Formed Social Competence as Means to Solve Bullying at Schools

Author’s Contribution:
A – Study design;
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Abstract
The modern worldview shows that the society experiences bullying more and more often. Teenagers’ aggressive behaviour and bullying of those who are of the same age has been highlighted by mass media more frequently lately. Science has been interested in this problem for a long time. However a significant amount of current theories requires additional detailed theoretical analysis, first of all – new empirical research that could become the basis for creating more specific meanings in their application of theoretical concepts of the defined phenomenon.
The aim of the study: to ground the necessity of social competence formation as a means of bullying solution at schools.

Materials and Methods:
To reach the aim, a set of theoretical methods is used in the work: deduction and induction, analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalisation.

Results:
The essence of the notion “bullying” is revealed in the research. It is defined that in a narrow sense the essence of bullying is aggression and violence, but in a broad sense it is asocial behaviour. The main reason of bullying is grounded, that is unformed social competence.

Conclusions:
Components of social competence are outlined: cognitive-motivational, emotional-reflexive, operational-activity. The interconnectedness between the age physiological and psychological peculiarities of a primary pupil and the process of social competence formation to prevent bullying among a new generation is established. Further research will be directed at elaboration of methodical tools as for social competence formation.

Keywords: bullying, violence, asocial behaviour, social competence, primary school age, theory of generations, generation Z.

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Introduction

Humanistic pedagogy has become the basis for the modern educational views. However, free up-bringing can sometimes result in consequences which are not compatible with the forecast result. A free choice of policy in the society is complied with the right or wrong choice. Thus the correctness of a choice is complied with the rules and norms of the society and individual indices that are inter-crossed. Personalities, who make a false choice of a behaviour manner which is not complied with the generally accepted norms, are called in the society as discipline violators. If their false choice is repeated regularly, the main peculiarity of such a personality is generally considered as problem behaviour. We would like to identify the problem of bullying as one of the types of problem behaviour.

The modern worldview shows that more and more often the society faces the problem of bullying (harassment). Lately, the aggressive behaviour of teenagers and bullying of those who are of the same age, have been highlighted in mass media more frequently. The science has been interested in this problem for a long time. However at the same time a significant amount of current theories requires additional detailed theoretical analysis. First of all it requires new empirical research that could become a basis for creating more accurate theoretical concepts in their application of the defined phenomenon.

The scale of this problem encompasses not only educational institutions but also the society on the whole. Children’s aggressive behaviour influences others not only within educational institutions, but also goes beyond their limits that results in mass problems of the social life. Thus the topic of current research is becoming more and more urgent.

The aim of the study. To ground the necessity of social competence formation as a means of solving a bullying problem at schools.

Materials and Methods

To solve the given problem it is necessary to reveal and analyse the reasons of bullying, and to form an algorithm of actions afterwards.

The term “bullying” is new in the society’s lexicon. Still the meaning of it has been used directly for quite a long time. From 1997 Poer started considering this phenomenon in her works and grounded the scale of this problem. Olweus (1996) highlighted one of the first scientific papers at a high level. It deals with the analysis of peculiarities and reasons of bullying, and practical recommendations as for solving this problem.

The current problem has been illustrated in papers of some world famous scientists: Ahmedbekova; Ballard; Berdyshev; James; Kon; Leymann; Lorenz; Olweus (1996); Smith; Tattum and Lane (1994); Fainstein and others.

Among national scientists who studied this problem are: Doroshok; Koval; Kutuzova; Malantseva; Ozhiyova; Sidoruk; Stelmakh (2016); Strebitiskaya; Volynets; Vishnevskaya; Yevsyukova and others.

The analysis of scientific sources gives the possibility to state that the main reason of this phenomenon is unformed social competence at the age of a primary pupil.

To ground the necessity of social competence formation as a means of solving a bullying problem at schools, a set of theoretical methods of research has been applied: deduction and induction, analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalisation.

Results and Discussion

The term “bullying” is referred by scientists to the term “violence”.

In the comprehension dictionary the term “violence” is defined as “enforcement” (act), realised by a person or a group of people to reach a certain goal, that concerns causing direct physical, psychological or moral harm to another person or threatening to cause it” (Andrushchenko & Bekh, 2002, p. 536).

However the term “bullying” is defined by scientists Tattum and Lane (1994) as a durable process of conscious cruel behaviour, either physical or psychic, from a person or a group to another person who is unable to defend themselves.

The famous psychologist and scientist in the bullying problem Olweus (1996) reveals this notion as a situation in which a pupil is repeatedly affected by negative acts from one or several other pupils.

There is a correlation of identity in all the definitions given above. In a narrow sense the basis of it is aggression and violence, while in a broad meaning it is asocial behaviour.

Balakirieva (2007, p. 6) believes that asocial behaviour is a sum total of people’s acts and actions, that contradict the society’s current cultural norms, social rules and obligations. The given definition also equals to display of bullying, as such behaviour indicates socially incompetent children.

The world famous scientists (McCandless; Roff; Ullmann) claim in their research that socially incompetent children are more disposed to wrongdoing. They display a high level of physical and verbal aggression. Besides, scientists Triquet and Ziegler draw attention to the fact that children who are hyperactive, aggressive and even those who suffer from autism, are characterised as socially incompetent.

Basing on the contrary point of view, it can be confirmed that each person who plays a certain role in the society, according to which they assume certain duties and follow certain norms of co-existence, as well as moral norms, is the one with the formed social competence.

The research problem of personality social competence is a subject of studies by national and foreign scholars such as: Ermakov; Goncharov-Goryanska; Kalinin; Kostina (2018); Makarov; Maslenikova; Melnyk (2017); Melnyk and Pyenko (2018); Petrovskaia; Rachov; Radulla; Slot; Sokhan; Spanijard; Yashchuk; Ziminja and others.

Scientists Asher, Dodge, and Parhurst (1983) in their papers have confirmed that social competence is the ability of a person to reacts to various conflict situations in an efficient and adequate way.
Luk’janova (2001) has considered this phenomenon as a person’s conscious self-expression that is revealed in their beliefs, views, attitudes, motives, orientations as for certain behaviour, as well as in the formed personal qualities which favour constructive interaction. Ponimanska (1998) in her work has given the following definition: a child’s social competence is people’s openness to the world, skills of social behaviour, readiness to perceive social information, a wish to understand people and do some good.

There is no unique definition of social competence in science. However, the components of social competence have been outlined by the inductive method on the basis of analysis and synthesis of scientific literature:

1) the cognitive-motivating component that presupposes awareness of social norms, rules of behaviour and moral values; knowledge about interpreting one’s own emotional state and understanding social reality;

2) the emotional-reflexive component that involves skills of self-control, self-regulation of personal feelings; understanding of social roles and following them; skills to perceive minor details of social situations and abilities to solve problem situations;

3) the operational-activity component that deals with skills of effective interaction with the society, diversity of behaviour techniques, communicative skills, personal activity, skills of self-recommendation.

The components of social competence are illustrated in Figure 1.

These formed components in a personality help to avoid bullying, which is an axiom.

Along with this, we emphasise that it is necessary to form social competence starting with the age group of primary school. Indeed this age group is characterised by certain physiological, psychological and social-pedagogical peculiarities which are the basis of social competence formation and its components.

Physiologists point out that the beginning of studies at school for a child coincides with the period of physiological crisis that is revealed in various endocrine and physiological changes and impacts psychological crisis. This age group is defined by scholars Bozovich; Elkonin; Lublinska as a period of moral qualities formation. The structure of a child’s behaviour also changes due to forming processes of analysis, synthesis and various mental operations.

The change of self-consciousness results in the change of values. Thus, a game activity is gradually changed into an educational one. Thanks to physiological changes in the brain structure, new thinking processes are launched that stimulate perception of a large flow of information. Theoretic thinking becomes the grounds for mastering a number of moral issues, such as kindness, evil, justice, mercy, sensitivity etc. This new synthesis in the group of primary school age becomes favourable for forming cognitive motivational component of social competence, i.e. the child masters fundamental principles of moral notions.

For pupils of primary school it is common that they do not possess the unity of theoretical knowledge and its practical application. Children of this age only learn to be aware of the variety of life situations, start to analyse and compare personal experience with other people’s actions. Sensitivity of this process prevails. Still, the modern psycho-physiological research has shown that the emotional behaviour of a person is affected by the amygdale, temporal cortex and frontal cortex, as well as the reticular system of the brain stem, in which the neurotic connections continue to develop actively under the influence of up-bringing at the age of 8-10 (Titov, 2011, p. 195). In conformance with development of these brain regions, formation of higher senses becomes visible (intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical senses). They are responsible for emotional-volitional sphere of a personality that influences formation and development of emotional-reflexive component of social competence.

Besides, namely this age group is characterised by formation of emotional self-control that is also related to the second component of social competence and constitutes one of the most important components in avoiding bullying.

The words by a genius pedagogue Sukhomlynskyi are extremely significant nowadays (1977), as he claimed that “a firm basis of moral beliefs is planted in childhood and early adolescence. At this time the notions of the good and evil, honour and dishonour, justice and injustice are understandable for a child only on conditions of a vivid visual model, obvious moral content of the things they see, do and watch”. The correctly formed emotions are moral senses which under the influence of social interaction or up-bringing transfer into moral habits, in particular the right behaviour that is revealed in the operational-activity component of social competence.

Skills to control emotions (such as suppressing laughter and tears), estimate a situation, transmit and perceive face expressions and non-verbal emotional signals become an indicator of steady moral motive of co-living in the society.

Figure 1. The components of social competence.
Matviienko (2006) in her papers has noted that “moral education concerns not only how well people know norms, rules and demands of the society but also how they follow them.” Starting a new level of their life, a school, a child interacts very close with the surrounding world. Thus, earlier mastered moral habits provide the possibility to fit in the society, interact with it at a high level that will also contradict any form of bullying.

An important factor is that at the age of primary school brain regions become mature which are responsible for perception of the surrounding people, and multi-level types of thinking are formed. All the experience acquired by a child at this sensitive period influences very much the duration and efficiency of brain bonds connections.

According to Karvasarskij (2014), the main sensitive periods are the age of 3 and the ages of 11-15. Namely these ages are exposed to probable psychic disorders. Due to a child's brain formation and construction at the age of 6-10, there can be no pathologies revealed for a long period of time. These arguments are proved in Stelmakh's research (2016), who indicates the fact that bullying occurs most frequently exactly at the age of 11-15. So, emphasising social competence formation at the age of 6-10 from the very beginning of a child's socialisation and developing social behaviour skills complied with moral and ethical norms, will reduce further bullying as a result of self-regulation.

Besides, modifications in a person's brain provoke consequences in psychic mental spheres that lead to changes in perception of the surrounding world. When children are born, they are “tabula rasa” in the social sphere of their existence. Moving into adulthood a child acquires knowledge from the surrounding environment, in which the information space has given unlimited flow of information. Thus, modern parents and teachers face the task to teach their children how to filter and work with this flow. A significant attention should be given to a new generation that constitutes the age group of primary school.

This statement is proved by “the theory of generations”, formulated by Howe and Strauss (2007). The main idea is the fact that systems of values are formed according to historical periods, i.e. in 20-year time period. The scientists have reached the conclusion that people's values are formed not only as a result of family upbringing but also under the influence of public events (economic, social, technological and political events), that take place at the period of a person's growing up.

After release of “the theory of generations”, written for America, the national scholars (Kolesova; Lyubchenko; Miroshnikova; Soldatova, 2016) have adapted it according to the countries of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). In conformance with this theory the scientists state that currently in these states 80% of pupils are from generation Z (Soldatova, 2016), i.e. children who are born or will be born from 2004 to 2024. They are quite different children than there were 20 years ago. The reason is technogenic progress. These are the children who were born in digital environment. The notions “new computer technologies”, “virtual space”, “online” and many others are not new for them. These are the children who grow up in a vast information environment. The things called by previous generations as “huge information flow” are common circumstances for Z generation. They have a new perception of the world norms, values and common life laws, i.e. everything that is stipulated by digital space and that provokes a number of modifications in a personality’s biology.

Sapa (2014) emphasises the peculiarities of a new Z generation that indicate the reasons of increase in children’s and teenagers’ aggressiveness.

This generation understands technologies better than other people’s feelings. It is a multimedia generation that was born with technologies. Even from the early childhood children are aware of technologies better than an older generation. They need less time to understand how these technologies work. However such a great number of technologies reduces the necessity in live communication that provokes communication distance, incompetence in the emotional sphere of the surrounding world. That is why they are more likely to offend another person.

The introvert type which is revealed in individualism is characteristic for this time. Due to immersion into the virtual world, children become less communicative that indicates an introvert type of a personality. Namely this generation is more prone to individualism. However individualism is sometimes compared to egoism (Berdyaev, Styrner), that can have negative consequences in social relations. Socrates wrote in his works: “The sun has one drawback: it cannot see itself”. In the same way a new generation cannot see the drawbacks of egoism. Thus, divergence appears between life principles and moral-ethical norms of the society that results in external and internal conflicts, i.e. aggression.

Nowadays the hyperactive society is developed. A huge flow of information accelerates the life speed that is resulted in lack of time in a personality’s day. It provokes impatience, irritation, and inclination to conflicts.

Among the above mentioned reasons, the demand of the society for a competitive personality plays an important role. The society itself requires the ability of a certain object or subject to outbid their rivals in the given conditions. On the one hand it inspires for development, on the other hand it provokes fighting for one’s place, not always by moral norms. A personality has to confront many external factors for a certain social role and ground their merits. However if sometimes even adults do not cope with this demand and do not follow human moral qualities, how can children do it if they only learn to understand the surrounding world in all its meanings? The main goal of adults is to teach children not only how to co-exist in the society but also how to reveal their individual qualities without aggression.

**Conclusions**

To sum up we should admit that school bullying appears on the grounds of receiving status, power or a certain social role. Its main reason is unformed social...
competence. The analysis of scientific literature has given the possibility to state that this problem cannot be solved completely. Still we are able to avoid severe forms of bullying among children and reduce its amount with the help of early formed social competence at the primary school age.

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Література


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