

Social Work Intervention in the Prevention and Intervention of School Bullying

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Abstract: School bullying refers to the persistent and intentional harm inflicted upon a student by one or more students through verbal, behavioral, or other means, occurring within or in the vicinity of school premises. School bullying not only causes psychological and physical harm to the victims but also disrupts the learning environment, impeding the healthy development of students. This paper aims to explore how social work can intervene in the prevention and intervention of school bullying issues. By analyzing the current situation, causes, impacts of school bullying, as well as the methods and strategies for social work intervention, the paper proposes effective preventive and intervention measures to create a safe and healthy growth environment for students.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of school bullying has increasingly garnered widespread attention from society. Incidents of student bullying not only cause adverse effects within schools but also bring severe negative impacts on the physical and mental health and development of adolescents. Preventing and intervening in student bullying incidents requires the joint efforts of schools, families, and society, and social work, as a professional force in solving social problems, should play an important role in this process.

2. The Current Situation and Impacts of School Bullying

2.1 The concept of school bullying

The definition of school bullying currently lacks a unified consensus. This paper aims to synthesize previous scholarly perspectives to define school bullying as: negative behaviors that occur within the school and its surrounding areas, among students (whether between individuals or groups), where one party deliberately or with malice, either once or repeatedly, inflicts harm on another through physical contact, verbal attacks, or online means. In this definition, we clearly delineate the spatial scope of the behavior as the school and its vicinity, the behavioral agents as

students, and the behavioral characteristics as deliberate or malicious, occurring either once or multiple times. Given that the judgment of "malice" in bullying behaviors often varies based on the subjective intentions of the bullies, all interpretations of relevant concepts are defined from the perspective and feelings of the victims.

2.2 The Current Situation of School Bullying

The phenomenon of school bullying is ubiquitous globally and presents some common characteristics. In a survey conducted by a multinational cooperative research group on adolescent health and well-being established by the World Health Organization, which covered 41 countries, school bullying was defined as "a student being subjected to unpleasant things said or done to him/her by another student or a group of people, that is, being attacked verbally or physically." [1] Bullying behaviors typically occur in or around schools, through speech, actions, the internet, etc., causing physical, mental, and financial harm to the victims. School bullying takes various forms, including verbal bullying, physical bullying, cyber bullying, and relational bullying. These bullying behaviors not only cause direct harm to the victims but also have negative impacts on the bullies themselves and bystanders.

2.3 The Impacts of School Bullying

Campus bullying has profound impacts on both victims, bullies, and bystanders. Surveys have revealed that bullied children exhibit low levels of psychological capital, difficulties in distinguishing bullying behaviors, a lack of effective methods to cope with negative emotions, excessive focus on and exaggeration of their own inadequacies, and a dearth of skills to respond to campus bullying. Consequently, there is a practical need to enhance their psychological capital, improve their ability to recognize bullying behaviors, and acquire skills to address bullying. For victims, failing to process negative emotions, we view themselves positively, and adopt effective coping strategies can lead to prolonged impacts from temporary bullying incidents, severely affecting their physical and mental well-being. For bullies, bullying behaviors reflect psychological issues such as flawed values and improper emotion management, which may lead to decreased social adaptability over time and even push them towards criminal behavior. For bystanders, bullying behaviors can evoke negative emotions such as fear, helplessness, and indifference, affecting their mental health and sense of social responsibility. These detrimental campus incidents not only undermine students' well-being but also disrupt the efforts to create a harmonious and safe campus environment, even eliciting adverse societal reactions and hindering the dissemination of positive energy in society.

3. Analysis of the Causes of School Bullying

3.1 Family Factors

The family environment has a crucial impact on a child's growth. Espelage believes that parents should establish good communication with primary and middle school students, as parents' behaviors serve as a model for them. If parents frequently communicate with primary and middle school students through beating and scolding, when these students encounter contradictions and conflicts at school, they may respond in the same way.[2] These family environments can easily lead children to develop adverse personality traits and behavioral habits, such as stubbornness, willfulness, and irritability, thereby increasing their risk of becoming bullies. On the other hand, victims of bullying often come from families with overly strict discipline or a lack of love, which

can lead children to feel inferior, timid, and lack confidence, making them targets of bullying.

3.2 School Factors

The impact of school environment and management mode on the phenomenon of school bullying cannot be overlooked. Garbarino points out that when schools excessively focus on academic performance and competitive activities while neglecting the in-depth cultivation of students' socio-emotional education, this may inadvertently increase the frequency of school bullying incidents.[3] If schools fail to provide students with adequate social skills training and conflict resolution strategies, students may lack effective means to cope with interpersonal conflicts, thereby increasing their risk of being bullied or becoming bullies.

Furthermore, the way schools handle bullying behaviors is equally crucial. Some schools lack effective prevention and intervention mechanisms, making them struggle to deal with bullying incidents, resulting in bullying behaviors not being promptly and appropriately stopped and corrected. This not only causes continuous psychological trauma to the victims but may also exacerbate the aggressive behavior of bullies due to their not receiving deserved punishment. Therefore, the field of social work emphasizes that schools should establish a comprehensive anti-bullying system, strengthen teachers' and students' awareness of bullying behaviors, enhance intervention capabilities, and ensure that every bullying incident is handled in a timely, fair, and effective manner.

3.3 Societal Factors

The influence of social environment and cultural atmosphere on the issue of school bullying is profound. Adverse social phenomena and cultural beliefs, such as the glorification of violence and cyber bullying, often subtly shape children's values and behavioral habits, making them more susceptible to accepting or perpetrating bullying behaviors. These phenomena not only distort children's understanding of interpersonal relationships but may also stimulate their inner aggressiveness and violent tendencies. Additionally, the inadequate attention given to school bullying by society is another significant factor contributing to the ineffective containment of bullying behaviors. Due to the lack of sufficient legal and policy support, many bullying incidents do not receive the attention and handling they deserve, allowing bullies to escape justice while victims often find themselves in a helpless situation. Therefore, the field of social work emphasizes that all sectors of society should work together to raise awareness about school bullying, strengthen legal and policy frameworks, and create a safer, healthier, and more harmonious social environment for children.

4. Methods and Strategies for Social Work Intervention in School Bullying

In terms of preventive measures against school bullying, foreign scholars have attempted to intervene in school bullying through teachers and other school staff, based on their research focusing on the identities of bullies and the psychological intentions of bullies.[4] Meanwhile, other scholars have also pointed out that the influence of parents cannot be overlooked in the prevention of school bullying, emphasizing the role of home-school cooperation in addressing this issue.[5] As a professional force in solving social problems, social work should actively intervene in the prevention and intervention of school bullying issues. The following are methods and strategies for social work intervention in school bullying.

4.1 Deepening Campus Culture Construction: Fostering a Positive Campus Atmosphere

Social workers play a crucial role in the in-depth development of campus culture. They must not only actively participate in and promote the organization of campus activities but also delve deeply into the shaping and dissemination of values to ensure that these activities truly resonate with students' hearts. By designing and implementing a series of long-term and systematic educational programs, such as regular themed events like "Kindness Month" and "Respect Day," social workers can continually reinforce students' identification with core values such as kindness, respect, and inclusivity, helping them embody these virtues in their daily lives. Furthermore, social workers should fully leverage various channels such as campus radio, bulletin boards, and social media to widely disseminate stories of positive energy and establish positive role models within the school. These stories and role models not only provide students with examples to emulate but also inspire their inner motivation, guiding them in forming a positive campus atmosphere. Through this approach, social workers can create a campus culture filled with positive energy and a proactive mindset for students, providing robust support for their growth and development.

4.2 Improving Prevention and Intervention Mechanisms: Strengthening Institutional Guarantees and Execution

Social workers need to assist schools in formulating and improving prevention and intervention mechanisms for campus bullying, ensuring the scientificity, comprehensiveness, and operability of the systems. During the institutional development process, special attention should be given to protection mechanisms for victims, such as establishing emergency assistance procedures and designated sanctuary spaces, to ensure that students receive timely and effective support and protection when subjected to bullying. Furthermore, a scientific and reasonable evaluation system should be established to periodically assess the effectiveness of prevention and intervention mechanisms, with adjustments and optimizations made based on the assessment results.

4.3 Enhancing Teachers' and Students' Recognition and Response Capabilities: Professional Training and Practice

Social workers should regularly provide professional training for teachers to enhance their abilities to recognize, assess, and handle bullying incidents in schools, ensuring that teachers can sensitively perceive the occurrence of bullying behaviors and take timely and appropriate intervention measures to protect students' physical and mental health. Additionally, in-depth thematic education should be conducted for students. By utilizing interactive teaching methods such as role-playing and scenario simulations, social workers can strengthen students' self-protection awareness and teach them effective strategies to cope with bullying, helping them remain calm and protect themselves when facing difficulties. On the other hand, social workers should actively promote home-school cooperation and provide relevant educational training for parents to enhance their ability to identify whether their children are experiencing bullying or perpetrating bullying behaviors. Through educational guidance, parents can work together with schools to establish a closely knit safety network, ensuring that students receive sufficient attention and protection both at home and in school. Social workers should strive to foster close cooperation between home and school, jointly creating a safe and harmonious environment for students' healthy growth.

4.4 Case Work Intervention: Precision Counseling and Support

In case work, social workers should adopt multidimensional assessment methods to deeply

understand the family backgrounds, psychological states, interpersonal relationships, and other factors of both victims and bullies, formulating individualized counseling plans. For victims, they can help rebuild self-confidence and improve social skills through psychological counseling, confidence-building groups, and social skills training. For bullies, the focus is on behavioral therapy, cognitive restructuring, and family therapy, aiming to change their adverse behavioral patterns and promote cognitive transformation. Meanwhile, attention should be paid to the mental health of both groups, and necessary referral services should be provided in a timely manner.

4.5 Strengthening Home-School Cooperation: Building a Co-Governance and Co-Management System

The role of social workers as bridges for home-school cooperation is crucial. They must not only facilitate the establishment of regular communication mechanisms, such as home-school joint meetings and parent-teacher conferences, to enable both parties to jointly discuss issues of school bullying, share prevention strategies and handling experiences, but also develop home-school cooperation conventions to clarify the responsibilities and obligations of both parties in promoting the healthy growth of students, thereby constructing a positive atmosphere for home-school co-education. Social workers should also actively encourage parents to participate in school activities, such as volunteer services and parent-child workshops. These activities not only enhance understanding and trust between home and school but also allow parents to gain a deeper understanding of the school's educational philosophy and the students' growth environment. Through joint participation in school activities, parents can form a closer partnership with the school, providing comprehensive support and protection for the healthy growth of students. Social workers should strive to promote effective communication and cooperation between home and school, jointly escorting the healthy growth of students.

4.6 Leveraging Community Resources: Expanding Prevention and Control Networks

Social workers should fully explore and utilize community resources, such as community service centers, youth activity centers, and mental health service agencies, to jointly carry out the prevention and control of campus bullying. By organizing community public welfare activities, parent-child lectures, and mental health education, the awareness of community residents towards campus bullying issues can be raised, forming a good atmosphere of joint concern from the whole society. At the same time, establishing cross-domain cooperation mechanisms with public security organs, judicial authorities, and educational institutions can form a comprehensive prevention and control network, creating a safer and more harmonious growth environment for students.

5. Conclusion

Campus bullying is a multifaceted and intricate social issue that is deeply ingrained within the fabric of schools, families, and even the entire society. To effectively tackle this issue, schools, families, and various societal sectors must collaborate and work together to establish a comprehensive and multi-layered prevention and intervention system. Social work, as a professional social force, plays a crucial role in this process. To foster a positive campus atmosphere, efforts should focus on strengthening campus culture, implementing robust prevention and intervention mechanisms to promptly identify and address issues, and enhancing the ability of teachers and students to recognize and respond effectively to problems. Additionally, case-specific interventions should be carried out to offer personalized support for victims. Strengthening collaboration between home and school can create a favorable environment for joint education.

Furthermore, fully leveraging community resources can help expand and diversify intervention channels. Social work employs these measures as means to strive for creating a safe, healthy, and harmonious growth environment for students, making campus bullying impossible to hide.

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