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.

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