

Detecting Non Verbal and Vocal Expressions of Bullying in Kindergarten

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the aggressiveness which is expressed by infants in kindergarten and is manifested as school bullying. More specifically, this paper is aiming in recording main bibliographic references of non verbal and vocal expression of preschoolers in anger situations and how those references are substantiated through surveys. Bibliography claims that school bullying does not occur unexpectedly, but instead there are apparent signs in behavior of preschoolers, that can be prevented before they occur.

Throughout this paper however, what is in parallel aimed is the recording of the reasons that positively contribute to the expression of aggressive behavior in preschoolers. In this way, knowing the reason of causing an attitude, it could become easier and more efficient to prevent and efface that attitude. Many researchers conclude that parents and teachers have to cooperate and constantly communicate each other in order to significantly help preschoolers who, appear (show) aggressive behavior, to change its (their) behavior for the rest of their lives. Conclusions like that are under a new review in present study.

Keywords: Bullying, aggressiveness, preschoolers, vocal, non verbal expression of anger.

INTRODUCTION

Within (During/over) the last few years arises an intense concern about the school bullying which takes place among preschoolers, pupils and adolescents. School bullying is directly related to people's inherent need for survival, while being a feature of human behavior and an element of human nature. Already, since the beginning of human existence, in order to be secured the limited natural resources of the earth, survival has been linked to the feeling of competition (Donegan 2012). The term "school bullying" has worldwide prevailed. Initially, the term bullying was used as a description of aggressive behavior among students. However, nowadays, the term has been linked to violence and delinquency at school (Artinopoulou 2002). In English, the term bullying has been in use since 1530 describing the behavior of someone who was trying to scare a weak person (Giannarakis, Tzavelas, and Cheitsika 2015). According to Bouchard *et al.* (1996:10), aggressive behavior is defined as "*any act which, during an engagement, violates or threatens to violate the physical or psychological integrity of an individual*". At present times, there are numerous of definitions for intimidation and bullying. A common parameter of individual definitions is the assumption that any act of attitude intended to physically or spiritually harm the recipient is defined as an offensive act (Dodge, Coie, and Lynam 2006).

This article seeks to capture school bullying, which occurs in kindergarten, through bibliographical references, as well as surveys that have been conducted. However, both bibliographic references and studies on this subject are significantly less than those related to older children. According to studies, in both infancy and childhood, aggressive attitudes, especially physical are more frequent but this is gradually decreasing while the age increases (Coie and Dodge 1998).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RECORDS AND STUDIES OF SCHOOL BULLYING AMONG PRESCHOOLERS

When children enter school reality are called to compete their classmates, making the best possible school performance. On the one hand, this practice introduces them into an activation and mobilization process to show off their best. On the other hand, it produces opposite results, as children use unacceptable methods to characterize themselves in the competitive and social environment, incorporating these methods and practices of intimidation and bullying (Giannarakis, Tzavela, and Cheitsika 2015).

Between ages 2 to 5, children have low to moderate levels of aggression which are characterized as normal and expected at this age (Alink *et al.* 2006; Tremblay *et al.*, 1999). However, there is a rate of 3% to 10% that will face high levels of aggression over time (Broidy *et al.* 2003; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network 2004). Those children who show high levels of aggression from a very young age, increase rates to continue this kind of behavior throughout their

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childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Campbell, *et al.* 1996; Tremblay 2000).

The first study published worldwide for school bullying was in 1970 by the Norwegian psychologist Daniel Olweus, who also created an intervention program with positive results (Giannarakis, Tzavela, and Cheitsika 2015). According to Olweus (1993), intimidation is a series of aggressive acts and/or behaviors that take place on a continuous basis and afflict a weak person. School bullying is characterized as a situation in which one student is exposed repeatedly and for a long time to negative and undesirable acts and situations caused by a student or a group of his or her classmates with purpose the cause of some injury, harm or even negative emotions. All these negative behaviors includes, actually, harmful communication processes and are based on violence.

According to Murphy's (2009) study, 22% of students are afraid of meeting specific classmates that will cause them bullying and thus, they avoid being in three or more specific places in school. Also, 5% of pupils are absent from school one or more times in a month, in order to avoid victimization.

What is more interesting to study and record, that is the way infants manifest their aggression, causing school intimidation. School bullying can occur in various forms. According to Coie and Dodge (1998) and Crick and Grotpeter (1995), it can be either physical or verbal. Particularly, physical intimidation can be manifested by bumps, bites, punches, hair pulls and spits. On the contrary, verbal intimidation as a more direct and frequent form of intimidation is manifested through abusive or derisive expressions, with rude comments, ironic, sarcastic expressions, mockery, bad teasing, nicknames and other attitudes related to communication violence.

According to Guerra, Nolan, Huesmann, Van Acker and Eron (1995) and Goldstein, Tisak and Boxer (2002) who have studied the phenomenon of apparent aggression in preschool age, have shown that this form of aggression is more common at this age. This age is the most proper time for early prevention and treatment of the phenomenon, so that it does not continue and, above all, not being spread.

What is more interesting, however, is to be recorded the aggressiveness that takes place at this age, non verbally. Moreover, would be interesting studying the threatening signs that children may be emitting at this tender age, but above all, to be recorded the way that

their anger is manifested. According to Paul Ekman (1972), anger is one of the six basic feelings and according to James Russel (1991), anger differs from culture to culture in its expression. However, the non verbal expression of anger can be universally comprehensible, since the pain it causes cannot be overlooked in any civilization.

Most of investigations that have been conducted are focused on the apparent aggression in preschoolers. Apparent aggression is defined as the acts of physical aggression, such as hitting, pushing, biting, throwing objects, kicks and threats to carry out the above operations, in order to harm a person, using physical expedients (Coie and Dodge, 1998. Crick and Grotpeter, 1995). Apparent aggression is the use of insulting words against another infant in order to hurt it, as well (Goldstein, Tisak, and Boxer 2002).

Apparent aggression increases among preschoolers, compared to other ages. The research by Guerra, Tolan, Huesmann, Van Acker and Eron (1995), and Goldstein, Tisak and Boxer (2002), has shown that children displaying apparent aggression in kindergarten maintain this behavior while they grow, forestalling the difficulties that these children will face later in their social life. The apparent aggression that occurs in infancy does not require the development of linguistic and cognitive skills and thus its manifestation is easily observed (Bonica *et al.* 2003; Renouf *et al.* 2010).

In early childhood, anger occurs mainly by frowning, tightening or gritting of the teeth and there are cases where anger reveals itself with constant staring on the eyes (Papadaki-Michaelides 2008). Also, the inner points of the eyebrows are pulled together downwards with the eyes really open and the lips are pressed to one another or opened and exposing teeth. In fact, children at this age are quite assertive and react rather strongly if something that they claim is denied to them.

Preschoolers express their anger mainly through disagreements, they speak harshly either to their peers or even to their nursery teacher. They purposely provoke with their behavior, they are disobedient and irritable. They behave in a hostile way, are willing to destroy various objects around them and they show bursts of giggling and negativity. At this age they know how to cause pain and harm, regularly using their teeth, wiping and wounding other children, or destroying a toy. They also do not intend to cooperate and participate in collective activities, while trying to disturb other children of the class involved.

There are also signs of aggression, which are considered to be normal at this age. These are signs of the physical aggression of this age, which are eliminated as the preschooler grow up. These signs are biting, kicking, stinging, pushing, pulling other's hair and taking other's place on the playground. The most concerned signs are when they are pretentiously mocking, reviling others' secrets, excluding their peers from games and collective activities, using nicknames and finally the embarrassment and public humiliation (PrevNet).

However, aggression is often confused with disobedience and opposition. Howbeit, it is a situation that does not exist. Preschoolers usually become disheveled when they are tired, stressed or upset, which are situations that are part of the normal maturation of preschoolers. Nevertheless, when disobedience evolves into frequent objections, it can generate problems in relationship between the preschooler and its environment, but also to itself and gradually, develop intense aggression leading to school intimidation.

On the other hand, aggression can be expressed with two forms, direct and indirect - element aggression. As direct aggression is defined the hostile aggression that deliberately hurts others, validating its dominance. Preschoolers express their aggression because they want to hurt their peers and in general they have an aggressive attitude. As an indirect - element aggression is defined the situation in which a preschooler provoke indirect harm to other preschoolers, while trying to acquire and mention exclusive sovereignty over an entitlement or object, such as a toy (Cole and Cole 2001).

According to Hinshaw Stephen (1992), a preschooler's school performance is associated with attention and academic performance problems in elementary school. It can also be associated with antisocial attitude and behavior's disorder.

CAUSES OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

An important parameter is also the recording of the causes that provoke the aggressive behavior of preschoolers. Some of these causes are:

- Potential family problems and/or changes: financial problems, divorce, removal, bereavement, even the birth of a new member.
- Pursuit of attention: preschoolers seek the attention of either their parents or nursery

teachers in any way, which may even be an aggressive act.

- Imitations of standards: family, school and social environment with which the preschooler is in contact, compose (constitute) the institutes from which the preschooler will copy and adopt patterns and behaviors.
- Psychological characteristics of preschoolers: the personality of each preschooler occur a key role in whether it will receive school bullying or not.
- Social and Cultural Criteria: preschoolers often are the most rigorous judges, targeting children or lower social layer with obvious changes in their appearance, as well as children of different cultural groups.

Thus, it seems that preschoolers express their anger in order to avoid painful situations and feelings that may be caused by low self-esteem, isolation, anxiety and failure. Situations, i.e. in which preschoolers have not any control. Also, the outbreak of anger can be a result of regret or even depression.

METHODS OF TREATING AGGRESSIVE PRESCHOOLERS

Often, many parents and preschool teachers who interact with aggressive preschoolers are wondering about the methods and ways in which these children could be supported, by limiting and eliminating those behaviors. Initially, the primary concern of those who wish to help is to really want to help and not to punish the child. Also, any positive action of the kids should be welcomed and strengthened, ignoring and not commenting their negative and bad behavior.

An essential role is also played by the effective contact with the preschoolers. A touch or a friendly hit on the back are capable of positively boosting the preschooler and giving him the attention it needs. Also, verbal expression of preschoolers should be enhanced to discuss their feelings and problems, preventing in this way negative behaviors. Even setting limits is a positive practice to help preschoolers effectively, while parents and nursery teachers should be positive models for children.

The collective organization of the class and the collective formulation of rules for routine procedures may also play a positive role in the prevention of the

phenomenon. The preschool teacher should still try to involve actively these preschoolers in the learning process and develop positive interpersonal relationships within classroom. Creative preoccupation of preschoolers, either by building a visual work or by preparing a theatrical performance, can positively work on the behavior of more aggressive preschoolers.

Finally, the active involvement of preschoolers' parents and their good communication with preschool teachers, is also a key part of the effort to reduce or even eliminate school bullying. Parents should be engaged actively in the educational process; for example, by developing seminars and lectures as speakers on topics they know and which may be about their profession, personal interests or even their talents.

Therefore, it should be said that preschool age is the most appropriate age for early prevention, recognition and dealing with the phenomenon of school bullying, so as to be avoided perpetuation and its deterioration (Denham *et al.* 2002; Huesmann and Moise, 1999; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Rubin *et al.* 2003). According to Walker *et al.* (1994), an intervention program, which is appropriately designed to reduce and eliminate the phenomenon, is more likely to have an effect if it occurs until the age of eight. If it does not disappear until this age, there is a risk that it will be strengthened and withstand through the time, as the preschooler grow older and the chances of infants becoming part of antisocial and delinquent situations are also growing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are preschoolers who need help, rather than "bad" preschoolers. All of this aggressive behavior that manifests and leads to school bullying, is the result of interactions with their environment, while combining their individual characteristics. What should be said and understood is that each preschooler is a separate case and needs a personalized intervention program. All behaviors (should) do not be treated in the same way, nor do they express in the same way their preschoolers aggression. Non violent communication is considered to be the key of bullying control in every educational environment and even more in kindergarten. The way that preschool teachers and parents are talking to preschoolers, in addition to nonverbal behaviors and attitudes they show to them, is very critical for their present and future perception about bullying behaviors and the consequences it causes to self and others.

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