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Adolescents Think That School Bullying "has Always Happened And Will Keep On Happening" And They Resign Themselves To This Problem

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Most of the adolescents think that bullying in the school context "has always happened and will continue happening", and present "a negative, pessimistic and resigned attitude" towards this social problem, which makes difficult the intervention and leaves few hopes for its eradication.

Those are the conclusions of a doctoral thesis carried out at the department of Evolutionary and Education Psychology of the University of Granada (Spain), which warns that, from the viewpoint of psycho-pedagogical action, "it is necessary to prove to the children that this type of behaviours do not have to go on forever, and that it is possible to do something to stop them" through more complete educative programmes.

This work, whose objective was to find out the representation of adolescents about the phenomenon of bullying, has been conducted by professor M^a Jesús Caurcel Cara, and supervised by professors Fernando Justicia Justicia (UGR), Ana M^a Tomás Almeida (Universidade do Minho, Portugal) and M^a del Carmen Pichardo Martínez (UGR)

To carry out this work, the authors conducted a survey on 1,237 children aged between 11 and 16 years old from Granada and Braga (Portugal), who completed a questionnaire in order to get to know their perception about 'bullying'. The researchers confirmed that, in school centres studied, there are conducts of victimization with an incidence rate of 7.3% of victims, 8.5% of abusers and 84.1% of audience 'children'.

Bullying, "something natural"

M^a Jesús Caurcel has ascertained that "bullying in getting more and more integrated in the daily routine of interaction among groups of peers, is considered as something natural and has certain social approval". Schoolchildren approve abusers' behaviour, and leave the victim isolated and unprotected.

The questionnaire applied to children revealed that, to describe the major figures of bullying, the participants use social stereotypes, characterizing their victims as passive persons, socially incompetent and who experiences unpleasant emotional states of [anxiety](#), [depression](#) and insecurity; and the abuser as a strong, brave and extrovert person who experiences pleasant emotional states (a happy victimizer) which give him power and self-confidence, reinforce their status in the group and inhibit other social motivations to end up with the abuses.

Differences by sex

The research work carried out at the UGR has also proved that there are differences depending on sex on the social schoolchildren's perception of bullying. Girls condemn abuses in more critic way, respond with unpleasant emotions to them, reject this kind of situations and show more empathy to the victims, describing them with a wide set of positive characteristics, admitting their suffering and being able to share their emotional state.

On the other hand, boys highlighted in their categorizations the vulnerability and the moral responsibility of the victims and asserted, "they should feel guilty and ashamed".

Differences by age

As regards the differences found depending on the age of the participants in the

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study, the most accused differences were found among pre-adolescents aged between 11 and 12 years old and adolescents from15 years old. "The perception of the victims' vulnerability and the intensity of the rejection against abusers became accentuated as adolescents grew older, which is due to a higher internalization of the social rules by children", explains Caurcel.

The study carried out at the UGR has permitted to detect connections, regularities and risk and protection factors which could be useful as starting points to implement appropriate, consistent and realistic interventions in the schools studied. In addition, it will contribute to determine the blocks to work with for direct intervention programs useful to help adolescents to get out of such a spiral of unjustified violence by themselves, with the support of the entire Education Community.

Source: University of Granada

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