Lesson 4: The causes of bullying and cyberbullying

Bullies learn how to be bullies, mostly through the way they were treated by bigger or more powerful people in their lives.

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- Social environment
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Introduction

The answer to the question of why a child starts to behave violently is not simple. Some authors see the interplay of genetic and environmental factors as the causes of violent behavior. So, we are born with a certain tendency, that is, a tendency towards aggressive behavior, so various environmental influences "bring" it to the surface. Perhaps such behaviors are not part of our character, but such an environment "forced" us to use violence as a defense mechanism, a means of survival and treatment of people. It is argued that there are many reasons for violent behavior, but it is certain that bullies are not born bullies. Individual characteristics of a child such as: impulsivity, liveliness, excess energy or lack of patience can be attributed by the environment to bad behavior and perceived as "bad". Accordingly, the child begins to behave in this way.

So, we can say that bullies learn how to be bullies, mostly through the way they were treated by bigger or more powerful people in their lives. One of the reasons for violent behavior may be that they themselves were once victims and learned that violence is acceptable, or they simply do not know how to react properly and express their feelings. Some bullies themselves experience difficult and stressful situations such as the divorce of their parents, so they take out their anger and dissatisfaction on others in this way. Some children have a bad opinion of themselves and because of that they want others to feel bad too. Some attract the attention of others in this way, some have low self-confidence and feel more powerful by violence against others, some are part of a gang that abuses others and simply want to fit in by respecting the rules of a bad society, that is, a group they want to be a member of.

The innate character and individual characteristics of the child can be one of the factors, but also numerous environmental influences such as:

- family and family atmosphere,
- school and school life,
- society - community and culture,
- media.

https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/whats-cyberbullying

Student Video

What's Cyberbullying?



Individual causes

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.

Family environment

Lack of attention and warmth in family relationships, child witnessing violent behavior at home, insufficient supervision and parental care of the child are risk factors for the development of violent behavior in children. Also, by practicing physical punishment and verbal aggression, the message is sent to the child that this kind of behavior gets what one wants to get. It is very likely that when a child experiences the listed experiences, he will use these experiences in his behavior with his peers. Through an Australian study, it was concluded that a child, regardless of his gender, who lives in families that function less well, is more likely to abuse other children. Worse family functioning was described through:

- lack of sympathy of the parents with the child,
- the lack of honesty and sincerity values in the family,
- reluctance to solve family problems together,
- non-freedom of expression of opinion, etc.

When talking about the connection between the family situation and peer violence, it is often heard that children who commit violence come from so-called, unsettled families, that is, families with a worse economic status or a lower level of education and the like. However, this is not always the case, and for this reason the position is once again confirmed that peer violence is a very complex phenomenon and that each case of violence should be approached individually, familiarized with the situation and act accordingly.

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.

Social environment

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

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.

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.

School

The school climate can also increase the occurrence of violent behavior. Lack of closeness, feeling of acceptance of all students and mutual respect between teachers and students and vice versa can be one of the factors of school violence. Also, ignoring violence by adults in the school and poor supervision in the entire school area (corridors, toilets, playground, sports hall) can contribute to the frequency of violence in the school. The literature states that the school atmosphere should be warm and acceptable to all students, and that there should be clear rules of conduct both between students and in the relationship between students and teachers.

Society

Society has an influence on the violent behavior of young people through the culture of behavior, the influence of peer groups and the media. Among young people, violent behavior takes place within peer groups, in the form of expressing belonging to a certain group, in the form of participation in some sports (eg riots in stadiums) and music (eg concerts of certain musical genres) manifestations. In addition to the above, violent behavior can be learned, and if a child lives in an environment where there is violence for which there are no punitive measures, the child can very easily adopt such violent behavior.

Media

Many studies have dealt with the relationship between media and children's upbringing, the time children spend watching TV, playing video games, etc. By watching violent content on television, children are exposed to the risk of developing such behavior. In addition to cartoons, videos, dramatic films, and newspapers, children are also exposed to violent content through interactive media - the Internet. This includes video games. It has been noticed that children, immersing themselves in the game, copy the characters from the games with their behavior in movements, expressions and character, giving their friends their names. There is ample evidence of the impact of video and computer games on children (Zadravec, A., Uzelac, M. and others, 2014).

Modern media are ubiquitous, interesting and extremely multi-purpose. Thus, they provide different opportunities for information, learning, entertainment, communication, etc. In addition to being necessary for understanding the modern world, they are an essential component of children's everyday life. One of the most popular media among young people is certainly the mobile phone. It is available at any time and in any place, it has become a kind of "extended hand" to young people. We closely associate the Internet with the mobile phone. In a very short time, the Internet has become a favorite among children and young people, and they are extremely susceptible to its influence. It has many positive sides (e.g. it is a source of the latest knowledge and research results, quick

availability of information, exchange of experiences, opinions and information with peers and adults with similar interests or problems, etc.), but at the same time you should be aware of the dangers and risks it can represent (such as a lot of violent content, hate speech, inaccurate and superficial information that children encounter every day, excessive exclusion from the real world, etc.)

Conducted research indicates that exposure to media violence (through television or computer games) increases the risk for aggressive and violent behavior towards peers in the real world. It is impossible to completely protect and isolate children from violent media content. However, watching violence should be accompanied by a conversation that points to conscience, ethics, morality, and humanity. If a child grows up in an environment where there is interpersonal attention, tolerance and respect, then violent scenes from television screens will not be perceived as instructions on desirable behavior. In the end, you should keep in mind the fact that the Internet and other modern media are still just tools. The user himself decides how to use it and what consequences will result from such behavior (Jeli?, I., 2017).

Exercise: Classify concepts according to that causes of violence -

https://puzzel.org/en/categorize/play?p=-NO4i2OCziJnbIm9CqBB

The most common causes of online violence

- *The "Boom" of social networks and the Internet* - social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Skype and Viber, allow us to communicate very easily and quickly, and everything is easily visible and accessible.

- *Excessive use of the Internet*

- *Lack of supervision by parents and teachers* - parents and teachers are role models for children and young people, and it is recommended that they have some control over the activities their children/students perform online. When there is a lack of control or supervision, electronic violence is more likely to occur.

- *Insufficient knowledge and developed awareness of the consequences* - when a child can recognize an unsafe/dangerous situation and report it to an adult, it is very likely that he will not have a problem in terms of cyberbullying, nor will he need to be bullied on the internet. Likewise, it is necessary to develop children's awareness of the consequences of spreading images, videos and personal data, but also to develop values such as respect, tolerance, and kindness as much as possible (*Characteristics, causes and consequences of cyber violence*).

- *Just fun* - the causes of online violence among peers are often anger, revenge or frustration, but sometimes peers expose their colleagues or friends to inappropriate situations in modern media and out of sheer fun, boredom, confusion or with the aim of gaining popularity.

Exercise: Quizizz "Causes of bullying and cyberbullying" -

https://quizizz.com/embed/quiz/63e8e4e4e55fda001ebf4dc4

Resources and things to remember

Please, check the video below.



are you okay? | Award-Winning Short Film



FUSE Primary Workshop 4 - Reporting Bullying!

Learn and have fun:

- Sliding puzzle " Stop cyberbullying " - https://puzzel.org/en/slidingpuzzle/play?p=-NO4SINkjx2lQOLzgS6J
- Classify concepts according to that causes of violence - https://puzzel.org/en/categorize/play?p=-NO4i2OCziJnbIm9CqBB
- Quizizz "Causes of bullying and cyberbullying" - https://quizizz.com/embed/quiz/63e8e4e4e55fda001ebf4dc4

Videos:

- Are you okay? | Award-Winning Short Film, Downloaded from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJsGGsPNakw , 11.2.2023.
- What's Cyberbullying? Retrieved from: https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/is-it-cyberbullying, 11.2.2023.

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