

Bullying in Higher Education – The Role of the University Community, the Counseling Service and the Liaison Office – SEC University of Applied Sciences of Piraeus

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ABSTRACT

KEY WORDS: university, intimidation, bullying, student, victim, victimizer, counseling service

This paper describes the bullying phenomenon appearing in Higher Education.

The intimidation observed involves repeated, violent and abusive behavior (oral, physical, and psychological) in small amounts. Usually, it isn't initially realised by the victim and works cumulatively, resulting in being very destructive to the mental and physical health, as well as the quality of life of the victim.

More specifically, the study aims to highlight the nature and characteristics (definition, causes, consequences and treatment) of the phenomenon, while aiming to act proactively, informing and sensitizing students, graduates and professors towards the issue.

We approach practices and prevention of the violent incidents inside and outside (?) the University campus within the university community, and in particular, the role of the Counseling Service at the TEI of Piraeus Liaison Office.

Intimidation /Bullying: Definition

The term school bullying, in Higher Education refers to the deliberate, systematic and repetitive exercise of psychological and / or physical violence by a student or a group of students against one or more students.
(power point)

The aim is the enforcement. The relationship between victim and perpetrator is always characterized by a power imbalance. The student holding the aggressive behavior is usually taller / stronger / has better performance at university or is more popular. Normally, it is difficult for the student or students who suffer such negative behavior to defend and protect themselves, therefore they are seriously damaged both physically and emotionally.

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Surveys have shown that aggressive behavior in young adults is associated with factors that derive mainly from the family environment. More specifically, the lack of warmth, concern and love from the parents combined with either very strict educational methods (physical punishment, excessive demands, violent emotional outbursts, ironic treatment to students etc.) or lack of limits and high tolerance, are instrumental in creating a model of aggressive behavior in the young adult.

But the same personality – of the student plays a role in shaping his behavior. Irritable and impulsive individuals are more likely to become aggressive adults compared to individuals who have a more "soft" personality. **(power point)**

The Most common expressions of Bullying/ Intimidation are:

- **Physical** (gestures, jostling, strokes, etc.)
- **Verbal** (swearing, insults, mockery, ironic behavior, etc.)
- **Psychological or indirect violence** (destruction of personal belongings, threats, extortion, exclusion from groups / group activities, social events, dissemination of malicious events / false rumors against a student in a systematic way).
- **Sexual harassment** (abusive comments, sketches and graffiti with sexual content, immoral gestures, unwanted touching, serious sexual assaults).
- **Electronic bullying (cyber bullying)** through messages, through e-mails or through social networking sites (FB, Twitter, etc.) (e.g. sending threatening or offensive material, use or falsification of personal data of a student, exclusion).

Cyber Bullying - Definition

The term cyber bullying refers to bullying and aggressive behavior exercised through electronic devices. It has been initiated following the development of technology and the constant preoccupation with the new electronic media.

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The purpose of electronic bullying is often the exclusion of the student from a group, physical or online and his marginalization. In several occasions it is made as a way of "taking revenge" for something that has happened among students, since in internet there is the feeling of anonymity and "invisible threat" by unknown persons.

Cyber bullying differs from other kinds of intimidation because it interferes in the privacy of the recipient. This type of bullying is difficult to be eliminated since there is no restriction neither in the messages distributed electronically nor in the number of recipients that can receive of these messages.

Cyber Bullying includes:

- Attacking someone through e-mails, messaging, social networking websites and blogs.
- Sending recurring threatening, abusive electronic or telephone messages.
- Using false information or another user's identity (identity theft).
- Spreading rumors and lies in online conversations (chat rooms).

Methods Expression of Cyber Bullying

- Flaming
- Harassment
- Cyber stalking
- Denigration
- Impersonation / Identity Theft
- Tricky or Outing (circulating photographs, personal information)
- Exclusion (to destroy the popularity of the victim)
- Happy slapping (videotaping the victim while he suffers different forms of violence & web publishing of the video).

Online Traps for Students in Cyberspace

- You cannot see me
- I cannot see you
- Who am I?
- Am I sexy?
- Everyone does it (web standards)
- Searching for love
- How far can I go...(risky behavior).

What are the characteristics of students - victims of bullying?

The characteristics commonly observed in students who are victims of bullying/intimidation in the university or in higher education are: 1) the isolated students left alone without their company, 2) the absence of assertive behavior (students who are embarrassed and have not learned to express themselves), 3) sensitivity and introversion, 4) poor academic performance/ dyslexia 5) absence of domination and competition 6) students with "diversity" (physical disability, tribal, family, religious), 7) lack of a supportive framework of family and friends for students studying away from home, 8) students who have suffered violence at school and failed to emotionally manage the problem.

What are the characteristics of students who bully?

The characteristics commonly observed in students who are bullies are: 1) emotional immaturity, 2) lack of empathy: inability and indifference to understand how the individual who suffered violence feels, 3) inability to manage their anger, 4) strong sense of superiority, 5) manipulative behavior: mood to dominate, to impose, to become the leader of the group. They have the ability to escape from difficult situations, to persuade, to manipulate their peers/classmates, parents, professors, employer highlighting another person worthy lenient response, 6) student with no limits: they say and do whatever they want.

Consequences of Intimidation/ Bullying for the Victim

Immediate Effects:

- Physical & Psychological Exhaustion
- Reduction of Self - Esteem, Introversion, Anxiety, Insecurity
- Emotional Withdrawal, Isolation
- Depression
- Phobias
- Loss of academic performance, difficulty in concentration
- Psychosomatic problems (nutrition, sleep, pain psychosomatic headaches, abdominal etc.).
- «Domino effect» the student intimidates in turn other vulnerable students.

Long Term Effects:

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- Low self - esteem
- «Cycle of Abuse» (domestic violence, spousal abuse)
- Lack of confidence and intimacy in relations.

Consequences of Intimidation/ Bullying for the Abuser

Immediate and Long - Term Consequences:

- Aggressive and impulsive behavior
- Antisocial Behavior
- Addiction Problems
- Delinquent behavior (problems with the Police).

Many students who are victims of aggressive behavior do not express it to anyone and suffer alone, often for a long time usually either because they are ashamed of what is happening to them, or because they mistakenly feel guilty about causing the problem, or because they believe that the intervention of the university community, the professor and / or the parent will be ineffective and potentially may become a cause to receive even more violence by his / their classmates. Student's victims of violence usually have some specific symptoms that are indicative.

The Bullying in Higher Education

At University the risk of the phenomenon of violence is higher since all expressions are stronger and the intimidations by the students very often reach extreme physical violence.

Research of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) reports that bullying takes another dimension in higher education compared to secondary education.

The switch in the roles (abuser - victim) is evident among students. More specifically, there can be violence from the abuser to the victim, from the victim to the abuser (although it is less common that the abuser becomes the victim) or the victim to turn against himself.

The Role of the University Community

Intimidation and violence relate to all the university community and deficits this and not just in the relationship abuser - victim.

Each member of the university community has a role and responsibility for tackling intimidation and violence. The degree of involvement of each member is related to their capacity as well as the severity, frequency and intensity of intimidation incidents.

However, they should all work together on a framework of parallel actions. The grounds of intimidation are multifactorial therefore its management should be multilayered.

Bullying: Indicative Practices for Prevention – Management within the University Community

The following indicative proposals - actions could help to change the overall perception and attitude of the university community towards the problem of bullying and violence.

The Academic Staff

At University it is not easy for the professor to perceive the problem of bullying and violence so it is proposed:

- For each professor to be available and in direct when communicating with the students. He should express interest not only in the academic courses and the success of the student but also to adopt a human profile (for discussing possible difficulties or problems of the students with humor, confidentiality and discretion). The assistant role in preventing and combating violence plays the statutory role of tutor.
- To follow-up systematically the attendance of students in classes as well as the teaching areas such as the halls and auditoriums, laboratories and the areas outside the university.
- To listen carefully and seriously to a student that testifies that has been bullied. Reassure the student that will respond immediately to protect it and that you are available to provide all possible assistance. Ask the student to keep you informed on any developments.

The Students :

- Create a Student Volunteer Group for combating violence & bullying and supporting and assisting vulnerable groups. It has been observed that students who suffer violence more easily talk about it with a student instead of an adult. The role of a group can be mainly supportive and intermediary for students.

The volunteer students should be trained in active listening, i.e. to be able to listen effectively and to remove any possible feeling of guilt from victims. Also, to encourage and guide victims and abusers to seek help from professional psychologists always in cooperation and under the guidance of the Centre for Counseling and Psychological Support of the university.

- Drafting the Declaration Against Violence of the Student Community: clear rights - duties - obligations for all members of the university community to stop the breeding cycle and the encouragement of violence in the university. Also, since the students are adults there is also the legal dimension of violence.
- Raising awareness about the phenomenon of bullying and violence through various student artistic activities (theatrical play or artistic exhibitions on violence), sports event highlighting fair play "condemning" all forms of violence in order first to recognize the problem and then to prevent and treat.

The Administrative Staff

Implement adequate supervision at the university areas (with an emphasis on outside areas: corridors, toilets, sports facilities).

Students, academic and administrative staff, guards should intervene immediately and decisively when they notice, even when they suspect, incidents of intimidation and violence.

The Counseling - Support Services of Higher Education - University of Applied Sciences of Piraeus

The Liaison Office and the Centre for Counseling and Psychological Support of University of Applied Sciences of Piraeus T.T. are addressed to all the academic community (students, graduates, teaching and administrative staff and students studying at other higher education institution in the country) and provides individual and group counseling by trained personnel (psychologist, social worker).

The Liaison Office in the University of Applied Sciences of Piraeus

Indicatives services provided relate to:

- Counseling in Career Guidance (through specialized questionnaires).
- Counseling in issues related to stage and career (writing a c.v., preparing for the interview).
- Social Counseling, actions for women and socially vulnerable groups.
- Organizing experiential seminars for dealing with exams stress, improving study skills, developing social skills, self-esteem, assertiveness).
- The Liaison Office implements Mentoring program with special trained volunteers who inform, help and support with practical advice for a particular employment sector, labor, education, lifelong learning the students and the graduates.

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Counseling & Psychological Support in the University of Applied Sciences of Piraeus

Indicatives services provided relate to:

- Systematic counseling of people of special groups in need of facilitating the attendance, adjustment and integration into the university community.
- Counseling - Psychological support to issues such the adjustment difficulties in the student environment, grief, violence / bullying.
- Information and psychosocial support socially vulnerable groups.
- Speech Therapy Intervention.

The Counseling - Support Services of Higher Education Piraeus within the rich activity for the promotion of academic community (educational, vocational and mental) could organize workshops, seminars, lectures on intimidation / bullying and cyber bullying. More specifically:

- Organizing lectures for the university community by the cybercrime prosecution department for the prevention and guidance on preventing and dealing with electronic bullying.
- Providing information material to students with practical guidance on the forms of intimidation and violence.
- Working with local authorities and the police to prevent or deal with bullying incidents.

Finally, the aim of the Higher Education is for the student to be able to talk to another student, an academic staff or the counseling services of the University on violence that may receive or on bullying incidents that has noticed among other students.