

The Risk and Protective Factors on Relational Aggression in Teenage Girls

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Abstract

Adolescent girls face aggressive behaviors every day in school. They face isolation from groups, being made fun of, feeling ashamed and embarrassed, and the feeling of not belonging. The struggles can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and even suicide. School counselors are trained to address social concerns and should be prepared to intervene and help the victim and bully. This paper examines relational aggression and the effects it has on adolescent girls. It also examines the implications for school counselors, which includes an Adlerian perspective on the issue.

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Relational Aggression in Teenage Girls

Bullying is a huge problem in our schools. The National School Safety Center (NSSC) called bullying, "...the most enduring and underrated problem in U.S. schools" (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p.101). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2001) states that the most frequent form of youth violence is bullying which can heighten into exceedingly serious antisocial behavior. Bullying usually occurs where there is the least adult oversight and the most frequent spots for bullying are usually in or close to school, playgrounds, and hallways (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Relational bullying has the potential to be harmful to an adolescents' mental health.

Relational bullying can be harmful to an adolescent girls' mental health. According to Fanning (2002), and Muscari (2002), relational bullying has been proven to harm girls' mental health and future emotional welfare and can lead to anxiety disorders and depression. Recent studies reveal that bullies and victims have poor psycho-social health. Craig (1998) and Smith (1991) state that bullies are more aggressive, antisocial, and impulsive. On the other hand, victims are more passive, anxious, and mistrustful (Craig, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, McFayden-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1998). There may be different types of aggression that bullies use but bullies share familiar characteristics.

Characteristics of Bullies

There may be different types of aggression that bullies use but bullies share familiar characteristics. Bullies are convinced that there is nothing wrong with how they behave and are generally not informed on how their behavior makes others feel. According to NSSC (1995), bullies like to control other peers, are very aggressive, harmful, hot-tempered, spontaneous, and do not have patience for frustration (Carney & Merrell, 2002; NSSC, 1995; Olweus, 1993).

Several researchers have noted that most bullies have a positive attitude toward violence especially if it's a way to deal with any problem they may have (Careny & Merrell, 2001; Glew et al., 2000). This attitude towards violence can lead into other physical harmful actions.

Bullies are more likely to vandalize, get into fights, drop out of school, participate in criminal activities, and engage in drinking and smoking (Nansel et al., 2001; Young, Hardy, Hamilton, Biernesser, Sun, & Niebergall, 2009). Beale (2001) and NSSC (1995) articulate that bullies have a lack of empathy towards their victims and do not comprehend their force of aggression that they use to achieve or manage control over their victims. Their need for control may be a contributing factor to their lack of interest in a structured environment such as school.

Another characteristic of bullies is the lack of interest in school. Nansel et al. and DHHS (2001) state that bullies usually show a lack of interest in school (more so in middle school), and also present low school achievement and have inadequate problem-solving skills (Andreou, 2001). According to Dodge (1991), McNamara & McNamara (1997), bullies have a difficult time understanding social information and construe other's behaviors as hostile or unfriendly, even if they are not. Their interpretation of a peer's behavior can be classified by bullying subtypes.

There are two different subtypes of bullying which include popular aggressive bullies and unpopular aggressive bullies. Popular aggressive bullies associate with other popular peers and do not present any social shame from their aggression, whereas, unpopular aggressive bullies are usually shunned by peers and will use aggression to get attention (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). According to Pellegrini (1998) even if peers tend to disprove of bullying behavior, bullies seem to be popular with other aggressive adolescents. Whether the bully is classified popular or unpopular their victims tend to share common characteristics.

Characteristics of Victims

Adolescents who are perceived by peers as uneasy and distressed are more inclined to be bullied than adolescents who are not perceived this way. Some research reviewed showed that a majority of victims that have been bullied, around two-thirds, are indifferent, quiet, or uninvolved with peers, and the other one-third show aggressive attitudes towards peers (Brockenbrough, et al., 2002). A study found by Nansel et al. (2001) asserts that victims of bullying showed low social and emotional adjustment, difficulty in making friends, fewer friends as peers, and the victims felt loneliness (no friends to talk to). Another study by Olweus (1993) found victims disclose more with adults rather than their peers.

Victims tend to comply with the bullies aggressive behaviors allowing the bullying to continue throughout time. Glew et al. (2000) and Schwartz et al. (1993) articulate that victims lack assertiveness skills and tend to be insecure, cautious, and do not have good communication and problem-solving skills. A number of studies have shown that victims of bullying tend to give in to the bully by crying easily, not defending oneself and not being assertive or confident in their self (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Perry, Williard, & Perry, 1990; Schwartz, Dodge, & Cole, 1993). The lack of self-esteem and confidence may cause the victim to blame themselves for the bullying and cause the victim to not report the bullying which will cause the bullying to continue (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Bullying causes the victims to be very distressed. This behavior is displayed by avoiding school, failure in academic performances, depression, stress-related issues, social withdrawal, and even suicide (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin & Patton, 2002; Craig, 1998; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Rigby, 1996).

Victims that lack self-confidence are more likely to react inadequately to the bullying unless they have interventions that prepare them with appropriate strategies (Hall, 2006).

Relational Bullying

A type of bullying that stems from relational aggression is relational bullying. Relational bullying happens when there is an imbalance of power; it is an approach that escalates peer rejection and social confinement and is usually used when the bully can manipulate the social climate and attack the victim by disturbing the peer relationships of the victim (Gomes, 2007). Definitions of bullying consider it a subset of aggressive behavior that is associated with harming another person (Camodeca, Goossens, Schuengel, & Terwogt, 2003; Rivers, & Smith, 1994). Harmful factors can be identified by several bullying figurations.

There are different figurations of relational bullying. Cenkseven Onder and Yurtal (2008) state relational bullying is not just presented physically, but also verbal, subtle, and evasive. If the victim is outnumbered or is physically inferior, the victim will not be able to defend herself (Smith, & Sharp, 1994, cited in Sanders, & Phye, 2004). It also has been noted by Nansel et al. (2001), that if the bully is physically or psychologically more authoritative, then there is a power inequality between the bully and victim. Another aspect depends on the gender of the adolescent bully.

Relational aggression is more prevalent in girl adolescents than boy adolescents. There has been a growing awareness that aggression in relationships can be a compelling concern for girls in the past few years (Arts, 1998; Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Aggressive behavior is prominent among the complicated interactions of social, cognitive, emotional and biological factors (e.g., Boxer & Dubow, 2002; Tisak et al., 2006). A number of studies have shown that

the most common form of aggression among girls is relational aggression. According to Cummings, Hoffman, and Leschied (2004) relational aggression is defined as:

...manipulation of other with the goal of causing harm to the relationship and the victim through behaviors such as: (a) excluding a girl from a social group, (b) gossiping about another girl so that other girls will reject her, or (c) threatening termination of a friendship unless a girl does what the aggressor wants (p. 286).

According to Horne, Stoddard and Bell (2007) the effects of aggression is no less dangerous as those effects of physical violence. Research and statistics indicate female aggression is on the rise.

When reviewing research on bullying, there is little research solely on female bullies. Researchers of aggression and bullying research rarely reviewed females because the original thought was that only males were aggressive (Gomes, 2007). Snyder, Sickmund, & Poe-Yamagata's (1996) study shows that in the United States, girls under 18 years of age being arrested for violent crimes have increased 125% between 1985 and 1994. This reflects a consequential rise in rates for girls being arrested for aggravated assault (134% for girls versus 88% for boys) and "simple" assault (141% for girls versus 102% for boys), (Moretti, Holland, & McKay's, 2001). This research is built from studies of relational versus overt aggression in girls and boys and gender differences in aggressive behavior.

One of the biggest problems that occurs in schools is bullying and aggressive behavior. Violent, aggressive, or bullying children and adolescents are a prevalent problem in schools and regulating disruptive behavioral issues is a big obstacle for students, teachers, and administrators (Olweus, 1993; Orpinas & Horne, 2006). Smokowski (2005) states bullying is a huge problem in U.S. schools, affecting about one in three children. Furthermore, educators are worried that

aggression incidents in schools are inflating for girls at an extraordinary rate (Boothe, Bradley, Flick, Keough, & Kirk, 1993; Cameron, Bruijne, Kennedy, & Morin, 1994). In childhood and early adolescence, increased aggression correlates with adjustment issues (Crick & Grotpeter 1995; Werner & Crick 2004), and is associated with higher school dropout and delinquency in adulthood (Coie & Dodge 1998).

There are different subtypes of relational bullying. Gomes (2007) states that relational aggression is comparable and generally synonymous with the following terms: indirect aggression, social aggression and relational bullying. In Moretti et al. (2001) study, results showed that girls are involved in higher rates of relational aggression than boys. A study by Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, and Peltonen (1988) asserts that relational and indirect aggression is seen more in girls, and overt and direct aggression is seen more in boys. Females are affected by relational ramifications of indirect bullying because female adolescents become more distraught than males by issues in close relationships (Underwood, 2003). The connectivity between relationships will influence the aggression.

The most important and valued friendships among females are the friendships among girls and women. Gilligan (2003) proposed that the importance of connectivity and kinship with others are based from women's morals and that the relationship and approval by other females are a crucial component of their identity. These relationships become even more essential when girls become adolescents and aid with developing a healthy sense of well-being (Pipher, 2002). Balancing relationships is an important factor.

Girls are expected to manage balanced relationships with others, and if they are worried about the others reactions being negative then their personality will be altered (Hatch & Forgays, 2001). Indirect forms of conflict management can lead adolescent girls to seek power and claim

control in relationships and still meet the assumptions of adults which is that girls shouldn't struggle with relationships and have problems with sensitive emotions and disputes (Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005). If adolescents that have antisocial behavior (aggression), associate with peers with antisocial behavior, is found to boost their behavior over time (Dishion & Owen, 2002; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). Emotional and relational behavior can also be influenced by home environment.

Home Environment

Bullies are well experienced with aggressive behavior and this behavior usually has its foundation from the home environment. Adolescents want a considerable amount of freedom from parents and to spend more time with peers then look to their peers for the emotional support (Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Smith and Binney's (1992) states that students that were bullies and victims of bullying (compared to peers that were not identified as bullies or victims), identified their power between their parents to be unequal, and they also thought that their fathers carried more power than their mother. Conflict within the home and between parents will directly influence bully behaviors.

Bully home environment. Research finds that adolescents who are bullies have more conflict and less affective acceptance from their families. Children and adolescents have a better chance to associate with troubled peers if they lack parental supervision such as, not knowing the child's whereabouts (Patterson and Fisher, 2002; Steinberg and Silk, 2002). The lack of parental awareness has been correlated to aggression and misbehavior.

Some studies conclude that adolescents that are bullies believe that demoralizing, power, and threatening behavior are the ways to challenge difficult times in life and this is taught out of the home environment. Mocking remarks, banter, and judgment are more is more of the lifestyle

a child who bullies sees at home rather than approval, appreciation, and humor (Greenbaum et al., 1989). Espelage et al. (1996) and Garbino (1999) state that bullies model the aggressive behavior they act out and the modeling starts at home. This aggressive behavior escalates as the bully ages.

Through studies it has been found that the aggressive behavior starts from home. Eron, Walder, and Huesmann (1997) studied students over a 22-year period and found that by the time aggressive 8-year-olds reached thirty, were more inclined to have a criminal record, to have a drunk driving record, and show aggression towards their spouse and children compared to the children who were non-aggressive. A study by Cummings, Hoffman, and Leschied describes gender-specific problems associated with aggression in adolescent girls. The study found that 70 percent of 29 adolescent girls in residential facilities had a background of abuse compared to 34 percent of 123 high school girls (Cummings et al., 2000). Parenting styles and role modeling will influence bullying.

Families of adolescents that bully have a domineering and strict way of caring for their children. According to O'Moore (1989) and Turgut (2005), families of adolescent bullies use inconsistent and tough child care techniques. Loeber and Dishion (1984) state that parents of bullies lack problem solving skills. Reviewed research has correlated authoritarian parenting styles with the behavior of bullying. Parents of bullies show limited positive role modeling and rarely discipline their children for their aggressive behavior (Roberts & Morotti, 2000). Parents of victims will shelter or support their children depending upon the parents coping skills.

Victim Home Environment

The families of victims of bullying are likely to shelter their child as a result of not knowing how to cope with their child being a victim of bullying. Many parents do not know

how to handle the fact that their child is victimized by bullies and this can cause symptoms of depression compared to those parents who know how to support their child being bullied (Conners-Burrow et al., 2009; Mishna et al., 2006; Rigby, 2008). Victims tend to be timid and so fearful that they will not report the bullying. Prior research asserts that support from the victim's family is linked with the probability of victims reporting the bullying (Holt, Kantor, & Finkelhor, 2009). Victimized children are influenced by how protective their parents are.

A lot of parents of victimized children tend to be too involved in their child's lives and can cause more harm to their child. Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) state that victimized children are usually insecure, anxious, and come from families that are usually unduly protective because of this. Rigby (2002) asserts that the overprotective behavior from the victim's parents can cause the child to have poor social skills and that the victims are poor just like bullies. Awareness and positive behavior need to be promoted within the school environment to encourage parental reporting of bullying.

School climate has a huge impact on bullying and victimization. Parents report the physical aggression because they think it is more harmful than indirect aggression and parents that do not see the school as handling the bullying may not contact and report the bullying at all (Mishna, 2004; Mishna et al., 2006; Sheldon, 2002). Positive awareness of the school climate is associated with bullying-prevention programs, the more probability of parents and students reporting the bullying and the student's feeling safe (Beets et al., 2008; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Waasdord et al., 2011). All bullying should be reported whether it is physical or relational.

Relational Aggression

Relational aggression occurs when the bully tries to manipulate and dominate one's social status by interfering with friendships and obtaining control over the victim who is looked at as a threat to the bully by preventing them from being friends with anyone in that peer group (Gomes, 2007). Goldstein & Tisak (2004) state that the act of relational aggression can be different with the age level and who is included such as friends, partner, or acquaintance. It's important to look at the reasoning behind the aggression.

During the adolescent years, it's crucial to explore relational aggression because this is when adolescents are concerned about their appearance, friendships, and fitting in with their peers. Study's by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984, Furman and Buhrmester (1992), and Brown (1990) asserts that it is important to look at the reasoning behind relational harm during adolescent years because this is the time when there are developmental changes in peer groups, (such as the time spent with peers), the growing importance of the viewpoint of friends and also recognition of social stereotypes. Aggressive actions tend to mimic behavior.

Teenage girls who have aggressive behavior tend to use aggressive acts as a way to get revenge or to relieve boredom. In Paquette & Underwood's (1999) study, adolescents were asked to reflect why they might have been the victim of relational aggression and the answer mentioned most was that the aggressor was trying to get revenge or make them mad. Two more broad answers appeared when they asked teenage girls why a fictional character described in a story engaged in relational aggression. The teenage girls said that it was something fun to do to ease boredom, and the second answer had to do with creating jealousy, seeking attention, revenge, self-protection, and inclusion in a group involving friendship (Reynolds & Repetti, 2010). Relational aggression can be implemented in different forms: indirect or direct.

Relational aggression can be implemented in different forms: indirect or direct. Indirect forms of relational aggression would include the decision to harm through gossiping or rumor spreading (covert behaviors), (Bjorkqvist et al. 1992). Direct forms of relational aggression can be associated with calling someone mean names, negative facial expressions or negative body movements at others such as rolling one's eyes straight into a peer's eyes (Underwood et al. 2001). Although relational aggression is contemplated as indirect with its actions, relational aggression is direct with its effectiveness which causes distress and psychological harm (Crick & Nelson, 2002; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Grotperter & Crick, 1996; Underwood, Galen & Paquette, 2001). Crick (1995) found that there is more emotional distress by relational (indirect) aggression felt by girl victims than boy victims and that indirect aggression is very hurtful. Popularity and social status can encourage aggressive behavior in adolescent girls.

Another reason adolescent girls use aggressive behavior is to gain social status. The desire to achieve high social status among peers with adolescents is the reason why relational aggression is effective in hurting other girls (Remillard & Lamb, 2005), and relational aggression is associated with popularity. Results from Smith, Rose, and Schwartz-Mette's (2009) study indicate that aggression in peer situations can be modified in some ways. For example, the relation between aggression and indicators of social competence (Vaughn, Vollenweider, Bost, Azria-Evans, & Snider, 2003), are notably strong among adolescents (Cillessen & Rose, 2005). This includes adolescents being recognized as "cool" or "popular".

As girls become more interested in having relationships with boys, the relational aggression will increase and be intended towards girls who are competition for boys' attention (Crick & Rose, 2000; Werner & Crick, 1999). Bjorkqvist (et al. 1992) and Sutton (et al. 1999b) state that using relational aggression requires social intelligence, social power, and the ability to

manipulate peers. It takes a sophisticated understanding of relationship and social status in peer groups to be able to victimize others. This manipulation and social power can easily influence other peers to join in on the bullying instead of sticking up for the victim and later becoming a target for bullying. In Craig and Pepler's (1996) research on bullying they found that adolescents reported that they felt safer to be on the bully's side than on the victim's. The adolescent girls reported joining in with the bullying to be part of that group for fear of being the next victim (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). The experience of relational aggression being part of an adolescent's development is debatable.

There is considerable debate about developmental appropriateness of the experience of relational aggression. One school of thought presents the thesis of experiencing relational aggression is a standard "right of passage" while other researchers question this orientation. Batanova and Loukas (2011) established a connection between social anxiety and aggression in adolescents and that the greater feelings of worrying and empathy for others can counteract adolescents' impulse to retaliate using aggressive strategies. A stabilizer between anxiety and aggression is empathy which is the individual's compassion and concern for others during struggling times (Davis, 1980). Batanova and Loukas (2011) also found in their study that high levels of empathic concern would shield the encounter of social anxiety on relation aggression. There are theorists who feel relational aggression among girls can be a positive norm in their development.

Some theorists (Arora & Stanley, 1998; Brown, 2003) have articulated that relational aggression, friendship, and social abilities can be put into the same context and have argued that relational aggression is more common in adolescent girls because they have a high value for friendships (Apter & Jossleson, 1998; Cramer, 1993). Underwood et al. (2001) found that

relational aggression can be a positive developmental function, such as in developing social norms, helping adolescents feel a sense of belonging, and protecting the honor of social groups in school. Remillard and Lamb (2005) state that learning to deal with aggression is a life lesson and having a more developmental outlook on girls' relationally aggressive behavior may be applicable. Females appoint to maintain their relationships with their friends over protecting the self (Remillard & Lamb, 2005). Some view aggression as a formation of our culture surrounding relationships.

Another point of view has been discussed by Brown (2003), stating that relational aggression is constructed by a culture that directs girls to be jealous and contest with one another for boys' attention, and to be skeptical of other girls. During adolescence having friendships that are gratifying can rely on an adolescent's capability to endure with the ups and downs of relationships (Remillard & Lamb, 2005). Relationships can form social aggression.

Social Aggression

Another form of aggression that conforms with relational aggression is social aggression. Social aggression includes aggressive acts such as gossiping, while relational aggression is more visible such as ignoring or excluding others (Peeters, Cillessen, & Scholte, 2010). The difference between relational and social aggression is that social aggression affects a bigger peer group and relational aggression exists among as few as two girls (Kayler, 2010). Age may be a factor of social and relational aggression.

The older adolescents girls become the more relational aggression is seen. Galen and Underwood (1997) assert that incidents of social aggression rise with the age of girls. Carins, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariepy (1989), state that adolescent girls' struggle with relational aggression as adolescent girls get older. During the adolescent years, female

adolescents may have social anxiety due to a fear of being judged or criticized. Loukas et al. (2005), states that social anxiety relates to boys' and girls' levels of social aggression during adolescence. In a study done by Galen and Underwood (1997), reported that adolescent girls are said to think that social (indirect) aggression is just as damaging as physical aggression.

Relational aggression impacts victims and bullies alike.

Impact of Relational Aggression

Relational aggression can be extremely hurtful to a girl when it relates to problems with friends. Both the victims and bullies of relational aggression risk psychological and social struggles (Reynolds & Repetti, 2010). The consequences that surrounds bullying affects other students as well as the victim. Students who have witnessed the bullying may worry that they will be the next victim of bullying, they may feel guilty for watching and letting it happen, or they may be encouraged to join in on the bullying (Cole et al., 2006). Bullying behavior may implicate mental health issues.

Mental Health Impacts on Bullies

Bullies may struggle with mental health problems. One study found by Smokowski and Kopasz (2005), stated that among bullies, 12.5 percent had oppositional-conduct disorder, about one-third had attention-deficit disorder, and 12.5 percent had depression. Personality defects (thinking it's alright to use physical aggression), has been found in aggressive bullies (Andreou, 2001; Olweus, 1978).

Acting as a bully as an adolescent has effects on the bully as an adult. Being a bully correlates with exhibiting externalizing behaviors, hyperactivity, and antisocial development in adulthood (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). In addition, reviewed research suggests that when bully adolescents become adults, they tend to have children that become bullies (Carney &

Merrell, 2001; NSSC, 1995). Roberts (2000) asserts that by the time bullies become 30, they were inclined to have criminal convictions and traffic violations compared to less-aggressive peers. Victims also carry risks of mental health issues.

Mental Health Impacts on Victims

Relational aggression can have an alarming and unending damage to the victim's self-image. Victims may see themselves as failures and studies have proposed that there is a correlation between victimization and internalizing disorders among adolescent girls such as anxiety, depression, and development of eating disorders (Brockenbrought et al., 2002; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Bond et al., 2001). Victims that avoid situations they may think could cause bullying to start can have an effect on the victims. According to Davidson et al., (2000) and O'Brien et al. (1996), victims who use avoidance as a defensive method lose the interest in former activities and people they enjoyed, and numbness, and prevention of stimuli that provokes thoughts of the trauma. Victims' offspring are at risk of becoming victims themselves.

When victim's eventually have their own children, their offspring are at risk of becoming a victim themselves. Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) assert that victims who become parents may overreact to behavior they may see as bullying which can lead to overprotection and the lead to the development of conflict resolution skills in their children. In terms of coping, Remillard and Lamb's (2005) study is about adolescent girls coping with relational aggression and stated that the more bullying victims experience in social situations, the more they had wishful thinking, feel accused about and kept to themselves. Social situations, such as in a school environment, are important that they feel safe.

School is a place where students should feel safe but victims do not always feel safe at school. Victim's fear bullying and this causes student's to avoid school because they do not feel

safe (Berthold & Hoover, 2000) which causes the victim to have few friends and feel lonely (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). According to McNamara and McNamara (1997), victims miss a lot of school because of not feeling safe in the school environment and this causes their achievement level to go down and victim's end up not meeting their academic potential. Brockenbrough et al. (2002) asserts that victims carry weapons to school to feel safe or retaliate more than non-victims. Their mental health and emotional well being are at risk.

Relational aggression has a huge impact on victims and their mental health. Crick and Bigbee (1998) found that victims of bullying were emotionally disturbed, and felt lonely because of the rejection from peers. Victims of bullying report having low self-esteem, being stressed, having headaches, nightmares, stomachaches and bed wetting (Horne, et al., 2007). According to Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) attention-deficit disorder was connected to victims of bullying because the victims felt they had to regularly watch their environment anxiously awaiting the next bullying event. Protective factors and limit problem behavior.

Protective Factors

The presence of protective factors can be thought of as variables that can reduce the possibility of participating in problem behavior. Through protective factors such as engaging in church, activities with family, and commitments towards activities in school can decrease adolescents engaging in problem behaviors (Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995). Jessor et al. (1995) asserts that protective factors can limit the connection to problem behaviors because the better protection (not at risk for problem behaviors), the less the problem behavior. Strategies of intervention can also limit problem behavior.

School-wide Interventions on Bullying

There are many intervention strategies for bullying. Some programs focus on having interventions with either the bully or victim, some programs may talk about awareness of bullying behavior in general, and others may address the bullying behavior to family and through schools (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). McFadden (1986) and Olweus (1991a) reported several strategies that can help reduce victimizations such as (a) expanding the knowledge of bullying, (b) having teachers and parents involvement, and (c) creating support against bullying behavior. Psychoeducational groups also can help increase awareness of bullying.

Psychoeducational groups are the most frequently used group interventions. Psychoeducational groups address groups such as teachers and students to increase the awareness of bullying and to present strategies for controlling bullying and helping victims as well as implement training and support. Psychoeducational groups can be presented in school-wide productions, classroom discussions, educational activities, and parenting groups to help families be aware of the program, ways to be aware of bullying situations, and how to be supportive (Horne, et al., 2007). In schools, trained staff members can facilitate intervention.

In a school setting, school counselors, social workers, and psychologists can be the best people to intercede in a bullying situation. According to Smokowski and Kopasz (2005), school counselors, social workers, or psychologists can recognize bullying more efficiently than other school personnel because they recognize the aggressive behavior and victimization in bullying situations. School counselors, social workers, and psychologists are trained to intervene in the bullying situations so they can provide support and counseling for the victim and bully. Bullies should know the school policies on bullying and know the consequences of their actions if the policies are broken. Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) and Roberts and Coursol (1996) assert that

bullying is usually a group of bullies against one victim and that each bully should be able to speak, seek support, and have help to shift their behavior because bullies usually require long-term counseling assistance. Social support can be beneficial to females with relational aggression.

Female adolescents with relational aggression should explore social support to help with their conflicts. Interventions for relational aggression with girls should address the many areas of difficulties that teenage girls go through such as their social skills and problem-solving abilities (Prescott, 1998). Adult female role models can help adolescent girls be aware of positive ways of being a female in this culture by stopping the aggressive behavior and giving the girls opportunities to see and practice positive behaviors (Cummings, et al., 2004). Intervention is a necessity in changing aggressive behavior.

Interventions for bullies. Adults who do not intervene on bullying incidents actually promote the aggressional behavior. If the adolescent is not presented with different options to their aggressive behavior, then they have no reason to act any differently (Sportt & Doob, 1998). According to Roberts and Morotti (2000), bullies must be encountered by an adult and when they are it should be done in a calm and reasonable manner and not right after the bullying took place because it will not be as effective. Roberts and Morotti (2000) assert that bullies should first learn that aggression is not respectable and that there are other options they have other than using aggression and bullies should have a chance to practice the alternative options in a intervention program or activity. Bullies should be made aware that they are accountable for their actions.

Schools should educate the bullies of their aggressive behavior and be held accountable for their actions. Having school counselors let bullies know that they are concerned and will act to correct the aggressive behavior can only help the situation, however, school counselors should

not be the one to discipline the bully. Another way to intervene with the bullying in a school environment is to have parent, teacher and administrator team send the message that the school and home environment are inclined to stop the aggressive behavior (Roberts & Morotti, 2000).

When bullying occurs, the parents should be contacted and the school principal should also be aware of the situation. According to Elliott and Gresham (1991); Morrison and Sandowicz (1995); and Smith (1990), behavior contracts should be used during interventions in the school environment to give the bully attainable behavioral change and having the parent(s) there can help support the behavior contract (Roberts & Morotti, 2000). Intervention for victims of bullying is just as important.

Interventions for victims. Interventions for victims of bullying should focus on the victim through counseling and groups with peers that can support them. Cummings et al., (2004) states about victims, “These girls also need to have an understanding of how they have been affected by their gender-role socialization and various forms of victimization so that they can make better choices when faced with difficult interpersonal situations” (p. 297). Williams and McGillicuddy-DeLisi (2000) suggests that research states there are two main strategies adolescents use to cope: emotion-focused strategy, which is avoidance and withdrawing; and problem-focused strategy, which is social and instrumental support (plans of action). Victims of bullying usually cope by trying to be invisible by staying away from their peers.

Victims of bullying usually cope by trying to be invisible by staying away from their peers. School counselors, social workers, and school psychologists should pursue students that are victimized because some victims tend to think that going to report the bullying may make things worse and cause embarrassment. The school counselor, social worker or school psychologists should concentrate on breaking the victim’s isolation by helping the victim

maintain a friendship with an older peer because it could help the victims self-esteem, the feeling of loneliness, and possibly help with their social status (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

According to Jacobsen and Bauman (2007), informing the parents of the victim is important so the victim and school have the parent's support with working through the problems. Structured awareness programs on bullying will help in this process.

Structured Programs

Structured bullying programs are designed to create awareness to all of the students in the school environment and can be delivered through groups, the classroom setting, or counseling groups. These bullying programs also help not only the students but the teachers and school administrators learn and participate as well. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Hazelden Foundation, 2013) is the most researched bullying prevention program. Olweus is geared towards the ages of five to fifteen years old and is effective for high school students as well. This program has been proven to prevent or reduce bullying in school environment. The goal of this program is to increase peer relations and make schools a positive and safer place for students to learn.

The Bullying Project (Williams, 2010) hopes to help school administrators and teachers fight against bullying. This program also has intervention strategies for both the victim and bully and teaches students how to stick up to bullying, how to get adult help, and how to reach out to friends involved in bullying situations. The goal of this program is to create awareness of bullying and offer resources to schools.

Bully Busters (Bullybusterscampaign.org, 2010 – 2013) is an anti-bullying campaign and program that is designed to provide teachers and school administrators with interventions and

prevention programs to stop the aggressive behavior. Their goal is to have every school adopt a “zero tolerance” policy towards bullying.

Steps to Respect Bullying Prevention Program (Committee for Children, 2013) starts with administrators keeping record of their bullying policies and creating surveys to track progress. Then the school staff train in recognizing and dealing with bullies and then the classroom lessons can start. This program is research based and has social-emotional learning materials to teach to the students.

Bully-Proofing Youth program (Bully-Proofing Youth, 2013) is designed for grades 1 – 12 and teaches students what their peers who bully look for in their victims and how to stop giving those reactions. Bringing awareness to students, teachers, school administrators, and parents, this program help eliminate bullying behavior. The Bully-Proofing Youth program also has material for parents to learn the importance of effective parenting to reduce the bullying behaviors.

Adlerian Perspective

One role school counselors have is to advocate for students and to make sure they have a sturdy social interest. Based on Adlerian principles, this involves feeling appreciated or loved, develop positive self-worth, help students to belong, and not feel discouraged (Pryor, Private, & Tollerud, 1999). Personality is constructed from the decisions people make to appease their needs and there are consequences on a person’s behavior because of these needs, and according to Adlerian principles, all behavior is purposive and goal-directed (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996).

Social Interest

Social interest (community feeling), refers to contributing to the welfare of the community, and not concerned only with one self. According to Dreikurs et al. (1982),

children's behavior is established from their decisions and making the wrong decisions creates inappropriate behavior. Adler believed that children make decisions and are independent of their life style, so children cannot establish an effective sense of self-esteem if they feel fear and misinterpreted. When children belong to a group they can attain social skills and by encouraging social interest the Adlerian approach encourage children to establish in the best way intellectually and socially (Pryor et al., 1999).

Sense of Belonging

Alfred Adler believed that all children have a need to belong. There is a correlation among a child's sense of belonging and being respected, acknowledged, and appreciated by other peers (Goodenow, 1991). There is an association between academic accomplishments and belonging. Children who feel a sense of belonging, "...are more apt to perform proficiently, competently, and responsibly" (Rosenberg, McKeon, & Diner, 1999, p. 23).

When a child does not feel a sense of belonging, the child could then start to develop inappropriate behavior. Abusive or pampering family lifestyles can cause a child to not feel certain about themselves and to feel like they do not belong and then the child's behaviors are directed toward self-protection and not social interest (Ferguson, 2010).

Inferiority and Superiority Complex

Inferiority feelings are when a person feels not good enough and people who have inferiority feelings compensate feelings of superiority. Superiority is when a person feels superior to others. According to Adler's theory, the inferiority reaction feeling occurs in people when they develop a feeling of inadequacy (Bagby, 1923). Adler expressed the significance of treating the child as equal: "It is one of the most important principles in any educational system to take the child seriously, to regard him as an equal and not to humiliate and make fun of him"

(p. 342, Adler, 1923/1971). Adler also stated that striving for superiority is “directly related to the feeling of inferiority” (Adler, 1970, p. 36).

Children aim for superiority in order to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority and when children overcompensate they gather their own outcome of their life and where they fit in (Pryor et al., 1999). According to Adler (1930), inferiority feelings, discouragement, anxiety, and other disorders can arise from the failure to learn cooperation, to meet life’s tasks.

Goals of Misbehavior

Inferiority and superiority are the feeling of discouragement. When a person feels discouraged they no longer feel like they can contribute and they enter miss-behavior. There are four goals of misbehavior: (1) attention, (2) power, (3) revenge, and (4) inadequacy. Dreikurs suggests that school counselors and teachers should intermediate by altering the child’s motivation rather than the child’s behavior (Thompson & Rudolph, 1988) and this can be done by encouragement. Encouragement expresses the message that the counselor accepts the child where he or she is and takes out the focus from the outcome (Pryor et al., 1999). Encouragement should be used on the victim and bully.

Children who misbehave, such as bullies, tend to think they will never be acknowledged or accepted. Such children believe they can be acknowledged and accepted by participating in problem behaviors in search of their mistaken goals (Ansbacher, 1988). Bullies tend to use aggressive behavior to seek attention, power, revenge, and may feel inadequate. Pryor et al. (1999) asserts that Adlerian techniques tend to dismiss a rewards-and –punishment path because it could have a bad effect on a child’s development. Rather, common and logical results are noticed as concepts that grant the child to participate the actual results of his or her behavior (Pryor et al., 1999).

Implications for School Counselors

There are several avenues of implications for school counselors. Individual and group counseling, crisis management, and suicide prevention are particular ongoing services presented by school counselors. These services facilitate students to recognize and work toward eliminating personal barriers (American School Counselor Association, 2003). School counselors should ensure students' safety by creating a zero tolerance policy within the school environment that emphasizes that the school will not tolerate any bullying. It is important that school counselors recognize the bully as the effect of mimicking learned aggressive behavior and that they are the advocate and exceptive component and in ending and altering the aggressive behaviors displayed by bullies (Roberts & Morotti, 2000).

School counselors work with the whole school population and may be aware of the involvement of bullying (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007). As advocates for students, school counselors and can teach purposeful skills directly to individuals or within groups and be leaders in promoting anti-bullying programs. In a group setting, school counselors can focus on factors of the problem areas by concentrating on and discussing particular behaviors displayed by group members then establish methods to decrease or diminish the behavior (Horne et al., 2007). Counselors can help students establish coping strategies for controlling the anxiety they might have from bullying as well as presenting adequate services for all students by asking, "How are students different as a result of school counseling services?" (ASCA, 2005, p.9). Having been trained to take a direct approach to social concerns, construct and implement appropriate programs, it is important that school counselors embody a cooperative approach so parents, teachers, and administrator are all knowledgeable and committed in approaching the obstacles (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007) as well as the avenue to be taken in resolving the issues.

Conclusion

Adolescents are faced with bullying every day and it is a growing issue in schools. Female adolescents engage in relational aggression, and this type of bullying can be very harmful. The adolescent years are a crucial time for adolescent girls because they are worried about friendships, and their social status. Relational aggression also has an effect on self-esteem, anxiety levels, depression, and can even cause thoughts or the action of suicide.

School counselors play a critical role in helping implement anti-bullying programs and creating awareness of bullying in the school environment. By informing and training parents, teachers, and administrative staff the knowledge school counselors have learned, it will create a safe place for students to be successful.

It is important to explore more about relational aggression in female adolescents. The more knowledge we have on female adolescent bullying such as, what causes the behavior and the affects it has on not only the victims but how it affects the bullies, the better understanding and tools schools will have to implement a safe environment.

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