BULLYING IN ADOLESCENTS: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr.Renu Rathee*

ABSTRACT

Bullying is the most common and frequent antisocial behavior among adolescent and children across the globe. The negative consequences of this behavior affect everyone- the victims, the bullies, the bystanders, the school, the parents and community as a whole. Various data from researches indicate the alarming statistics about theharmfuland long lasting impact of bullying. Despite various anti- bullying policies and programs at various levels, we are not able to control and prevent this harmful and aggressive behavior. In the present paper, the author would like to deeply explore the bullying behaviors by analyzing different theoretical aspects of bullying by using traditional literature review method. This is a multi-dimensional problem so it requires in depth understanding, mutual efforts of parents, teachers and students to stop this harmful and problematic behavior.

Keywords: Bullying, antisocial, adolescent, harmful impact, consequences.

Introduction

Bullying is a frequentlyperformednegative, unwanted and aggressive behavior in which one person intentionally and repeatedly causes discomfort or injury to another person (Shetgiri, 2013). Bullying is a widely used behavior in different social settings (Olweus. D,1994). It can be through, physical contact, words or in any form of action (Christine-Mizell, 2003). Bullying has three basic characteristics: intention to harm, repeated occurrence and possession of unequal power between bullies and victim. There might be some potential causes of bullying like perceived threat, low sense of worth seeking popularity, desire for power, revenge, cowardice, sadism etc. (Shetgiri, R. 2013; Centifanti LC et al. 2015). Every year millions of school children are being victimized by their own peers through bullying. A study by Lereya, ST et al. (2015) reveals that molestations in schools by peers damages not only academics and physical health but also adds up many long lasting effects like risk of mental disorder, adjustment problems and low self –esteem. Various studies established that bullying is ranked third as a cause of suicide under 14 children. There is a high correlation between bullying and suicide.

*Associate Professor, Psychology, Dayanand College Hisar- 125001 Email: drrenurathee1997@gmail.com

In comparison to non-bullying behavior, the adolescent who are involved in bullying behavior, have a high tendency of cruel and antisocial activities in their adulthood. Also there is a high risk of incidents of anxiety, depression, drug abuse and substance abuse among adolescents who are involved in bullying behavior (Gibb et. at, 2011; Valdebenito et al, 2015).

The more painful aspect of bullying is that it is not reported inhalf of the cases of incidents because many victims or parents are reluctant to share the problems as they are oftenunsure of how to handle the situation or they feel intense shame and embarrassment(WolkeD &Lereya ST. 2015). Keeping all dimensions of bullying behavior in consideration, there is a strong need to do in-depth investigation in order to study the magnitude of effects. Actually bullying is a multi-faced issue that can be best understood with the help of various theoretical aspects. Theories can help us to understand that how school, family and society are associated with bullying behaviors and what measures can we take to prevent this destructive behavior.

In the present paper, researcher would like to deeply explore the bullying behaviors by analyzing different theoretical aspects of bullying by using traditional literature review method. This is a multi-dimensional problem so it requires in depth understanding, mutual efforts of parents, teachers and students to stop this harmful and problematic behavior. Some renowned theories of bullying are; social cognition theory, dominance theory, humiliation theory, social capita theory, organizational culture theory, developmental theory, theory of response to group and peer pressure and theory of restorative justice.

Theoretical Framework of Bullying

Social cognition Theory

This theory is based on the Basic principles of social learning (Theory Bandura, 1986). This theory emphasize on the role of cognitions in determining individuals' behavior by proposing that we have continuous interaction with social environment, we learn through observing our social surroundings by making cognitive evaluations of the behaviors (Bussey and Bandora, 1999). Bullying behavior has its roots in social relation problems and interaction between individual and his social environment. Exposure to supporting and appreciatingviolence and unpunished aggressive behaviors plays an important role in reference to bullying behavior. Many studies establish a link between observing bullying

and other aggressive behavior and perpetration of bullying behaviors on youth. Study reveals that youth who are exposed to domestic violence in their home are significantly more likely to bully others in comparison to those who are not exposed to domestic violence. (Baldry, 2003; Bowes et al. 2009). Various studies have found that exposure to violent and aggressive behavior in social context of a child is significantly related to bullying (Knous-Westfall, Ehrensaft, Macdonell and Cohen, 2012).

Dominance Theory

This theory is developed bySidanius and Pratto in 1999 as a social dominance theoryand supported by Pellegriniet.al(2007). This theory was originally designed to uncover disparities in power. It may be applicable in helping researcher to better understand victimization because this framework suggest that a bully's goal is to bring down feeling of hurtfulness and to harass someone and force them into submission.According to this theory, desire for power and dominance fuels bullies to engage in bullying behaviour. For instance, in the class room some students may show bossy behaviour expecting that others may admire them. In such case, they tend to create alliance with the bullies being leaders of them. Furthermore, these types of group may initiate bullying to less powerful person or group. Sometimes, people who have some leadership traits may use their charisma and skill for dominance others as a tool of gaining social power or and establishing domination. (Salmivalli C. 2010).

Humiliation Theory

This theory defined bullying as an act of overt derogation, humiliation and embarrassing others. It usually occurs when a powerful person publicly degrade or putting down of a feeble person (Klein 1991: Linder, 2006)). It is therefore a prerequisite factor to understand humiliation since its impact directly affects the victim as well as his surrounding very badly. Humiliation can cause depression and strong negative emotions to the victim (Fitness, 2001: Menesini et al., 2009). According to study by Frey and Fisher (2008) humiliation is positively associated with substance abuse, attendance problems, dropping out at school and even suicidal thoughts. Actually, humiliation is so powerful that it consists of putting others down and overpowering their self-esteem. As a matter of fact, humiliation violates the principle of fundamental human rights of people being respected or dignified.

Social Capital

Social capital is one of the resources that can lead to current and future welfare of the children(Coleman, 1988). Children with higher social capital resources and mutual benefits

are prone to be actively involved in bullying behaviours. On the other hand, they may bethe pro-social bystanders in bullying circumstances. Pro-social bystander is the behaviour that is instrumental to minimize school bullying. So, it is possible to decrease bullying by employing social capital gears that are related to school bullying. In their study, Jenkins& Fredrick also highlighted that there were positive association social capital access and pro-social bystanders (Jankins& Fredrick, 2015). Organization cultural theory is universally acknowledged that majority of bullying behaviours are learned or acquired from the community or the society or even from the school. They are not merely inherited. Therefore, everybody can assume that bullying school culture definitely influences to bidirectional traits; it can either promote or stop bullying behaviour(Goldweber et. al, 2013) Bullying behaviourare perceived to have amputate school environment. Parents and school members were less willing to arbitrate to act on their behalf. Similarly, it was opined that an effort to minimize or stop bullying behaviours in school without changing school culture would almost be impossible(Evan et. al, 2014).Therefore, it is very important to foster safe and caring environment. It is especially crucial for school where small babies and teenagers spend longer period of time than with their parents. Additionally, childhood is a highly behaviour influencing time period.

Developmental Theory

This approach giveemphasis that bullying behaviour arises from individuals' early childhood experiences. Bullying behaviour can be rooted in family system and social interaction during developmental phase(Hawley 1999).This approach states that they begin to do less socially wrong ways of controlling others in the beginning. At initial stage, verbal and indirect sorts of bullying appear to be more common than direct and physical ones. According to this framework, when a child displays bullying behaviour, it is a symptom of disturbed or conflicting relationship with family or society at developmental stage. Unhealthy family structure and adverse social interaction during developmental phase can pavenegative and repressed aggressive traits like bullying and teasing others. The developmental viewpoint is useful in providing supervision and guidance as to how bully and victim's concerns can be solved. For example, elder children are believed to be more likely to respond positively to problem (Regby, K, 2003).

Theory of Peer Pressure

Peer pressure theory give emphasis that bullying can be better understood in a societal background. It is a natural part of forming friendship and maintaining groups. A peer group consists of individuals within the same age group, all members bound together by common

purpose, interest, goals and motives (Bernard 2008).The school environment serves as a primary setting for the membership of peer groups (Olalekan, 2016). Peer groups provide a sense of security and belongingness.It helps the teenagers to build a sense of identity by not allowing them to be themselves. One important factor of bullying is related to peer's influence, that is, the tendency of adolescents to adjust and fit in their behaviour in accordance with their close friends and peers with whom they identify themselves (Pepler, Craig, & O'Connell, 2010). Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (2007) investigated that peer groups convince the individual members to adopt group values and beliefs and to participate in the same activities. Salmivalli (2010) statedthat peer groups directly challenge individual members to comply with existing norms. For this reason the adolescents who belong to a peer groups that engage in bullying are more likely to become bullies themselves. Peer pressure is a powerful force on the decision that one makes and can lead to engagein behaviour that we normally won't consider. Hence, members are inclined to take risks. Peer group members believed that risky behaviour increase their standing in the eyes of their peers and assured their acceptance in the group. Furthermore, peer groups are among the most influential social structures affecting adolescent behaviour. It has been observed that peer-influenced decisions have long-lasting consequences. It has also been proven that bystander intervention plays an important role and the person who witness bullying has a powerful role in a situation((Hutchinson ,M.2012). It can impact directly when an individual encourages other and support someone who is bullying another person or join the activity or laugh when someone is being bullied).

Theory of Restorative Justice

This theory can bedefined as a system of criminal justice which emphasizes repairing harm caused by criminal activities. Restorative justice is a method for dealing with crime that brings together those who have been affected by the crime typically offender ,victims and their family to impact of the crime and to solve the problem together in order to decide on action that will repair the harm caused (Miers, 2004; Roche,2006). In this approach, the restoration of criminals is done through reunion with victims and the society. It emphasis that crime should be viewed more than just breaking the law in the society. This aims at creating mediation between the bullies, victim, and other concerned people. The goal is to discuss for a resolution to the contentment of all concerned participants. It makes the bullies liable to the other parties such as parents, teacher and at large community as a whole. Final destination of this approach is transformational changes within the society;

not only giving justice to victim but also trying to change bullies and moving them from aggressive activities to healthy individual. This theory does not deny using other approaches of bullying prevention but emphasizing on use of combined approaches. Academic valuation of restorative justice theory encourages which is evidenced by the most studies. It helps offenders in such way that they are less likely to indulge in this type of activity again. It has the maximum rate of victim contentment and offender liability of any method of justice (Sherman &Strang, 2007). In all other approaches, where only the victims are the focal point, this approach enhances a new way of living for offenders instead merely stigmatizing or shaming to offender. Despite its positive aspects, many writers have criticized this theoryby highlighting its possible soft corner approach to the offenders, it may also override the police and legal power of the authority and there is also a chance of crumbling the legal right.

Conclusion

Basically, no one will just spontaneously turn out to be a bully. It must have some etiological factors.Review of some important theories provides in-depth understanding aboutbullying behaviour and associated risk factors on the life. The insight from different theories makes easy for implementing anti- bullying strategies accordingly. Social capital theory sheds light on the bullying dynamic as bullies often use bullying as a means of obtaining and protecting social capital, which fuels their power and gives them the resources to continue bullying and acquiring additional social capital. In contrast, victims lack social capital, making it almost impossible for them to shed their victim status. The desire for power and dominance is another motivating factor for bullies and bullying is used as a means to acquire both group and individual social dominance. A serious consequence of this social domination is the humiliation of victims, which results in negative outcomes such as depression, anger,and other mental health problems in the target person. Finally, although bullying occurs between small groups of people, its presence negatively affects the culture and society as a whole, which need to be addressed from larger platform at different level. Using social capital theory, dominance theory, the theory of humiliation, and organizational culture theory to examine bullying and its consequences provides an effective way of understanding the bullying dynamic and throw light on how social work practitioners can work and make effective strategies to deal with different aspects of bullying.

References

Baldry, A. C. (2003). Bullying in schools and exposure to domestic violence. Child Abuse & Neglect, 27, 713–732.

Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bowes, L., Arseneault, L., Maughan, B., Taylor, A., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (2009). School, neighborhood, and family factors are associated with children's bullying involvement: A nationally representative longitudinal study. Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 48, 545–553.

Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. Psychological Review, 106, 676–713.

Centifanti LC, Fanti K A, Thomson ND, Demetriou V, Anastassious- Hadjicharalamb X (2015). Types of relational aggression in girls are differentiated by callous- unemotional traits, personal and parental over control. BehvSci (Basel) 5 (4): 518-536.

Christie Mizell, C . (2013) .Bullying; The consequences of interpersonal discord and child's self-concept. Family Process 42 (2), 237-251.

Coleman JS.(1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital.American Journal of Sociology, 94, S95 – S120.

Evans C, Fraser MW & Cotter KL.(2014) The effectiveness of school-based bullying prevention programs: A systemic review. Article in Aggression and Violent Behavior 19(5):532–544·

Fitness, J. (2001). Betrayal, rejection , and forgiveness: An interpersonal script approach. In M. Leary (Ed.), Interpersonal rejection(pp, 73-103). New York: Oxford University Press.

Frey, n. & Fisher, D. (2008). The under- appreciated role of humiliation in the middle school. Middle School Journal, January 4-12.

Gibb, S. J., Horwood, L. J., and Fergusson, D. M. (2011).Bullying victimization/perpetration in childhood and later adjustment: findings from a 30 year longitudinal study. J. Aggress. Conflict Peace Res. 3, 82–88.

Goldweber A, Waasdrop TE & Bradshaw CP.(2013) Examining association between race urbanicity and pattern of bullying involvement. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42(2), 206-219.

Hawley PH.(1999) The ontogenesis of social dominance: A strategy based evolutionary perspective, Developmental Review, 19, 97–132.

Hutchinson, M. (2012).Exploring the Impact of Bullying on Young Bystanders. Educational Psychology in Practice, 28(4): 425-442.

Jenkins LN & Fredrick SS.(2015) Social capital and bystander behaviour in bullying: Internalizing problems as a barrier to prosocial intervention. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 46(4), 757-771.

Klein, D. C. (1991). The humiliation dynamics: An overview. The Journal of Primary Prevention, 12(2), 93-121.

Knous-Westfall, H.M.,Ehrensaft, M.K./ MacDonell, and Cohen , P.(2012)'Parental intimate partner violence, parenting practice, and adolescent peer bullying; A prospective study, Journal of Child and Family Studies,21; 756-766.

Linder, E. G. (2006).Making enemies: humiliation and international conflict. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.

Menesini, E., Modena, M., &Tani, F. (2009). Bullying and victimization in adolescent: concurrent and stable rolesand psychological health symptoms. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 170(2) 115-133.

Miers, D.(2004).Situating and Researching Justice in Great Britain. Punishment Society, 6(1),23-46.

Olalekan, A. B. (2016). Influence of peer group relationship on the academic performance of students in secondary schools – A case study of selected secondary schools in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo State. Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Arts & Humanities – Psychology, 16(4), 35-47.

Olweus, D.(1994). Bullying at school: Basic facts and effectsof a school based intervention program. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35(7):1171-1109.

Olweus, D. (2001). Peer harassment: A critical analysis and some important questions. In J. Juvonen& S. Graham (Eds.), Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized (pp. 3–20). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Pellegrini AD, Roseth CJ, Mliner S, Bohn CM, Ryzin MV, Vance N, Cheatham CL &Tarullo A.(2007) Social dominance in preschool classrooms. Journal of Comparative Psychology, 121(1), 54–64

Pepler, D., Craig, W., & O'Connell, P. (2010). *Peer processes in bullying: Informing prevention and intervention strategies. In S. R. Jimson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective (pp. 469–479). New York, NY: Rutledge.*

Rigby K.(2013) *Addressing Bullying in Schools: Theory and Practice.*

Roche, D.(2006). *Dimensions of restorative. Journal of Social issues,62(2), 217-238.*

Rubin, K. H., Bukowski, W. M., & Parker, J. G. (2007). *Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups. In Handbook of Child Psychology.John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

Salmivalli C.(2010). *Participant Roles in Bullying: How Can Peer Bystanders Be Utilized in Interventions? Theory into Practice 53(4):286-292.*

Shetgiri, R. (2013). *Bullying and Victimization Among Children. Advances in Pediatrics, 60, 33–51.*

Sidanius J &Pratto, F.(1999) *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression.*

Valdebenito, S., Ttofi, M., and Eisner, M. (2015). *Prevalence rates of drug use among school bullies and victims: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies. Aggress. Violent Behav. 23, 137–146.*