by a computer screen or the display of a smartphone: this prevents a full understanding of how painful the target is suffering or how serious the action carried out by the cyberbully is. These acts are carried out with the aim of insulting, damaging reputation, instilling fear or dread in someone, gaining popularity within a group, or simply having fun or fighting boredom. It is therefore a matter of intentional bullying (different from what may be a joke or an argument) carried out in a lasting (at least for a few months) and systematic manner, to the detriment of the same person(s), in which there is an imbalance of power, where those who have power, virtual in this case, exercise it to the detriment of those who are weaker. On the web, the audience that witnesses the harassment is exponentially numerous and therefore the social consequences that follow is even more rapid and burdensome, if defamatory. For this reason, the target often develops paranoid thoughts because he/she believes that even in her/his absence, the rumor in the web about him/her is incessant, continuous and constant.

MAIN FEATURES

The possibility of having an anonymous identity and the difficulty in tracing the perpetrator of bullying, makes it easier to engage in persecutory behaviors online and eliminates the worry of being discovered, disapproved of or punished. The ease of access to the network also allows the material disseminated to circulate quietly and unconditionally without time limits and remain on the web for a long time. In this situation, moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002) can be considered one of the psychological mechanisms that drive the cyberbully to persecute someone. The so-called 'victim dehumanisation' occurs: the cyberbully ends up disassociating himself from the distress that would be caused to them. This flattening of empathy, (understood as the ability to 'walk in the other person's shoes'), curbs the emergence and development of guilt in the face of other people's suffering. Indeed, in cyberbullying, the absence of real contact between the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour and the target (face to face contact) facilitates and amplifies dehumanisation. Moreover, the absence of space and time limits allows the phenomenon to spread everywhere and indefinitely in time, while invisibility and the possibility of creating a fake

personality and virtual identity allows the cyberbully to increase his power: this is also why the level of disinhibition is high, and different actions are carried out online from those one would do in real life. In fact, the possibility of being 'another person' online can weaken ethical qualms: the cyberbully, in fact, not really seeing the consequences of his actions, does not realise the seriousness of what he/she is doing. Moreover, the absence of relationship and knowledge with the other person, further amplifies this factor: very often, in fact, in cyberbullying, people do not really know each other. Since it is difficult to find the cyberbully identity makes the phenomenon even more widespread.

1.4 Difference between bullying and cyberbullying

Although we are talking about two detrimental phenomena that affect the well-being of other people, there are many substantial differences between bullying and cyberbullying. Often the bullying actions take place between people from the same school or group, between people who know each other. The episodes often occur in the classroom, at school, in sports groups and happen at specific times: at playtime, on the way from home to school, in the changing rooms of the sports centre. In this phenomenon, the bully's need to make himself 'visible', to be the centre of attention, is evident: the level of disinhibition of the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour in these cases often also depends on the group dynamic. The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour carries out the acts of aggression, regardless of the consequences of his actions against the target. In cyberbullying, on the other hand, people from all over the world can be involved, even if they do not know each other. The material can be spread all over the world and circulate at any time on the net, even remaining on the web for a long time. In this phenomenon, there is a high level of disinhibition on the part of the cyberbully: he/she does things that would be more restrained in real life, perhaps also because his power is increased by his invisibility and the fact that he cannot actually see the effects of his actions. A study carried out by some scholars highlighted the fact that those who were bullied offline often turned out to be the aggressors online, reversing their roles in the two contexts, perhaps driven by anonymity and a desire for revenge (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004). Another role reversal, but in the opposite direction, is reported instead by a different study that shows that targets of cyberbullying are more likely to be bullies in the traditional context (Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2008).

1.5 Roles in Bullying and cyberbullying

Given the social and transactional nature of bullying as a phenomenon, researchers had explored the differing roles of CYP who participate in or experience incidences of bullying (Olweus, 2013). This had traditionally been divided into two categories or roles i.e. bully and victim, with an additional category of participant being added more recently (Gumpel, 2008; Olweus, 2013; Yen, Ko, Liu, & Hu, 2015). In terms of more recent work on bullying prevention programmes the terms and roles of ‘target’, ‘CYP engaging in bullying behaviour’ and ‘by-standers’ are being used.

Bullying Roles

In developing bullying prevention programmes it is important to consider the language, terms and roles within the bullying dynamic. Programme design, development and implementation should speak to the characteristics of these roles. The terms ‘bully’ and ‘victim’ tend to label individuals whereas the term ‘target’ and ‘those engaging in bullying behaviour’ emphasises the behavioural elements and the possibility for change. Recent programmes have incorporated the role of by-standers as part of the school bullying prevention strategy e.g. FUSE, DCU. Teaching bystanders to respond appropriately (by discouraging, intervening in or reporting bullying) can be an effective way to limit and prevent bullying.

CYP engaged in bullying behaviour

Students who bully others often do so to gain status and recognition from their peers. Their bullying behaviour is reinforced when they intimidate their targets and when the peer group colludes by not challenging the initiator or reporting the bullying to staff.

Bullying can be rewarding, increasing the initiator's social status while lowering the social status of their target. The culture of a school will strongly influence the extent to which this occurs.

Targets

Students of all ages can be at risk of being bullied (that is, being targets) for a whole host of reasons, including:

- differing from the majority culture of a school in terms of ethnicity, cultural or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic status; having a disability, special education needs or mental health issues
- being unassertive or withdrawn (for example, isolated students with low self-esteem)
- academic achievement (being perceived as a high or low achiever)
- having recently transitioned into a school (through natural progression through schools, changing to a new school because of behavioural issues at a previous school, or moving to the area from another city or country).

Bystanders

Bystanders are students who witness bullying. They can be powerful influencers — how they react can either encourage or inhibit those who bully others. There are different types of bystanders:

- followers (assistants) - do not initiate, but take an active role in the bullying behaviour
- supporters (reinforcers) - do not actively attack the target, but give positive feedback to the initiator of the bullying behaviour, providing an audience by laughing and making other encouraging gestures
- defenders - dislike the bullying and try to help the target by intervening, getting teacher support (using safe telling) or providing direct support to the target
- outsiders - stay away, do not take sides with anyone or become actively involved, but allow the bullying to continue by their 'silent approval'.

Bystanders can play a number of different roles:

- helping students who are engaged in bullying behaviour and actively joining in
- encouraging or showing approval to the students who are engaging in bullying behaviour
- doing nothing or being passive
- defending or supporting the target (the student who is being bullied) by intervening, getting help or comforting them.

Bystanders who take no action or behave in ways that give silent approval (watching, nodding, turning a blind eye) encourage the bullying behaviour to continue. Teaching bystanders to respond appropriately (by discouraging, intervening in or reporting bullying) can be an effective way to limit and prevent bullying.

1.6 Types of bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying

There are different ways of bullying.

It may be **physical**, when it is carried out through physical aggression and abuse (hitting, kicking, shoving, hitting, pinching or assaulting with objects). But it may also refer to violence against things or property, through, for instance, taking objects, damaging them, or extorting money from the target. This is generally the easiest form to detect.

However, it can also manifest itself in a **verbal form,** through insults, teasing, verbal aggression. It means mocking, repeatedly taunting the target, apostrophising them with humiliating nicknames, making comments about the way they dress or speak, making racial or sexist remarks. This form of violence repeated over time leads to a progressive and deleterious inner attrition in the target. But there is also indirect or psychological violence, which is mainly carried out through the spreading of slander, intentional exclusion, the spreading of annoying gossip or through threats, humiliation and mockery. Conversely, it is defined as relational when it involves isolating the target. Ignoring someone also falls under this form of bullying. This one in particular refers to a form of 'aggression' that manifests itself mainly in the form of 'sneaky gossip' and affects the female sex more than the male.

Cyberbullying

The cyberbully can inflict immediate and long-term violence or psychological harm on his target in various ways:

- Cyberbashing
- Harassment or Put Down
- Denigration
- Cyberstalking
- Flaming
- Impersonation
- Exclusion
- Outing or Trickery
- Exposure
- Sexting
- Sextortion

CYBERBASHING

CYBERBASHING is the most frequent form of cyberbullying and is evidenced when a target is assaulted, hit or harassed while a group of bystanders film the scene with a phone camera and then disseminate the images and footage on the web.

Digital prevarications are the order of the day and are used by CYP in order to humiliate, attack and denigrate others, many of which are unknown to most adults.

These are forms of violence, often acted out in group, in which physical force is used with the intent to hurt: children punching and kicking each other, girls beating each other and pulling each other's hair while others stand by and watch what happens, without intervening, except to comment and to incite them to continue, while they record it all behind a smartphone screen. The videos are then posted on groups and pages with the hashtag WorldStar, spread all over the world in order to be visible and popular, to receive likes, comments and shares on an attention-grabbing video.

We are talking about 4 out of 100 teenagers filming their peers while they are being beaten and suffering physical violence, without intervening at all, leaving them at the mercy of this type of violence (Italian National Observatory on Adolescence data).

The most alarming aspect is the sharing, appreciation and incitement to hatred on the net: in no time, in fact, the videos reach thousands of views and likes. No one intervenes; on the contrary, most of those who view these videos are as if they were watching a film, laughing, enjoying themselves, commenting with insults and sharing, fuelling the phenomenon.

The pages where these videos are collected have been flagged and closed several times but then reopened under other names, so that most of the videos can still be found on the web, triggering a very powerful contagion effect.

There is a risk of encouraging a normalisation, a greater acceptance of such behaviors by those who are already prone to this type of violence. There is also a deep irresponsibility in those who watch and do nothing because they do not feel personally involved, because they cover themselves behind the fact that 'it is not them who are fighting'. The screen also dehumanises, strips away feelings and emotions in those who do not put themselves in the victim's shoes and show no solidarity with them.

In these CYP, there is a total lack of awareness of what they are doing both to themselves and to others, failing to understand the limit between play, fun, prevarication and violence. There is a lack of education on all fronts, which must also involve all those spectators who, if they intervened immediately and if they did not share, could at least stem this type of violent phenomenon.

HARASSMENT and PUT DOWN

HARASSMENT consists of the repeated sending of offensive, unpleasant, defamatory and insulting messages, which are sent, repeatedly over time, through technological means (chat, email, text messages, blogs, anonymous phone calls).

PUT DOWN (denigrate): i.e. denigrate someone through e-mails, text messages, posts sent to a blog, i.e. a group of people. This tool aims at affecting not the person as he/she really is, but his/her reputation in the eyes of others, which is compromised not only on the web but also by all those who are informed by the cyberbully.

This is therefore an unbalanced relationship in which, as in traditional bullying, the target is always in a one-down position (Watzlawick, Beavin, Jackson, 1971), i.e. passively suffers the harassment or, at best, tries, usually unsuccessfully, to convince the persecutor to stop the aggression. In some cases, the cyberbully, in order to reinforce his offensive activity, may also involve his online contacts (mailing lists), who, perhaps even though they do not directly know the target student, lend themselves to participating in the online aggression (one could define this phenomenon as 'harassment with voluntary recruitment', Pisano, 2008).

Here is an explanatory story of this phenomenon:

"*Valeria is happy. Finally, after months, she was able to get together with Manuel, the boy she liked from the beginning of school. She overcame her shyness and on Saturday, at Luca's party, she asked Manuel if he wanted to be with her. He, after a very long moment of silence, said yes. Valeria is in seventh heaven and jokes with her friends via chat. Some joke that she is lucky to have such a handsome guy and others congratulate her on her conquest. Valeria laughs, embarrassed and happy at the same time.*

Then the smartphone rings again: it is a text message from an unknown number. The message is brutal: 'I'll make you pay'. Valeria is astonished, she thinks it is a mistake, a message intended for someone else. Shortly after, the smartphone rings again: it is the same number, and the message is even more threatening. Valeria whitens, swallows slowly. Then she takes courage and writes: "Who are you?". No reply.

For the rest of the day, the mystery user does not answer or search for her. The same happens the next day, so Valeria is quiet again. Finally, she can only think of Manuel, with whom she exchanges an endless series of sweet messages.

But after three days, the unknown number returns, and this time it leaves no room for doubt: 'You stole Manuel from me'. Valeria is overcome with rage: she has not stolen anyone's boyfriend, it is Manuel who has chosen her. She tries to find out who the sender is, but cannot get any definite information.

And meanwhile the messages increase, become a constant in her days, like the fear that grips her stomach every time the phone rings. Valeria also begins to dread the journey from home to school: she is afraid that someone will suddenly come and hurt her. And in the end she decides to break it off with Manuel. She no longer wants to see him, because discomfort accompanies every moment spent with him."

DENIGRATION

DENIGRATION consists of the online dissemination of slander, lies or rumors, gossip, often of an offensive and cruel nature, for the purpose of defaming or insulting someone or damaging their

reputation and personal relationships.

Cyberbullies may, in fact, send or publish on the Internet altered images (photographs or video clips) of the target, for instance, by modifying the face or body of the target student in order to ridicule him or her, or by making him or her the protagonist of sexually explicit scenes, through the use of photomontages.

In these cases, the peers who receive the messages or view the photographs or video clips on the Internet are not necessarily the targets (as is predominantly the case with harassment and cyberstalking), but sometimes passive spectators of cyberbullying (when they just watch), more likely active ones (if they download the material, report it to other friends, comment on it and vote on it).

Therefore, unlike in cyberstalking, the cyberbully's offensive and intentional activity can take the form of a single action (e.g. publishing a retouched photo of a classmate), capable of generating, with the active, but not necessarily required, contribution of other Internet users ("involuntary recruitment", Pisano, 2008), unpredictable cascading effects.

Finally, denigration is the form of cyberbullying most commonly used by students against teachers: there are, in fact, numerous seriously offensive video clips on the Internet depicting episodes from classroom life. In some cases, the scenes depicted are obviously fake and, therefore, re-created ad hoc by the student, sometimes they are, unfortunately, true.

Here is a concrete example:

"*Marco is in his first year of middle school and has landed in a class where he knows no one: making new friends is difficult. To break the ice, Annalisa takes care of it: after asking everyone for their mobile phone number, her classmate creates a class group on WhatsApp. The kids start interacting. There are those who write jokes, like Giacomo, those who send curious photos, like Sara, and those, like Gloria, who only reply with smiling emoticons and simple 'ahahs'. Others, however, view the conversations but do not participate. Annalisa does not worry: sooner or later it will be their turn. The group on WhatsApp also seems to help in real life, because the children now find themselves talking about that shared photo or that song Sara linked.*

All is well, in short. Until the maths test arrives. The day before, everyone talks about it, and promises to 'help each other' and 'suggest'. The debate, in the group, continues even after the test is over. And for the first time, Dario intervenes. Dario sits two seats away from Marco: he always keeps to himself and speaks little. His best friends are in other classes and he spends playtime with them. During the test, Dario ended up next to Marco and, throughout the test time, asked him for his results. But Marco was unable to help him because the teacher was keeping an eye on him.

Dario then debuts in the group with a very specific accusation: Marco refused to hand over the task to him. It is a false accusation and full of insults. Marco tries to justify himself, but Dario continues to insult him. Someone tries to stop the comrade, but he gets fed up almost immediately: after all, his attack is only on Marco and everyone prefers to talk about something else.

Only Annalisa writes a private message to her unjustly attacked friend: she tells him to let it go, that Dario is only telling lies and that no one believes him. To Marco, however, those harsh words hurt. He cannot help but give them weight. And so, what used to be a space to have fun, now becomes a battleground, and Marco loses the will to interact with his peers...'

CYBERSTALKING

CYBERSTALKING consists of repeatedly sending intimidating messages containing threats and insults. It can be considered a real telematic persecution after which the target begins to fear for his or her physical safety.

If Harassment involves targeting someone every now and then, Cyberstalking (online persecution) is a relentless barrage, aiming to frighten the target with threats, even of physical violence.

"*It is Saturday afternoon and Mattia has gone to the park with his mates to play a football match against the older children in the neighbourhood. Just before the last goal, the one that will decide the challenge, Mattia sees the attacker of the opposing team advancing. He decides to counter him with a rather impetuous foul, and lands him. His teammates recover the ball and score on the counter-attack. Among his teammates, Mattia becomes the hero, the one who saved the game. But the attacker of the opposing team doesn't think so: at one point, he approaches him and whispers something incomprehensible in his ear, then walks away.*

The next day, Mattia finds a message in the Facebook chat. The sender is the older boy, and the text is a threat with a clear reference to Saturday's game. Twenty minutes pass, and an e-mail arrives at Mattia's e-mail address: the subject is a provocation. An hour later, four more emails arrive containing violent photos. The subject line is a chilling: 'Do you want to end up like that?"

Mattia does not lose his cool and decides to let it go. He hopes that the older boy will tire of it sooner or later. But he does not. After a week, Mattia starts receiving at least ten threatening messages on Facebook and three different emails every day, full of details about what might happen to him if he is found wandering around alone.

Mattia starts to get scared and begins to no longer want to leave the house alone. He even gives up his usual bicycle ride around the neighbourhood, something he had always loved to do right after lunch.

After a month, the messages increase further, but Mattia prefers not to talk about it with anyone so as not to look like a coward. But now he hardly goes out anymore: even when he is in company he does not feel safe and the rare times he is with friends he spends the whole time looking around, worried.

"*What is it? Everything OK?*" *his best friend Francesco asks him.*

Mattia plays it down: sooner or later that boy will stop threatening him. Maybe."

FLAMING

FLAMING consists of violent and vulgar messages that aim to provoke confrontations and verbal battles in web spaces between two people using the same modality.

Flaming is the offence, pure and simple, made on public social networks and often vulgar, perhaps written between social media comments or in a forum, an online discussion group.

""*Paul is very sensitive to environmental protection issues. For some time, he has been sharing articles, photos and videos on his Facebook page that, in his opinion, should 'shake everyone's conscience'. And, in his own way, he achieves some effect. His schoolmates occasionally make fun of him, but most of the time they just comment with a 'Way to go! Way to go!". The same goes for family friends, who appreciate his commitment.*

Paul also choses to share all posts publicly to attract more people, but no unknown contact ever commented. One evening, however, under a new anti-pollution article, a user called Max Turbo surprisingly shows up. The first comment is a long sequence of insults that have nothing to do with the article.

Paul decides not to reply: some of his contacts will do it for him. No one intervenes instead, and Max Turbo continues to comment, increasing the creativity of his offences. To make matters worse, a couple of his classmates comment with amusement on the 'style' of the unknown brawler.

At that point, Paul decides to reply and does so at first calmly and diplomatically, urging the user not to swear. And he gets the opposite effect: Max Turbo now takes it out on Paul directly. And the boy loses his patience and starts to hit him back.

The comments become dozens and dozens. Occasionally someone tries to intervene to restore calm, but to no avail, and meanwhile the supporters of both contenders increase. There are those who urge them to dare more and those who take sides. The next day, the post contained over seven hundred comments. Paul rereads them all with a hint of anger and solemnly promises himself that from now on he will never post anything on social networks again, not even those beautiful posts for the protection of the Earth for which he had spent so much energy.

MASQUERADE or IMPERSONATION

In the case of IMPERSONATION, the attacker carries out a real identity theft, obtaining private information (passwords, nicknames) that allows him to access someone else's account with the aim of damaging his reputation or taking possession of it.

"*Francesco has never joined any social networks. He is in eighth grade and almost all his peers are on one or more platforms. For this reason, he sometimes feels excluded from certain discussions, but he doesn't give it much weight. In fact, in some respects, he is famous precisely because he refuses to stay connected and this makes his friends smile, who see him as the 'alternative' kid.*

One day Stefano, a classmate, walks up to him smiling and pats him on the back: 'You gave in too, huh? You finally joined Facebook'. Francesco stares at him dumbfounded: he hasn't done anything at all! He tries to deny it, to say he is mistaken, but Stefano insists: he has been registered on Facebook since the night before and has already asked all his classmates to friend him.

Francesco pales: he has to check what is going on. So, he borrows his smartphone from Stefano and looks at what should be his profile. In the avatar photo is his favourite footballer, the date of birth is correct. There is only one post in the profile: 'I'm here at last! Hello everyone!", followed by a list of welcome comments.

Francesco has no idea how to deal with it, except by declaring that it is a fake profile. But the statement is met with global laughter: everyone knows he is the only one missing on social media, and sure enough, Francesco is lying to get attention!

The next day, the situation worsens: in the space of twenty-four hours, the fake Facebook profile has sent offensive messages to all his classmates, threatened a couple of students from first grade and shared 'embarrassing' links. When Francesco entered the classroom he was greeted by grim looks and a few classmates picked him up saying he should be ashamed of what he had written. "It wasn't me," Francesco repeats, but no one believes him.

And while Francesco futilely continues to defend himself, in a corner of the classroom Stefano updates his brand new and totally fake profile."

EXCLUSION

Exclusion consists of voluntarily excluding and ousting someone from an online group, chat, forum, or other activity, just for the purpose of hurting them.

Not inviting a classmate to your class group on WhatsApp, or making sure that on Facebook no one accepts the friendship of that girl from the gym, simply because you have decided she is obnoxious, are examples of Exclusion.

"*Luisa changed volleyball teams this year. She joined a team of girls who have been playing together for seven years, and she still does not know anyone. The group is very close-knit and does not seem to accept the newcomer willingly.*

Luisa is a sunny and cheerful girl, and she is not used to this kind of reception. Therefore, from the very first day of training, she tries to establish a good relationship with her teammates, listening, intervening in conversations and being helpful. But every effort falls on deaf ears.

One day, the setter, Betta, confides in her that this attitude stems from the fact that she is not part of the team's online group, and is therefore an outcast. And she tells her that to be part of the group she will first have to 'deserve' it.

Luisa does not quite understand how to acquire this merit, but she decides to put in as much effort as possible: she starts to satisfy every need of her companions, who ask her to bring them a drink, to lend them a towel or comb, to shower last, when the water is cold, and so on.

Luisa takes it ironically, as a kind of 'challenge' to win their trust and tries not to take it personally. But time passes and, after two months, she has still not received an invitation to the online group. On the other hand, at every training session she listens to the amused conversations of her companions who talk about things they have 'put into the group'.

Luisa begins to despair: although she has behaved well and always made herself available to the others, she does not feel accepted. She begins to dislike training, starts not showing up for matches, and her parents cannot understand why her great passion for volleyball has died out.

Luisa would like to talk to them, to explain that joining that group would be an important step for her. But every time she tries, a knot clutches her stomach and the words seem to die in her throat..."

OUTING, TRICKERY and EXPOSURE

It refers to the sharing of personal information, secrets or images on the Internet; usually the person is persuaded by deception, to reveal this information in order to then make it public on the Internet. It is experienced as a real emotional betrayal.

Trickery means deception, and it is one of the most devious attacks: alone or with an accomplice, the cyberbully gains the target's trust (perhaps by offering to help him/her not to be bullied any more!), and then publishes online everything they said to each other, laughing about it.

"*Giada is very shy and has made few connections in her class. Maria, on the other hand, is an outgoing, funny girl who always has a joke ready. The boys court her shamelessly and the girls look at her with a mixture of envy and admiration.*

One afternoon, Giada receives an unexpected notification: Maria has written her a message on Facebook! Her heart flutters as she scrolls down the lines: the girl has composed a real declaration. She says that she is sorry to see her always on the sidelines and that if she needs to confide, she is ready to listen. Giada rejoices and cannot believe her eyes: Maria wants to be her friend!

Strangely enough, however, the next day, Maria greets her in passing, dedicating the same amount of time to her as she had so far. But after a moment Giada receives another message in which Maria apologises for not stopping to chat. At school, she says, there are too many impediments and distractions, and she would rather devote as much time to them. 'Better to talk here, where we have all the time in the world'.

And so a beautiful relationship begins and Giada finally begins to open up. Maria, for her part, listens to her and gives her advice, especially about her secret crush on the third-year blond boy who, fortunately, knows nothing.

All goes well until the day Giada receives a strange message via Facebook: it is Luigi, another of her classmates, who points her to a public group with a sinister name on the same social networking site. It is called: 'Poor Giada distressed by fate'. Inside the group there are some classmates, but also many strangers, and the thing that unites them is laughing out loud under the posts that are published.

These are screenshots of the conversations Giada had with Maria, each accompanied by a cruel comment. The moment when she confessed her love for the blondie is called 'eternal and impossible', while the conversation about her being shy is called 'boredom in person'.

Giada feels tears streaming down her face. She would like to talk to Maria, to ask her why she did this... but those evil words echo in her head more than ever."

Outing occurs when the cyberbully posts embarrassing information about the target online. It often occurs when the target leaves the computer or smartphone unattended and with social network logins open.

"*The class is back from its two-day trip. Students are still elated about the school holiday and are talking about it all the time. The class Whatsapp group is studded with photos: everyone has taken a myriad of them of their classmates and wants to share them to remember those fun and unmissable moments they just experienced.*

Melania, for example, only sends group photos. On a field trip, she was the subject of constant snorting because she made her classmates stop every three steps to take a shot 'all together'. Alice, on the other hand, did a photo shoot of the football match on the first day and the classmates really liked her shots.

So, in the days following the return, Whatsapp is full of photos and amused comments.

Strangely, the males share a few snaps: it almost seems as if they did not take any photos. The silence is broken by Giacomo, one of the shyest in the class, who suddenly posts a selfie taken in what appears to be the room where he was staying with his classmates during the trip: the shot shows him just waking up, with his hair tousled and wearing red and white pyjamas. Along with the shot, Giacomo writes 'I'm handsome, aren't I?'. The response is not long in coming, and more or less everyone responds with laughter and smiling emoticons.

Nobody would have expected this sudden cheekiness from Giacomo: he, so shy and reserved, is suddenly filling the class chat with his selfies. And the shot of Giacomo posing in front of the mirror, hugging a dog or showing off his muscles in the garden is followed by a shot of him on a field trip. Each shot always has a proud comment and causes further laughter.

But it is not Giacomo who is sending the photos because he is playing a game of football and has left his smartphone in his rucksack. The gesture did not go unnoticed by Luca, who decided to have some fun as he did not feel like chasing the ball with the others. He therefore grabbed his companion's smartphone and glanced through the photos in the device's archive in search of the most embarrassing or funny ones. Once selected, he started sharing and every time he sent a new snapshot, Luca grinned amused, thinking it was a fabulous joke.

Giacomo meanwhile, oblivious to what is happening to his smartphone, has just scored a goal. It has been a long time since he has scored a goal and he rejoices happily, hugging his friend Marco.

Too bad he doesn't yet know that, the next day, he will be called 'Selfie Fixer' by the whole class and that that obnoxious nickname will not leave him for months to come."

EXPOSURE means revealing information, truthful or extorted, or details concerning someone's private life without them having the opportunity to make amends. In this case, however, it is not a question of actual confidence made by the target.

SEXTING

As early as 11 years of age, many young people are tempted by the idea of taking intimate, unclothed or sexually oriented selfies and sending the pictures or videos to their partners, friends, in group chats. It is called sexting and we are talking about a practice habitually carried out by 6% of preadolescents aged 11 to 13, 70% of whom are girls. The numbers rise as age increases: in fact, between 14 and 19, the proportion is about 1 in 10 teenagers.

The term derives from the combination of sex (sex) texting and indicates the exchange or sharing of sexually explicit texts, videos or images that often depict oneself. Adolescents often mistake this behaviour for a game, which can, however, have repercussions that significantly alter their lives and explode into dramatic situations. In sexting, it is the dimension of trust that is misunderstood and confused. Teenagers who spread their images think they can blindly trust their friends but are betrayed the moment the relationship breaks down due to arguments or other reasons and the images are spread. Teenagers who post provocative selfies do not decide for themselves the image they want to give of themselves but go along with what others want to see in them (winking, older-than-their-age figures). This phenomenon feeds the divide between the sexual dimension and that of feeling. It has more to do with the exhibition of oneself than with the expression of emotions since it encourages the public display of automated sexual behaviour in a sphere that has always been private.

Revenge porn: taking revenge even on friends

Girls, therefore, are the category most at risk from the point of view of the dissemination of intimate and private material and are often also targets of so-called revenge porn. This phenomenon occurs when an ex-partner takes revenge for having been left or betrayed by posting material of a sexual nature on social networking sites or chats, with the sole aim of causing harm to the other person and exposing them to public pillory. It can also happen in friendships, where one takes revenge for a wrong suffered by posting intimate content. The consequences, not only psychological but also social, are often devastating for the victims, even for those who do not go as far as suicide.

But what are the characteristic aspects of this type of behaviour?

- **Trust**: boys/girls often send their own nude or sexually explicit images or videos because they trust the person to whom they are sending the material. They show little awareness that that same material, if the relationship (friendship or couple) were to deteriorate or break down, could be disseminated as payback for what happened.
- **Pervasiveness**: the possibilities offered by the new generation of mobile phones allow to share one's own or others' photos with many people at the same time, through multiple sending, sharing on social networks, online dissemination.
- **Persistence of the phenomenon**: material posted on the Internet may remain available online for a long time. Children, who grow up immersed in new technologies, are not aware that a photo or video spread on the net may never be taken down again.
- **Non-awareness**: children are often not aware that they are exchanging child sexual abuse material.

The need to appear and 'be seen' helps to explain not only the surge in social network subscriptions, but also the incessant need to take selfies.

According to a recent survey of more than 15,000 Italian teenagers (2014), one in four takes at least one photo a day, 85% share at least a few of them on social networking sites, and 53% use photo-editing programmes before posting their pictures (53%, or 1 in 2 boys) (Doxa kids, 2014). The same research showed that 36% of teenagers know someone who has done sexting and 13% of teenagers have signed up or downloaded a dating app (among boys 17%).

Recent research (2013) by a European helpline (Kids Help Phone) with its users revealed that they used to sext for (in order from most to least common):

- for fun or for sexual pleasure: "*I do it for fun*".
- as a result of pressure from others: "*I do it because I have been asked repeatedly*".
- to give something of oneself to a person one likes: "*I do it for my boyfriend*".
- to explore one's sexuality: "*I was curious*".
- as a joke or to combat boredom: "*it's a game between friends*".

It is also important to know that the phenomenon affects both boys and girls, although it is predominantly boys who both send and receive sexually-motivated messages. On the other hand, 9 out of 10 parents consider it impossible for their child to undress and put his or her pictures/videos online (source: Eurispes, 2012).

SEXTORTION

Sextortion, or sexual blackmail, consists of threatening to make a target's private information public unless the target pays money to the extortionist. In the digital age, the information might include fragments of sexual text messages (sexts), private photos and even videos. Criminals generally ask for money even if they sometimes seek even more compromising material (send us more or make it all public). The majority of targets are not teenagers - according to the police, in 2017 out of more than a thousand victims of age only 25 were between 14 and 18, although the tendency of the very young not to ask the police for help may weigh on this statistic - because they are that part of the population that has no money to spend. Nevertheless, they remain the perfect target because in adolescence one finds oneself cultivating new types of relationships, usually without any guidance. The result can be a cybercriminal's dream: a lot of information that should be protected, but is not, and that belongs to people who are emotionally vulnerable and easily ashamed. Victims fear public condemnation; asking for help would mean revealing secrets they desperately try to hide. And teenagers are very vulnerable. Sextortion can cause serious psychological damage or even suicide attempts (at least four have been documented in Italy).

THE CYBERBULLY'S WEAPONS:

WARNING WARS: wars of reports, often false, to get the target's account closed (mainly used in exclusion cases).

SCREEN NAME: denigrating the target by impersonating him/her, using a similar username

TEXT WAR: group ganging up against an individual and sending hundreds of text messages from the target's phone number

INTERNET ROLLING: Creation of online surveys aimed at offending someone. (e.g. 'who is the biggest loser in class').

E-MAIL E INSTANT MESSAGING: targets are placed among the users of advertising or porn sites.

1.7 The causes of bullying and cyber bullying

1.7.1 The causes of bullying

Individual, family and social contexts are risk factors that affect the behaviours of children and determine the aggressiveness of a CYP engaged in bullying behaviour.

On an individual level, these may relate to temperament, a predisposition towards violent games, an established diagnosis (or tendency) towards attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, limited problem-solving skills and abilities. In children who tend to be more 'impetuous' and have a 'strong temper' there is a greater likelihood of developing bullying behaviour in the future. Although this is not a certainty, on a statistical level, it has been proved that children who are more impetuous, tend over time to be more aggressive and have manifestations tending towards bullying behaviour: children who love 'contact games', who are perpetually ready to intervene in any situation, who tend not to be very shy. Those, on the other hand, who have a calmer temperament and are described as shy, risk-averse, the classic 'good boy' in a nutshell, will find it more difficult to develop such attitudes. These are obviously percentages: it is more or less probable, but not 'certain' or 'to be excluded'. The propensity towards games and manipulative attitudes also constitutes another predisposition factor to the development of bullying behaviour. Finally, the presence of limited problem-solving competence (that is the ability to find more effective and appropriate solutions in response to the actions performed by the others), can be regarded as a risk characteristic: the subject actually fails to relate adequately with others because he or she does not possess the tools to do so.

By analysing the diagnostic grouping of 'Attention deficit disorder and Disruptive Behaviour Disorder' in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), it is easy to see how bullying can straddle the line between conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder.

Conduct Disorder is characterised by a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour in which the fundamental rights of others or the norms or rules of society are violated. This type of behaviour is present in various environments and may cause clinically significant impairment of social, school, or family functioning.

Children and adolescents may display an overbearing, threatening, or intimidating behaviour; can be physically cruel to people or animals; deliberately damage others' property, etc.

The affective sphere is compromised, in fact, when the subject carries out the violent action, he/she does not feel any remorse or empathy for his/her target but reacts with deep frustration and high reactivity to stimuli, going so far as to commit actual violence (DSM-5 American Psychiatric Association, 2014).

Oppositional Defiant Disorder, on the other hand, does not manifest itself through acts of direct aggression but rather through a negativistic, defiant, disobedient and hostile attitude towards

authority figures, particularly adults. Hostility and provocation are expressed with persistent stubbornness, resistance to directives, and unwillingness to compromise, surrender or negotiate with both adults and peers (DSM-5 American Psychiatric Association, 2014). This type of disorder is less severe than the previous one but can evolve into Conduct Disorder when it transforms from a natural behaviour for a certain developmental stage to abnormal and persistent oppositionality, which affects both social relationships and school performance (DSM-5 American Psychiatric Association, 2014). There are many theoretical models that have attempted to explain aggression and bullying and, in order to better understand the factors of distress or deviance, researchers have usually focused on two lines of research: on one hand, a strongly environmentalist approach that attributes the causal origin of 'deviant' behaviour to socio-familial factors; but on the other, we find the genetic-biological approach that reduces risk factors to the constituent components of the individual (Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998). Research has emphasised that both social interaction theory and social control theory contain in a nutshell the main factors of deviance (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). Both theories state that the child's personality is structured from the relationship with parents, who become facilitating agents of conventional values and consequently of the acquisition of control functions (ibid.). It is attachment theory (Bowlby, 1989) that clarifies the protective function that a healthy relationship with the caregiver can assume in the child's development, or, on the contrary, how much a conflictual relationship can lead to difficulties in the development process. Moreover, one should not forget the large body of literature that shows how bullying episodes, suffered, and perpetrated in childhood and adolescence are highly likely to lead to serious conduct disorders in late adolescence and adulthood (Menesini, 2000). Oliverio Ferraris (2008) summarizes the original causes of persecutory acts by stating that bullying is based on a family discomfort that leads the person to engage in harassing behaviour essentially for two different motivations: learning and revenge. In the first case, the person re-proposes in the classroom the model of violent behaviour learned from his/her family. In the second, he re-updates what he/she learnt as a target of aggression but reverses his/her own role. These theories are fundamental for understanding the phenomenon of bullying, but if considered individually they are not exhaustive. In fact, this type of aggressive behaviour leaves no room for unilinear causal models, as it appears as a multi-componential phenomenon resulting from the interaction of numerous distal and proximal factors, which explain not only the different types, but also the varied evolutionary trajectories and the multiple rates of stability or change over time (Fedeli, 2007). In this regard, an important variable that is often underestimated is the period of onset of bullying behaviouring, a fundamental index of the chronicity and/or transience of the phenomenon over time. The onset, starting as early as the first years of childhood of violent behaviour - not only directed at peers but also directed at adults - in association with a very impaired emotional modulation, presents a strong stability over time and cross-situationally that is more likely to lead to the chronicity of such behaviour and to forms of aggression of increasing severity (Fedeli, 2006). Aggressive actions, which arise in adolescence, on the contrary, take on a primarily relational value with the aim of making the individual assume an identity, role and position within the group and therefore their nature is purely situational and limited in time (Vitaro, Tremblay, & Bukowski, 2001), even if the particular phase of onset, already in itself characterised by disturbances and changes, has catch scholars’ attention on the criticalities that can be highlighted in the previous phases of development. Some American researchers (Loeber & Hay, 1997), for instance, have been concerned with tracing the age of onset of three different types of aggression, subdivided by levels of severity, arriving at the empirical finding that it is possible to trace an order of onset in relation to the greater or lesser severity of aggressive forms, but above all, they have verified that

antisocial phenomena with the highest levels of severity occur precisely during the adolescent period, confirming not only the relational nature of such behaviour during the adolescent phase of individuals' lives, but also the greater inability of adolescents themselves to manage their emotions and their predilection for behavioural modes of transition to the act.

In the family environment, particularly aggressive behaviour by parents or incorrect educational styles such as permissive, or overly authoritative, distracted, or authoritarian, can lead to bullying.

Parents who often have aggressive attitudes or frequently resort to violence provide the wrong role model. For this reason, children who live in hostile family environments are more likely to develop bullying behaviour later. Thus, families in which borderline or clearly delinquent attitudes are widespread are obviously higher risk environments. But also, a lack of attention to their children's habits, needs, passions and interests, and educational disinterest or disengagement with them, affect the development and behaviour of children: sometimes parents are totally unprepared for what happens to their children daily.

Also, the imposition of strict rules on their part, which are then not enforced, promises of punishments that are then not followed up, or even exaggerated reactions that alternate with attitudes of indifference, lead to an increase in misconduct on the part of the children, who, as a result, are not fully able to understand and comprehend the seriousness of their actions.

The group of friends, the school environment and the social environment are influencing factors on a social level.

Bullying is also, and above all, a group phenomenon characterised by a particular dynamic, in which not only the CYPs engaged in bullying and targets play a decisive role, but also all those who appear to be uninvolved or supporters of one or the other (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). The group, in such situations, takes on the appearance of a monad (Anzieu, 1986), functioning as a self-sustaining unit in its members' need to endorse each other's anxieties through sharing. Adolescent grouping, specifically, tends to assume a self-referential task that concerns the group's well-being. Sharing becomes, therefore, the identifying and defining condition of the group, leaving the appearance of the threatening outside. Hence, in a constant interaction between the inside (to be safeguarded) and the outside (the enemy), the action becomes the expression of internal frustration that must be discharged, removed towards something other than oneself: the target (Ingrascì & Picozzi, 2002). As a collective phenomenon, it cannot be separated from the context in which it is acted out, namely the school (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Berts, & King, 1982). In the early work of Olweus (1983), conducted on more than 130,000 Norwegian children between the ages of 8 and 16, the author found that 15% of the students were involved, either as actors or targets, in bullying behaviour at school. Subsequent studies confirmed the incidence and prevalence of this phenomenon in schools. In Italy, the first data collected in the 1990s on a sample of 1,379 pupils between the ages of 8 and 14 indicated that 42% of pupils in primary schools and 28% in secondary schools reported having been bullied (Menesini, 2003). These studies therefore make it possible to highlight how schools can become possible places of persecution and violence (Petrone & Troiano, 2008) and how the subjects involved can be summarised in three categories: the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour, the target, the group.

Within the group, the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour often tends to seek out companions who can support him/her and approve of his/her behaviour. In fact, when he/she engages in aggression against weaker individuals, he/she receives attention and approval from his/her peers who see him/her as a brave, a 'hero'. This causes gratification and satisfaction in him/her, leading him/her to repeat his/her actions again. This attitude, which can also be contagious and repeated by observers, tends, therefore, to promote and accept forms bullying behaviours: one speaks of 'social contagion', as the other children, to assert themselves in the group, follow the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour's example.

At the educational level, the alliance between school and family is crucial. In fact, just as the parents' attitude at home has an influence on their children's behaviour, the teachers' attitude also affects their conduct at school. Teachers, therefore, will try to collaborate with parents to implement a correct education of the children and must behave consistently, condemning and severely punishing bullying attitudes that occur at school.

By social environment we refer to the public context in which a child lives daily and in which he/she interacts. Often, when reference is made to realities in which there are obvious forms of discomfort and subcultural phenomena, the parenting style tends to refer to a greater acquisition by children of 'tough guy behaviour'. In some cultures, in fact, the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour is regarded as a 'heroic' subject capable of earning the respect and esteem of all and is therefore compared to a model to be followed and admired. Therefore, in order to prevent such behaviour over time from consolidating aggressive or unfair attitudes on the part of children, it is first of all necessary not to underestimate them and to intervene with effective and appropriate actions that tend to stem their development.

Key aspects such as awareness of the suffering of others, appreciation of empathy together with knowledge of emotions should be emphasised in both the family and the school environment.

1.7.2 The causes of cyberbullying

Excessive Internet use, access to the Internet without adult supervision and the use of violent video games can be considered as some of the causes cyberbullying.

The target is usually someone who uses the web more frequently than his/her peers and is therefore more likely to be targeted by cyber CYPs engaged in bullying.

A first precaution can certainly be to use the PC in a central part of the house where parents can supervise web surfing. Children's lack of awareness of the dissemination of images, videos and personal information is also a dangerous component that should not be underestimated: they often share their information too superficially, making it accessible and available to everyone.

Finally, the use of violent video games tends to reinforce in the cyber CYP engaged in bullying behaviour the idea that insults and threats on the Web can only be considered as a game and not as real virtual violence.

The families of CYPs engaged in bullying and cyber CYPs engaged in bullying are often environments characterised by a hostile aggressive climate, where there is little acceptance of their children or where excessively authoritarian and violent educational models are in force. In some cases, parents are inordinately permissive or exaggeratedly disregardful of their children's educational needs. This can lead some of them to adopt prevaricating attitudes and behaviour, which can also have serious effects on others.

In some circumstances, moreover, the inconsistency between actions and educational behaviour can lead to the development of particularly aggressive behaviour in children or young people, because they are unable to anticipate their parents' reactions and recognise those of others: certain attitudes or words that are presented as innocent are interpreted by them as offensive or violent and therefore deserving of punishment. This would explain their strong hostility towards others and their unjustified attacks of violence against peers and adults.

It is important to point out that the family of a CYP engaged in bullying behaviour or cyber CYP engaged in bullying behaviour is also a family that experiences difficulties. In general, when young people are so aggressive and opposed to social norms, it is because even within their family reality, there are problems where there are no defined rules and often young people not only experience a condition of extreme neglect, autonomy, and self-sufficiency without care, but also find themselves living in an environment without distinct and defined rules.

1.8 Social consequences of bullying and cyber bullying

The consequences resulting from this phenomenon vary depending on the person referred to. The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour's attitude of prevarication, if repeated over time, tends to become an integral part of his/her personality. A fulfilment of the stereotype then occurs.

In the short term, the possible consequences for CYPs engaged in bullying relate to the manifestation of conduct disorders due to an inability to abide by rules, a deterioration or low performance at school, and difficulty in forming relationships with others.

In the long term, on the other hand, the behaviour of CYPs engaged in bullying can lead to antisocial, deviant behaviour, including crime, vandalism, substance abuse, repeated failures and related dropping out of school, violence in the family and aggression at work.

Other consequences will occur in the target because of the violence suffered.

The data of the National Observatory for Adolescents (Italy) speak for themselves. Among the adolescents who have been targets of cyber bullying (6.5%), 65% said they felt DEPRESSED or sad, 30% had carried out SELF-DEFEATING CONDUCT, 40% had thought of ending it all, and 11% had even attempted suicide.

In general, the target will tend to become increasingly insecure and anxious to the point of depression. He/she will experience a strong desire to escape from reality, her/his self-esteem will drop dramatically, and he/she will easily somatise her inner discomfort even physically. In severe cases, the feeling of depression and sadness could lead to suicide attempts.

In the short term, the most noticeable consequences may refer to physical symptoms such as frequent stomach aches or headaches, which occur especially in the morning before going to school. The target may perceive a difficulty in concentrating or learning what he or she is studying, with an obvious and consequent drop in school performance.

Impending psychological symptoms include:

- sleep disorders or nightmares
- anxiety or panic attacks
- low self-esteem
- devaluation of one's identity.

This would also have social repercussions as the target would then tend to isolate him/herself from others and not have any kind of relationship with his/her peers.

The areas in which the distress of targets bullyingcand cyber bullying is highlighted are:

BEHAVIOURAL AREA:

- Self-aggression
- Self-harm (intentionally hurting oneself)
- Resistance to going to school to the point of dropping out
- Suicide

AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL AREA:

- Lack of self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Lack of trust in others
- Self-isolation
- Emotional instability
- Loneliness

SOCIAL AREA:

- Peer rejection and rejection of recreational activities

COGNITIVE AREA:

- Difficulty in concentrating
- Learning problems
- Drop in school performance

PSYCHOSOMATIC AREA:

- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Night awakenings
- Headaches
- Bellyache
- Poor health

In the long term, suffering violence may lead to the onset of depressive symptoms, self-destructive behaviour, dropping out of school, closure, and isolation from others. In fact, targets are hardly able to talk about their problem with adults or friends: they are ashamed because they think they are weak, unable to react and to avoid being judged by adults, they prefer to hide the problem and bear the pain alone.

Finally, the consequences can also affect possible helpers, supporters and outsiders in whom a deep sense of distrust towards others is established: they realise that everyone thinks about 'their own business' first and come to the conclusion that it is always the strongest who wins, even if

what they do is wrong.

Keaton Jones and targets of bullying as adults

The web is definitely a whirlwind of information and getting sucked into it is a matter of a moment: once in the whirlwind, it is virtually impossible to get out, and if a piece of news goes viral, it is like having your life projected onto a huge screen in world cinema. Who knows if Keaton Jones' mother was aware of this effect of internet use when she posted a video with her son a few days ago: in the video, the middle school boy complained to the point of tears about being bullied by his classmates and was terrified of having to go back to the cafeteria, where most of the attacks took place. VIDEO https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zZh41_WJJU

Being a target of CYPs engaged in bullying can be considered a form of child abuse, in the same way as with parental abuse and neglect, because of the negative impact on the target's well-being and the risk of developing mental health problems. The extent of bullying can be that of a real trauma, as it causes long-term changes in the brain: it increases the production of stress hormones, such as corticosterone, which can remain in large quantities in the brain long after exposure to bullying. These hormones concentrate in areas of the brain that process the stimuli associated with reinforcement: this, together with other factors, could increase the risk of substance abuse, as happens with other types of chronic stress.

Reading news like this, one might think that bullying is a problem confined to childhood and adolescence. In fact, one does not usually stop to think that kids like Keaton will one day be adults and we all carry a backpack made of our experiences in our lives. The negative experiences, just like the positive ones, will forever be a part of us and, in the case of targets of bullying, can be a heavy load to carry around.

What emerges from the research is that the effects of bullying are measurable throughout life, with negative consequences on mental, physical, and cognitive health, social functioning and even the economic side. Targets, particularly males, show more severe symptoms of depression and lower self-esteem in the early part of their adult lives. Suicidal ideation is also more prevalent, while in general adults once bullied report a lower quality of health and life. Not only do they perceive less satisfaction, but former targets do not see an improvement in the future. On the economic side, targets bullying also show negative long-term consequences: lower levels of schooling, unemployment, lower wages. From the point of view of social relationships, there is a lower likelihood of getting married or living with a partner, of having friends with whom to have a close relationship, of receiving social support in case of illness.

The impact bullying is therefore pervasive: many areas of the targets' lives are negatively affected, and the effects are noticeable in the long term. It is therefore necessary that bullying episodes are stopped, but also that targets are subsequently supported in order not only to reduce the extent of psychological (and in some cases physical) suffering, but also to increase the likelihood that they will become adults with a quality of life comparable to those who did not have to endure such trauma. And, why not, have a more positive approach as well: as is often the case, it is not the negative event that has the most significant impact on people's lives, but rather the use of resilience and, therefore, the ability to cope with and overcome such an event and turn it into an

opportunity for growth.