



CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING ACTS IN STUDENTS OF THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyze the characteristics of bullying acts among students of the municipality of Bujaru, Pará, in 2017, and to identify which type of bullying students are most involved in and what are its main consequences, by using the Stratified Random Sampling and Simple Random Sampling techniques. A sample composed of 46 students from the Bujaru-Pará Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education was analyzed. The data obtained from interviewing the students were submitted to descriptive statistical analysis. Among the main results found, it can be stated that half of the students have been involved in bullying, the most frequent type being verbal bullying, and the main consequence of the acts was a feeling of fear, insecurity and sadness. The results indicate the need to reflect on the implementation of preventive programs in schools aimed to inform and instrumentalize the school community about bullying episodes, helping to reduce the occurrence of aggressive behaviors and promoting a healthy environment of development and learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is characterized as a worldwide problem that occurs with high frequency in schools, further propagating violence among students (Reis and Oliveira, 2016). According to Grillo and Santos (2015), bullying has been increasing epidemically in schools, which brings traumatic consequences for both victims and those who witness the violent acts. This type of violence occurs when a person is exposed to negative actions more than once, on the part of one or more aggressors, and the aggressions can be performed by physical contact, verbal abuse or by the use of vulgar expressions. In addition, one can identify the occurrence of bullying acts through rumors among the students and the exclusion of the victim from a group of friends, which may lead to their intimidation and even cause

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suffering, such as low self-esteem, isolation, learning problems and drop in school performance (Moura *et al.*, 2011). There are also the episodes of cyber bullying, which is a type of violence understood as repeated aggression with the intention to persecute and humiliate using electronic means (MARCOLINO *et al.*, 2018). The word *bullying* is of English origin, also known as "school violence", and it is defined by an imbalance of forces, where there is an intention to repeatedly and consistently harm and humiliate. The main classifications of this type of violence are: *direct bullying*, which occurs through physical and verbal aggression; *indirect bullying*, characterized by the social exclusion of an individual; and *victimization*, which occurs through aggressive acts aimed at harming a specific individual (MOTA *et al.*, 2018). Also called *victimization*, bullying is already considered an important public health issue, as it causes serious consequences, such as the development of emotional disorders like anxiety, depression, drug abuse and even suicide. According to the

National School-based Student Health Survey (PeNSE), led by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics in 2015, in which 9th grade students participated, it was found that 14.8% of students had suffered acts of bullying. Regarding the aggressors, 19.8% stated that they had already bullied, mocked, bashed, scolded or intimidated some of their classmates (IBGE, 2016). Therefore, the discussion of such theme in the present paper is considered relevant, since there is a need for better understanding the characteristics of such phenomenon and its consequences, along with the identification of the people involved, as bullying is often seen as a harmless joke, whereas it actually results from implied violence. Thus, the present study aims to identify the characteristics of the cases of bullying by students from the Brazilian Amazon, more specifically from Nossa Senhora da Conceição School, located in the municipality of Bujaru, State of Pará, in the year of 2017. In addition, it aims to identify which type of bullying occurs most frequently among the researched types (verbal, psychological, physical, sexual and cyberbullying) and what are the main forms of student involvement in the episodes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research has a quantitative, descriptive and exploratory nature. The descriptive research aims to discover and observe phenomena, with the intention of describing and analyzing them without any interference of the researcher (CHURCHILL, 1987). The exploratory research provides the researcher with a greater familiarity with the problem under study, identifying a situation to provide criteria and understanding of the problem, in order to make it more explicit (MALHOTRA, 2001). This research was carried out at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, located in the municipality of Bujaru, Pará. Sixty-nine students were enrolled at the school at the time of the research. From the stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques (BOLFARINE; BUSSAB, 2005), 46 students were selected and interviewed, proportionally to the number of students enrolled in each of the 6th to 9th grades of elementary school. The sampling error was set at a maximum of 8%. The research was carried out between October and November 2017, during class breaks. In order to collect the information used in this study, each researcher would enter a classroom and explain the purpose of the research to the students, who would voluntarily take home the Free and Informed Consent Form (TLCE), so that their parents or person in charge could sign it. Only after their consent the students were invited to fill out the questionnaire of the research, which contained questions related to personal data and behavior in the school environment, concerning the acts of bullying performed in the school. After the stage of data collection, the questionnaires were criticized by the researchers in order to identify possible errors in the collection or even blank questions. After the critique of the questionnaires, they were entered in a spreadsheet for the analysis of the work results. The exploratory data analysis technique was the one used for the initial analysis, which, according to Bussab and Morettin (2013), has the function of organizing, describing and summarizing the data, presenting important characteristics of the information set, through graphs, tables and synthetic measures. It is important to emphasize that the personal data that could identify the elements of the study population were not, in any case, published, but kept confidential. Although not a laboratory experience, the involvement of human beings in

there search required special attention with respect to ethical issues. In this sense, it is very important to make clear in this project that, although the "sample" of the universe in question is intended to be covered, the willingness of those who accepted to be surveyed was respected.

RESULTS

Half of the students reported having been involved in some case of bullying, being 52.17% of them females. The majority of the students involved are between 14 and 16 years of age (53.49%), and most claimed to have prior knowledge about bullying (93.48%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Students Interviewed About Bullying Acts at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in a bullying episode in school	Yes	50,00
	No	50,00
Gender	Female	52,17
	Male	47,83
Age range (in years)	11 to 13	39,53
	14 to 16	53,49
	17 or older	6,98
Knowledge about bullying	Yes	93,48
	No	6,52

Concerning the bullying topic, the majority (56.81%) of the students affirmed that they had talked to teachers in the school about the episodes. Regarding the feeling of exclusion within the school environment, 20.00% of the students said they felt left out, and most of them (37.50%) attributed the fact to their way of acting and their behavior at school (Table 2). Most of the students also stated that the most frequent type of bullying was the verbal one (32.00%), followed by the physical and psychological types, both with 20.00%, and the main consequences of all types were fear and insecurity (29.42%) and sadness (23.53%) (Table 2). In relation to the acts of verbal bullying, 48.48% of students affirmed they had already been involved in such episodes, from which most were only victims (38.10%) and 28.57% affirmed they had been both victims and aggressors (Table 3). Acts of verbal bullying occur more often in the classroom (33.32%) and the majority of the students involved told their friends (36.84%), followed by those who omitted the fact (26.32%) (Table 3). Regarding the acts of psychological bullying, 80.95% of students affirmed they had already become involved, of which 55.18% were only victims (Table 4). All of the involved in the psychological bullying acts were the students themselves and most episodes occurred in the classroom (43.75%). The majority of the students involved did not report the psychological bullying to anyone (37.50%) (Table 4). As for physical bullying, 31.25% of the students had already been involved in such type of violence, and 33.34% of them were both victims and aggressors (Table 5). All participants were students and the place where the acts occurred more frequently was the school corridor (36.00%) (Table 5). The main reactions of the students to physical bullying were not to tell anyone (29.43%), followed by the desire to take revenge (27.78%) (Table 5). As for sexual bullying, 17.24% of the students had already been involved in sexual bullying in some way, with 33.33% being only victims and 33.33% being both victims and aggressors. All of the involved were students (Table 6). The school corridor is the place where the acts occur more frequently, with 33.34% (Table 6).

Table 2. Percentage of Students Interviewed About Bullying Acts at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017 (part two)

Variable	Category	Percentage
Who have they talked with?	Teachers	56.81
	Friends	25.00
	Family	13.64
	School Staff	4.55
Feel left out or excluded in the school environment	No	80.00
	Yes	20.00
Reason why they feel left out or excluded in the school environment	Way of acting and behavior	37.50
	School performance	25.00
	Social Class	12.50
	Race/Color	12.50
	Religion	12.50
Type of Bullying	Verbal	32.00
	Physical	20.00
	Psychological	20.00
	Cyberbullying	18.00
	Sexual	10.00
Consequences of Bullying	Fear/Insecurity	29.42
	Sadness	23.53
	Learning Problems	17.65
	Aggressiveness	11.76
	Stress	11.76
	Low Self-Esteem/Depression	5.88

Table 3. Percentage of Students Involved in Acts of Verbal Bullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in episodes of verbal bullying at school	No	51.52
	Yes	48.48
If the answer is yes, what role have you performed during the act of verbal bullying?	Victim	38.10
	Victim and aggressor	28.57
	Bystander	14.29
	Victim and Bystander	9.52
	Aggressor	4.76
	Aggressor and Bystander	4.76
Where in the school did the episode of verbal bullying take place?	Classroom	33.32
	Corridor	16.67
	In the vicinity of the school	16.67
	Schoolyard	16.67
	Bathroom/Changing room	11.11
	Gymnasium	5.56
	Reaction to the episodes of verbal bullying	Told friends
Have not told anyone	26.32	
Considered taking revenge	21.05	
	Told the teachers	15.79

Table 4. Percentage of Students Involved in Acts of Psychological Bullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in episodes of psychological bullying at school	Yes	80.95
	No	19.05
Role performed during the act of psychological bullying	Only the victim	55.18
	Only the aggressor	31.03
	Victim and aggressor	13.79
	Where in the school did the episodes of psychological bullying take place?	Classroom
	Corridor	18.75
	Bathroom/Changing room	12.50
	In the vicinity of the school	12.50
	Gymnasium	6.25
	Schoolyard	6.25
Reaction to the episodes of psychological bullying	Have not told anyone	37.50
	Told friends	25.00
	Considered taking revenge	25.00
	Told the teachers	12.50

Table 5. Percentage of Students Involved in Acts of Physical Bullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in episodes of physical bullying at school	No	68.75
	Yes	31.25
Role performed during the act of physical bullying	Victim and Aggressor	33.34
	Aggressor	20.00
	Victim	20.00
	Bystander	13.33
	Victim and bystander	13.33
Where in the school did the episode of physical bullying take place?	Corridors	26.67
	In the vicinity of the school	26.67
	Classroom	13.33
	Schoolyard	13.33
	Bathroom/Changing room	6.67
	Corridors, bathroom/changing room	6.67
Reaction to the episodes of physical bullying	Gymnasium	6.67
	Have not told anyone	29.43
	Considered taking revenge	27.78
	Told friends	22.22
	Told the teachers	11.11
	Told the parents	5.56

Table 6. Percentage of Students Involved in Episodes of Sexual Bullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in episodes of sexual bullying at school	No	82.76
	Yes	17.24
Role performed during the acts of sexual bullying	Vítima	33.33
	Vítima e Agressor	33.33
	Espectador	16.68
	Vítima e Espectador	8.33
	Vítima, Vítima e Agressor	8.33
Where in the school did the episode of sexual bullying take place?	Corridors	33.34
	In the vicinity of the school	16.67
	Classroom	16.67
	Corridors, bathroom/changing room	8.33
	Gymnasium	8.33
	Bathrooms/Changing Rooms	8.33
	Schoolyard	8.33
Reaction to the acts of sexual bullying	Told friends	30.77
	Considered taking revenge	30.77
	Have not told anyone	23.08
	Told the teachers	7.69
	Have not told anyone, considered taking revenge	7.69

Table 7. Percentage of Students Involved in Acts of Cyberbullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Variable	Category	Percentage
Have already been involved in episodes of cyberbullying at school	No	71.88
	Yes	28.13
Role performed during the act of cyberbullying	Victim	41.67
	Victim and Aggressor	41.67
	Bystander	8.33
	Victim and bystander	8.33
Reaction regarding the acts of cyberbullying	Considered taking revenge	41.67
	Told friends	16.67
	Have not told anyone	16.67
	Told the teachers	8.33
	Told the parents	8.33
	Have not told anyone, Considered taking revenge	8.33

As for the reaction to the episodes, 30.77% of the students preferred to tell friends about it, and 30.77% considered taking revenge (Table 6). Regarding cyber bullying, 28.13% stated they had already been involved in some episode, and in 41.67% of the acts the students claimed they were only victims, while 41.67% of them were both victims and aggressors, and all of the involved were students (Table 7). All acts of cyber bullying were performed with the use of a cell phone, and the desire for revenge (41.67%), reporting the episode to friends (16.67%) and omission (16.67%) are the main reactions of the students to the episodes (Table 7). In cases of verbal bullying, the most performed role by the students involved was the role of victims (51.62%), in which both males and females presented the same percentage (25.81%) (Table 8). As for bystanders, boys presented a higher percentage regarding episodes of verbal bullying (19.35%), and in relation to aggressiveness, they also stand out with 12.90% (Table 8).

Table 8. Percentage of Students Regarding the Role Performed in Acts of Verbal Bullying at Nossa Senhora da Conceição Municipal School for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Bujaru-PA, 2017

Role	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
	Percentage		
Victim	25.81	25.81	51.62
Bystander	6.45	19.35	25.80
Aggressor	9.68	12.90	22.58

DISCUSSION

In the results of the National School-based Student Health Survey, held in 2015, we found similarity with the results of this study, since male students appear with higher percentage, as about 24.20% of them state they have suffered bullying at some point of their education, against only 15.60% of the female students (IBGE, 2016). According to Santos et al. (2015), the dialogue channel between teacher and student is of vital importance, being one of the ways to prevent bullying, as well as talking with everyone in the classroom about the issue, highlighting its consequences and advising the students not to endorse violence, but rather take the problem up to the teacher so he can interfere and avoid the conflict. According to Santos and Medina (2018), verbal bullying was the most practiced act in schools in the city of Palmas-TO, followed by physical bullying, practiced by the students involved. In the study by Marcolino et al. (2018), psychological bullying predominated among students, as 23.30% of them reported suffering from this kind of school violence, which is among the bullying types that affect the most children of both genders, and is considered to be of lower severity, which contributes to the continuation of such acts in the school environment. One of the explanations for the fact that boys present a more aggressive behavior than girls relates to their greater physical strength and a deficit in social skills, which can cause boys to use more direct and physical aggression than girls. Thus, there is a greater involvement of boys in episodes of bullying, as opposed to girls (BINSFELD, LISBON, 2010). According to Souza and Almeida (2011), bullying acts cause suffering to all victims, many of which tend to become adults who develop trauma or problems from the aggressions suffered, having to resort to psychological or psychiatric help to overcome them. The consequences of bullying are serious and may lead to student disinterest in school and drop in school performance, as well as the development of panic disorder, depression and school and social phobia. In addition, bullying can also aggravate preexisting problems, due to the repetition of stressful situations to which the victim is subjected. Not only the victims, but also the aggressors and witnesses of the episodes of violence are subject to suffer unpleasant consequences, since the aggressors tend to experience the sense of consolidation of their authoritarian behaviors, tending

to distance themselves from their school goals, whereas bystanders tend to deprive themselves of a safe and healthy school environment (SOUZA; ALMEIDA, 2011).

Conclusion

With the results of this study, it was possible to identify the characteristics of the bullying acts of students from the Brazilian Amazon region, specifically from the Nossa Senhora da Conceição school, in the municipality of Bujaru, Pará, in 2017, presenting the types of bullying with greater incidence and the main forms of student involvement in the act of bullying. It was verified that half of the students of the Nossa Senhora da Conceição school were already involved in bullying situations, and that the majority of the participants were female. The most common type of bullying practiced by the students is verbal bullying, and the most frequent consequences caused by acts of bullying were fear and insecurity and sadness. This study had the role of contributing to actions to combat bullying acts, as it is necessary to reflect on the implementation of preventive programs in schools that aim to inform and instrumentalize the school community about bullying, through the knowledge of the characteristics of this type of violence, aiming at helping students to change their behavior, both in the way of acting and thinking of them and the other people around them, thus promoting a healthy environment of development and learning.

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