



New Trends  
in Psychology

## Bullying and Violence in School Environments

Ana-Maria State<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Aggression and violence take different forms, starting from aggressive behaviour manifested either physically or symbolically; aggressive behaviour manifested by the use of physical force; or by other types of aggressive behaviour, such as name-calling; but all of them ultimately result in injury to the other. In addition to aggressive behaviour, violent behaviour should also be taken into account: harassment, teasing, name-calling, mimicking, taunting, threatening, bullying, hitting, physically pushing the other person. The literature talks about the fact that the phenomenon of aggression takes the form of bullying and mobbing. In order to combat aggression in the school environment, it is not enough just to create a relationship between teacher and pupil, but also to create a relationship between parent and teacher, because the pupil returns to the family environment at the end of the school day, and the family has the implicit role of being involved in the moral and other education of the child. Various programmes to prevent and combat aggression and violence in schools have been carried out in schools under the aegis of various specialist organisations, including that of the Ministry of Education, and yet these phenomena are increasing at a worrying rate.

**Keywords:** aggression; violence; pupils; school; behaviour; family context; teachers; prevention programmes

### Introduction

Aggression and violence has become an everyday issue in the school environment, taking place both outside school and inside school. In the present analysis it is necessary to distinguish between aggression and violence. While aggression is the predisposition, violence is the action itself of exercising aggression. Aggression and violence take different forms, ranging from aggressive behaviour manifested either

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<sup>1</sup> Student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, Faculty of Behavioural and Applied Sciences, Specialization Psychology, University Danubius of Galați, Romania, Address: 3 Galați Blvd., Galati 800654, Romania, Tel: +40372361102; Fax: +40372361290, Corresponding author: ana30\_stateiorga@yahoo.com.

physically or symbolically; aggressive behaviour manifested through the use of physical force; or through other types of aggressive behaviour, such as name-calling; but all ultimately result in injury to the other. In addition to aggressive behaviour, violent behaviour should also be taken into account, such as: harassment, teasing, name-calling, imitation, taunting, threatening, bullying, hitting, physically pushing the other person or various objects in order to injure the other person, and other behaviour provided for in various legal acts.

Aggression also involves visual confrontation, which creates intimidation for the aggressed and power to dominate for the aggressor.

Yet how can children in the process of training for life display such aggressive and violent behaviour towards other children? These behaviours can be reactions to the situation in their own family where they have accumulated frustration with the precarious material situation, lack of parental attention and affection, the desire to draw the attention of their parents to themselves and thus consider that they are asserting themselves both towards them and towards the group of children where they want to be accepted or recognized as leaders and thus the entourage can encourage the manifestation of aggressive behaviour.

Other forms of aggressive behaviour are: stealing/theft of objects or vandalism, use of intoxicants, sometimes sexual abuse, even rape, and even the use of “aggressive” language towards teachers.

In order to ensure the safety of pupils and, in exceptional cases, of teachers, it is important to create a relationship between teacher and pupil. The dynamics of the teacher-pupil relationship are determined by the teacher’s specialisation and degree of involvement in preventing and combating bullying, but also by the age of the pupil. Therefore, pupil safety in educational institutions is a necessity and should not be neglected or treated superficially.

However, in combating aggression in the school environment, it is not enough just to create a teacher-pupil relationship, but also to create a parent-teacher relationship, because the pupil returns to the family environment at the end of the school day, and the family has the implicit role of being involved in the moral and other education of the child.

The literature talks about the fact that the phenomenon of aggression takes the form of bullying and mobbing.

Bullying is the various types of emotional and physical abuse, which can be intentional (the bully's clear intention to cause physical and psychological harm) or repeated, with the bully taking advantage of the fact that the victim does not fight back and does not complain to the school management or even the police, where the situation requires it.

The term bullying actually means intimidation of the victim, ranging from labelling, taunting, name-calling, teasing and even physical violence designed to cause physical and therefore emotional harm to the victim. Bullying behaviour occurs in the context of economic, age, racial, cultural, family and physical differences. Repeated bullying will affect the victim in the long term and can be initiated by an individual or a group of individuals (mobbing), involving an unequal power relationship between the victim and the bully. Bystanders are also involved by witnessing the action.

Mobbing (Cace, 2010; Maureen & Yamada, 2018), can take place both in schools and in the workplace, interpreted as psychological abuse of the victim by a group of individuals, interpreted as bullying, terrorising, blackmail and demeaning the dignity of the individual).

The present analysis aims to identify the causes of the occurrence and persistence of violence in schools, starting with official statistics on these issues and the action taken by various institutions to combat and prevent such phenomena. There are many causes of aggressive and violent behaviour, but this analysis will focus on family causes.

A survey carried out by Save the Children revealed that, according to official data, there was an increase of almost one third in the number of bullying situations reported in the education system in the 2021-2022 school year compared to the previous school year (10,971 bullying situations reported, compared to 7,715).

In reality, however, the phenomenon is much more serious: recent analysis by Save the Children (end of 2022) shows that bullying in school or in the classroom and its perpetuation online affects hundreds of thousands of pupils emotionally year after year, as they become victims of physical violence and threats or humiliating messages sent online (49%), witness it (82%) or admit to having committed it themselves (27%).

This phenomenon of bullying at school must also be associated with the phenomenon of pupils' lack of motivation to learn and go to school, up to and including dropping

out. Why? Because, in their depth, these phenomena hide the lack of desire to educate the individual towards self-fulfilment (except in exceptional cases when children from poor family backgrounds succeed).

Children learn by imitation in their early years of development, so the impact of the family on their development and education is major. This is also one of the determining causes of aggressive or violent behaviour.

The impact of the family, both with a poor situation and with a good or even very good situation, determines various aggressive behaviours, either actively or passively.

Forms of aggression and violence manifest themselves in various forms and ways, from verbal aggression and violence, to coercive physical punitive violence by parents against each other or even against the child in the intimate family setting, to violence by parents outside the intimate space. For example: in traffic, aggressive reactions when listening to or reading the news, aggressive or violent reactions towards animals or nature, badmouthing in front of the child about co-workers, people in general who do not have a certain social status, etc.

In this family context, which is often also fuelled by the media, aggression or violence for the child becomes like normality and what they understand is that this is a way of life becoming, often against their will, aggressive towards others.

In today's context when gadgets are the main play for children and play has become the gadget itself, their creativity no longer manifests itself through play and creative play, it has become aggressive almost.

The lack of socialization through play and play in children through direct interaction has left and leaves a strong imprint on them in terms of adaptability to the social environment i.e. living in society means understanding each other, listening to the opinions of others, expressing problems in words not in deeds, making collective decisions, and obeying the decision of the majority, controlling one's violent urges.

If the family does not have the above, if the child is not listened to, if he is not "dictated" what to do, then how can he behave towards others around him. The family context, regardless of the situation, is important, because in both situations the child's inner frustration builds up and erupts in anger and rage towards those he perceives as weaker.

If for those in a precarious situation the frustration is due to economic conditions, the degree of material austerity in which they live, the lack of sufficient space for each member and sometimes the lack of adequate food, the lack of one or both parents, etc, for children from good or very good families the frustration is sometimes due to the fact that they are taken to various extra activities which no longer allow them the necessary rest and they forget who they are, sometimes by compensating with money for the time their parents do not spend with them, sometimes because parents differentiate on the basis of social status by imposing on them which category of children to choose, etc.

In both cases, it is often found that parents, although physically and emotionally present, are not involved in the development of children as a whole, but only in the cognitive area, leaving the school to educate them. While children from poor families often physically drop out of school at a young age, in good or very good families there is a different type of drop-out, where parents pay excessive extra 'training' and intervene to keep them in the top grades, and sometimes even to promote them.

In both situations, pupils act aggressively or violently to compensate for the 'lack' of either material or social status, but both compensate for the emotional and affective 'lack' of parents in their development. All these are perceived by the child as abandonment, if sometimes it occurs even physically, sometimes it occurs at a deep subconscious level, which creates for the child various defence mechanisms by which he often wants to draw attention to his existence both physically and emotionally.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are parents who place an excessive emphasis on emotional relations to the detriment of the educational role they should play in their relations with their children: they do not impose any prohibitions or rules, make few demands and seek to avoid conflict. This total absence of constraints (outside school) will lead pupils to adopt behaviour in school that refuses to accept teachers' demands.

Often, however, teachers directly or indirectly, in one context or another, in front of other pupils, make various remarks to children from one environment or another, or to the quality of their clothing, or to the slower way some of them communicate, etc., and this increases the sense of frustration for those involved, and creates the assumption for those assisting that they too have the right to do so. Subsequently, the person involved, full of frustration and anger, if stigmatised or provoked by the

other pupils because of the teacher's remarks, will react violently or repress this anger deep inside, which at some point will still be repressed in one form or another.

In this context, in the end there are major, serious consequences, such as: poor school performance; school failure, suspension, exclusion or voluntary leaving; assumption of violence as an acceptable form of problem/conflict resolution; extra effort on the part of teachers and administration to manage discipline problems (disruptive classroom and aggressive behavior at recess requires extra attention and supervision), leading to decreased teaching effectiveness and limited learning opportunities for other students; negative image from peers and teachers; marginalization of the student; feelings of isolation and loneliness.

The school cannot act alone, through teachers, to prevent and combat these behaviours, the tool at its disposal is oral and then written reprimand followed by lowering your grade on your performance. This proves an ineffective solution most of the time, as the behaviours stop for a short period of time after which they reappear.

Various programmes to prevent and combat aggression and violence in schools have been run in schools under the aegis of various specialist organisations, including the Ministry of Education, and yet these phenomena are on a worrying rise.

**Among the types of violence prevention activities organised at school level are:**

- *actions to make pupils aware of the negative effects of violence;*
- *activities with parents on the prevention of school violence, parent-teacher conferences;*
- *development of teacher training programmes on classroom management, development of communication skills, development of conflict resolution, promotion of cooperation;*
- *participation/involvement of pupils in projects aimed at reducing school violence;*
- *exchange of experience between schools on violence prevention;*
- *extra-curricular activities analysing the phenomena of school violence, competitions between classes, organisation of performances on violence;*
- *involvement of the parents' committee in organising activities to prevent and combat violence;*
- *thematic debates organised by pupils, organisation of "tolerance week", "anti-violence week" in schools;*

- *analysis in a debate of the moral principles/values violated by various acts of school violence;*
- *debate situations of school violence presented in the media: understanding the causes, analysing how situations could have been avoided, analysing the consequences for victims/ perpetrators, etc.*

I believe that a stronger way to raise awareness would be to implement by law that when a number of reprimands have been reached against a student, the parent/parents of the student should be involved with the child in community activities to make them accountable for what it means to belong to a group and to have reciprocity in terms of respect for each other.

Exclusion, rejection, admonishment only amplifies aggressive or violent behaviour, because the excluded, rejected, admonished will revert to such behaviour in the hope of gaining acceptance.

Children are not born aggressive or violent, they are just “victims” of certain circumstances, contexts and situations, but this does not justify such behaviour towards others.

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