School Violence in OECD countries

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Plan works in 17 of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation Development (OECD)[1] countries in Europe, Australasia and North America.[2] All share high income levels and universal primary and secondary education. Most prohibit or severely constrain corporal punishment at school.[3] However, differences in culture, history, social policy and the ways in which education is provided mean that the challenges surrounding school violence, and the ways in which these are tackled, do show some variation across regions and countries (Blaya, 2003).

Across the board, a great deal more scholarly, policy and popular work has been undertaken on school violence, especially bullying, over the last several decades in these OECD countries than in Africa, Asia or Latin America combined. More recently, there has been an upsurge in response to a number of extreme, large-scale episodes since the mid 1990s, including shootings on school and university campuses and extreme events of teacher-pupil 'relationships' and abuse (e.g. Foderaro, 2007). While some researchers attempt to understand the background to such tragic events, how to counsel perpetrators and survivors (UN, 2006), and how to prevent future episodes, many have attempted to refocus attention on the everyday violence – both physical and non-physical – experienced and perpetrated by students, teachers and other school staff (Pepler, 2003). Other new directions of inquiry include new forms of bullying emerging as a result of the prevalence of new technologies in the homes, schools and pockets of OECD country students, such as 'cyber-bullying' and 'happy slapping'(Ortega, Mora-Mauchan and Jager, 2007).[4]

In addition to the literature which specifically addresses the two key issues of bullying and sexual violence in schools, there is also a broad concern with the school 'environment' and its effects on student health. The objective of this stream of work is articulated by Samdal and Dur (2002) of the WHO Regional Office for Europe who argues that:

> A health promoting and supportive school environment may be considered a resource for the development of health-enhancing behaviour, health and subjective well-being, while a non-supportive school environment may constitute a risk. (49)

Clearly in order to promote a healthy and supportive school environment the issue of violence within educational settings needs to be identified and addressed through rehabilitation and preventative measures.

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[1] The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) does not refer to a geographical region but rather encompasses 30 countries characterised not only by the formal ratification of the OECD Convention (1961) but also by a an acceptance of representative democracy and free-market economic principles. Its mandate is broad, encompassing economic, social and environmental issues with the explicit objective of providing a space in which governments can engage and share policy experiences with 'like-minded' countries.

[2] Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

[3] The exceptions are France, Korea and some parts of Canada and the US. Further, Australia has not yet enforced a complete ban.

[4] 'Cyber-bullying' is the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly mobile phones and the internet, to bully. 'Happy slapping' is a fad in which someone attacks an unsuspecting victim, while an accomplice records the assault using a mobile phone or other camera. Footage is then posted on the internet or circulated via email or mobile phone. See Ortega-Ruiz and Mora-Merchán (2007) for more detailed definitions and typologies.

Sexual harassment and violence

A large amount of general research, policy and advocacy work done on sexual violence against women and girls, and sexual abuse against children, notwithstanding, there is a far smaller number of recent studies on these phenomena in schools (e.g. Foderaro 2007). This is despite the fact that the limited amount of (mainly American) literature available indicates that sexual harassment can have an extremely negative impact on educational achievement levels, on top of the longer term psychological and physical consequences of rape and other serious offences (Witkowska and Menckel 2005). School curricula are seen as useful for educating children about sexual abuse, and teachers are people in which an abused child can in theory confide. In reality children may not always feel comfortable reporting abuse which takes place either in school or in the home. It has been recognised that the mechanisms for reporting abuse must be improved in order to prevent more negative effects on the student's educational career (Timmerman, 2003). Pinheiro's (2006) report for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children argues that cases of violence in schools are in general 'hidden, under-reported and under-recorded.' There is however a surprisingly limited amount of literature available on schools as unsafe places in terms of sexual harassment or on teachers or peers as perpetrators. In the Europe and Central Asia regional consultation document for the UN Violence against Children study, Kane (2006d: 22) notes,

> There have been quite high profile reports on sexual violence by teachers on pupils, notably in France, but this may reflect more the interest of the media in covering this form of violence than a reflection of the situation regarding violence in general. Conversely, sexual violence is often not addressed adequately within the education system itself, perhaps because it is more controversial but also perhaps because it is to many adults unthinkable. It has a serious impact, however, not only on the victim but also on the morale of other pupils in the school and indeed within the families of children who attend

Young women at highest risk of sexual victimization, 2002

Rate per 100,000 population
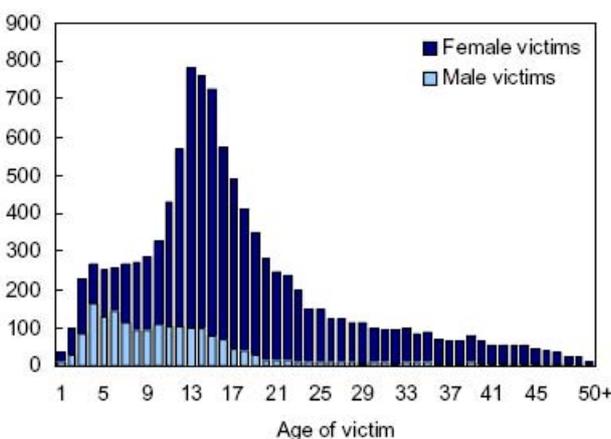
Data are based on 154 police agencies (excluding OPP Rural) participating in the UCR2 Survey, representing 56% of the national volume of reported crime.
Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR2), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Young males at highest risk of sexual offending, 2002

Rate per 100,000 population
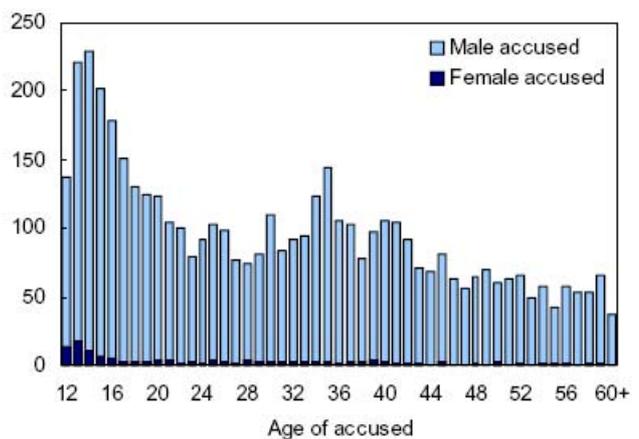
Data are based on 154 police agencies (excluding OPP Rural) participating in the UCR2 Survey, representing 56% of the national volume of reported crime.
Source: Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR2), Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Source: Kong et al 2003: 7.

the school in question.

Young people – girls and women in particular – are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, yet there seems to be limited understanding of the extent to which this occurs in school. For instance, Kong *et al* (2003) reporting on Canadian statistics note that in 2002, 61% of all sexual offence crimes reported to the police involved the abuse of a young women and girls under the age of 18, with 13-year old facing the highest rates. Young boys are also at highest risk of sexual offending (see figures below). While the report notes that compared to their older counterparts, sexual offences involving teens tend to involve victims of their own age and peer group, and take place at home or school, data on the occurrence of sexual offences at school are not readily available.

A study of child sexual abuse in Sweden (2000) that reported that 3.1% of males and 11.2% of females aged 17 acknowledged that they had faced sexual abuse, including exhibitionism. Schools were used to distribute questionnaires, and it was noted that no abused boys, and few girls, had confided in teachers or other professionals. The authors disaggregated all results by gender and differentiated between type of abuse, age at onset, problems following abuse, and perpetrator. However, as the categories of perpetrator are limited to relatives, friends of the family, or strangers, we have to assume that teachers and school staff were never identified as perpetrators in this survey. Notably, 'peer abuse' was excluded from the research.

A later study in Sweden by Witkowska and Menckel (2005) note that sexual harassment in schools is recognised as a key public health problem for girls in Sweden, yet the sexual harassment of students by teachers has been subject to very little research. Defining sexual harassment as inappropriate and/or unacceptable conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a student's right to a supportive, respectful and safe learning environment in school, the authors found that among 17-18 year old girls, 49% felt that sexual harassment at school was a significant problem. Reported exposure to sexual harassment in general ranged between 0.2%-27%, while exposure to teacher-student sexual harassment ranged from 2%-14%.

The problem of 'dating violence' between and among school students is increasingly a focus of research (e.g. Ortega-Ruiz and Mora-Merchán 2007); arguably this can spill into the school environment. A recent article (Espelage and Holt 2006) investigated the associations between dating violence, sexual harassment, bullying and peer victimisation among middle and high school students in the US. The authors found that those victims who had experienced the highest levels of sexual harassment, and those victims and bully-victims (bullies who are also victims of bullying) with the highest levels of dating violence, reported the highest levels of anxiety/depression. This highlights the importance of assessing multiple forms of victimisation affecting youth.

Also in the US, the *2000 School Survey on Crime and Safety* noted that 71% of public and elementary schools experienced at least one violent incident – rape, battery, gun crime or sexual assault – during the 1999-2000 school year, and 20% experienced more than one event. A number of factors distinguish schools with a high number of violent incidents from those with few violent incidents: school level (secondary schools more likely to experience violent incidents), enrolment size (larger schools), urbanicity (city schools), higher crime rate in area, higher number of classroom changes, higher number of serious discipline problems, and higher number of school-wide disruptions. The survey's results are in no way applicable only to the US but can also be applied to the other OECD countries, if not globally. Although Wolke (2001) has found a weak correlation between infant victimisation amongst students in Britain and France it is essential to consider violence in schools as a 'reflection of social attitudes and behaviours outside of the school context' (UN: 2006). This again suggests the

importance of considering sexual and other forms of violence in an holistic way, taking into account the environments in which the individual, school and community exist.

The one recent study that does attempt to quantify the level of harassment perpetrated by teachers shows very high levels. Timmerman (2003) compared sexual harassment perpetrated by teachers and peers among 14-15 year girls and boys in secondary schools in the Netherlands. 18% of respondents had experienced some form of unwanted sexual behaviour on the part of peers; not more, as sexual harassment by peers is often accepted as a cultural phenomenon. A much larger 27% of respondents reported sexual harassment perpetrated by teachers, often in public places, and this was viewed as much more detrimental to an adolescent's health, both physically and mentally.

Bullying

Throughout the OECD, bullying in all its forms is increasingly considered to be a serious problem by practitioners, policymakers and academics. They are not only concerned about the present and future psychosocial, educational and physical well-being of the victims, but also of the bullies. As in other regions, children are often bullied based on vulnerability that stems from being considered different in some way – because they are, for example, from a minority ethnic, religious or linguistic group; gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered; physically, mentally or learning disabled; ill; or obese. The United Nations Study on Violence Against Children Regional Consultation for North America (2006) suggests that a lot more work needs to be done in order to illuminate the issues which surround the incidence of violence and factors such as disability, race and obesity (27). Disability has been particularly highlighted by UNICEF (2005) in their Thematic Group on Violence against Disabled Children report as a global phenomenon and the issue has been taken seriously by many of the OECD countries, including Britain which incorporated the Disability Discrimination Act into the education sector in 2001 (Advisory Centre for Education: 2003). Osler and Starkey (2005) also look at the way in which bullying in English and French schools is 'racialised', suggesting that ethnicity may play a significant role in determining how children pick an 'other' to bully. Bullying can further be analysed in terms of age and size, with the youngest, smallest and weakest children often on the bottom rung of the bullying ladder, particularly in the case of male bullies (Olweus, 1987). Probably the primary disaggregation to consider is that of gender and is articulated by a number of authors on this subject (e.g. Wolke et al, 2001). The message articulated by many authors is that boys are generally more likely to bully, particularly in physical ways, than girls, who tend to use verbal and social means of bullying. In Japan, where these latter forms of bullying are most common, girls are more frequent bulliers (Stassen Berger 2005) but in Korea they also tend ot be more susceptible to suicidal ideations (Kim et al, 2005). Further, the dynamics of bullying are taking on new proportions and no longer take place directly. Ortega-Ruiz and Mora-Merchán (2007) note that the advent of cyberbullying means that victims now have no 'safe space' into which they can retreat from bullying – among an 'online generation', bullying can take place '24/7' and without any spatial limitations.

Kane (2006d:10) noted in the United Nations Study against Children Regional Consultation for the Europe and Central Asian region (with no means of differentiating within the text):

> Violence in schools was one of the issues about which the youth delegates at the regional consultation felt most strongly. Their concern was not only with physical violence but also with the psychological violence that teachers and others inflict when they use humiliation or ridicule towards a student. School, the youth delegates said, should be a place where children are eager to learn. Instead, it is too often a place where adults – not

only teachers but other school personnel – impose 'discipline' or just their will through physical and psychological violence. …

Violence among peers is also a problem in schools and is often again a reflection of attitudes and behaviours that exist within the wider community. Children who are violent in school are generally disrespectful of other people outside school too, and find in vulnerable or younger students the opportunity to translate that disrespect into violence.

Stassen Berger's (2005) recent review of the bullying literature suggests that while it is a significant problem in all countries, the level of prevalence does vary depending on country and age (as well as definition, method of gathering information, and period of time over which the prevalence rate pertains). Among Plan's countries of interest, the proportion of children involved as bullies and as victims in her review show some differentiation (although because the frequencies and ages involved are different, the rates are not strictly comparable):

- Netherlands: 4% bullies and 9% victims
- England: 4%, 10%
- US: 8%, 9%
- Germany: 9%, 10%
- Norway: 8%, 12%
- Canada: 9%, 18%
- Japan: 17%, 14%
- Australia: 7%, 25% (among younger children); 3%, 14% (among older children)

She also notes variations within countries, with, for instance, children in Flemish Belgium more likely to say they are bullies than victims, but children in French Belgium claiming the opposite. This point indicates that national statistics may not be entirely representative and that studies undertaken in particular areas must be aware that a neighbouring community may possess a greater awareness of and/ or mechanisms for dealing with bullying (99). Higher rates are found in Malta, Portugal and Turkey. Stassen Berger makes an interesting point about the high rates of bullying found in Portugal:

Portuguese culture or history may encourage bullies, but consider one detail of education policy: Portuguese school children must repeat 6th grade unless they pass a rigorous test. Consequently, at least 10% of all 6th graders (more often boys) have been held back two years or more, and these older, bigger children are almost twice as likely … to be bullies as the class average (Pereira, Mendonca, Neto, Valente, & Smith, 2004). A higher proportion of them are immigrants, from low-income families. Does retention, academic failure, family background, socioeconomic status, or gender make them more likely to bully, thus increasing the Portuguese percentages? Or perhaps inadequate school funding or poor playground design is partly to blame, as the researchers suggest (Pereira et al., 2004). Without more data and analysis, no scientist could conclude that Portuguese culture promotes bullying (99).

In Korea and Japan, a key issue has been the prevalence of suicides amongst students who have suffered from excessive pressure to perform well academically, as well as those who display suicidal tendencies as a result of bullying and violence within their educational institutions. In a study of bullying in 2 middle schools amongst seventh and eighth grade students in Korea, Kim, Koh and Leventhal (2005) found that 40% of respondents were involved in bullying (14% as a victim, 17% as a bully, and 9% as a victim-perpetrator), and that significantly more males experienced bullying. All three groups reported higher levels of anxiety/depression than those not involved in bullying, and were more at risk of suicidal/self-injurious behaviour, with females and victim-perpetrators most likely to have suicidal tendencies. One of the schools in the study, located in Anyang, was single sex and may

have had an impact on the study results. The authors note that their findings support those found in other studies linking bullying and suicidal ideation in Finland, the Netherlands, Australia and US.

An earlier study in New South Wales, Australia (Foreto *et al* 1997) noted that among students with an average age of just under 12, 57.6% of respondents self-reported that they were involved in bullying (12% as a victim, 23.7% as a bully, and 21.5% as a victim-perpetrator). While bullies tend to be unhappy with school, victims tend to feel alone, and the greatest number of psychosomatic and psychological symptoms were seen in students who had been both victims and perpetrators of bullying.

Political Context

Underlying causes

A number of interlinked causes of violence are identified in the literature, many of which resonate with those highlighted in developing country contexts. These include pervasive patriarchal relations and behavioural patterns (Seymour, 1998), manifested in gender discrimination in schools; violence in the home which then spills over into the school environment; and a lack of school participation in decision-making (Osler and Starkey, 2005). In addition, issues that are not widely addressed in other regions include overcrowded schools with inadequate adult supervision and support (Klonsky, 2002); schools located in neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of violence; and societal patterns of discrimination against ethnic and sexual minority children as well as children who are differently abled (Harper et al., 2008).

Policy and legislative responses

All of the OECD countries with which Plan works have ratified both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child with the admittedly significant exception of the United States and there is a general awareness of the Convention's existence and how it can be used to prevent child rights violations. All 17 countries have legislation that provides general protection to children against sexual violence (see *Annex 1*), and guidelines and regulations at the school, school board and ministry of education level also regulate appropriate relationships between children, and teachers and school staff. Specific legislation providing protection to children against bullying in different contexts only exists in Korea, Norway, UK and US among the 17 countries, although several others have laws that may be used to deal with specific forms of bullying (see *Annex 1*).

In terms of school-based sexual violence, OECD governments generally and increasingly show a concern for outlining laws and guidelines to citizens in relation to what constitutes appropriate behaviour between adults in positions of power – including teachers – and children. Arguably, while protecting children and young people from sexual abuse and harassment is the main goal of such documents and workplace campaigns, protecting adults and the institutions in which they work against allegations of sexual misconduct and lawsuits is also considered important. In the US, for example, the Supreme Court decision of 1992 allowing victims of sexual assault to sue school boards (Bagley, Bolitho and Bertrand 1997) has encouraged documentation and standardisation of procedures.

Similarly, the stated purpose of a recent document published by the UK's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF 2007), and prepared by the appropriately-named 'Allegation Management Advisors', is both to facilitate a safe and supportive environment through informing those who come into contact with children, and to set out guidelines to educate adults on "what constitutes illegal behaviour and what might be considered as misconduct". Not only do the guidelines state that adults *must not*:

- have sexual relationships with children or young people;
- have any form of communication with a child or young person which pertains to sexual activity or be sexual in nature;
- make sexual remarks to or about a child or young person; or
- discuss their own sexual relationships with/in the presence of children or young people,

…but also that adults *should*:

- ensure that relationships with children take place in public places with clear boundaries set; and
- take care that language or action does not give rise to 'comment or speculation.'

However, O'Moore (2004:1) considers that:

> In view of the complex and multi-faceted nature of bullying and violence it is evident that individual efforts from schools alone will not be sufficient to counteract these negative forces. Instead a commitment will be required of Government and stake holders at all levels of decision making, local, national and international. This view is also recognised by the World Health Organization.

In terms of bullying, as of 2003, all but six member states of the OECD, had taken initiatives to deal with bullying and violence in schools. These include the following:

- Norway's Manifesto against Bullying
- National Guidelines to Counter Bullying in Schools in Ireland
- National Education Protocol against Bullying in the Netherlands (Limpner, 1998)
- Ireland's Child Protection Committee compiled the status of the law in regard to criminal law and sexual offences against children in 2006.
- Canadian Youth Court's role in the convictions of young (largely male) perpetrators of sexual abuse (Kong et al 2003).

While these represent important advances, Witkowska and Menckel (2005) note that there are still significant implementation challenges, especially in terms of limited attention to sexual and gender-based violence. Examples include a youth-targeted consultation document called 'Staying Safe' published by the DCSF (2008) which tackles multiple types of violence and abuse, but significantly excludes sexual abuse, harassment or violence and the EU's 'Tackling Violence in Schools project' (involving 17 EU-member states) which has been critiqued for being insufficiently sensitive to gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Framework for national policy approaches to school bullying and violence

Drawing on the World Health Organization's 2002 report on *Violence and Health*, O'Moore suggests a nine point framework for policy approaches to prevent the school bullying and violence occurring at a global level:

1) Draw up, implement and monitor a national plan of action to prevent school bullying and violence.
   - Based on government-NGO consensus
   - Coordinate local, national and international levels
   - Cross-sectoral (e.g. education but also health, social welfare, justice…)
   - National plan to include:
     o Review and reform of existing legislation and policy
     o Build data collection and capacity building
     o Strengthen services for victims
     o Develop and evaluate prevention responses
     o Set a timetable
     o Develop a mechanism for evaluation
     o Establish an organisation to monitor and report on progress

2) Enhance the capacity to collect comprehensive and reliable data on school bullying and violence. Work on standardising definitions and improving comparability across countries and time.

3) Define priorities for, and support research on, the causes, consequences, costs and prevention of school bullying and violence. Undertake systematic and rigorous evaluations of initiatives to prevent and reduce school bullying and violence.

4) Develop a national strategy to assist schools to prevent and reduce school bullying and violence.
   - While it may seem of benefit to introduce a standard formalised intervention programme on an international scale, one must not lose sight of the benefits of a programme that is tailored to meet a schools unique characteristics.
   - Evidence suggests that the most successful interventions are regularly audited whole-school programmes (see below), introduced early in the educational career of children, involving multiple stakeholders in the design process, and focussed on
     o reducing the risk of bullying and violence
     o responding to incidents of bullying and violence and
     o treatment and rehabilitation for those involved in incidents.

5) Promote a media campaign to promote non-violent values, attitudes and behaviour.

6) Integrate school bullying and violence prevention into teacher education at both pre-service and in-service levels.

7) Establish an advisory body for partners in education (e.g. Anti-Bullying Centre in Trinity College Dublin, Ireland).

8) Contribute to an international research network.

9) Promote legislation to deal effectively with school bullying and violence.

Source: Adaped from O'Moore 2004.

Programmatic responses

Despite the range of legislative and policy initiatives outlined above and outlined more comprehensively in Annex 1 it is clear that the problem of bullying has not been effectively eliminated *anywhere*, and by some accounts is actually worsening in some countries. In a recent systematic review of school-based interventions to prevent bullying, Vreeman and Carroll (2007) judged that only 26 evaluations, published in English between 1966 and 2004 and covering 10 countries, were of sufficient rigour to be included. These studies all included an experimental intervention with control and intervention groups, and a follow-up evaluation with measured outcomes. Sixteen of the 26 studies focus on British or American experiences. Five main forms of intervention were noted (see table below). All 26 studies focussed on interventions in primary schools (grades 1-8 depending on context), and six included secondary school students. The authors drew out findings pertaining to the interventions' effects on direct outcome measures of bullying (bullying, victimization, aggressive behaviour, and school responses to violence), and outcomes indirectly related to bullying (school achievement, perceived school safety, self-esteem, and knowledge or attitudes toward bullying).

The authors concluded that multi-disciplinary 'whole-school' interventions (such as the well-known Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (BPP)[5]) seem to provide better results, particularly in contrast to curricular changes, and that indirect outcomes of bullying are not consistently improved by these interventions. Most reductions in bullying tend to be relatively small and related more to the proportion of children being victimised rather than the proportion engaging in bullying.

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[5] The work of Dan Olweus in 1970s and 80s Norway in particular is very significant for any discussion of anti-bullying programmes, especially in Europe. His typologies of potential victims and bullies have been very influential, leading to the implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (BPP; see Olweus 1993) in many countries.

Olweus' Typology of Bullying

In his seminal book on bullying, Olweus identifies key characteristics of children who are more likely to be either bullies and victims in the school environment. According to Olweus, potential bullies exhibit the following characteristics:

- Possess a strong need to dominate others and get their 'own way'
- Display acts of impulsive behavior and are easily angered
- Are defiant in character and often act aggressively toward authorities/adults - including parents and teachers
- Tend to show little empathy toward the students who are being victimised
- Male bullies tend to be physically stronger than their peers

The characteristics of both actual and potential victims tend to fit into a different category:

- They display signs of caution, sensitivity and are often quiet, withdrawn and shy
- Are often anxious, insecure, unhappy and have low self-esteem
- Suffer from depressive feelings and may engage in suicidal ideation more frequently than their peers
- They seldom have a single good friend and relate better to adults than to peers
- If they are male victims, they may be physically weaker than their peers

Lastly there is a smaller group referred to as the provocative victims or the bully-victims whose characteristics include:

- Frequent reading and writing problems
- Often they display Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) characteristics
- They often elicit negative reactions from peers
- They may be disliked by teachers

It is however very important to consider the roles of all students in the classroom, as Olweus' 'Bullying Circle' highlights by mapping out the roles and reactions of students in an acute bullying situation.

Source: *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do*, 1993

However, the review's results are complex, showing few clear trends, and suggesting that context, duration, content and quality of intervention are important. This inconsistency reflect earlier sets of reviews: for example, while evaluations of the Olweus BPP reported reductions from 30-70% in student reports of bullying and being bullied, an evaluation of a similar programme in Belgium showed no significant decreases at all. The table shows that two studies of the Olweus programme in this review, both from Norway, also show disparate results, suggesting that the foundation for Norway's position as a global anti-bullying role model may be less clear.

Type of intervention	Country (number of studies)	Summary of results
Curriculum interventions (ranging from videotape plus discussion, to 15-week course)	**10 studies:** Belgium (1), Czechoslovakia (1) , Italy (1), UK (4), US (3)	• Only 4/10 studies showed decreased bullying. • 3 of those 4 also showed no improvement or worsening in some populations (e.g. younger children, aggressive children). • Only one unequivocal success, but this only for indirect outcome of knowledge and attitudes about bullying.
Multi-disciplinary/'whole school' interventions (includes some combination of school-wide rules and sanctions, teacher training, classroom curriculum, conflict resolution training, individual counselling.)	**10 studies:** Australia (1), Canada (1), Italy (1), Norway (2), Switzerland (1), US (4)	• 7/10 revealed decreased bullying, with younger children having fewer positive effects. ★ **Two studies evaluated the *Olweus BPP* in Norway: the original Olweus (1994) study showed large improvements, while Roland (2000) showed large increases in bullying and victimization, although schools that implemented programmes did display evidence of having responded well to the programme.**
Social and behavioural skills group training interventions (including peer mediation training, targeting bullies and/or victims)	**4 studies:** South Africa (1), UK (1), US (2)	• 3/4 showed no clear bullying reduction. • The one study showing positive outcomes involved younger children considered aggressive.
Other interventions (increased social workers, mentoring)	**2 studies:** UK (1), US (1)	• The mentoring study found decreased bullying and risk of depression for mentored 'at-risk' children. • The study of increased school social workers found decreased bullying among primary school students, and increased among secondary school students, but decreased truancy, theft, and drug use among both.

Source: Adapted from Vreeman and Carroll, 2007.

While the authors note the difficulty of generalising from a small sample of interventions, they consider that the failure of the curriculum and skills training types of intervention, both based largely on theories of social, cognitive and behavioural change, point to the inability of a single-level intervention to combat bullying. They note:

> "If bullying is a systemic group process involving bullies, victims, peers, adults, parents, school environments, and home environments, an intervention on only 1 level is unlikely to have a significant consistent impact. Furthermore, if bullying is, as some propose, a socio-cultural phenomenon springing from the existence of specified social groups with different levels of power, then curriculum aimed at altering the attitudes and behaviours of only a small subset of those groups is unlikely to have an effect. … Overall, the studies of social skills group interventions suggest again that failing to address the systemic issues and social environment related to bullying undermines success."

They also note that while single-level interventions "are often attractive because they usually require a smaller commitment of resources, personnel, and effort", they report another review that suggests that whole-school multi-disciplinary approaches actually "reflect a reasonable rate of return on the investment inherent in low-cost, non-stigmatizing primary prevention programs." But difficulties in replicating programmes that require the involvement of all school stakeholders in different school environments – including ones with larger class sizes and more limited teacher training – continue to limit the uptake of 'whole-school' programmes.

Evidence and framing of messages

Framing of debates

One key focus of debates on bullying in OECD countries has been on trying to raise the visibility of the problem and to deconstruct discourses about the normalcy of children's experiences of violence and bullying in school contexts (UN Regional Consultation for Europe and Central Asia, 2006). By highlighting the linkages between family-based violence and experiences of violence in school (for both bullies and victims), there has been considerable discussion about ways to best tackle a culture of violence which pervades daily existence.

A second thread has concentrated on the physical and psychological effects of school violence. Unlike Africa where public attention to school violence was in large part catalysed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and in Latin America as a legacy of the region's recent authoritarian political rule, OCED civil society actors and select state agencies have emphasised the medical and psychological ramifications of bullying, and the particular vulnerability female students face vis-à-vis gendered and sexualised violence. "[Sexual assault] is a major social problem that affects millions of people each year and exact an enormous toll on their health and well-being" (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists National Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Project, 2001). By striving to unpack the typical characteristics and behavioural patterns of bullies and victims, advocates have sought to develop broad awareness among students, parents and teachers how to prevent and deal with such abuse and trauma (Foreto et al., 1997).

In addition, there are some important national variations. In France, Blaya (2003) has argued that the concept of school violence is very broad and includes a strong concern about juvenile delinquency and its intersection with ethnicity and social exclusion, while in Germany, there has been a particular concern about bullying being linked to xenophobia. By contrast, in the UK school bullying is also associated with student stress and the need to provide better peer counselling and mediation, as well as telephone support lines and websites such as Childline.

Key actors and linkages

Efforts to tackle school-based violence in OCED countries have involved a wide range of actors, both civil society and governmental. Starting at the micro-level, a number of initiatives have sought to foster **students'** role in anti-bullying initiatives, premised on the fact that school participation may be an effective means to engage disaffected students and to promote a child-friendly school environment. For example, in the US faith-based youth groups through the Stop Bullying Now! campaign have provided support to victims and

helped bullies to 'recover' from their unwanted behaviour[6], while Operation Respect operating in New York works with youth groups to sensitise members about how to act respectfully towards their peers[7]. There are also a plethora of online communities dedicated to providing support to victims[8] and in this way the landscape of bullying prevention and response is rapidly changing.

Parents in a number of contexts have also come to play an important role in tackling school-based violence, by serving as peer trainers and helping other parents to identify if their child is being bullied (Limpner, 1998). Similarly, teachers and counsellors are being encouraged through training programmes to identify when a child is being bullied and to promote an appropriate code of conduct towards children among colleagues. One OECD-wide initiative worthy of mention in this context is the 'Comprehensive Measures to Address the Problem of Bullying' involving the active participation of national parent-teacher associations which was launched in Korea in 1994. In this school management project, emphasis was placed on the interactions between teachers and parents in order to communicate about the incidence, prevention and eradication of bullying in particular schools.

Because of the medical and psychological framing of school violence amongst the OECD countries being considered here, **health professionals** have also come to play an increasingly important role in terms of detecting cases of abuse/bullying and working with counsellors to help children minimise the effects of sexual violence or victimisation at school (Mallet & Paty, 1999).

At the **NGO** level, there have been a considerable number of NGO efforts to tackle school violence. UK-based NGOs and charities such as NSPCC's Full Stop Anti-Bullying Campaign which disseminates educational resources on violence prevention and awareness to schools and the Northern England 'Once is too Often' initiative have developed a no tolerance policy to bullying, emphasising that such behaviour is unacceptable and providing support to victims so that they feel empowered to take action and speak out about such abuse. INGOs such as Plan and Save the Children have sought to establish a reliable research base on child violence including the occurrence of violence in educational settings. In Europe, for instance, Save the Children Sweden has a comprehensive national programme which consists of initiatives such as their anti-bullying project entitled 'Together' with the Ministries of Science and Education, respectively.

At the **regional level**, a number of multi-stakeholder collaborative efforts have been established. These include the following:

- The European Union region's Daphne Initiative started in 1997 (Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security, 2005) which tackles violence against women and children in EU countries. This initiative is at base a network which encourages NGOs to cooperate at EU-level in order to combat bullying. It has involved the mapping out of best practices, extensive research on the subject of violence against women and children and the development of awareness-raising tools.

- VISIONARY is a European collaborative project on school bullying and violence (SBV), addressing teachers, parents, professionals, pupils and others interested in the topic. It is an online portal which serves as a clearing house on SBV materials, project descriptions, and good practice examples, as well as providing a forum for

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[6] http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp?area=youthleaders
[7] http://www.operationrespect.org/
[8] See http://www.bullying.org/

those who are interested in exchanging ideas and experiences with others on an international level.[9]

- The International Observatory of Violence in Schools[10] is an international scientific network which offers a multidisciplinary approach to issues of school violence whilst linking up a network of practitioners and professionals. The objectives of the network are to gain better knowledge of the phenomenon of violence in schools, to identify best practices and disseminate the information gathered.

- The Eurochild-EURONET joint venture to mainstream EU policy on child protection at the national and regional level in Europe is another example of good practice in terms of 'joined up' methods of planning and implementing anti-bullying and school violence programmes working at multiple levels: school/ community/national/ regional levels.

Future challenges

Although multiple initiatives involved multiple stakeholders have been spearheaded in many OECD countries, there are a number of key challenges that still remain to be addressed. First, it is often unclear whether bullying and other forms of school violence are in fact rising over time, or whether this is in fact due to successful campaigns which have improved the level of reporting of violent incidences (e.g. Durrant 1999). Second, it is also crucial to take into account differing definitions of violence, different ways of eliciting information (e.g. self-reporting versus police reports), and changes in size of school populations and cohorts (Kane 2006e). As such, an important research challenge is to continue to attempt to disentangle these relationships in order to get a clear picture of changes in school violence over time.

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[9] The main sections are available in each of the languages of present and former partner countries: English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Romanian, Danish and Finnish. http://www.bullying-in-school.info/

[10] The International Observatory of Violence in Schools established the International Journal on Violence and School http://www.ijvs.org/, a blind- and peer-reviewed scientific journal, in 2005. Its Scientific Committee includes researchers from different disciplines and from 14 different countries. The aim is to publish articles of a very high scientific standard. The IJVS seeks to promote progress in knowledge of an issue that is often misrepresented or manipulated in public opinion: violence in schools. Violence here is understood as being in all its forms: physical brutality and bullying, juvenile delinquency or violence perpetrated by adults. It can affect children, teenagers and members of staff alike. Those responsible may be members of the school or people from outside.

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