

VIOLENCE AND PEER AGGRESSION – CONTEXTS AND PREVENTION

Summary: The functions of the educational institutions include providing care, safety, educational and preventive activities for children. For the proper realisation of those tasks essential are accurate diagnosis/study of the school environment in this peculiar area/sphere and precise prearranging of specific actions against particular threats and among the particular groups of children. In the process of preventive planning the important role plays recognition of children's developmental differences, forms of aggression, and individual needs of particular class teams.

Keywords: aggression, violence, prevention

Introduction

At the base of the human needs pyramid is the need for security. Some disturbances in the human functioning and development of the individual appear, when it is lack of basic standards in this field. This applies to all environments and situations that directly or indirectly affect people. However, the postulate to create safe conditions for the development of a young person belongs to families and educational establishments. It is therefore worth considering the factors that can disturb this security and look at them with the child's eye. It is important to think about which of them specifically concern young people, which happen very often and which are overlooked or ignored by the world of adults.

All these actions would be pointless if they did not result in the development of a programme of preventive actions responding to current and anticipated risks.

As children grow up and know the world, the associations with the words aggression and violence change a lot. The perception of aggression on a global scale and the identification of such phenomena as racism, terrorism, discrimination, exclusion are much more strongly emphasized. In the background there are negative behaviours such as bullying, nervousness, emotions. However, violence and physical aggression is presented in a general form, with an indication of the persons who carry it out, e. g. aggressor, murderer.

aggression, violence



Graphic 3: Children's associations aged 15 with the words: violence, aggression

Source: own research using Mentimeter application - www.mentimeter.com

(Realized by M. Zięć).

This graphic shows clear changes in the perception of aggression and violence among young people that have taken place over a period of five years. At first it can be seen aggression and physical violence, then verbal acts, up to interpersonal relations, both in the individual and group and social dimension.

Experienced peer violence

Children at different age, associate the words aggression and violence through own experience. It was analysed physical, verbal aggression and how often does the aggression take place at school.

102 students took part in the diagnosis, 29 from the fourth class, 41 from the sixth class and 32 from the eighth class. The chart below shows responses

of students in percent concerning aggression and peer violence, which they experienced and their frequency.

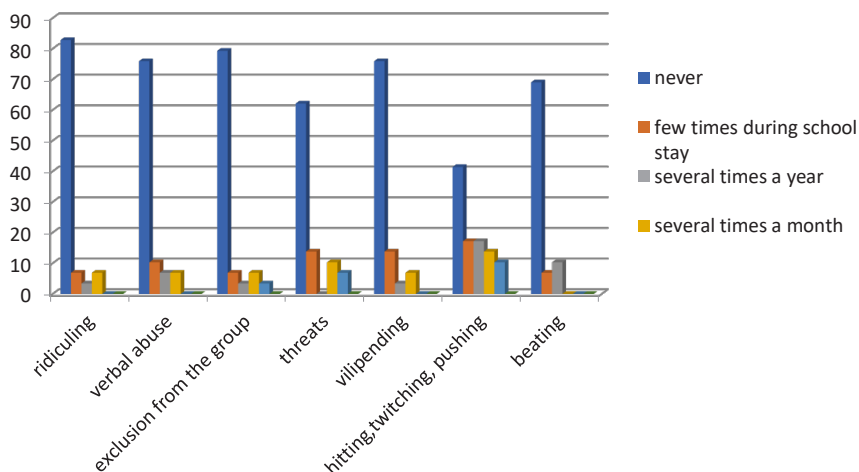


Chart 1. Experienced forms of aggression and violence by fourth grade students

Source: own research.

It is optimistic that many students have never been victims of violence in any form. However, there is a clear intensity of pathological phenomena connected with physical nature. Pupils understand a rather problem which occurs quite incidentally, as well as other behaviours of this type (no indication of the daily occurrence of aggression and violence). If we analyse this problem in detail, we can determine who is the aggressor in some cases. They are usually older pupils – about 60%. The phenomenon is less frequent in a class group (approx. 33%). On the other hand, there are some aggressive actions by younger pupils against older ones (7%). In almost all cases of physical aggression, the attackers were mainly boys. In the group of thirteen-year-olds, there is a tendency to intensify aggressive behaviour in all studied forms. However, physical aggression still dominates and verbal aggression increases significantly. At the same time, there is a decrease of students who have never been victims of such behaviour. Some students give examples such as daily hitting, jerking, pushing, which may indicate violence against them. It turns out, that about 34% of the attackers are girls at similar age. The occurrence of the aggression concerns quite often the class group. It is noticeable a verbal aggression among pupils from the fourth class.

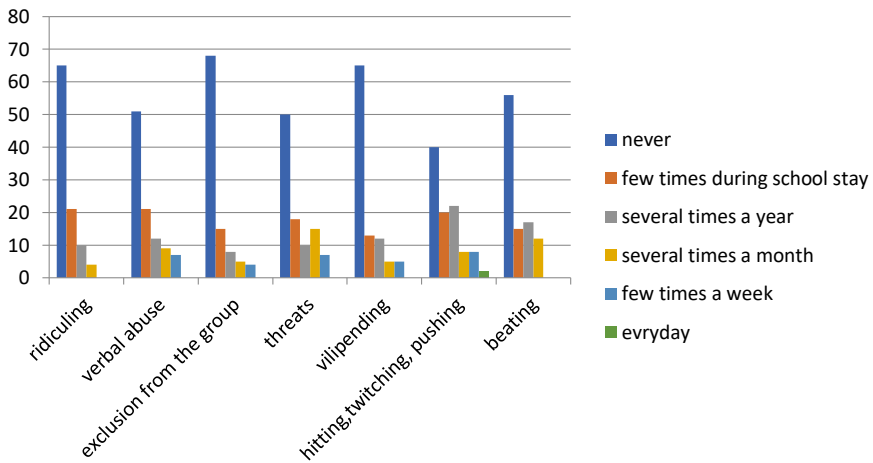


Chart 2. Experienced forms of aggression and violence by students from sixth class

Source: own research.

Definitely, there is a visible shift in relational and verbal forms of aggression and violence among the students from the eighth class. A significant percentage of students indicate mockery, rude expressions and exclusion from the group. At the same time, it turns out that gender does not play a major role here, the perpetrators of the actions are both girls and boys. However, it changed a lot. Often it is not direct contact, but very often through social media. Then aggression and violence are transferred to the real world. Perhaps the transfer of aggression and violence into the virtual world, limits its physical acts, which in this group are observed to be significantly reduced. The frequency of negative behaviour is worrying. In contrast to younger groups, some opinions were given about the daily experience of aggression and verbal violence.

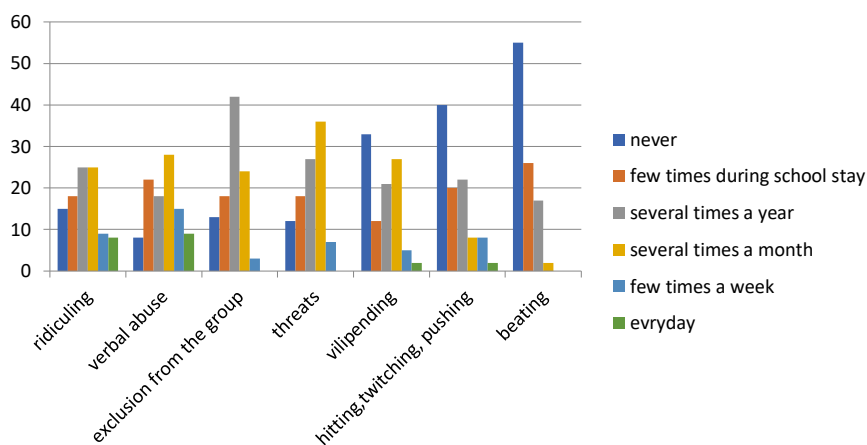


Chart 3. Experienced forms of aggression and violence by students from the eighth class

Source: own research.

These results show that children can show aggressive behaviour towards each other as they are older. Aggression is changing from the real world to the virtual world. The perception of this phenomenon is of great importance in the planning of preventive actions by educational institutions.

Prevention

Every educational institution (except kindergarten) is obliged to elaborate an educational and preventive programme. Its preventive part should result from a detailed diagnosis at schools.

Its element should be also violence and aggression. The planning of preventive actions depends on the degree of diagnosis and it should be adjusted to the age of students. It is not possible to develop a universal preventive programme for students from first to eighth class. There is a need to adapt activities to the age group and in mostly cases, to specific group, where are visible alarming situations. The presented results above showed the changes that have taken place over five years. Considering the two educational stages (I and II), preventive needs are definitely different. However, it is very important to know the reason for negative behaviour. It will be easier to eliminate this type of behaviour and solve the problem. Then it is possible to limit them at school and to offer cooperation with parents, whose children are aggressive.

Summary:

The observed scale of the phenomenon and violence, especially in younger classes, is relatively small. Children indicate few acts of physical aggression that result from the direct presence of children in the group, but do not create a sense of danger.

However, over time, aggressive behaviour and violence between peers intensifies and gradually changes its form. Sometimes this kind of behaviour becomes very sophisticated and realized with using various methods and the oldest youth transfers to the virtual world. Preventive programmes should be realized in many schools and should prevent these risks. However, their effectiveness depends on a solid diagnosis and the planning of activities dedicated to specific groups of students. Only this approach can lead up to educational success.

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