

Psychoemotional Characteristics of Adolescents Depending on the Manifestation of Bullying

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Abstract

Summary: At the moment, the problem of bullying among teenagers is increasing. In this regard, this study examines the psycho-emotional state of adolescents depending on the manifestation of bullying in the school and identifies the main psycho-emotional characteristics of schoolchildren who are studying in comfort conditions and with bullying. **Methodology:** The target audience of the study was 54 schoolchildren aged 14-15 years of two 9th grades of Secondary School No. 155 in Novosibirsk. The respondents were surveyed using four questionnaires: sociometric measurement questionnaire (sociometry) by D. Moreno; "Bullying structure" test (by E.G. Norkin); the diagnostic test of school anxiety (by E. Phillips); and aggressiveness questionnaire (by L.G. Pochebut). In the course of the study, grade 9A was designated as a control, grade 9B was designated as an experimental class. **The Results of the Study and Conclusions:** Sociometric analysis revealed the presence of neglected and outcast school children in both classes, as well as rejected ones in the experimental class. A positive bullying structure was observed in the control class, since the number of defenders of the victim prevailed over the number of initiators and their assistants. In the experimental one, there were more initiators of bullying and their assistants. Increased levels of anxiety and aggressiveness were also detected in the experimental class. The data obtained are the basis for work on reducing bullying, reducing the level of aggression and increasing emotional comfort in the experimental class.

Keywords: bullying, schoolchildren, bullying structure, aggressor, victim, neglected, outcasts, anxiety, aggressiveness

1. Introduction

According to the results of surveys from 2021, 55% of school-age children have experienced bullying — this is more often than one in two (Russian State Federal News Agency TASS, 2021). Unfortunately, there is at least one pupil in each class who becomes an object of ridicule and bullying. The reasons for ridicule are extremely diverse: from appearance and behavior, to nationality and the level of material security. Any, even minor uniqueness, can be a factor in creating a bullying situation. Systematic offensive jokes, "injections", rude words turn into real bullying, which must be identified and eliminated in time. As a result of bullying, constant anxiety, stress, destabilization of the personality and psyche are formed, sometimes this process leads to suicides (Lane, D. A., 2001).

In this regard, our research is aimed at identifying the impact of bullying on the psycho-emotional state of pupils.

The object of the study is bullying in the teenage environment.

The subject of the study is the relationship of bullying and the psycho-emotional state of adolescents.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between bullying and the psycho-emotional state of adolescent schoolchildren.

The target audience of the study was 54 pupils aged 14-15 years of two 9th grades of Secondary School No. 155 in Novosibirsk. In grade 9A (control) there were 12 boys and 14 girls, in grade 9B (experimental) there were 12 boys and 12 girls.

1.1 Research Objectives

- 1) To conduct a sociometric analysis among 9th grade students to identify the “bullying structure” in the experimental and control classes.
- 2) To assess the level of anxiety and aggressiveness in students of the experimental and control classes.

1.2 Research Methods

The students were surveyed using the following questionnaires:

- 1) Questionnaire of sociometric measurements (sociometry) by D. Moreno (n.d.).
- 2) A test to identify the “bullying structure” of E.G. Norkin (n.d.).
- 3) Diagnosis of the level of school anxiety by E. Phillips (2021).
- 4) The questionnaire to identify aggressiveness by L.G. Pochebut (2015).

The results obtained in the study were processed by generally accepted statistical methods with the identification of reliability at a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

1.3 Introduction

Initially, the systematic harassment of one person by another was referred to under the term “mobbing”. This term was first used by zoo psychologist K. Lorenz in 1958. K. Lorenz used this word to denote “the specific behavior of animals and birds that warn other animals about the approach of the enemy and drive away the enemy with common efforts” (Lorenz, K., 1998).

The problem of bullying was first solved by Scandinavian professor David Olweus, who in the 70s conducted a study of this phenomenon among boys, after which the study of the phenomenon of bullying began to spread in all countries (Olweus, D., 1993; Ermolova, T. V., & Savitskaya, N. V., 2015; Krivtsova, S. V., 2015).

Researcher S. Arora came to the conclusion that bullying is aggressive actions that take place in communication between young people at school (Aror, K. M., 1994).

Many authors consider that bullying is “a repeated attack (physical, psychological, social or verbal) by those whose power is formally or situationally higher, on those who do not have the opportunity to defend themselves, with the intention of causing suffering to achieve their own satisfaction” (Kupriyanova, S. G., 2018; Lane, D. A., 2001; Solovyov, D. N., 2013; Aptikieva, L. R., 2018).

Russian sociologist, psychologist and philosopher I.N. Kohn interpreted bullying as intimidation, physical or emotional terror, in order to manifest fear in the victim and thereby subjugate him to himself (Con, I. S., 2006).

The causes of bullying are diverse and multifaceted: improper upbringing in the family by the type of hyperprotection, hypoprotection or indulgence, which subsequently leads to aggressive egocentric behavior or vice versa, low self-esteem, “victim” behavior (Safronova, M. V., 2014), poor socio-economic living conditions, mass media promoting the cult of cruelty and violence, social the environment and the realization of a personal predisposition to aggressive behavior; the desire to assert oneself at the expense of weaker peers; the microclimate in the classroom, due to the relationship between students and the attitude of teachers (Glazman, O. L., 2009), etc., that have a strong psychological effect on the child. Since a teenager influences each environment to one degree or another, the occurrence of bullying has a detrimental effect on the psycho-emotional state of students (Butenko, V. N., & Sidorenko, O. A., 2015).

The impact of any kind of violence, direct or indirect, leaves an imprint on a person’s perception of the world picture. Having learned a certain pattern of behavior, for example, the behavior of a “victim”, a teenager can follow them for the rest of his life (Petrosyants, V. R., 2011).

As a result of the theoretical analysis of bullying as a socio-pedagogical problem, it was revealed that bullying can be considered intentional, not self-protective in nature and not sanctioned by regulatory legal acts of the state, prolonged (repeated) physical or psychological violence on an individual or the part of the group, which have certain advantages (physical, psychological, administrative, etc.), and which occurs mainly in organized groups with a specific personal purpose (for example, the desire to earn authority from some people) (Lane, D. A., 2001; Aizman, R. I., & Tretyakova, A. V., 2024).

2. The Results of the Study

To conduct a sociometric analysis, the degree of prevalence of bullying in the control and experimental classes was initially studied.

In the control class, the spread of bullying was detected in 43% of students, while the majority of respondents had a tendency to get into a bullying situation. In the experimental class, bullying was detected in 65% of students, moreover, a larger number of students compared to the control class directly participated in the bullying structure.

To identify the distribution of students regarding participation in bullying, the method of sociometric measurements by D. Moreno was used (n.d.).

According to the results of the study of students in both classes, the following results were obtained (Table 1).

Table 1. Sociometric analysis of 9th grade pupils (by D. Moreno)

Class	Total Pupils	Leaders	Preferred	Neglected	Rejected
Control 9 A	26	3 pupils 11,5%	19 pupils 73,1%	4 pupils 15,4%	0
Experimental 9 B	24	4 pupils 16, 7%	15 pupils 62,5%	3 pupils 12,5%	2 pupils 8,3%

An analysis of the results of a sociometric survey showed that 3 status groups were identified in the control class: leaders, preferred and neglected, and in the experimental class, a small group of rejected ones was also identified. Moreover, there were no significant differences between classes in terms of the number of students assigned to these 3 groups.

Let's focus on the characteristics of the identified status groups.

The leaders had an active lifestyle, participated in many activities and were friends with almost all the students in the class. They studied well, often helped classmates, and actively participated in Olympiads and school events. The position of one of the leaders was due to his high material well-being, which he openly demonstrated, emphasizing his superiority.

The group of preferred subjects turned out to be the largest in both classes. The students of this group were moderately proactive, had a large social circle, were friends with each other and with leaders, and less often communicated with classmates from other groups who were not part of a close circle.

The subjects from the "Neglected" group were mostly friends and communicated with each other, liked to be in each other's company or alone. They shared common interests and preferences, but these interests were not supported by the majority in the class. They wore unusual clothes and often looked untidy. Despite this, no one offended them. Such students were not included in the majority of the class due to certain personal characteristics, while they were not victims and the object of ridicule in this group.

There were no pronounced outcasts in the control class, and 2 rejected students were identified in the experimental class. One of them had recently arrived in class and had not yet managed to join the team; the second student was often ill and left, had a specific smell and interests, tried not to stand out in class, sat alone at the last desk.

Thus, the majority of students in both classes were in the first two groups ("leaders" and "preferred"), which indicates a favorable psychological climate. Nevertheless, groups of neglected and outcasts have been identified, which indicates the need to work on interpersonal relationships in classrooms, since even a small number of psychologically rejected students can affect the overall atmosphere.

At the second stage of the study, a technique by E.G. Norkin (n.d.) was used to identify the "bullying structure".

According to the results of the study, it was found (Figure 1) that 1 initiator student was identified in the control class, and 2 students in the experimental class, which indicates a greater potential for aggressiveness in the experimental class. They can attack their victims in the classroom, as well as relatives and teachers.

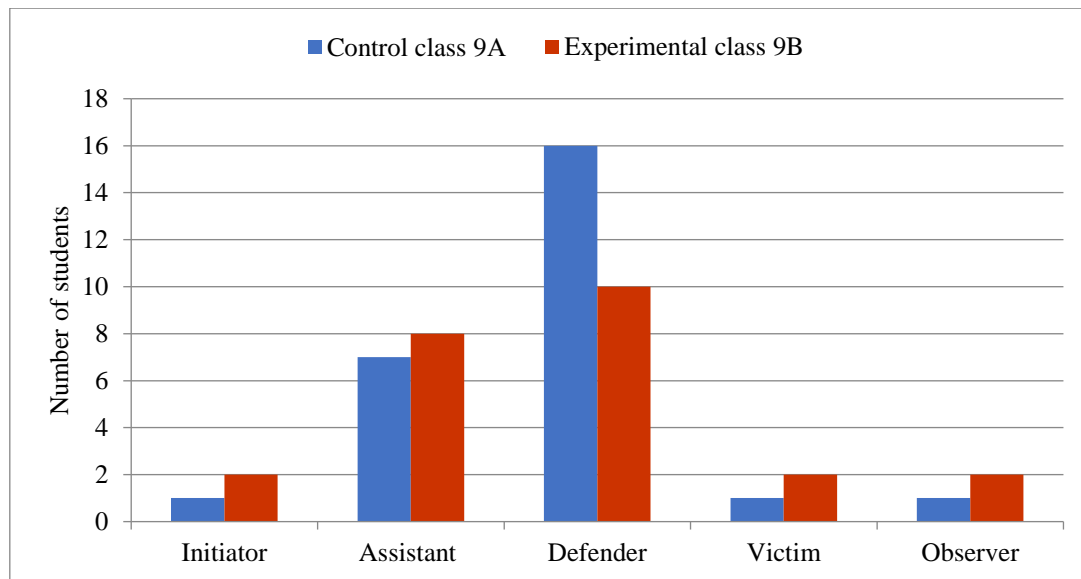


Figure 1. “Bullying structure” in 9th grade students (according to E.G. Norkin)

There are also more initiator assistants per student in the experimental class. They are characterized by the desire to help and imitate the “initiator”. Trying to please them, to win approval, assistants, as a rule, use direct bullying in physical and mental forms.

There were significantly more defenders of the “victim” in the control class, both compared to the experimental class, and more than initiators and assistants combined, which is a good prerequisite for reducing the threat of bullying in grade 9A.

The number of “victims” and “observers” in the experimental class is 2 people each, which is 2 times more than in the control class.

It can be assumed that such a “bullying structure” in the experimental class creates all the prerequisites for the manifestation of bullying in it compared to the control class, where the number of defenders is 2 times more than initiators and assistants. This contributed to the creation of a favorable environment for the prevention of various manifestations of bullying.

To assess the psychoemotional atmosphere in classrooms, in particular, the level of school anxiety, the method of E. Phillips was used (2021).

It can be seen (Figure 2) that in the control class, most of the students had a normal level of school anxiety, which is optimal for a comfortable human life. Only 6 out of 26 pupils had elevated and 1 student had high levels of anxiety. The number of students with a normal level of school anxiety also prevailed in the experimental class. However, if we sum up the number of students with elevated and high levels of anxiety, then there will be about the same number (12 people) as there are students with normal level. This indicates a higher voltage level in the experimental class compared to the control one (Figure 2).

Next, we assessed the contribution of various factors to the development of general anxiety by E. Phillips test (2021) (Table 2).

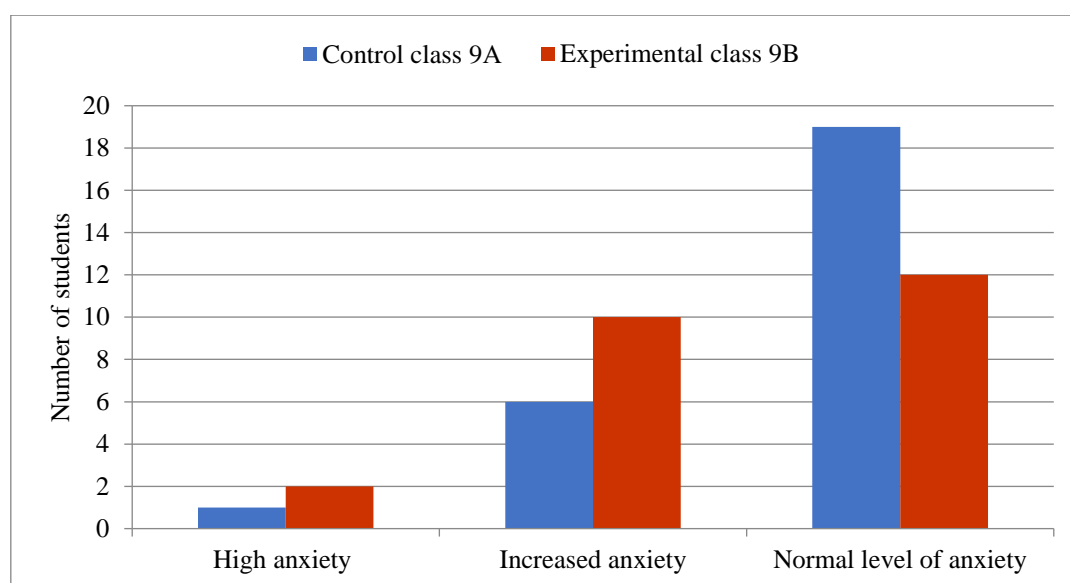


Figure 2. The level of school anxiety in 9th grade students

Table 2. The number of 9th grade students with different anxiety factors

Anxiety factors	Control 9A	Experimental 9B
General anxiety at school	7	15
Experiencing social stress	5	8
Frustration of the need to achieve success	8	13
Fear of self-expression	11	18
Fear of a knowledge test situation	12	14
Fear of not meeting the expectations of others	8	10
Low physiological resistance to stress	3	5
Problems and fears in relationships with teachers	2	4

Note: Each student can have some factors of anxiety.

According to the data obtained, significantly more students in the experimental class had a high level of general anxiety (15 people, or 62.5%) than in the control class (7 students, i.e., 26.9%). This was due to various factors: experiencing social stress due to difficulties in social contacts with people around them; greater frustration of the needs for success, which prevented students from believing in themselves and purposefully going towards their goals; expressed fear of self-expression (75% of students in the experimental class were afraid to express their thoughts, overstep the template actions and declare themselves although there were also quite a lot of such students in the control class — 42%). A particularly large number of students in both classes had a high level of fear of the knowledge testing situation, which consists in the fear of speaking in front of the class, especially in public, which is associated with responsibility for the results and, possibly, insufficient preparation for this type of activity. The fear of not meeting the expectations of others is also expressed in students in both grades, although to a greater extent in the experimental class (42% versus 31% in the control class). These school fears could be caused by poor contacts with teachers. However, an analysis of problems and fears in relations with teachers showed that a very small number of students are exposed to this — 2 people (8%) in the control class, 4 people (17%) in the experimental class. Consequently, teachers at this school were not the main causes contributing to the development of school anxiety.

It cannot be excluded that the formation of high anxiety in students is their personal characteristics. The analysis of psychophysiological resistance to stress showed that low stress tolerance was also inherent in a small number of students — 11.5% in the control class and 21% of students in the experimental class.

Thus, the main factors causing increased anxiety of students were fears of testing knowledge, self-expression, inconsistency with the expectations of others, frustration in achieving success, moreover, in the experimental class they covered significantly more students than in the control one.

As indicated in the introduction, one of the reasons for the formation of bullying could be the high aggressiveness of students. Therefore, in order to identify the role of this factor in the more common manifestation of bullying in the experimental class, a test was conducted to identify the level and type of aggressiveness.

It turned out that in the control class (Table 3) the majority of students (from 62 to 79%) had a level of all types of aggression (verbal, physical, objective, emotional and self-aggression). It was low, which is a favorable background for preventing bullying and its initiators. Somewhat more, compared with other types of aggressiveness, students showed a high level of emotional (24%) and objective (12%) aggression, which was expressed in a tendency to vent emotions at the moment of aggression on others (the appearance of hostility) and objects (hitting the table, breaking a pencil, etc.). The majority of respondents — 17 people (65%) — had low self-aggression as a manifestation of imbalance with the world and themselves.

The following data were obtained in the experimental class (Table 3). According to all scales, the majority of respondents had a low degree of aggressiveness. However, in the experimental class, the number of students with high and medium degrees of aggressiveness exceeded the indicators of the control class in many factors.

To obtain an integral characteristic of the degree of general aggressiveness, we summarized the results on all scales. As can be seen (Table 3), in the experimental class, the number of students with high and medium levels of general aggressiveness was significantly higher (16 pupils, or 66.7%) than in the control class (11 pupils, or 42.3%).

This factor can be considered, on the one hand, as one of the reasons for the unfavorable bullying structure among 9th grade students, and on the other hand, it cannot be excluded that increased aggressiveness in this class was a consequence of bullying and, as a response, a defensive reaction to bullying.

Table 3. Distribution of 9th grade students by types and levels of aggressiveness, number of students

Types of aggressiveness	Levels of aggressiveness					
	High		Middle		Low	
	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control	Experimental
Verbal	2	4	5	6	19	14
Physical	-	2	8	6	18	16
Subject	3	3	5	5	18	16
Emotional	6	6	4	6	16	12
Self-aggression	3	5	6	5	17	14
General aggressiveness	2	4	9	12	15	8

3. Conclusions

The majority of students in the sociometric analysis study group were included in the groups of leaders (initiators) and preferred, rejected ones were present only in the experimental class. A more favorable bullying structure for the team was observed in the control class, since the number of defenders of the victim prevailed over the number of initiators and their assistants. Higher levels of aggression and anxiety were noted among the students of the experimental class, in which the bullying structure contributed to the manifestation of this phenomenon.

The data obtained are the basis for work on reducing bullying, decreasing the level of aggression and increasing emotional comfort in the experimental class.

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