

# THE INFLUENCE OF BULLYING ON THE DIGNITY OF THE CHILD

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**Abstract:** People are different and perceive things differently, and this creates problems in a community that wants to be united. Differences separate when people feel threatened by other people who have different beliefs, values and habits. And children have dignity and value regardless of ethnicity, language, nationality, age, gender, religion, ability or any other characteristic. Children use bullying as a form of manifestation of power to assault, hurt and hurt other children. The effects of bullying on the child are: depression, anxiety and damage of dignity. The values transmitted through both the family and the school play a very important role in the formation and development of the child. These values are the foundation of his subsequent actions. Love, respect, integrity and self-control can prevent and combat bullying if promoted and implemented in children's education.

**Keywords:** Bullying, human dignity

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## **1. Bullying – a form of manifestation of power**

On November 20, 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Romania assumed the UN Convention the following year by Law no. 18 of September 28, 1990. This Convention on the Rights of the Child encompasses all human rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural in order to ensure the full development of the potential of children in an atmosphere of freedom, dignity and justice..

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child states: "Due to the lack of physical and intellectual maturity, the child needs special protection and care, including adequate legal protection, both before and after his birth."

The child has the right to: name and nationality, education, family, protection, information, nutrition, health care, leisure and participation.

With all these rights that children have in our country, the phenomenon of bullying is more and more frequently manifested.

“At European level, Romania ranks 3rd in the ranking of the 42 countries in which the phenomenon was investigated, according to a report of the World Health Organization (WHO), with 17% of the 11-year-olds admitting that they have assaulted other students at least three times in the previous month, the percentage of those of 13, respectively 15 years, being 23%. The latest data processed at the level of the Ministry of National Education (MEN) for the 2014-2015 school years speak of 18,783 cases of violence at national level.” (*Salvați copiii*, 2019)

As a verb, to bully means: to intimidate, to frighten, to dominate. “Bully” is a person who uses his strength and strength to scare and hurt weaker people (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2016).

„A student is harassed when he / she is repeatedly exposed to negative actions by one or more students. A negative action is the situation in which a person intentionally causes or intends to cause, physical pain or discomfort to another person, through physical contact, words or in other ways.” (Olweus, 1993)

Forms of manifestation of bullying:

- ✦ Verbal - screams, nicknames, sarcasm, insults, insults;
- ✦ Physical - palms, strokes, knocks, whips;
- ✦ Mobbing - verbal and emotional aggression of a group towards an individual;
- ✦ Relational - intimidation, denigration, isolation, manipulation;
- ✦ Cyber bullying - sending a message or image on the phone or the internet to denigrate a person's image;
- ✦ Social - exclusion, insults regarding the social status.

Bullying is one of the most complex forms of aggressive behavior and violence. However, not every act of violence is an act of bullying.

The bullying phenomenon has three characteristics:

- ✦ Intentional - the aggressor intends to hurt someone;
- ✦ Repeated - the same person is hurt constantly and always;
- ✦ Force imbalance - the aggressor chooses the victim who is perceived as vulnerable, weak and cannot defend himself;

According to Olweus and other scientists, in a typical “bullying circle” a whole range of protagonists are involved: the aggressor, assistants of the aggressor (named and followers), the victim, passive witnesses and possible defenders, who actively support the victim, taking a clear position and opposing the aggressor. (Olweus, 2001)

Bullying can occur anywhere: at school, at home or at work. Most often the victims of the aggressors are children who have the following characteristics:

- ✦ Overweight or underweight;
- ✦ They have low social skills;
- ✦ They have few friends or no friends;
- ✦ They are poor or rich;
- ✦ Have a different religion or race;
- ✦ They are short or too tall;
- ✦ Have poor sports skills;
- ✦ They are intelligent, talented;
- ✦ They have physical disabilities;
- ✦ There are new people in the group;
- ✦ They have divorced parents;
- ✦ They are different from the others.

## **2. Human dignity, the foundation of human rights**

When discussing child development, it is important to distinguish between socialization and individualization. Through socialization children will become like other people, while through individualization they will be different from others. The challenge every child is facing on his or her way to adulthood is to acquire the means of action and values necessary to live in the society to which he belongs, enriching it by his individual qualities. “Individual socialization should not conflict with individual development. Therefore, it is necessary to act in the sense of developing an education system that tries to combine the virtues of integration with respect for individual rights.” (Delors, 2000).

Self-awareness is the first step in self-formation and refers to the child’s ability to understand that he is a distinct being with his own existence.. Who am I?” Is a question that persists in the mind of the child until adolescence, much of the childhood being dedicated to finding an answer.

The concept of self is precisely the answer to the above question, drawing in an image that the child constructs about his person..

“Self-esteem refers to the value that children attach to their qualities, answering the question <How good are they?> And going from extremely positive to extremely negative”(Schaffer, 2005).

Susan Harter has differentiated five areas based on which children can be evaluated (Harter, 1999):

- + Academic competence: how competent the child is considered in school tasks.
- + Athletic competence: the child’s sense of competence in sports activities.
- + Social adaptation: to what extent the child feels popular in relation to other children of his age.
- + Physical appearance: how well the child thinks he looks.
- + Conduct: the degree to which the child considers that in general, his behavior is acceptable to others.

The family is certainly the environment in which the children’s self-sense is born, but as they grow, so does the number of important people who influence the way children perceive and self-evaluate. Acceptance from other children becomes more and more important during the school years: being nice or, on the contrary, being rejected has repercussions on the dignity of the child.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and must behave towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood.”

Dignity is a characteristic of the human being and implies the existence of a consciousness of its own value and correlated with the consciousness of the value of others.

Dignity should not depend on color, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, material situation or social position. It can manifest itself in several aspects: the dignity of the family and the development of family values, the dignity of the child, the adolescent, the student, the woman and the man, the professional dignity, the national dignity.

Although today it is difficult to imagine the atrocities committed in the Nazi concentration camps, however, they existed and did represent neither the beginning nor the end of the attack aimed at human dignity.

However, the violation of human dignity does not refer only to the horrific acts committed throughout human history. Often it takes on more subtle forms.

Bullying is a phenomenon that affects human dignity in the following way: the child who is ridiculed for physical appearance, the immigrant who gets kicked for having strange habits, or the individual who reaches the target of discrimination because of skin color or nationality.

The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language defines dignity as “the quality of being worthy” and “moral authority, prestige”. Therefore, by human dignity is meant both the way in which the person looks upon himself/herself and the way in which he/she is treated by other people. Although there are various factors that can influence the individual’s feelings about oneself, the way he/she is viewed or treated by others plays an important role in his sense of self-worth.

### **3. Management of bullying situations**

The abused children are disadvantaged, unhappy and suffer from problems related to self-esteem and self-confidence. They often feel anxious, feel ashamed and even feel guilty for what happened to them. In school, they are usually intruded without friends, alone and abandoned (Olweus, 1993). Their friendship is often affected by an increased fear of trusting their fellow human beings. The negative consequences affect not only their mental health but also their academic outcomes and may diminish their motivation to go to school and learn.

Richard Ryan and Edward Deci (2017) they have developed Self Determination Theory which says that each person has three innate psychological needs. These needs also have children, and in order to have a harmonious development, they must be fulfilled. These are:

- ✦ The need for a relationship / connection - the need to establish and maintain secure and satisfactory relationships;
- ✦ The need for competence - the child’s desire to do something well, his or her need to feel capable of the environment, experiencing personal control situations;
- ✦ The need for autonomy / control - the child’s ability to decide what and how to do it.

By exercising bullying behavior, these needs are not only not met but also called into question.

Bullying is a model of communication and social interaction that affects all participants. Children who harass other children are usually insecure, fearful, and historically have internal traumas that are not properly managed in their families. The emotional environment at home is mentioned by many authors as an important factor in becoming an aggressor or a victim. Thus, the lack of warmth between parents or between parents and children, the use of any kind of violence (but especially physical) and abuse in the family, combined with the lack of clear and reliable rules for the guidance of the child, can catalyze the adoption of bullying behavior. In turn, Olweus (1993) said that very protective parents can increase the risk of exposure to bullying for their children, who become victims of bullying more often than their peers. In the profiles of his victims, Olweus highlighted certain intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics associated with the increased likelihood of suffering from bullying, for example: shyness, insecurity, passivity, low self-esteem, lack of friends. In general, being different from the majority of others, due to their ethnicity, faith, sexual identity, sexual orientation, can lead to an increased risk of victimization. Also, children with special educational needs, physical disabilities or learning difficulties may have the special risk of being attacked.

For managing bullying situations it is important to have a proactive attitude on the part of parents, teachers and educators. As in the road traffic there are rules that ensure optimal traffic, so in the education of children there must be a set of rules that they should follow for a harmonious development. To avoid confusion and confusion, these can only be three:

- ✦ “You are not allowed to harm yourself.
- ✦ You are not allowed to harm others.
- ✦ You are not allowed to spoil things.

These three basic principles cover a whole range of wrong behaviors, giving the child the necessary framework for decision making”(Kuzma, 2011, p. 82). If bullying happens it's important to take the following steps:

- ✦ Stop bullying
- ✦ Support the victim

- ✦ Explaining the aggressor why this type of behavior is unacceptable
- ✦ The responsibility of the spectators
- ✦ Assuming consequences
- ✦ Monitoring the situation for the prevention of bullying.

Family and school play an important role in the lives of children through the values promoted and implemented and are expected to teach children how to manage their feelings and negative experiences and deal with bullying aggression.

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