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Bullying in Schools
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For the past two decades, bullying in schools has become a serious problem that affects children and adolescents all over the world and has aroused the interests among researchers, educators, medias, and public policy makers. Studies conducted so far to examine bullying and victimization revealed the nature and prevalence of bullying in schools and the coping strategies associated as well, which are useful to develop effective prevention and intervention programs.

The Nature of Bullying in Schools

Olweus (1999) has defined bullying as aggressive behavior characterized by repetition of actions and imbalanced power relationship. In general, bullying can take three major forms: verbal, physical, and psychological (social isolation, intentional exclusion from activities, etc.) bullying.

Research evidences indicate that there are characteristic gender and age difference in relation to the prevalence, nature, and coping strategies of bullying. Boys are more involved in physical bullying than girls; while girls use more verbal and psychological means rather than physical means (Rigby & Slee, 1991). Studies have also suggested that bullying behavior tends to peak in middle school and generally decreases with age (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000) as students mature (Borg, 1998) and learn more social skills accordingly.

Assessment of Bullying and Victimization in Schools

To design prevention and intervention programs that are applicable to the school ecology (Espelage & Swearer, 2003), many measures have been developed to access school bullying and victimization from multiple sources (students, parents, teachers). The measures primarily include: self-report, peer nominations and teachers' ratings, and behavioral observation.

1.   Self-report Scales and Survey

A commonality of self-report bullying scale is that students are asked directly how often they engaged in certain behaviors over a specified time period (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). The Student Survey of Bullying Behavior-Revised (SSBB-R) is one of the examples of student self-report scale, which specifically assesses students' perceptions in the five areas:

➢ Victim Behaviors
➢ Bully Behaviors
➢ Safety
➢ Positive Coping
➢ Negative Coping

2.   Peer/Teacher Nominations

Primarily used for research purpose, the nomination procedures are sometimes used to identify students for targeted interventions (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). For example, the Peer

Nomination Inventory (PNI) (Fox & Boulton, 2003) is used to access: (1) social skills problems, (2) peer victimization, (3) friendship and (4) peer acceptance.

3.   Behavioral Observations

Another ideal method to collect information of school bullying is direct observations of children and adolescents in the natural school setting and it provides invaluable data about how students interact (Craig & Peplerf, 1997; Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Prevention and Intervention Program

Researchers find that bullying can be detrimental to students' well-being and development (Nansel et al. 2001). Victimized children tend to display more internalizing symptoms, including anxiety, depression, diminished self-esteem, and social withdrawal (Nansel et al., 2001). Research also suggests that adults who were subjected to victimization as children show long-term effects on their personal relationships and mental health (Josephson, 2004).

Concurrent with these rising awareness of bullying and its consequences, school anti-bullying programs have been developed rapidly and used to prevent and reduce bullying and violence in schools in many countries. There are three major intervention approaches: whole-school intervention, peer-led intervention, and individualized intervention.

1. Whole-school Approach
    - Characteristic: currently the most popular one, which is predicated on the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem, and by implication, programs must address the problem at all levels of a school community (Smith, Cousins, & Stewart, 2005).
    - Features of the whole-school approach include:
        o   Activities for the entire school, such as the development of an anti-bullying policy;
        o   Increased adult supervision on school grounds;
        o   Establishment of an anti-bullying committee;
        o   Within classrooms, teachers may develop behavior codes and engage the students in a variety of curricula activities with anti-bullying themes;
        o   Parents receive information and may be invited to participate directly in some anti-bullying activities.
    - Example: The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1993), Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project (Eslea and Smith,1998), etc.

2. Peer-led/Peer Support Interventions
    - Characteristics: involve teaching peer helpers the basic skills of active listening, empathy, problem solving, and supportiveness that they need to help students involved in a bullying situation (Smith, Cousins, & Stewart, 2005).
    - Features of Peer-led Intervention (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000) include:
        o   Active participation of many students,
        o   Promoting communication instead of blaming bullying,
        o   Creating roles and structures that encourage students to act in responsible and empathic ways.
    - Example: Befriend intervention program (Menesini, Codecasa, Benelli, Cowie, 2003), etc.

3. Individualized Interventions
    - Characteristics: targeting children who have had significant involvement in bullying situations, typically focus on remedying specific externalizing problems of bullies or the internalizing problems displayed by victims, using interventions like social skills and assertiveness training and anger management (Smith, Cousins, & Stewart, 2005).
    - Example: Problem-Based learning (Hall, 2006), Social Skills Training (SST) (Fox and Boulton, 2003), etc.

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