

BULLYING AND COMMUNICATION¹

Ion NEGRILĂ²

Abstract: *Bullying is defined as an unwanted, verbal, psychological, or physical behavior inflicted by an individual or a group against a person or a group, which is repeated over time.*

School bullying is identified as a worldwide problem and it is one of the most common antisocial behaviors among adolescents and children. Despite the implementation of anti-bullying, prevention programs implemented in almost every school in Romania, the phenomenon remains ubiquitous in schools. This article attempts to emphasize the understanding of the definition of bullying in school, as well as the size of the problem, the perception of bullying, the consequences of bullying and the programs conducted in schools to reduce and prevent this phenomenon.

Key words: *aggression, children, school, behaviour.*

1. Introduction

Almost every child or adolescent group includes at least one child with signs of aggressive behavior. This child is hard to accept, and hard to understand.

However, an aggressive child, as any other child, needs the comfort and help an adult can provide, because his/her conduct reflects internal discomfort, of a hidden trauma, the inability to respond appropriately to events around him/her.

"How to Become Loved and Useful" is a difficult problem the child faces. He seeks ways to attract the attention of adults and colleagues. Unfortunately, these searches do not always end as we and the child would desire, and the child does not know how to manage the circumstances.

An aggressive child uses all the opportunities he/she has trying to irritate his/her parents, teachers, colleagues, all the people around him/her. He/She will not stop until the adults get mad and the other children react in one way or another.

In fact, it is just a desperate attempt to win for themselves a „place under the sun”, to become visible, distinguishable, noticed. This child protects himself/herself by the way of aggression. Aggressive children are often suspicious and worried, they like to blame others for everything they do. Such children cannot assess their own aggressiveness, they do not notice that they inspire fear. Aggressive children fear and hate other

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children, and they, in their turn, fear them.

Let us first understand what a psychological trauma is and why the victim of a traumatic situation is not the only one who suffers. Psychological trauma is the consequence of mental negative effects that can be caused by completely different stressful situations. A person suffers a strong shock that he/she cannot cope with. This happens when there is a contradiction between two impossibilities: resolving the situation and accepting it. The trauma is imprinted mentally and continues its destructive activity. The external behavior tells us that the threat has passed, but the suffering remains inside. The lack of action and the silence are the factors that increase the effect of the trauma. The victims of violence have begun to have more protection and assistance opportunities. However, the situation is still far from ideal.

An acute subject in society nowadays is the phenomenon of violence in school. Aggression is a long-term psychological or physical abuse instilled by an individual or a group against a person who cannot protect himself/herself in a particular situation (Craig & Pepler, 1995; Volk et al., 2012; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Plybon, & Kliewer, 2001).

Bullying is not a conflict between two people with the same social status or physical force; it is not a natural element of intragroup relationships. It has a huge destructive potential, similar to the one a person experiences when his/her life is threatened (Elinoff, Chafouleas, & Sassu, 2004; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010). Although nowadays we are no longer so dependent on society, the need to belong to a team and the fear of being rejected are very high.

2. Types of aggression

Anxiety is often transformed into aggression. When a person is full of anxiety, fear, he/she has only one desire: to protect himself from this fear, according to the principle: let them fear me better than I fear them. Thus, this person starts to exhibit aggression towards other people. This form of bullying is very common among children. There is also a civilized form of aggression. This includes all sorts of competing and rivalry. Most often, the boys are the aggressive ones. If we do not direct their energy in a constructive way - towards sport, in general towards any type of physical exercise - then, of course, that child would not hit the ball, he/she would hit his/her classmate. He does not often do it because of malice, but because he/she needs to release this energy.

Another very severe form of bullying is its destructive form: The childhood reminiscences. In his/her childhood, the child has received little love, which means few positive emotions. His needs were not met; the human body requires a number of simple and complex incentives. The child is not subjected even to the simplest incentives; his most natural needs were not satisfied regardless what he wanted: to eat, cry, play, give advice, be surrounded by attention. He/she begins to compensate for dissatisfaction with negative actions and emotions. He/she tortures cats, and then younger and weaker children. The child shows verbal or physical aggression. By concentrating on himself, he accumulates a negative energy inside himself/herself that will erupt sooner or later. Then many problems become visible (Due et al., 2005;

Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001).

What happens? Why does the child become aggressive? The child transfers this anger at the inner level - to himself. Why does this happen? The basic needs in childhood were not satisfied. These children who grow up in such harsh conditions with cold parents, marginalized by their families, will become aggressive. But not only these children! Children who are overburdened become aggressive too. In addition, if the child is allowed everything, if he is loved, he does not try to be better. To gain the love of a mother or grandparent, he does not need to behave properly, to get a praise, some appreciation. He behaves as if everything is rightfully his/her. He is a little tyrant. Just what I want, that is all. If everything is allowed to the child, at the subconscious level, he thinks that the parents do not care about him/her at all.

How do we rehabilitate the child when acting aggressively? We must give them the opportunity to express all their emotions, all their feelings. If, for example, a child is mad at another child, we need to listen to him, to find out the reason. Then we disassemble the reason. And, most importantly, it is necessary to lead his/her aggression in a constructive direction (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Weare, & Nind, 2011).

How do you recognize harassment and avoid it? The child, after doing his/her first verbal or physical aggression, will not run to tell the parents.

The child avoids talking about the aggression for the following reasons:

- he/she is afraid that after the conversations the problems will not solve, on the contrary, they will get worse.

- he/she is afraid his/her problem will not be taken seriously.

- he/she is ashamed of being a victim. There is a feeling of inferiority.

Nonverbal signs will tell us what problems our child has:

- sleeping disorders,
- bruises on his/her body, which he cannot explain; or clothes and things that are broken,
 - refusal to go to school that go as far as faking a disease, unexplained recurrent headaches, abdominal pain and other psychosomatic symptoms - physical illnesses that are not explained,
 - sudden isolation,
 - a decline in his/her degree of academic performance, and the child does not want to go to school,
 - changing the route the child goes to school. Going to school earlier or returning later than usual. He/She can avoid criminals and therefore choose a longer way

The clothes and personal belongings tell us a lot about the daily work of the child. Missing buttons, broken pencils, torn pockets, will tell us about the aggressor's presence well before the first bruise occurs. The first symptoms should not be overlooked. The parent must have a confidential conversation with the class teacher (without letting the child know about it) (Olweus, 1997).

The teacher is an adult in his home space (the school), he is able to notice what the parent cannot see, even if the parent meets the child every day. A partnership between the teacher, the parent and the student is necessary. Informal solutions provide unexpectedly quick and effective results.

For example, going for a class trip will allow a closer look at the students' relationships. Indeed, you are unlikely to see any aggression in such trips: children hide from adults, but the tension can easily be noticed.

3. What happens if the child is assaulted by the whole class

There is no – „the whole class”. There are always leaders and followers. If the child is injured by the whole class, there is no need to rebuke each of the parents of the class. Determine who the leader is, find the reasons for his/her behavior together with his/her parents and ask for their help. Do not threaten; do not act like the aggressor.

If you think about what to do if your child is offended by the whole class, think about the other side of the question: why did your child become a victim? What happened does not change, but you can avoid the attacks to repeat.

Teach the child to communicate with the aggressors:

- He does not respond to a nickname they gave him, but he explains calmly that his/her name is different.
- Ask the enemy to explain why he is offending you: Why are you trying to offend me? What is your purpose? What did I do wrong? Let us talk about it.

Enroll the child to a sports club or a theatre. Sport offers you courage, and the theatre will give you the opportunity to make a speech. You will be able to communicate much easily.

Any activity that a child is involved into, removes him/her from the bullying area. Finding friends with common interests with which he can communicate in school breaks will give him self-confidence and team-positioning. Communicate with the child in every free minute you have. Establish a close contact. Become a person who is always on his side even if problems arise. Be his/her ally and his/her lawyer, going beyond the threshold of the house, solving all the problems. Remember: the fear of telling the parent about his/her troubles leaves the child fighting alone the problems.

4. What happens if you are a teacher and in your class there are issues related to bullying?

1. If you notice a child who suddenly becomes secluded, pay attention. Watch him in all places he goes and in all his activities.

2. Interact with the children's parents: personally, at meetings, on social networks. Subscribe to the accounts of parents and children. Sometimes the children write on social networks what they are not ready to say.

3. Do not be afraid to praise the students. Encouragement increases self-esteem. The child must be praised in public and scolded at home.

4. Be open to parents, children in your class, children and parents from the same level classes, anybody in the school.

5. Take care of children's secrets.

6. Establish an example of student behavior. Run training, psychological games with the help of a specialist.

In school, bullying can be manifested in different ways. It can be physical, by striking, by pulling hair. It can be verbal, through nicknames, curses, lies, etc. The position of an aggrieved child is not easy. If he becomes subjected to repeated abuse every day, which, in the case of adults, would automatically be considered a criminal offense, the child suffers by becoming internalized. Today bullying in school requires a serious approach. Every act of violence requires, in addition to the measures taken in school, a police investigation. Verbal bullying, manipulation, exclusion from games are forms of aggression that we find more and more in school. These problems can be solved by creating a link between teachers, parents and students (Holt & Keyes, 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Yoneyama & Naito, 2003; Unnever & Cornell, 2003).

5. The roles in the bullying – evidence from Brasov County

The most cited roles in bullying are: the victim - is the student who is constantly assaulted both physically and verbally; the abuser - the one who produces aggression; the abuser's accomplices - are those who support the instigator and who do not intervene being simple spectators who have fun with the one who is committing the crime; the defender - is the one who takes the victim's part, tries to stop the aggression by informing the adults either the teachers or the victim's parents or any other person empowered to intervene later in solving the situation; the indifferent - is the one who is the place where the event occurred but does not react. He/she leaves the scene of aggression without interfering and notifying anyone. His/her behavior always encourages the aggressor (Salmivalli, 2001; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2006).

When the aggression ends, it is hard to get rid of the painful experiences it has caused. It can leave scars for life, but will never determine the future of a child (Baldry, 2004; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003).

At the level of Brasov County in Romania, following the analysis made in 200 schools, we have noticed the following phenomenon in the last three years of schooling:

The attack to the person category shows that light violence has dropped a lot. Instead, verbal bullying has increased, especially the category that refers to serious and repeated insults. From here, there is only a step towards serious physical violence, especially punching, kicking, etc.

Frequencies of aggression behaviors

Table 1

Column1	Violating the secret of correspondence	Discrimination and Incitement to Discrimination	Serious repeated insults	Repeated threats	Blackmail	Fraud	Incitement to violence	Light physical violence without weapons	Abandonning without help	Acts about sexual life	Serious physical violence, no weapons
2016-2017	0	0	139	111	4	1	87	458	1	0	5
2017-2018	2	20	97	79	2	1	100	299	10	11	14
2018-2019	0	0	190	112	2	0	126	168	0	6	54

We see an increase in those who incite violence, in the abuser's accomplices. The tendency towards physical aggression is increasing. The society has become aggressive. Media has become aggressive. Only that news that highlight aggression is sold. The lack of child supervision, family problems in their society, their entry into different neighbourhood groups, and not only, lead to incidents ending in serious crimes.

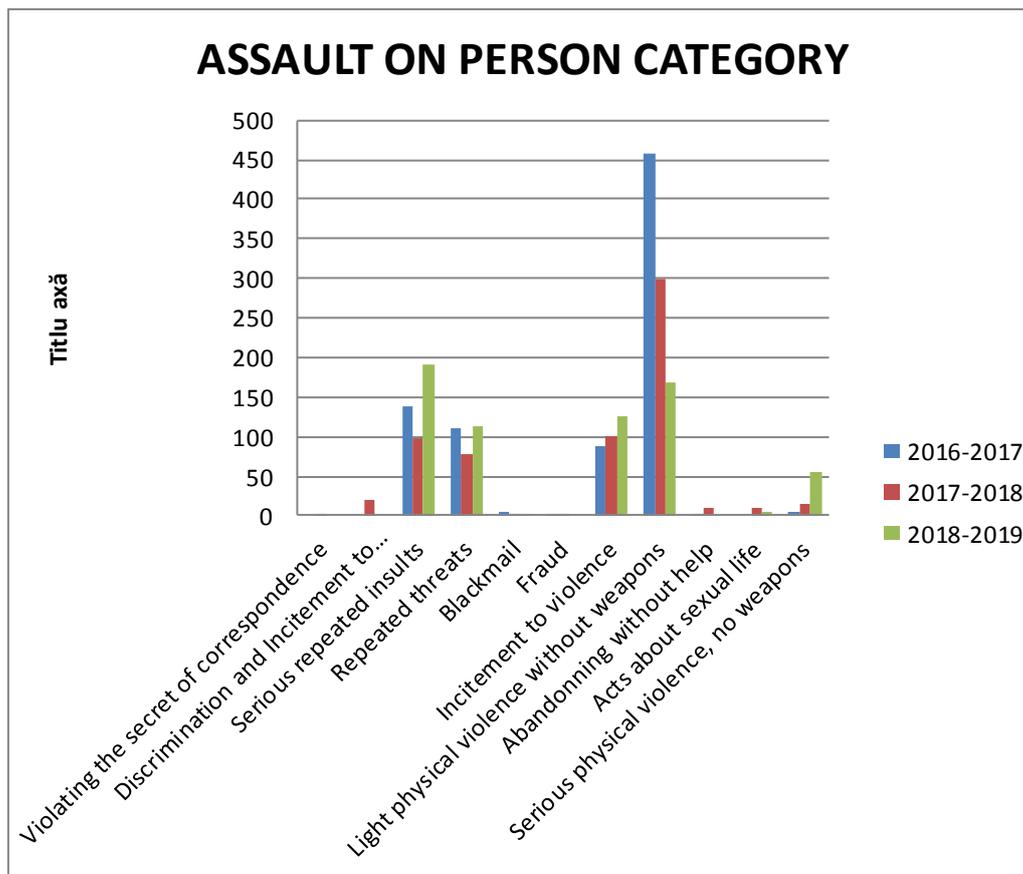


Fig. 1. Frequency of aggressive behaviors according to school year

5.1. Assault to the security of the school unit

As a result of this study, in the category of assault on the security of the school unit, we notice in the schools in Brasov a substantial decrease in the facts that endangered the children's integrity. A major problem has always been the admittance of foreigners into school. Most of the time these people were brought to physically threaten or even physically assault a child. The fact that the school intervened with procedures and rules of admittance into the school premises reduced the number of foreign persons entering the school. Children have learned not to be indifferent audience, but to act. We notice that there are two cases of false alarm. This shows that any intention, even if it is not

put into practice, is reported to those who can intervene. Providing schools with video systems and supervising children during breaks on halls and school yards led to a zero-scale introduction of white weapons.

If between 2016 and 2017 there were six such cases, there was no case between 2018 and 2019. Most of the problems we have encountered in 2018-2019 were in the urban environment, although in the previous years most of the problems were in rural areas. An important thing that has been shown lately is the increased aggression of girls. If so far the boys were the ones who caused such problems, lately, the girls are the ones who produce them.

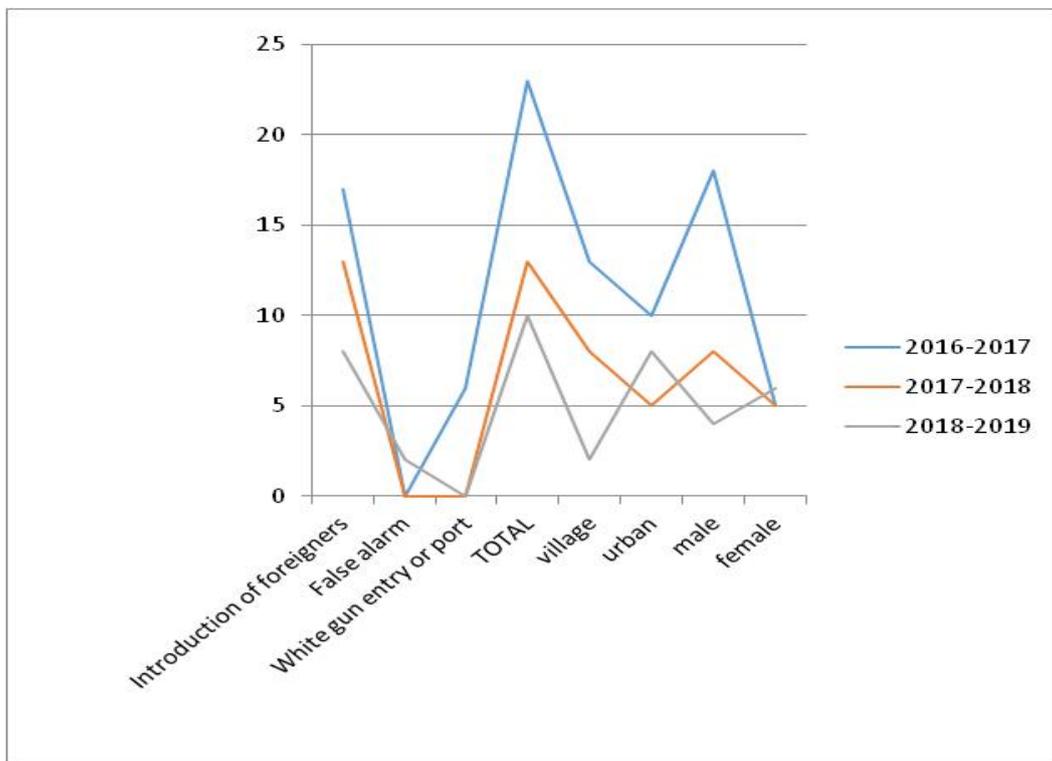


Fig. 2. *Frequency of aggressive behaviors on school unit*

Frequency of aggressive behaviors on school unit

Table 2

	Introduction of foreigners	False alarm	White gun entry or port	TOTAL	village	urban	male	female
2016-2017	17	0	6	23	13	10	18	5
2017-2018	13	0	0	13	8	5	8	5
2018-2019	8	2	0	10	2	8	4	6

5.2. Assault on goods

In the category of assault on goods, a category that can influence bullying of any kind, we notice a decrease in thefts and attempted theft, in turn, we registered an increase in the acquirement of a good found. An important drop can be seen in the destruction of school supplies. internal violence, internal aggression no longer manifests within the school. Due to a concrete approach between school-parent-child, the necessary counselling in such cases has led to a significant diminution of these facts.

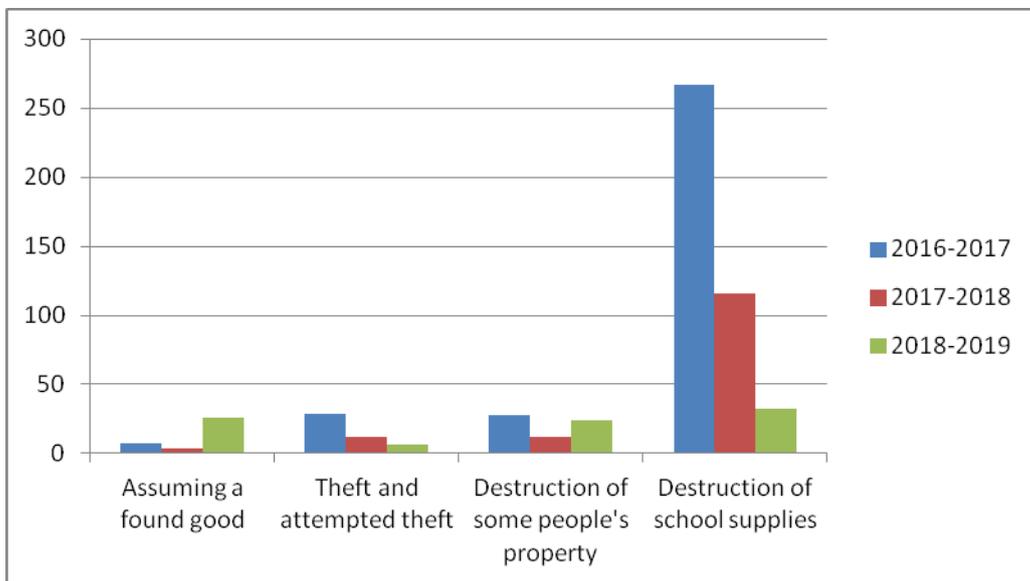


Fig. 3. Frequency of assaults on goods according to school year

Table 3

Frequency of assaults on goods according to school year

	Assuming a found good	Theft and attempted theft	Destruction of people's property	Destruction of school supplies
2016-2017	7	29	28	267
2017-2018	4	12	12	116
2018-2019	26	6	24	32

Aggressiveness exists in each of us. It is important to know how to manage it. Our anger should not hurt anyone. We all have problems, we are confronted with limit situations, we make decisions good or not so good; it is important to manage the situation, and in the instance we are not able to do that, we should ask for help.

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