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

PR1: National Report for Greece

Developed by:

Introduction

As it is stated in the study conducted by Husky and others (2020), *"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 (name calling and threats), and relational aggression (social isolation, spreading rumors)."* Another important feature of bullying is that there is a certain power imbalance between the people involved (Olweus, 1994, as cited in Husky et al., 2020). The person who is feeling oppressed during the act is called a victim and the oppressor or bully, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is *"someone who hurts or frightens someone else, often over a period of time, and often forcing them to do something that they do not want to do"* (Walter & Cambridge University Press, 2005). An act of bullying someone or treating them unfairly can be also called victimization (Walter & Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Research shows that bullying is related to other forms of violence. Individuals who are involved in bullying in one way or another are also at heightened risk of other forms of violence, such as, for example, sexual violence. In addition, people who experience other types of violence are more likely to bully (Hong et al., 2022). Following this, the question may be raised, how is bullying different from other forms of violence? The answer to this question was not found in scientific publications. However, according to one blog that is focused specifically on the topic of bullying (bullyingstatistics.org), these differences may be listed:

1) bullying differs from other forms of violence because of its frequent form of isolating a person from others in order to hurt him;
2) bullying behavior is usually repeated over a period of time until it becomes a pattern;
3) bullying can take a digital form and is not always direct.

Although the aforementioned article is the only one that attempts to answer the question raised, and it presents the mentioned features of bullying as its distinguishing features, it might not

always be the case. For example, some could argue that other types of violence could not be repeated over time. Also, in the digital era, other forms of violence can also be expressed online.

Looking into the situation in Greece, based on the book written by V. Nika (2010), no specific term was used to define bullying up until 1988. This probably implies that bullying in Greek schools has been studied without distinguishing it from other forms of aggression, or the problem of bullying has been overlooked altogether (Nika, 2010). Even now there are still not many studies analysing the situation in Greek schools in terms of bullying. However, the ones that are available provide insights into student understanding of bullying and some statistics.

According to the research conducted by Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010), in junior high schools of Greece, students sometimes have a subjective definition of bullying that is not necessarily the same as the ones presented in dictionaries. When asked about the meaning of bullying, boys from Greek schools agreed that bullying is an act when one *"blackmails or threatens someone else to convince him of something"* or *"to make the other be afraid of him."* This statement was also supported by the girls who said that bullying is supposed *to "make someone be scared, that is blackmailing to achieve something."* The definitions of both genders highlight fear as an important factor in the act of bullying. On the other hand, boys sometimes denied underlying negative motives and shared the opinions that bullying among them is spread only as a 'joke'. In addition, some of them tried to defend the oppressor and blamed the victims. Girls also attributed some types of bullying, for example, social isolation, to the victim's fault and they had not even seen it as bullying. They defined it more as a personal choice of a company (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). These interviews revealed that bullying should be a serious concern in Greek schools since some students are not even aware of their own or other students' actions and consider some forms of bullying a normal social practice.

Moving on, the extent of bullying in Greece should be taken into consideration. According to Pateraki and Houndoumadi (2001), whose main objective was to document the existence and range of bullying in a large sample of elementary school students in Athens, 14.7% of the pupils were self-identified as victims, 6.2% as bullies, and 4.8% as bully/victims (as cited in Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). According to the results of another study (Psalti & Constantinou,

2007), more than 10% of Greek junior high school students experience bullying systematically, and 35% are concerned about being victimized in their schools (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). One of the studies also analysed the attitudes of the students toward bullying. Overall, students were against aggressive behaviors, but these attitudes were more pervasive among girls and younger students (Boulton, Karellou, Lanitis, Manoussou, & Lemoni, 2001).

It is also essential to mention that bullying can be of different types. Different sources mention types such as physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, cyberbullying, sexual bullying, prejudicial bullying, social bullying, and many others. According to research, there is a gender differentiation among Greek students in this case. Boys are more likely to be involved in physical bullying while girls more often use social bullying, more specifically social isolation (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010).

Cyberbullying is a recently emerging type of violence. In the dictionary, cyberbullying is described as *"the activity of using the internet to harm or frighten another person, especially by sending them unpleasant messages"* (Walter & Cambridge University Press, 2005). This form of bullying may differ from 'traditional' bullying as, according to some literature reviews, cyberbullying is often a one-time event and often takes place between participants of equal power (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015). In Greece, similarly to other forms of bullying research, which emerged with relative delay, cyber-bullying has also received some attention relatively late (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015).

Antoniadou and Kokkinos (2015) conducted a systematic review that took into account 15 studies that described the cyberbullying situation in Greece between 2005 and 2012. The first study by Sygkollitou, Psalti, and Kapatzia (2010) declared that 54% of the 450 student participants had been cyber-victimized, while more than 50% knew someone who had been cyber-bullied (as cited in Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015). It is also stated that cyber-bullying may be less prevalent than, or equal to, traditional bullying. The overlap between the two is also suggested (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015). Anonymity also emerged as an important factor in the aforementioned study. More than 40% of cyberbullying victims did not know their oppressors (Sygkollitou et al., 2010). Regarding the identity of the perpetrator, this was the case in other studies as well (Kapatzia &

Sygkollitou, 2008). The risk factors mentioned for becoming a victim of cyberbullying were being a girl and being a young age (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015).

Even though, based on various research findings, it is indicated that bullying is a serious problem in Greek schools, there is still no national school policy concerning the phenomenon of bullying and victimization (Kalliotis, 2000; Smith, Nika, & Papasideri, 2004, Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010).

Aim of the project and aim of the PR1 activity:

Limitations of the desk research:

It is important to note that relatively little attention is paid to the topic of bullying in the Greek research field, so this desk research is based not only on studies conducted in Greece, but also on assumptions based on research from other countries. Some information is also taken from publicist sources, which may not always be accurate and should be viewed critically.

Risks and protective factors for bullying

Same as the act of bullying can be related to any kind of intolerance towards any type of unfamiliarity or unusual norm, many different factors can lead to the position of being the bully and/or the victim. Gkouliama et.al. (2021) stated that about 42% of teachers believe that acts of bullying are downplayed by either the parent or the school staff. As quoted in the research: "According to Stavrou et. all, 3.9% of adolescents in Greece reported being victimized because of their sexual identity, 2.8% because of their nationality, and 2.1% because of their family's socioeconomic status." (Gkouliama et al., 2021)

In a way, there is a mutual agreement that those who bully only act on their aggressive behavior or hot temper, also most times they lack parental monitoring, but Smith et.al. (2004) note that kids who take a part in bullying have extremely good social-cognitive skills that help them operate effectively in organizing groups, choosing time, place, and ways to attack the victim. Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2012) state that intra-individual variables related to social-emotional skills: trait emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and empathy, have been consistently found to play a

significant role in aggressive behavior. Emotional intelligence (similar to social intelligence) recently was noted as part of bullying strategies. More serious forms of bullying have been associated with high social intelligence, and only bullies who prefer more direct and physical forms exhibit low social intelligence. Victims, in this case, show low social intelligence. Self-efficacy – a term introduced by Bandura - refers to personal judgments of one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action, attain designated goals, and organize their psychological functioning. The key point here is that kids with low self-efficacy have higher tendencies to take part in bullying. Also, bullies have been reported to have slightly higher than average self-esteem. Regarding victims, research has shown that they have problems with perception of their abilities, feel rejected and lonely, as well as lack belief in themselves. Victims seem to be deprived of problem-solving and other social skills. The lack of these skills leads them to reacting inefficiently when bullied.

Gkouliama et.al. (2021) also noted that victims of bullying usually suffer from anxiety, depression, and various other psychological complaints while the bullies suffer from externalizing problems like aggression and rule violation. Yet, children who have the status of victim/bully are the most vulnerable of them all. They face elevated levels of hyperactivity, impulsiveness, and feelings of peer rejection. Shyness and other internal struggles are frequent profiles of victims, but there are so many other factors, for example, disability and ethnicity. These children often experience social exclusion and lack the capacity to stand up against bullying by themselves. Also, some evidence shows that victims may come from overly protective families. The fact that the Greek school population has changed from almost monocultural to multicultural also brings many issues (many economic immigrants have been attending Greek schools). Children from immigrant families have more issues than the general population. They face a language barrier that influences their learning process. Many of them deal with instant rejection from the Greek students, which often ends in fights between the two groups. Not to mention that Greek children's parents express negative attitudes towards non-Greek students, perpetuating xenophobia and bullying.

As mentioned previously, ethnicity and migrant status can also be big factors for bullying. Nikolaou and Samsari (2016) also point out that the result about ethnic, racial, or cultural bullying can be contradictory since studies show that native students have higher risks of bullying non-native students. Yet, native students are at higher risk for victimization than non-native students. The role those migrant students take up previously mentioned issues: struggles regarding studying, acceptance, and integration. These struggles put them in a vulnerable position where the likelihood of them becoming a victim increase and their issues (anxiety, depression, low self-confidence) only add up to it. However, the same need for acceptance and efforts for integration can lead them to become bullies. Furthermore, it was found that a positive interpersonal relationship between Greek and immigrant students was a factor that lowered the bullying rates. Variables such as feeling happy with their classmates and having a friend from an immigrant background significantly impacted bullying cases. Another important finding was that non-Greek participants, who were born abroad, were victimized at a higher frequency compared with non-Greek children who were born in Greece. As we can see the findings of the study show how two-sided this particular factor can be.

An interesting finding would also be that boys are the ones who more often suffer from physical violence and insults regarding their ethnicity or religion, whereas girls seem to suffer more from false rumors (Gkouliama et al., 2021). Similar statements were made by Peteraki and Houndoumadi (2001), claiming that the physical spectrum of bullying was more related to boys, while all the verbal forms were related to girls. Skapinakis et.al. (2011) talked more about gender's influence on bullying. Among boys, it was more common to be the bully than among girls. Girls were also more likely to say that life was not worth living (referring to suicide) than boys. Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010) also point out that boys, even if they do not take an active role in bullying, still find themselves laughing and watching the act, while girls take on the role of the defender, by trying to stop the bullying and support the victim. As quoted in the research: "It has been generally recognized that the socially constructed nature of masculinity leads to violence and aggression, which is also approved of or even expected, whereas girls are expected to behave in more empathetic, caring, and helping ways as part of their female social role".

Magklara et.al. (2012) investigated the importance of socio-economic status influence on bullying cases. As the mentioned international study showed, if the adolescent was from a lower socioeconomic family, the chances of him/her getting bullied in school were higher. It also showed that families' lower education level was one of the factors of increased victimization. They also noted that even looking from the country's perspective if high levels of income inequality were detected among citizens that also regarded in elevated bullying rates. However, researchers stress that this particular topic is a bit more complicated than it may seem at first look. In their research, they did not detect any significant connections between socioeconomic factors and victimization. Nerveless, they highlight a notable connection between an unemployed father and the child being a bully, alongside other health and well-being factors. On the other hand, mothers' economic inactivity was more related to the child becoming the victim. Parental unemployment significantly reduced the feeling of parental support, which has been associated with less involvement in bullying-related behaviors.

School size could be a factor in bullying rates. Smaller schools tend to have way fewer bullying cases than bigger ones. The conflict between groups arises when both groups are similar in size. Similarly, the possibility of bullying is still visible in environments where minority groups are either outnumbered or are close to being predominant (Gkouliama et al., 2021).

Age also has an impact on how the act of bullying is carried out. Older students chose verbal violence way more often than physical (Peteraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). At the same time, younger students are the ones who face bullying more often than the older ones (Smith et al., 2004).

Smith et.al. (2004) also point out the impact of parents' physical punishment on the levels of bullying appearance in school. From the research done in the UK, they found that almost all parents at some point had hit or smacked their children, with 35% of children experiencing that kind of behavior daily (Smith et al., 2004). There is a high level of correlation reported between physical punishment from the father and the kid being a bully at school. It's important to note that once again, boys are the group that show significant correlation between at-home punishments and bullying, while girls did not show any significant correlation of the two. So,

there is a high chance that if the child comes from a family where they are taught that problems are best handled through physical aggression, they have a way higher chance of becoming a bully.

Consequences of bullying

In order to better understand the phenomenon of bullying, it is crucial to talk not only about its causes, forms, or extent, but also about the consequences of bullying for both parties. Since bullying in schools is a multifaceted problem, the consequences also affect many areas of life for all the persons involved. In most cases both victims and perpetrators deal with various forms of harm: psychological and physical health, as well as their development and social behavior.

Firstly, the experience of bullying can be associated with several subjectively reported physical health complaints for both, bullies and victims. Those complaints include headache, backache, abdominal pain, dizziness, fatigue, and sleep problems. Research in Greece was conducted in order to examine the association between bullying and subjective health complaints (SHC) among adolescents (Politis et al., 2014). To begin with, the team of these researchers was interested in the extent of bullying in Greek schools among 16-18-year-old teenagers. In the first survey, bullying-related behavior was prevalent among 26.4% of young people of this age, and with a different methodology, this percentage rose to 41.3%, making Greece the third out of 37 countries in terms of bullying (Politis et al., 2014). They also referred to another study that reported that as many as 36% of boys and 60% of girls in Greek schools have subjective health complaints (Currie et al., 2008, as cited in Politis et al., 2014). The statistical analysis revealed positive associations between bullying victimization and the experience of subjective health complaints among the victims. Being bullied by others was mainly associated with experiencing somatic symptoms such as backache, dizziness, and fatigue. On the other hand, bullying perpetrators were more likely to report suffering from backache.

Moving forward, although studies conducted in Greece that focus on the effects of bullying on the psychological health of victims and bullies could not be found, studies conducted in other European countries allow some speculations about the situation in Greece as well. Victims and bullies appear to have differential associations with specific mental health problems (Husky, et al., 2020). Various studies show that being bullied in school increases the risk of psychological health problems such as depression and anxiety (Husky, et al., 2020). Also, some children are not only victims of bullying, but in some cases are the aggressors of bullying themselves. Children who are both victims and bullies themselves were more likely to report feeling sad and worried, compared to students who were not involved in bullying incidents (O'Brennan, Bradshaw & Sawyer, 2009, as cited in Husky, et al., 2020). In addition, being a bully and a victim is associated with poor self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. Exposure to long-term bullying can lead to suicide attempts and even which may even prove successful (Husky, 2020). Meanwhile, being a bully but not a victim is associated with mental health disorders and aggressive behaviors (Cook et al., 2010; Olweus, 1997, as cited in Husky, 2020).

Although studies on the overall impact of bullying on students' psychological health in Greece were not found, there is a study that focuses on the impact of bullying on suicidal ideation (Skapinakis et al., 2011). Research that is focused on the possible causes of suicide is essential due to the fact that suicide is the leading cause of preventable death, even though the suicide rate in Greece is relatively low (5.1) compared to other countries in the world (Lesotho is the leading country in the list with a number of 72.4 suicide deaths in a year per 100,000 population) (World Population Review, 2022). This makes Greece an even more interesting case in terms of the fact that the relationship between bullying and suicidal ideation in such an area may be less likely the result of unmeasured confounding factors (Skapinakis et al., 2011).

A study conducted by Skapinakis et.al. (2011) measured responses to the question "in the past week have you felt that life isn't worth living", since this kind of feeling is considered to be the first stage of suicidal ideation. In addition, the respondents were asked how frequently they had been bullied or they had bullied others, during the last 2 months in school. This study reported that victims of bullying were more likely to express that "life was not worth living." This

association was particularly strong for those who experienced bullying each week, and it was independent of mental morbidity and other socioeconomic or family-related variables. On the contrary, being a perpetrator was not associated with this type of thoughts. These findings were similar in both boys and girls, although the impact of victimization on suicidal ideation was potentially higher for boys (Skapinakis et al., 2011).

The literature draws somewhat less attention to the social consequences of bullying. Although it is difficult to find data on specifically the social consequences of bullying at the level of Greece or Europe as a whole, studies from some other countries provide examples of such effects. Both bullies and their victims may have poor social adjustment. It usually involves feelings of disgust with one's social environment, overexpressed dislike of school or workplace, extensive loneliness, isolation, and absenteeism (Rigby, 2003). Some retrospective studies also point to the potential long-term social consequences of being a victim of bullying. These studies argue that victimization at school in later life may take the form of disabling shyness and fear of intimacy that make relationships with the opposite sex difficult or impossible (Rigby, 2003). It can be hypothesized that being involved in bullying at a young age, whether as a victim or a bully, may make it more difficult to build social relationships in general. Bullies also tend to carry their social problems into adulthood and are likely to engage in more criminal activities or abuse their peers and family, like spouses or children (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). There are also extreme cases of bullying, when victims kill their oppressors (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). However, regarding the situation in Greece, more research on the topic of social consequences of bullying is required in order to draw some conclusions.

After looking at the physical, psychological, and social consequences of bullying for bullies and victims, it is crucial to highlight the position of those people around as well. In Greece, as in other countries, research on bullying often lacks the perspectives of the parents of involved children (Sawyer et al., 2011). Parents are not only likely to experience stress and other negative emotions themselves due to the difficulties their children are going through, but they are also particularly important factors in solving the problem of bullying. For this reason, their experiences should be taken into account more. The consequences on teachers are also frequently overlooked. It can

be assumed that teachers also face various issues related to bullying. Some teachers try to solve the problem of bullying in schools, but their efforts are often ineffective. Other teachers purposefully conceal bullying in an effort to defend their school and its climate (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). Regardless of how teachers choose to deal with a difficult situation, facing bullying can also be stressful for them and cause a variety of negative consequences. Although neither the consequences for parents nor the consequences for teachers have been sufficiently studied in Greece, it is very likely that bullying negatively affects not only the directly involved children, but also their environment.

Good Practices for parents

1. **Safe Internet Open Online Courses for Educators and Parents (MOOC)**
   - Implementation organization (private or public): Hellenic Safe Internet Center of ITE
   - Purpose: the aim is to strengthen the knowledge of adults so that they can advise and guide minor users for a safe and quality use of the internet.
   - Description:
     Through a series of online courses developed and edited by the Hellenic Safe Internet Center of ITE , teachers and parents have the opportunity to be informed in detail about emerging risks of the digital world. One section of the course is focused on cyberbullying.
   - Sustainability: the webinar is still available.
   - Link:
     https://saferinternet4kids.gr/%cf%83%cf%87%ce%ad%ce%b4%ce%b9%ce%b1-%ce%bc%ce%b1%ce%b8%ce%b7%ce%bc%ce%ac%cf%84%cf%89%ce%bd/mooc/

2. **The Antibullying Project**
   - Date of development: A five-year multi-disciplinary project.
   - Implementation organization (private or public): Athens coordination center for migrant and refugee issues.

- Purpose: To be exposed to other cultures, to provide parents and teachers with tools to improve the children's general well-being, especially those who are exposed to bullying in and outside the school. Moreover, this is addressed to the bullies themselves.

- Description: Main goal is not only to provide an individual response to the victims of bullying but to work on prevention and to accompany the various institutions that integrate refugee and immigrant children. This is done in addition to working with the local and refugee population in order to close cultural gaps and in parallel to campaigns in the media and social networks aimed at raising awareness against bullying.

- Sustainability: Still going.

- Link: https://www.accmr.gr/en/services/service/2692.html

3. **Live Without Bullying**

- Date of development: 2015

- Implementation organization (private or public): KMOP

- Purpose: Improve the responsiveness of health systems to address the needs of disadvantaged children. Support the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport, and cultural activities. Put in place mechanisms that promote children's participation in decision-making that affect their lives.

- Description: The program aims to combat bullying through the provision of in-person and online counseling and training sessions and the creation of online content, including webinars and educational tools. The program takes a holistic approach and engages with children, adolescents, young people, parents, and educators.

- Sustainability: Still going.

4. **European Antibullying Network**

- Date of development: 2014

- Implementation organization (private or public): EAN project brought together 17 partners from 12 EU Member States.

- Purpose: Teachers, parents, and public services and entities obtained useful tools and resources to support them in their fight against bullying. Children who have been victimized in the school or the wider social environment, as well as children and young people who are in some way involved in the phenomenon of bullying (either as victims, victimizes, or observers) indirectly, benefited from the implementation of EAN project.
- Description: EAN was conceived as an "umbrella organization", providing members with a platform and framework to join forces, exchange good practices and materials, and thus develop common actions to motivate all parties involved in the bullying phenomenon: not only children who suffered from bullying, but also teachers and educators, parents and children who exercise bullying, who are in fact often not really aware of the serious consequences of their behavior and acts of bullying.
- Sustainability: Still going.
- Link: https://www.hamogelo.gr/gr/en/collaborations/eiropako-diktio-kata-tou-scholikou-ekfovismou-ean/; https://www.antibullying.eu/

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