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THE BYSTANDER – A KEY PARTICIPANT IN BULLYING. THE ROLE OF FACTORS THAT DETERMINE INTERVENTION

Abstract: The paper discusses the subject of bullying, including bystander experiences. The phenomenon of peer bullying is a significant problem in terms of planning school-based prevention programmes in this area. In most theoretical and empirical studies, researchers describe bullying, focusing on the behaviour of bullies and victims, overlooking the key role of the bystander. The author of this article emphasises the important role of bystanders who, through their intervention, can contribute to the defence of victims, and thus to the reduction of bullying incidents. The article presents selected typologies of bystanders to bullying, emphasising the important role of bystanders who support the victim. In the paper reference was made to the author's own research, the purpose of which was to gain a better insight into the determinants of taking intervention measures in bullying situations. The research was conducted using in-depth interviews conducted with 23 students aged 20–41. The determinants of intervening or abstaining from intervening are described.

Keywords: peer bullying, bystander to bullying, typologies of bystanders to bullying, bystander intervention.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of bullying has been repeatedly undertaken by researchers who in their work have focused largely on the scale of this phenomenon, incidence of its occurrence, characteristics of bullies' and victims' profiles, origins and consequences of the phenomenon (e.g. Olweus, 2004, Pyżalski, 2012, 2015). However, despite numerous empirical studies, bullying, due to its complex character, is not yet fully recognised. A small percentage of them are still domestic research on bullying, the subject of which is related to the role of bystanders in the process of bullying. The apparent deficiency is also observed while studying the research conducted with the use of the procedures of quality methodology. Qualitative research could, after all, show the wider context of the bullying process and determine the importance of the behaviours and attitudes of individual participants to reinforce or inhibit bullying. We owe the origins of research into bystanders to bullying to Christina Salmivalli's team (1996), who in the second half of the 1990s focused their research interests on studying the role of bystanders as key participants in peer bullying. It turns out that bystanders, although they constitute a large group and are present in over 80% of cases of bullying, and declare their

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readiness to take action, actually intervene in about 19% of cases (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Hawkins, Pepler, Craig, 2001).

Bystanders are therefore a group of people who do not use their huge intervention potential. This is largely due to their belief that the lack of intervention is the norm. If others do not react when they observe a bullying incident, then most likely there is nothing wrong with this behaviour, and passivity may be interpreted as a sign of approval of the bully's actions. Even if the bystander himself/herself is convinced that the bully's behaviour is inappropriate and falls outside the normal range, the lack of support from others may inhibit him/her from openly opposing bullying (Meter, Card, 2015, Thornberg et al., 2017).

The conclusions from the research inspired me to address the determinants of bystander intervention in bullying situations. As a research goal, I intended to study the determinants of intervention in bullying situations. In this study, therefore, I focused on factors and mechanisms that encourage or inhibit intervention.

TERMINOLOGICAL FINDINGS

The term bullying has been repeatedly operationalised by Polish and international researchers. The pioneer and one of the experts in research on school bullying is Dan Olweus, who claims that a student is subjected to bullying when he/she is repeatedly and over a period of time harassed and exposed to negative actions from one or several other students, which is characterised by an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). In spite of many imprecise criteria included in Olwesus's definition (such as negative actions or imbalance of power – difficult to measure), researchers still cite it in their studies (Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2013; Gumpel, Zioni-Koren, Bekerman, 2014; Pyżalski, 2015).

Another definition was presented by Ken Rigby (2010, p. 28) which described bullying as "the systematic abuse of power or in interpersonal relations." Rigby proposed criteria on the basis of which he tried to assess whether a behaviour can be considered bullying. Among them he lists: the bully's desire to hurt, the advantage of the bully over the victim, deliberate, unprovoked harm or discomfort, repetition, feelings of hurt and inability to defend against bullying, and a sense of power over the victim.

The cited definitions, however, concentrate on the bully-victim dyad, taking into account only these two participants of bullying, overlooking the role of bystanders, as well as a number of other factors, such as interactions between the participants and group dynamics. Considering these variables, Stuart W. Twemlow and Frank C. Sacco (2013, p. 291) proposed a triadic definition of bullying, describing it as "the repeated harmful exposure of an individual or group (the victims) to multiple episodes of harm by many different individuals and groups (the bullies), perceived as stronger than the victim, and facilitated mainly by the active or passive role of bystanders linked with the bully and victim in complex social interactions and group dynamics." The authors of this definition emphasise the important role of bystanders to bullying who may inhibit or reinforce bullying. No less attention is focused on the processes occurring in the group, including social status of the participants in bullying, group norms and normative pressure.

A serious problem among both international and native researchers is the lack of coherence in the terminology used. Polish researchers face a difficult task of find-

ing the right term to describe the specificity of bullying. The most commonly used terms (alternatives to the term "bullying") are: dręczenie szkolne, nękanie, tyranizowanie, szykanowanie, prześladowanie. Agata Komendant-Brodowska (2012, p. 38) defines school bullying as "systematic use of violence by an aggressor or a group of them against a relatively defenceless student, which takes place in a group context and other students are aware of what is happening."

The author, for the purposes of this article, adopted the term "peer bullying" (Polish: „dręczenie rówieśnicze"), but she did not restrict it to bullying between peers (as the term "peer" would suggest) and to bullying taking place only in the school environment. Peer bullying is thus understood as deliberate (intending to harm others and/or gain power/recognition from peers), repetitive, negative aggressive behaviours characterised by an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, occurring in the school environment or outside and usually taking place with passive or active participation of bystanders.

As already mentioned, studies from previous decades (Komendant-Brodowska, 2009, Padgett, Notar, 2013, Jenkins, Nickerson, 2016) indicate that apart from the bully and the victim other people in the school community are involved in peer bullying, and it is bystanders who are responsible for reinforcing or inhibiting bullying. It is their intervention or lack of it that determines the repetitiveness and intensity of bullying.

Bystander behaviour is significant both from an individual and social perspectives. The former one emphasises that victims of peer bullying who have classmates supporting and defending them are less depressed, less anxious than victims who do not. The support of friends certainly leads directly to a lower incidence of bullying, yet the lack of a sense of loneliness and a sense of group bond is particularly important for victims (Sainio et al., 2011). The former perspective stresses the group nature of bullying. The tendency of bystanders to inhibit or reinforce peer bullying is extremely important in a social context. In some classes the scale of bullying is much lower than in others, which is the result of better intervention strategies designated for students bullied by their peers. The teachers who condone bullying also play a significant role in the reduction of bullying (Saarento et al., 2013). Several studies suggest that positive and supportive relations in the school environment (the teachers and students) also increase students' willingness to report bullying (Eliot et al., 2010).

THE DETERMINANTS OF TAKING OR ABANDONING INTERVENTION MEASURES

Studies show that the majority of students witnessing violent behaviours do not take any intervention measures to defend victims. Bystanders are usually a large group of people, which isn't conductive to making a decision to defend victims. In a situation where none of the participants reacts, it may be a signal to bystanders that the bully's actions are just a joke and there is nothing wrong with them. Moreover, the bystander, not knowing what to do, behaves according to "a social proof" and acknowledges the lack of intervention as appropriate (since most people behave this way) (Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2013, 2014; Salmivalli, 2014). Even if the moral evaluation of the bully's behaviour is negative, it is difficult for the bystander to stand up to him/her (Salmivalli, 2010). I believe that the level of moral development of a participant in bullying is not without significance here. According to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral de-

velopment in the period of adolescence (when bullying usually occurs), it is the group's norms that are important for taking or abandoning intervention measures. Thus, the pressure of conformist behaviour increases in order to avoid criticism and to gain approval from significant people in their lives – their peers (Chańko, Wołyniec, 2016). Depending on the existing standards in the reference group (encouraging or discouraging aggressive behaviours), an individual's behaviour will be either favourable or unfavourable for bullying.

Aleksandra Tłuściak-Deliowska (2014, p. 309), writing about the determinants of helping, underlines the importance of the stimulation-balance model (by Jane Allyn Piliavin et al.). She emphasises the importance of three statements:

"(1) witnessing other people's problems makes the bystander emotionally stimulated, which increases with their intensity, unambiguity and duration, and decreases as the distance between the bystander and the victim increases;
"(2) stimulation is unpleasant for the bystander and the stronger the stimulation is, the more he/she tries to reduce it;
"(3) the bystander in a crisis situation chooses such a way to reduce his/her stimulation which works the fastest with the relatively most favourable profit and loss account."

According to the above-mentioned model, the result of the observed bullying episode is the emotional stimulation of the bystander who seeks to reduce it at the lowest possible cost. Therefore, he/she analyses which behaviour (intervening or abstaining from intervening) will be the most beneficial for him/her in a given situation. By taking intervention measures, he/she either risks becoming the victim of bullying and thus losing his/her current status in the group structure (costs) or neutralises the feeling of guilt (profit) related to failing to help the victim.

Witnessing harm done to others is also associated with other unpleasant feelings that bystanders want to get rid of. Bystanders often take the perspective of victims and feel their emotional states. This is related to the empathetic experiencing of the victim's states and situation. It turns out that both boys and girls with high levels of empathy are more likely to take the defender role in a bullying incident than the participants with lower levels (Gini i in., 2007). Perhaps defending the victim is just a way to neutralise the perceived discomfort caused by the empathetic experiencing of this situation.

The social status of the bully and the victim as well as the psychological ties to the bystander to peer bullying also contributes to the failure to act. Research by Robert Thornberg et al. (2012) indicates that the bystander's close and friendly relationship with the bully and a negative attitude towards the victim contribute to the lack of defensive reaction. Also, the positive moral evaluation of the bully's actions and the belief that the victim is responsible for the whole situation in which he/she finds himself/herself ("she is the one to blame for what is happening to her") is of great importance here. Such rationalisation of the lack of intervention removes the responsibility for bullying from the perpetrator and co-responsibility from the bystander, and attributes all the blame to the victim, which further "pushes" him/her into the role. At the same time, the author states that the bystander's friendly relationship with the victim is a motivating factor for defence.

In a broader context, not only the relationships between the students, but also between students and their teachers, and the nature of the educational process (i.e.

specific features of the school environment) referred to as the social school climate (Kulesza, Kulesza, 2015) can be an important contextual factor of bullying. Tłuściak-Deliowska (2014), mentioning the Xin Ma's studies (2002), states that schools characterised by a small number of bullying actions have high educational standards, involve parents in cooperation and demonstrate positive educational activities.

Gender is an important variable in determining intervention, although there is no ambiguity in research. Some researchers (Salmivalli, 1996; Monks, Ortega-Ruiz, Torrado-Val, 2002; Nickerson, Mele, Princiotta, 2008) state that girls show a greater tendency to intervene in bullying situations than boys. It turns out that they have higher levels of moral sensitivity to harm done and close relationships with victims. They also have lower levels of "moral detachment" when participating in bullying. However, studies do not prove the dependence of defensive measures on gender (Nickerson, Mele-Taylor, 2014).

The last determinant of the lack of bystander reaction is ignorance and inability to respond to bullying, as well as the belief that intervention may prove ineffective and will not bring the intended results. It turns out that people with a high sense of self-efficacy are more willing to take defensive measures than disengaged participants in bullying (Thornberg, Jungert, 2013).

SELECTED TYPOLOGIES OF BYSTANDERS TO BULLYING

Bystander behaviour in bullying situations has been repeatedly described and now we can find several typologies of bystanders in foreign literature. According to Salmivalli (2014), bystanders are a group without which this procedure would not take place. Bullies need an audience that support and reinforce their actions in an overt or even covert manner. "Often the bully will only do what the bystander social group allows (Twemlow, Sacco, 2013, p. 291).

Olweus was the first one to describe bystander behaviour in bullying situations, explaining the bullying cycle. Presenting a triad of the bullying participants (bully, victim, bystander), he attached particular importance to bystanders who, through their attitude towards violent behaviours, take on specific roles: the supporter/henchman who takes an active part but doesn't start the bullying; the supporter/passive bully who supports the bullying but does not take an active part in it; the passive supporter/possible bully who does not display open support. Another group of players are bystanders who are on the victim's side and here the author mentions the possible defender who dislikes the bullying and thinks that he/she should help, but doesn't do it; the defender who openly stands up for the bully or at least tries to help the victim. Apart from the mentioned types of bystanders, Olweus also mentioned the disengaged onlooker/observer who watches the bullying and is aware of what is happening, but he/she thinks that it is none of his/her business and does not intervene. (see Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2017).

When analysing bystander behaviour, a team of researchers led by Salmivalli (1996) distinguished specific behaviours characterising certain groups of bystanders who are involved in bullying. They established four participant roles: assistants, reinforces, defenders, and outsiders. The assistants join and help the bully. They do it in an open manner and take an active part in the bullying. The reinforcers supporting the bully watch the bully's and show their approval by cheering on the bully and mocking victims. Those

in the third group are the defenders who openly support the victim. Their actions are most often based on conversation, support and consolation. And those in the last group are individuals who do not directly approve or disapprove of the bullying. They are also referred to as the outsiders and even though they stand up neither for the bully nor the victim, they contribute to peer bullying. Through their inaction and idleness, they may display support for negative and hurtful behaviours in a nonverbal manner.

Marie-Louise Obermann (2011) offered an interesting typology of bystanders to bullying. She investigated the relation between moral disengagement of bystanders in bullying situations and their intervention. "Moral disengagement" was explained by the author with reference to eight mechanisms which facilitate to justify one's own negative behaviour. She mentions moral justification, advantageous comparison, diffusion of responsibility, displacement of responsibility, euphemistic labelling, dehumanisation, attribution of blame and distortion of consequences. Obermann identified four bystander roles: disengaged (passive) bystanders – unconcerned bystanders; bystanders who do not intervene, do not stand up for victims and feel guilty about it – guilty bystanders; bystanders who have not experienced peer bullying – outsiders; and bystanders who actively try to help the victim – defenders. Her research indicates that there is a relation between the bystander role and "moral disengagement". Unconcerned bystanders have higher moral disengagement than defenders and guilty bystanders who feel guilty for not doing anything. After comparing outsiders and defenders, it turned out that the former have moral disengagement too (Obermann, 2011). Also Robert Thornberg and Tomas Jungert (2014) in their research on bystander reactions to school bullying addressed the dissociative techniques mentioned in the concept of "moral disengagement".

Another typology of bystanders to peer bullying was proposed by Twemlow and Sacco (2013). It was developed with regard to both the teachers and the students – possible bystanders to peer bullying. The researchers distinguished the bully-bystander, the victim-bystander, the ambivalent bystander and the avoidant bystander.

The bully-bystander is referred to as the silent partner of the bully who watches and allows using violence against others. He approves violence, although he/she does not take an active part in the bullying. The bully-bystander identifies with the bully to overcompensate for being afraid of him/her or for previous traumatic situations. The bully-bystander has leadership skills, but he/she lacks the courage to become a leader and, therefore, strives to raise his/her position in the class hierarchy at all costs. The victim-bystander identifies with the victim, projects onto himself/herself the feelings of a harmed person – he/she experiences shame, anxiety and fear. In addition, he/she is afraid that the situation will change and he/she will become a target for the bully. The victim-bystander rarely intervenes and opposes the bully. Another type of bystander is the ambivalent bystander who is confused and who does not identify either with the bully or the victim. Even though he/she would like to stand up for the victim, he/she does not know what he/she could do and how to act effectively. In addition, he/she does not feel strong enough to defend others. The last type of bystander is the avoidant bystander who wants to absolve himself/herself of responsibility and blames others for the bullying. He/She does not intervene because he/she expects someone else to do it and to solve the problem.

When analysing the above-mentioned typologies of bystanders to bullying, it may be worthwhile to consider the motives that contribute to specific bystander behaviours (intervening or abstaining from intervening), whether they are constant or change depending on the situational context or other variables.

METHOD

Subjects

I interviewed 23 full-time and part-time students (18 women and 5 men) of different fields of study: education, architecture, mathematics, sociology. During the interview period, the subjects were aged 20–41.

Tools

This study uses semi-structured interviews. In order to obtain the research material, a list of issues of interest to the researcher was made. They referred to taking or abandoning intervention measures studied in bullying situations, to the description of specific intervention measures, motives for action and experienced emotions. In addition, the consequences of the intervention measures were an important area of interest.

PROCEDURE

The subjects were recruited on the basis of voluntary participation. They were informed about the full anonymisation of the interview and agreed to participate in the study. Individual interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours.

When data was collected, transcripts and team problem analysis of the individual interviews were made. The collected empirical material in the form of a description of the students' experiences as bystanders to bullying was compared with Thornberg's model (2012) (*Conceptual framework of bystander motivation to intervene in the bullying situation*), taking into account the nature of the research group and the categories selected during the interviews.

The analyses were presented according to the qualitative model and were used to reflect a deep and contextual view of the determinants of bystander intervention in bullying situations.

FINDINGS

When describing factors that may motivate the bystander to intervene in bullying situations, one cannot overlook the issue that the subjects paid attention to during the interviews, namely – habituation to bullying. How is it possible that bullying takes place in the presence of other people and no one reacts or does anything to stop bullying? As described, the authors of the studies (including Thornberg et al., 2012; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013) emphasise that the reason for abstaining from intervening is anxiety, lack of empathy, a fear of losing one's status, group norms or a negative social climate of institutions.

In the author's own research, the bystanders mentioned two issues: neutralisation of bullying and diffusion of responsibility and, as a result, passivity, to justify abstaining from intervening. When describing bullying incidents, the subjects treat them as a natural element of functioning in the student community, as a normal behaviour. Certain behaviours due to their repetitiveness no longer arouse surprise and opposition, and are even treated as fun.

The situation when the student was locked in the storeroom took place in the presence of the whole class and no one reacted. The other students had fun at his expense (…) I also enjoyed "getting into it". We were having a good time. (K., Year 2 of university studies).

These are human weaknesses, backbiting or something like that (B., Year 3)

It was fun when J picked on him. W and G either cheered J on or they themselves took part in it. We had a good laugh, something was happening, there was a victim. It was going on for so long that at some point everyone got used to it, to it happening in this class (P., Year 3 of studies).

We laughed at someone, but it was just immature jokes. Generally, everyone who went to school was a victim of malice, teasing, because that's how it is at school (K., Year 2 of graduate studies).

When describing bullying incidents, the subjects underlined that bullies' activities violated the social norms. Bystanders, when addressing bullies' behaviours, noted the signs of victims' sufferings and believed that harming other people went beyond the limits of accepted behaviour.

No one wanted to play with her during PE classes and she was laughed at (…) when she had her hair cut. She had a very poor vocabulary, so when she talked, she made mistakes and was ridiculed. Then she cried but didn't defend herself (B. Year 2 of studies)

I knew that the victim was almost over the edge with it (…) he sighed heavily, had a red face, moved his lower lip, I knew that he would burst into tears at any time (Ł., Year 1 of studies).

I didn't want to watch her suffer, I knew that the kids wanted to tease her, (…) kids are like that now (…) she cried, didn't want to go to class, didn't want to spend her break time with her classmates … I knew she was sad (…) I knew she was hurt (K., Year 2 of graduate studies).

An important factor which contributes to bystander intervention is a good relationship between bystanders and both the victim and the bully. It is worth emphasising that bystanders' high social position allowing them to take action to defend victims and to object to the bully's actions is also of importance in this regard.

I took her side, I said a few words to these girls (the bullies) (…) said a few words of consolation, I supported her, didn't leave her (…) we were close (…) we hanged around, she was a better student, so she helped me a little. It was a specific situation because she was my best friend in class. But another person, like the person I had no relationship with, what was the point of getting involved (K, Year 3 of graduate studies)?

I was friendly with some people, and it was often the case that for instance a bully talked to me about it and he actually drew some conclusions from it when I tried to explain that his behaviour was bad, and then his aggression decreased (W., Year 2 of graduate studies).

An important issue mentioned in the interviews was looking at the situation from the perspective of the victim. The subjects emphasised the role of empathy, referring e.g. to empathising with the victim and taking his/her perspective.

I was sorry that they had a down on her. (J., Year 2 of graduate studies)

I tried to put myself in the position of this bullied boy, he was sad. I wouldn't want anyone to behave like this towards me (A., Year 1 of studies).

There were people who tried to do something, but they never did (…) perhaps they were afraid, perhaps they didn't have enough empathy (Ł., Year 1 of studies).

Although the research was focused on bystanders to bullying, it confirmed my supposition that there are no "pure" and unambiguous participant roles in bullying situations. As it turns out, they vary according to the situational context. The subjects described their previous experiences also from the perspective of the victim. However, I am not convinced that experiencing the victim role in the past may contribute to bystander intervention. The analysis of interviews shows that experiencing the victim role in the past instills a fear of being "pushed" into this role again, which inhibits intervention.

However, among the subjects there were also bystanders who when recalling their previous experiences as victims stressed the role of empathy, which encouraged them to stand up for other people.

I knew how these people felt, what it was like to go back home and to be alone with your problems, no to want to go to school because of them (…) I have been there myself (…) I knew they couldn't defend themselves, theoretically they could, but they weren't strong enough (…) I used to have these problems, and now I'm fighting these situations myself (Ł.,Year 1 of studies).

Another important issue that emerged during the analysis of the interviews was a profit and loss account made by bystanders (especially those who were victims of bullying before). The support they provided for victims was their way of going through their negative experiences and dealing with the victim's stigma.

It's a big motivator. I know they can't defend themselves. (…) A person suffers and something must be done about it. (…) Dealing with all of this was probably my therapy to overcome bad memories (Ł., Year 1 of studies).

It can be assumed that the benefits of intervention measures were direct (an attempt to overcome one's negative experiences in the role of the victim), but they also indirectly increased self-efficacy and recognition from other people, and this, in turn, increased one's social status.

Someone once told me that what I'm doing (standing up for others) is heroic (...) If there was even a slight chance of getting something done, I tried to do it (Ł., Year 1 of studies).

Belief in the effectiveness of intervention is one of the motivators to stand up for victims (Thornberg et al., 2012).

The subjects were glad and relieved that they were not victims any longer. They stated that they abstained from intervening in bullying situations for fear of losing

their position. Even though they observed the bully's actions and they disapproved of them, they were less inclined to intervene for fear of losing their status.

> Generally, I thought I should stand up (for the victim), but then I was afraid that I might become a new target (Kr., Year 2 of studies).

> Watching it is risky, there's a risk that I will become a new victim, that my safe, neutral position will change, that I will join the people who are bullied (Ł, Year 1 of studies).

> When I rebuked my colleagues, they often took it out on me, became aggressive towards me (W., Year 2 of graduate studies).

CONCLUSIONS FROM RESEARCH

The factors encouraging bystanders to intervene or abstain from intervening presented in the paper are only part of the author's research. Firstly, I presented categories which, in the opinion of bystanders, can mobilise. Secondly, I described these variables which encourage to support the bully or abstain from taking action and take the outsider role or the disengaged bystander. It is worth noting that these last groups are the most numerous. Based on the stories of the subjects, it can be concluded that bystanders are not aware of being able to reinforce bullying.

The fact of the matter, however, is that bystanders, although they constitute a large group and are present in most bullying situations (Pepler, Craig, 1995; Hawkings et al., 2001) and declare readiness to intervene, actually do so only in a small percentage of cases (Craig , Pepler, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2001). Bystanders are therefore a group of people who do not use their huge intervention potential. This is largely due to their belief that, because the situation does not directly concern them, it seems unreasonable to intervene. In addition, it turns out that peer bullying is treated as a natural element of functioning in the student community.

The aim of the paper was to describe the determinants of bystander intervention in bullying situations. It focuses on analysing bystander behaviours supporting victims. Therefore, when planning preventive measures it is worth using their potential, and when introducing the principles of universal precautions, increasing awareness among all students of being responsible for bullying and victimisation.

The factors encouraging intervention described in the paper correspond to the ones in the research conducted by Gianluca Gini et al. (2007) and Thornberg et al. (2012). The subjects who were taking defensive actions characterised first of all by implicit interventions in the form of consolation and support, proved that empathy plays a significant role here.

They emphasised the importance of empathic concern understood as the capacity to feel compassion and empathy for the victim and personal distress, i.e. the capacity to experience fear, anxiety and discomfort when hurting others (Kaźmierczak, Plopa, Retkowski, 2007). Empathic suffering could also be enhanced by their previous experiences as victims. The subjects who were victims in the past emphasised the importance of previous experiences and identification with the bullied person.

These findings are corroborated by Lyndsay N. Jenkins and Amanda B. Nickenson (2016) who describe that victims and supporting bystanders are more sensitive and

recognise a bullying situation more quickly, which results in greater awareness of bullying and help-seeking.

An important factor mobilising bystanders to take action is their emotional relationship with the victim or the bully. It turns out that bystanders who have friendly ties to victims feel an overwhelming compulsion to stand up for them. However, there is no ambiguity in the research about the relation between friendly ties with the bully and inhibition of bullying. The author's own research shows that a close relationship between the bystander and the bully can be a significant factor when defending the victim. It would be worth exploring this topic, taking into account also the bystander's social status, which may not be without significance for the bully's further actions.

SUMMARY

Summerising the information presented in the paper, it is necessary to stress the important role of factors that should be taken into account in preventive actions directed towards bystanders. When developing guidelines for preventing bullying, however, we should begin with a thorough diagnosis of both positive and negative bystander behaviours in bullying situations, and the differences between these behaviours, i.e. what bystander intervention strategies are directed towards bullies and victims. It is also important to study other variables, such as the victim's social status and the social climate of the school.

Preventive and intervention activities of the school environment should therefore be directed, among others, towards raising awareness of students' responsibility for bullying others, the sense of effectiveness of intervention, building empathy, and – in a broader perspective – creating a positive social climate in the school environment, where prosocial norms are of utmost importance. It's also important to shape and reinforce students' prosocial behaviours through the intervention of parents and teachers in bullying situations.

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