



‘Like father, like son’ - Parental education and Augmented Reality to prevent bullying among children

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Introduction

The aim of the present document is to present the findings of the desk research conducted in each country in the context of the project Like Father Like Son, which is funded under the Erasmus+ Program of the EU.

The report first presents the summary of the findings in each participating country and then proceeds in a transnational analysis of the findings.

Summary of results per country

Spain

In the review bullying is defined as a phenomenon of unjustified aggression and evidenced through different ways of aggression. The main characteristics of bullying are three: persistence, intensity and frequency. Three different roles in this process were also identified: the perpetrator, the victim and the observers or collaborators. Cyberbullying is described as violence between peers with harassment towards a victim through messages on social networks. In Spain, cyberbullying was dramatically increased throughout the pandemic (65%), while bullying in other contexts was significantly reduced, due to quarantine.

Considering the risk factors in the family environment, rejective and distant parenting style is related with the child's low self-esteem and aggressive reactions. Violent parents who chose physical punishments are also linked with the child's hostile behavior. In this way, caregivers who have history of bullying may reflect their conflicts in their parenting style. Hostile behavior between parents is finally a risk factor of bullying. Sibling victimization was also highlighted. Thus, parents' lack of affection and empathy, lack of rules and limits and existence of physical or psychological violence were indicated as specific risk factors of aggressors.

On the other hand, overprotective caregivers could reinforce children's or adolescents' introversion, fact which may make them vulnerable to a plenty of situations. So, the review focused on the impact of interpersonal relationships in childhood and indicated that relationships based on control could cause hostile or passive reactions. Lack of emotional education and social competences was also highlighted as a risk factor for both victims and aggressors. On the contrary, caregiver-child relationships based on love, affection and respect are related with the child's emotional well-being.

Taking into consideration the homophobic and transphobic bullying, absence of sexual and gender diversity education in the Spanish education system was indicated.

As factors for the maintenance of bullying, the review identified the use of the child as a repository of the caregiver's imbalances and the repetition of parenting styles of previous generations without adjusting them to the current and individualized child's needs.

The need of awareness and familiarization with the characteristics of bullying was noticed. Programs that incorporate psycho-education on depression and suicide into school context, training teachers and schoolchildren to detect children at risk and screening programs for the detection of suicidal risk were considered effective methods for the prevention of bullying.

The review also focused on the consequences of bullying which were characterized harmful for both individual and society. Depression, anxiety disorders and PTSD were mentioned as some of the most common effects of bullying. What is more, low self-esteem, greater vulnerability and loss of trust were also highlighted. Self-harming behaviors or even suicide were found to be related with bullying. Finally, sleep disorders and physical disturbances could depict the effect of this condition in individual's health. For the bully, aggressive behaviors could lead to negative perception of self, low self-esteem and exclusion from the peer group. The possibility of serious mental illness or dissociation from reality was also noted.

Finally, the review suggested good practices for parents. Firstly, Workshops for parents for the responsible use of social network were conducted in Valladolid in 2016, intending to inform caregivers about the risks and teach them to detect situations of cyberbullying, providing also solutions to prevent this phenomenon. "Guided against Bullying" was also a program which gave parents, teachers and children the opportunity to talk about bullying and share their experiences. UNICEF Spain created a guide for parents to help them face this challenge.

Italy

Bullying in this review is defined as "an aggressive act, repeated overtime, with intention to injure and harm, physically and emotionally, one or more persons, in socialization contexts that can be formal and informal". First researches in Italy conducted in 1990s and discriminated bullying from other aggressive behaviors by its intentionality, persistence and power imbalance. This review focused on the two types of bullying which consists of direct bullying –open attacks- and indirect bullying- based on exclusion and backbiting-. It is also mentioned that the term "cyberbullying", which continually increases in Italy, was firstly introduced in Italian legislation. Cyberbullying concerns verbal written attacks, visual attacks, impersonification and exclusion and 7% of children aged between 11 and 13 years old have experienced aggressive behaviors via cell phones or internet. To prevent this phenomenon three strategies were proposed: Educational activities addressed to children, investigation of such behaviors and their punishment and finally victims' protection. However, due to no regular systematization of data in Italy, further research is required.

The review identified bullying as a dynamic process and detected more roles than only bully and victim: Bully's assistants, victim's defenders, as well as passive bystanders. Considering the risk factors of cyberbullying, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and disability were mentioned. Taking into account the gender, most of the bullies are males who prefer direct bullying behaviors, while females indirect. Moreover, girls have a higher rate of victimization than boys.

Bullies are often described as impulsive, hyperactive children with poor social skills and low self-esteem. However, popular bullies with adequate cognitive and social skills which allow them to manipulate others, are also described. Bad school performance is linked with aggressive behaviors too. As family factors, authoritarian, unwarm and rejective caregivers are related with such reactions. On the other hand, victim's profile includes poor social skills and low self-esteem. Age seems to play role in the children's victimization, as preadolescents aged 11-14 years old report more incidents. Foreign males and boys and girls with non-heterosexual orientation are more likely to be bullied. Children with disabilities are in higher risk too. As protective factors, UNICEF Italia highlighted the role of parents and family, as positive parenting style, empathic communication and dialogue over restrictions seem to

enhance children's social skills and self-esteem. The significance of safe and responsible use of technology was also mentioned.

The consequences demonstrated in the review, are physical, psychological and relational. For victims, anxiety, depression and isolation were included, while low self-esteem, self-harm behaviors and physical disturbances were also mentioned. No difference between the effects of bullying and cyberbullying was found. As a long-term consequence of this phenomenon, victims are more likely to appear symptomatology of severe psychiatric illness. The possible consequences for bullies are physical disturbances, illegal behaviors and absence of social relationships.

In the review good practices are also described. First of all, platform Elisa, created by the Italian Ministry of Education, provides activities aimed at families and 50 successful school experiences are described. Secondly, "To prevent cyberbullying: Parents and protective factors" is a guide created by UNICEF Italy which intends to inform parents about the ways they can protect and support their children from cyberbullying. Finally, "Survival Guide for digital parents" is another guide for parents, helping them detect and prevent cyberbullying incidents.

Greece

Bullying is defined as "repeated acts of physical, relational or verbal violence with the intent to harm or humiliate another person. Bullying includes acts of deliberate physical aggression, verbal aggression and relational aggression". Power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim is also a significant feature of this phenomenon. Bullying is discriminated by other forms of violence because of its frequency, its pattern and its possible indirect aspect.

According to the review, in junior High schools of Greece, most students define bullying in a different way, which means that they may interpret some forms of bullying as normal social practice. Researches have shown that more than 10% of Greek junior high school students experience bullying systematically. Bullying can be of different types: physical, verbal, relational, sexual, social and cyberbullying. Boys are more likely to use physical bullying, while girls social. Cyberbullying is a recently emerging type of bullying with girls in younger age being more likely to be victimized. Even though bullying is a serious problem in Greek schools, there is still no national school policy concerning the victimization and thus further research is required.

Bullying is related to other forms of violence and thus, perpetrators are more likely to involve in other forms of aberrant behaviors. Considering the risk factors, caregivers' behavior, sexual identity, nationality and family's socio-economic status consist the most common ones. For the victims, low self-esteem, lack of belief in themselves and poor social skills are related with their vulnerability. Moreover, overprotective parenting style has found to be linked with the victimization of the children.

Surprisingly enough, researches have shown that in some types of bullying, perpetrators have extremely good social and communication skills and enhanced emotional intelligence, which facilitate them to find the most suitable conditions to attack their victim. In this way, bullies have slightly higher than average self-esteem.

It is interesting that boys suffer more from physical violence and insults regarding their ethnicity or their religion, while girls suffer more from false rumors. Not only this but older students are more likely to choose verbal violence, while younger students choose physical. Moreover, families' lower economic

status and lower education level are considered risk factors too. Caregivers who physically punish their children could make them more aggressive or vulnerable. School size also seems to play a significant role, as in smaller schools less incidents were reported than in larger ones.

Considering the consequences of bullying, psychological, physical and social effects occur. Both bullies and victims experience physical disturbances, as well as depression, anxiety and poor self-esteem. Suicidal ideation or even suicide attempts are also reported. On the other hand, the child's family experiences anxiety and guilt, while educators facing bullying experience anxiety and stress.

As a good practice, Safe Internet Open Online Courses for Educators and Parents (MOOC) was mentioned. This program provides online courses with the intention to inform children and parents about the safe and quality use of internet. The "Antibullying Project" is another program which aims to offer caregivers and educators tools to improve children's well-being, preventing at the same time the phenomenon. It also intends to support those who have experienced bullying. "Live without Bullying" is an online platform where psychologists provide online counseling and training sessions for children, caregivers and educators. Finally, "European Antibullying Network" provides particular tools to support people in their fight against bullying. The platform includes a field where parents and teachers can exchange good practices.

Cyprus

Bullying is defined as "an aggressive and intentional act or behavior carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a person" and has been recognized as a worldwide issue. It includes different types of abuse: physical, verbal, social and cyber. This review tried to face bullying as a group behavior, without talking only about the victim and the bully, following the Group Process Theory. Thus, a bullying incident could involve a ringleader, a target, a reinforcer, an assistant, a defender and an outsider. Until recently, there was not particular legal framework about bullying and the phenomenon's extent in Cyprus is still not clear, so further research is required. The last 20 years incidents of bullying in Cyprus are on the rise and a significant percentage of students aged between 11 and 15 years old reported that they have experienced bullying (22.2%).

Considering the risk and protective factors, the review discriminated them in three categories: contextual, behavioral and relational. As contextual risk factors of bullying age, gender and sexual orientation were highlighted. Early adolescent years and more specifically adolescent boys face higher risks to be bullied. Also, LGBTQ individuals are in higher risk too. As behavioral risk factors for both victims and bullies low self-esteem, low empathy, poor social skills and hyperactivity were noted. For a perpetrator, narcissism was also taken into account. From a relational aspect, parental overprotection could lead to child's introversion, while a rejective parenting style could lead to child's aggressive reactions. Thus, dysfunctional family relations could possibly consist a risky environment for the child. On the contrary, healthy family environment could promote child's autonomy and ability to face these challenges.

The consequences of bullying are considered a public health concern and are discriminated in three categories: physical, emotional and social. Physical consequences include psychosomatic issues, eating disorders and self-harm behaviors. Emotionally, victims experience depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders and low self-worth, while socially, bullying could lead to isolation, lack of trust to others, absence of

interpersonal relationships and poor academic performance. For the bullies, alcohol abuse and problems with the law were highlighted.

As good practices, the program “Beat Bullying” from the Hope for Children CRC Policy Centre was mentioned. The program intends to promote the rights and the well-being of children. A mobile app “HFC Beat Bullying” was included in the services, providing useful advices and helpful contact numbers. Youth Board of Cyprus with “Micri Arktos”, moreover, aims to enhance children’s social and communication skills, facilitating them to deal with challenges such as bullying. Also, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute with the program “Internet Safety” provides educational materials and resources for both parents and children, informing them about cyberbullying. Another good practice is implemented by Commissioner for Children’s Rights which intends to promote public awareness and protect the rights of the children. Finally, Emphasys Centre with the program “Learning Hub” aims to inform caregivers, children and adolescents about cyberbullying and provide them advices and effective methods in order to deal with this situation.

Croatia

According to this review, behaviors that can be considered bullying are intentional negative behaviors, harm to another child, recurrence and the presence of a power imbalance between the child who attacks and the child who experiences these behaviours. Such aggressive behaviours distinguish between physical, verbal, relational, sexual, economic and cultural violence.

Researches in Croatia have indicated that 27% of students experience at least one form of violence at school almost every day, while 8% of children are violent towards other children on a daily basis. School’s response is passive. Moreover, the vast majority of parents (62%) have never been educated in topics related to bullying and only 68% of educators are aware of the legal framework about bullying, which means that a significant percentage does not have the skills to react.

In some researches cyberbullying is a continuation of classic bullying, which means that children who commit bullying are more likely to express aggressive behaviours throughout electronic media too. In the same way, children who are exposed to classic forms of bullying, experience cyberbullying too. Some other researches face cyberbullying as a different phenomenon, focusing on the anonymity and on the fact that perpetrators do not see the consequences of their behaviours.

Sexual violence as a form of gender-based violence was highlighted, where victims are mostly females. Homophobic and transphobic violence, on the other hand, concerns aggressive behaviours towards people because of their real or perceived sexuality. In Croatia, 64% of LGBTQI+ individuals have experienced bullying. For the confirmation of these results, further research is required.

Considering bullies’ profile, perpetrators are described as aggressive, impulsive children with lack of social skills and empathy. They have positive opinion about themselves and have experienced hostility in their family environment. On the other hand, victim could be any child. However, a new child in the class, a gifted child, a child of lower socio-economic status or different ethnicity is more likely to be bullied. Low self-esteem, introversion, sensitivity and overprotective parenting style were noted. For the bullies, authoritarian or overprotective caregivers, absence of affect and communication in the family and punishments over dialogue were highlighted. Taking into account age, bullying increases during primary school and especially between 14-15 years old. What is more, boys are more likely to express physical violence, while girls indirect bullying. Nationality seems to play a significant role, as children exposed to

war and in minority are more likely to be bullied. Finally, students physically stronger have more possibilities to commit classic bullying. As protective factors, open communication between family members, respect and affection were mentioned. In the school context, a supportive school climate with adequate supervision of teachers and appropriate rules and boundaries was considered safe.

Considering the consequences of bullying, anxiety, loss of trust to others and suicidal ideation were highlighted. Cyberbullying's consequences were described as equally harmful and long-lasting, with anxiety disorders, depression, isolation and sleeping and eating disorders consisting a significant part of the symptoms following.

Good practices towards bullying: Firstly, European Awareness Raising Campaign on Cyberbullying or “#DeleteCyberbullying” program combined seven countries' approaches and developed common practices for the prevention of cyberbullying, providing guidelines for the caregivers. Secondly, “ENABLE” project brought together 50 policy makers, teachers, academics and health professionals and intends to build the resilience of children by developing their social and emotional skills. A useful handbook about bullying prevention for parents and guardians was also developed. Moreover, CAP (Child Assault Prevention) concerns the primary prevention of child abuse, by reducing their vulnerability and encouraging local systems actively react in aggressive incidents. “Centre of Safer Internet Croatia” is also a program which aims to support in case of violence over the internet and advice on how to use internet safely and how to deal with inappropriate content. The brave phone for parents is a helpline where a parent can discuss everything about child's positive psychological development. Finally, “Luka Ritz” Centre is a social welfare institution funded by the city of Zagreb which offers counselling and psychological support for parents, children and experts, with main purpose children's psychological well-being.

Transnational analysis

Bullying is a phenomenon which has raised awareness the last twenty years. It is worth-mentioning that all of the counties involved focused on the multifactorial character of bullying, analyzing risk and protective factors, as well as consequences of bullying in different and multiple levels and contexts.

Moreover, most of the counties faced bullying as a dynamic process, identifying at the same time multiple roles in this circle of violence. More specifically, Cyprus identified bullying as a group behavior and discriminated six different roles: a ringleader, a target, a reinforcer, an assistant, a defender and an outsider. In the same way, Italy also highlighted the dynamic between bully's assistants, victim's defenders and passive bystanders. Observers and collaborators' impact was mentioned by the other three countries too. Thus, it is clear that when we are talking about bullying, we do not only talk about the perpetrator and the victim, but we perceive the aggressive behavior spherically.

The distinguishing features of bullying, compared to other forms of violence were also agreed. So, the main characteristics of bullying are four: persistence, intensity, frequency and power imbalance between victim and perpetrator. What is more, the potential indirect aspect of bullying differentiates it from any other form of hostility. At this point, all of the countries focused not only on the direct forms of bullying, such as hitting, but also on the indirect ones, which mainly concern the exclusion and the

isolation of the child of the peer group. In that way, the physical, verbal, relational, sexual, social or cyber nature of bullying was pointed out in all the reviews.

Cyberbullying, which continually increases in all countries, describes bullying through social networks. In some researches this form of aggression is a continuation of classic bullying, which means that children who commit bullying are more likely to express aggression throughout electronic media too. In the same way, children who are exposed to classic forms of bullying are more likely to experience cyberbullying too. Some other researches however, face cyberbullying as a different phenomenon, focusing on the anonymity and on the fact that perpetrators do not see the consequences of their hostility.

The countries involved in the process attempted to depict an indicative victims' profile focusing on their vulnerability, introversion and sensitivity. More specifically, contextual risk factors such as age, gender, nationality, sexual orientation and socio-economic status were highlighted from all of the countries. Early adolescent years and more specifically adolescent boys face higher risks to be bullied. Contrary to other countries and according to Italy's review, girls have a higher rate of victimization than boys. Nevertheless, all of the countries agreed that boys are more likely to choose physical bullying, while girls often use indirect forms of aggression.

Children with real or perceived non-heterosexual orientation have also more possibilities to be victimized. Thus, LGBTQI+ individuals are at higher risk. Spain's review attempted to explain this homophobic and transphobic form of violence in terms of the absence of sexual and gender diversity education in the Spanish education system.

From a relational aspect, overprotective parenting style or rejective caregivers are linked with children's vulnerability and could provoke passive reactions. Absence of open communication and lack of affection and empathy in the family context are related with bullying incidents. So, all the reviews focused on the impact of interpersonal relationships in childhood and indicated their long-term effects in children's social and school life, as dysfunctional family relations could possibly consist a risky environment for the child. As behavioral risk factors for victims, low self-esteem, low empathy, lack of belief in themselves, poor social and communication skills and hyperactivity were noted.

It is surprising that victims and perpetrators share some of the characteristics mentioned above. In this way, bullies are also described as children with low self-esteem, low empathy and lack of social and communication competences. Perpetrators, moreover, are described as aggressive and impulsive children and are more likely to have experienced hostility in their family context. So, authoritarian and violent parents who chose physical punishments over dialogue are linked with the children's aggressive behavior. Consequently, caregivers who have history of bullying may reflect their conflicts in their parenting style, which creates a circle of violence. Thus, parents' lack of affection and empathy, lack of rules and limits and existence of physical or psychological violence were indicated by all countries as specific risk factors of aggressors. In Cyprus' review narcissism was highlighted as a particular aggressor's characteristic. Not only this but in some researches, according to Greece's review, perpetrators are described as kids with extremely good social and communication skills and enhanced emotional intelligence, elements which facilitate them to find the most suitable conditions to attack their victim. In this way, bullies have slightly higher than average self-esteem, fact which refutes most researches' findings. Croatia's review also pointed out this aspect of bullies' psychological profile, mentioning that these children have a more positive opinion about themselves. On the contrary, as

protective factors, positive and respectful parenting style and open and empathetic communication in family were noted. In the school context, supportive school climate, adequate supervision of teachers and clear boundaries were considered as equally significant for the prevention of bullying.

The consequences of bullying for both victims and perpetrators were characterized from all countries as harmful and affect not only the individual victimized, but also the whole society. Thus, this phenomenon can be perceived as a public health concern. These consequences are physical, psychological and relational. For victims, depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD and suicidal ideation were the most common consequences mentioned in all reviews. Isolation, low self-esteem, greater vulnerability, self-harm behaviors and physical disturbances were also mentioned. No difference between the effects of bullying and cyberbullying was found. As a long term consequence of this phenomenon, victims are more likely to appear symptomatology of severe psychiatric illness. The possible consequences for bullies are physical disturbances too, absence of social relationships and negative perception of themselves. Caregivers and educators who deal with bullying incidents experience stress and anxiety too.

Conclusions

For the prevention of bullying all countries focused on the education and training of children, parents and educators. In this way, all the good practices described in the reviews concerned the awareness and the familiarization of caregivers and teachers with the characteristics of bullying and cyberbullying, the detection of risk factors and the identification of supportive and protective methods. The advocacy of children's rights and the promotion of their well-being were the core of the practices suggested.

It is worth-mentioning that although all of the countries approached bullying in common ways, there were some differences in the semantic definitions chosen in each review. These definitions meet each other in their conceptual meanings, however until nowadays there are many different words in the bibliography which describe the same acts and behaviors. For instance, for the person who "attacks" physically or verbally, directly or indirectly, the words "aggressor", "bully" and "perpetrator" were used.

To conclude, all the reviews had common limitations due to the recent awareness for the phenomenon, so further research is required in order to suggest better and more effective solutions to bullying.