

School Bullying in the Primary School. Report of a Research in Hajdú-Bihar County (Hungary)

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Abstract

Bullying has long been researched in different communities and cultures and has proven to be a phenomenon that seriously endangers individuals and communities as well. Among its consequences are different psychosomatic symptoms, deteriorating study or work performance, depression, suicidal ideation, unhealthy social climate or acts of crime. The present study presents some of the findings of a research carried out in 24 schools of Hajdú-Bihar County in 2008. The 1006 large sample of 5th and 7th grade students (age 11 and 13) answered questions on their bullying-related experiences and attitudes. Data were collected in a questionnaire on types of bullying, prevalence, students' mood, feeling of well-being and their social environment. Findings show that similarly to results of earlier research a large number of students are involved in bullying. In the sample the most common types are name-calling and ostracism, whereas beating and threatening are less frequent. Correlations with age, gender and academic performance show that the younger age-group is more involved in beating and spreading gossip, girls in relational bullying, and academically weaker students are most often involved in bullying events. Variables of mood, feelings of well-being, social and study climate are analyzed with a focus on studying correlations between feelings and relations within the smaller communities. Victims appear to be in the worst position on all measures, including number of friends, stress, emotions towards school or social climate. However, they show a more positive attitude for studying than bullies or bully-victims.

Keywords: School Bullying, School Climate, Social Climate, Mood, Hungary, Primary School

Introduction

School bullying is defined as the event when a child unable to defend himself/herself is intentionally bullied repeatedly over time. Bullying is not only physical, it has verbal (e.g. name-calling), or relational forms (ostracizing) as well. Bullying has been widely researched in several countries of the world since the 1970s. Research in Sweden and in Norway by Dan Olweus (Olweus, 1978) soon started further investigations in Europe, the USA, then in other countries of the world. By now an enormous amount of research findings, publications, websites is available for those interested.³ The reason why it is important to address this

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3 For the most important findings on bullying see Buda et al. 2008, Buda 2009.

topic is that bullying has serious consequences regarding all participants. Victims are prone to frequent psychosomatic and mental complaints, they are inclined to develop depression even in adulthood. Furthermore, bullying is harmful not only for victims. Bullies gain power in their community, and owing to this they do not need to acquire more efficient and sophisticated social strategies, which makes their adjustment more difficult later. In the group of bullies youth are more likely to break the law, or develop a deviant lifestyle later in their lives. Bullying is harmful for the whole community as well, since in an atmosphere of fear solidarity and personal responsibility get weakened. Making scapegoats of individuals and forming cliques largely damage the society of the school; it makes establishing meaningful relations difficult not only among peers but also between students and teachers. If schools do not recognize danger in time and cannot put an end to this process, bullying and aggression in general might get stronger and escalate, impeding efficient work.

Although bullying is present among schoolchildren of all countries researched, data of prevalence diverge highly. The proportion of bullies fluctuates between 5% and 35%, between 3% and 35% for victims. This wide span of data is rather confusing than informative. Larger samples tend to be more reliable. In Norway Dan Olweus found 8% bullies and 12% victims in his research of 130 000 students (Olweus, 1993).

The research conducted by WHO - Health Behaviour in School-aged Children, HBSC – is especially important. In their questionnaire a few questions are aimed at bullying, which makes it possible to compare results of different countries in this area as well. In 2001/2002 in 25 countries – in a representative sample – 113 200 youth aged 11-15 took part in the research. Involvement in bullying is between 9-54 % (Nansel et al., 2004, Craig and Harel, 2004).

In 2006 41 countries took part in the same research. A minute sheet available online reporting the findings shows that the proportion of those bullied at least twice over the last month is between 4% and 32% in the participating countries. The average value is 15%. The proportion of 11 year-old bullies is 2-24%, 9% as the full sample average shows. (Currie et al., 2008).

In Hungary a few articles and books have been published on this topic, and there have been some research (see Figula 2004, Mayer 2008, Sáska et al., 2009), but none of them have aimed at this issue in a way that would yield generalizable results. This way data about bullying in Hungary can mostly be obtained from the HBSC research.

In 2002⁴ 79.6% of the children asked were never bullied by their peers, 15.2% of them were occasionally bullied, 5.2% of them more frequently. The proportion of those bullying frequently is 4.7%. 19.8% of the children sometimes bully others (Aszmann, 2003).

In the 2006 study⁵ 15% perpetrators, 12% victims and 10% bully-victims were registered (Németh, 2007).⁶

Our research, carried out in Hajdú-Bihar County (Eastern Hungary) was aimed at gaining generalizable data about adolescents' bullying-related experience and about its background. The enquiry focused primarily on school climate and its subjective aspect, the effect of children's and classes' feeling of well-being and that of their attitudes towards bullying, and its relationship with bullying events. Here the most important findings and the relationship between some data are presented.

4 The proportion of bully-victims is not indicated in the article.

5 Those involved in the bullying events at least once were defined as bullies or victims, bully-victims in both roles.

6 Unfortunately these minute sheets do not describe how groups were made, so the results of the two studies cannot be compared to see if there have been changes.

Design

The questionnaire

When choosing a research method several points need to be considered. Since the topic of bullying is mostly unknown in Hungary, and schools in general tend not to think these kinds of information essential, the schools in our study were not wholeheartedly supportive in taking part of the research. The local governments did support our endeavours, but it was important to carry it out easily, fast, and without unnecessary complications.

Parental consent which - we believe - is determined by the relationship between parents and the school proved to be similar. There were schools where participation was no problem, but there were schools where 30–40% of the parents did not agree to their child taking part in the research. This way a method that was not anonymous could not be considered.

Considering all this a short, anonymous questionnaire, which could be filled in within one teaching hour was chosen. In our questionnaire children estimated the prevalence of aggressive acts in their class, and told us about how often they used aggression or were victimized by their peers.

The questionnaire consisted of 99 – mostly closed – questions, but at certain points it invited pupils to add their comments.

The questionnaire was organized around three major themes: children's experience of bullying, children's feelings of well-being at school and background questions.

a) Children's experiences of bullying

Children were asked about their everyday experiences relating to aggression ("How often do you see acts like this to happen?"), how often they bullied others, and how often they were victimized. The number of children victimized regularly by their peers in their class was also asked for.

In our questionnaire, similarly to research procedures, we asked for the prevalence of particular events.

b) Children's feeling of well-being at school

Similarly to most research procedures, school climate was not directly studied, but children's experiences and feelings were taken as indicators of school climate.

There are no standards to measure climate or the feeling of well-being, only few studies have been carried out in the area. Our research includes elements that are considered important and elements the relevance of which have been proved in studies - not necessarily aimed at climate or the feeling of well-being.

General mood and psychosomatic symptoms, attitudes towards school⁷ are clear indicators of children's general feelings of well-being.

Therefore the following thematic units were included in the questionnaire:

1. The child's mood at school (how often s/he feels happy, bored, etc., four items, five categories of frequency);
2. Occurrence of psychosomatic symptoms (headache, feeling tired; 3 items, five categories of frequency);
3. Attitudes towards school. Here 12 statements in connection with school, studying, school community, and teachers were given, with the response categories of "agree / disagree" (three times four items);⁸

These 22 items form a convergent scale (Cronbach- α =0.806), which is suitable to examine

⁷ The relationship with teachers, school, studying, and peers is directly used to measure school climate, see Freiberg 1999.

⁸ These questions are partly the same as those used in the HBSC research, therefore these data are comparable with the results of the nationwide representative study (Aszmann 2003)

children's feeling of well-being. However, examining each variable separately is also worthy.

Attitudes towards bullying are not used as predictors of prevalence of bullying, as attitudes are indirectly related to behaviour, their relationship is not easy to detect, since people do not often behave consistently to their attitudes declared. (As shown later, our research proves that there are bullies with positive attitudes and children who are not bullies in spite of their strongly negative attitudes) Negative attitudes are understood as indicators of missing solidarity and group cohesion, and they also show that group norm is permissive of aggression and overpowering behaviour. This, at the same time is a measure of how safe – both in literally and figuratively – life is in the given group. In this sense these attitudes can be considered as indicators of feelings of well-being.

1. Children were asked how many friends they had.
2. Attitudes towards bullying. In this part 12 statements about weak children, victims and bullying were given, the response categories were „agree / disagree”.⁹

c) Background questions

As our research did not aim at exploring individual background, mostly because research literature has not found significant correlations in this field, the questionnaire had only few questions on participants' background (gender, academic achievement, the mothers' school attendance / qualifications). Schools were grouped according to the type of the settlement. “Villages” and “county seats” were clear categories. The 10 settlements out of these categories were grouped into two groups: the “city without city functions” category was introduced¹⁰. (The fourth one was “city”) Every question was coded for higher values to refer to better, more positive conditions (less frequent headaches and bullying, frequent feelings of happiness, or a more positive attitude towards school). This made it easier to analyse and interpret data.

The sample

The research took place in Hajdú-Bihar County, Hungary. 25 fifth classes from the county schools were randomly chosen.

Since two schools decided to refuse participation in the last minute, altogether 1006 pupils from 23 schools made up the research population. The sample is proportional to gender, age and type of settlement; villages are somewhat overrepresented compared to population. (Table 1,2)

Table1: Gender and grade in the sample

		Gender		Total
		Boy	Girl	
Grade	Fifth	249	242	491
	Seventh	242	229	471
Missing				44
Total		491	471	962

⁹ Work by Michael J. Boulton and his team (2002) was used in designing the questions.

¹⁰ Hajdú-Bihar County has a special settlement structure. Though there are several cities in the county with a large population, as a result of the county seat's suction effect and of different reasons of history these cities do not function as real cities. (See Süli-Zakar 1994 e.g.).

Table 2: *Gender and type of settlement in the sample*

		Gender		Total
		Boy	Girl	
Settlement type	Village	71	67	138
	City without city functions	117	115	232
	City	116	104	220
	County seat	187	186	373
Missing				43
Total		491	472	963

Procedure

Children completed -anonymously- the questionnaires in one teaching lesson at schools in April 2008, in the presence of a data collector and a school teacher. They showed no problem interpreting the questions, time was sufficient. Children were highly willing to respond.

RESULTS

Sample and background variables

As numerous research data have shown, mothers' school attendance / qualifications show a significant difference according to types of settlements: in county seats parents are more highly qualified. The qualification of mothers in cities without city functions is similar to those of in villages, - or even somewhat worse, as there are fewer graduates.

As expected, children of highly qualified mothers have significantly better school results, as do those who live in county seats, those who are fifth graders and girls. As it has been pointed out in several studies aiming at school performance and socioeconomic status – Monitor studies, PISA, National Study of Competencies - in Hungary the mother's qualification is the most dominant indicator of SES (See Horn-Sinka, 2006).

Bullying in the schools

Bullying as estimated by children

First prevalence data were asked for in general, among peers. As seen in Table 3, school bullying is a prevailing problem in the upper section of primary school (grades 5-8).

In each class, there are at least 7 children who see their peers bully others, which is remarkable.

Table 3: *How many children are bullied in your class?*

	N	%
1 child	289	28.7
2-3 children	400	39.8
More than 3 children	133	13.2
None	97	9.6
Total	919	91.4
Missing answer	87	8.6
Total	1006	100.0

The questionnaire listed seven types of bullying, and children were asked to estimate how often these occurred. As shown in Table 4, the most common type is name calling and ostracizing. Beating and threatening were relatively rare.

Table 4: *Average values of bullying events happening several times a week or more often (%)*

	Name calling	Ostracizing	Milder types of bullying	Spreading rumours	Damaging property	Beating	Threatening
Full sample	50.9	26.2	24.3	22.5	21.7	18.4	15

Research literature shows little, if any correlation between SES and bullying. However, effects of the neighbourhood can be traced, as being exposed to more frequent violence as well as aggressive models of conflict resolution all strongly affect children's behaviour.

Several data show that pupils in schools of cities lacking city functions experience bullying most frequently. Here the value of the experienced bullying index¹¹ is significantly worse. (Except for villages, where the difference is not significant.) It can be concluded that cities without real city functions are just oversized villages with similar difficulties (unemployment, poverty), but here – probably as a result of their size – the control and cohesive force of the community is less effective compared to villages with lower population.

Children in county seats experience the least physical bullying and spreading rumours. However, the total value (Experienced bullying) shows significant differences, which proves city schools to be the most peaceful ones.

Bullying behaviour

Of the above mentioned seven bullying types children were asked how often, over the previous month - they committed the seven types of bullying mentioned earlier. (Table 5.)

11 To make comparison easier we formed „the experienced bullying index” by adding up the particular bullying types.

Table 5: *Frequency of violent behaviour as admitted by children*

	3-4 times	1-2 times	never
How many times did you call others names?	17.8	51.6	30.5
How many times did you threaten someone?	2.9	12	85.1
How many times did you ostracize someone?	8.4	35.6	56
How many times did you damage someone's property?	2.5	11.3	86.2
How many times did you spread rumours about someone?	2.9	22.4	74.7
How many times did you push someone?	5.7	26.2	68.1

Seventh graders called their peers names more often, fifth graders were more frequent in spreading rumours and in beating. Girls, as they indicated, did less bullying in all types of bullying acts altogether; the difference is strongly significant except for ostracising and spreading rumours. This supports earlier findings, which concluded relational bullying to be typically a girls' type of bullying.

According to the three groups of academic achievement we experienced that weak students –except for ostracising and spreading rumours – bullied others significantly more often. Good students consistently showed less aggression, though this difference is not significant as compared to the middle group.

In the groups set up according to the mothers' school attendance no general tendencies were found. This result falls in line with the finding that school bullying can hardly be associated with socio-economic status.

Location

Children also told us where bullying generally took place. Table 6 shows these results.

Table 6: *Places where bullying happens*

	%
classroom when the teacher is not there	45.1
classroom when the teacher is there	17.6
corridor	35.6
toilet	12.8
changing rooms	49.8
gym	16.8
schoolyard	18.8
Way to or from school	17.6
During class	30.3

Our findings are different from those in the literature of other countries, which show that bullying events most frequently happen in places where children are out of adult surveillance. Answers in this study showed that pupils were most often bullied in places where they are together and should be under surveillance (in the changing rooms, in the classroom when the teacher is not there, or in the corridor). It is especially surprising to see that 30% of the pupils say that bullying events also happen during the lessons.

Wendy Craig and her research team underline that teachers and staff supervising children do not often show the right approach to bullying. When they leave children unattended and do not respond to bystanders' reports on bullying, they help bullying to spread. (Craig et al. 2000). Our data also show that teachers are not efficient in intervening these events and cannot stop them from happening.

Roles in bullying

Table 7: *Bullying roles by gender and age (%)*

		Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total
Gender***	Boy	29.6	5.7	6.9	57.8	100.0
	Girl	11.7	8.7	4.4	75.2	100.0
Grade***	Fifth	16.0	8.7	7.5	67.8	100.0
	Seventh	25.7	6.2	4.5	63.6	100.0
Full sample		20.6	7.6	6.1	65.7	100.0

*** $p < 0.001$ (*Chi-Square*)

Who are the bullies?

In the present study bullies are children who indicated a frequency higher than one or two occasions over a period of about three months in at least one type of bullying behaviour¹². (Types of bullying were not distinguished)

Our results show that 26.7% of the children (269) bullied their peers in one way or another over the previous months. According to 2005-2006 HBSC results 20.3% of children bullied others once or twice over the previous months, 5.0% of them bullied others regularly. This frequency has not significantly changed between 2002 and 2006¹³ (Várnai et al., 2009, p. 2).

Our result seems surprisingly high, but it most probably includes different roles as well. With our measures real, chronic bullies cannot be distinguished from impulsive bullies or reciprocal bullies. Therefore the number of bullies in this research is not considered a reliable indicator of school bullying¹⁴.

12 In spite of the large number of research there are no standards regarding when a child should be termed a bully. In our study the practice of Olweus' bullying questionnaire is used. (Similarly to this the statistics of the 2005-2006 HBSC minute report children bullied at least twice are termed as bullies (HBSC 2005: p. 164). In recent studies – though using different methods as well – attempt is made to differentiate between so-called „chronic bullies” from those who openly admit frequent misbehaviour. At the beginning of our study this practice cannot be followed yet.

13 15 and 17 year old youth were also tested in the HBSC study.

14 This would not be logical, as the violent atmosphere of a class is not defined by the number of bullies, rather by the frequency of bullying events.

It is interesting to consider what could explain the difference between data in the HBSC research and in the present study. Both questionnaires used self-administered completion, the time period covered was the previous few months, and in both studies bullies were defined as those committing an aggressive act more often than once or twice.

We suppose that the definition used in the HBSC questionnaire might have caused an interpretation difficulty for children. They might not have fully understood it, or the Hungarian word used there might have been interpreted as one referring to acts of rough nature¹⁵.

What can be said about bullies?

Table 8: *Bullies by grade and gender*

		Grade		Total
		Fifth	Seventh	
Gender	Boy	79	100	179
	Girl	37	39	76
Total		116	139	255
Missing				14
Total				269

There are somewhat more seventh grader bullies than fifth graders, and almost three times as many boys as girls. Bullies' academic achievement is significantly lower than those of non-bullies ($p < 0.001$), but the average of their mothers' qualification is significantly higher than that of the 'non-bullies' ¹⁶ ($p < 0.008$). There is no difference according to settlement types. (Table 8).

Amongst bullies there are fewer girls than boys classified as bullies for regular fights, pushing, threatening or damaging others' property. There is no gender difference between those who call others names, exclude them or spread rumours.

Who are the victims?

Respondents were also asked about how often they suffered from others' aggressive behaviour. Victims were defined as children bullied at least once or twice weekly in one way or another. 13.6% of the children (137) were victims, every other one of them reported having been bullied on almost a daily basis.

This result is worth comparing with the 2005/2006 HBSC findings¹⁷. The average of the 41 countries in that study shows 15% victims in the 11-year-old age- group, (13% girls and 16% boys), 14% in the 13-year-old age-group (13% and 15%). Hungarian data in the same study show 10% girl victims and 9% boys among 11 year-old children. Of the 13-year-old children there are 8% girl victims, 7% boys. Our data differ significantly from the above data again, although the difference is smaller than in the case of bullies.

There are as many boy victims as girls, but there are significantly more fifth graders than seventh graders ($p < 0.01$). This result is confirmed by the 2006 HBSC research: Hungarian data show more girl than boy victims¹⁸. Two thirds of the girl victims are fifth graders. In the case of boys the difference is smaller. (Girls may be more successful in breaking out of the victim – role.) There are more fifth grader girl victims (than boys), and fewer seventh grader victims, but the difference is not significant. (Table 9)

¹⁵ Though in a small sample children's understanding of „bántalmazás” (one of the Hungarian words used to refer to bullying) proved to mean physical violence only (Szirmai, 2008).

¹⁶ Another piece of data showing that social status cannot be related to bullying behaviour.

¹⁷ In this case those bullied at least twice during the previous month were termed victims.

¹⁸ Apart from Hungary a similar situation in the two age groups was seen only in Greenland and the Ukraine in the HBSC study.

Table 9: *Victims by gender and grade*

		Grade		Total
		Fifth	Seventh	
Gender	Boy	36	26	62
	Girl	40	21	61
Total		76	47	123

Victims and non-victims do not differ significantly in the type of settlement, academic achievement or their mothers' qualification. Fewer than half of the victims are bullied in different ways almost on a daily basis. They reported being victims of spreading rumours (36.5%), threatening (35%), property damaged (34.3%), ostracising (30.6%), name-calling (26.2%), milder forms of bullying (24.1%), beating (23.4%) several times a week.

Who are the bully-victims?

Bully-victims are children who take part in bullying both as bullies and victims. They are the ones who are most at risk for both short-term and long-term effects, which is why this group deserves special attention.

Based on our data 61 children were classified as bully-victims. They represent 6% of the total sample. There are almost twice as many fifth graders as seventh graders, and about one and a half times as many boys as girls. This falls in line with international research findings. (Table 10)

Table 10: *Bully-victims by gender and grade (%)*

		Grade		Total
		Fifth	Seventh	
Gender	Boy	21	13	34
	Girl	15	6	21
Total		36	19	55
Missing				6
Total				61

The bully-victims and the others do not differ significantly in the type of settlement or in academic achievement, but bully-victims' mothers' qualification average is significantly higher than those of the rest of the children.

Correlations of bullying and other variables

In this part we look at how roles in bullying affect views about bullying and variables of scales indicating mood. Comparisons are based on means of different variables in groups of bullying roles¹⁹. The groups of bullying roles do not overlap.

¹⁹ Please note that higher values refer to more favourable situations. To examine the differences between the group means Anova was used.

Variables showing mood

The mood of pupils was measured in four items.

Not surprisingly the mood variables of groups with varying bullying behaviours are different. (Table 11) If the four variables are added up, the resulting mood index shows the difference between the groups even more markedly.

Table 11: Mean values of the Mood variable and the items of the mood scale in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
I feel happy***	4.34	4.03	4.52	4.45	4.40
I am bored***	2.81	2.91	2.43	3.21	3.05
I feel fine**	4.31	4.04	4.26	4.40	4.35
I feel blue**	3.53	3.25	3.41	3.64	3.58
Mood index***	3.75	3.55	3.66	3.92	3.84

** $p < 0.005$

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

The average of the variables in question – with few exceptions - follows the same pattern. The best results are indicated in the averages of the “not involved” group, then in those of the bullies, then bully-victims, and finally those of the victims. This means that with regard to mood it is the victims who are in the worst situation.

The “mood index” shows significantly worse general mood in all groups involved in bullying as compared to those not involved. There is a marked difference between bullies and victims as well. This variable clearly shows the specific situation of bully-victims: they do not differ either from the bullies or from the victims significantly, they are somewhere in between.

The groups mostly differ in the variable of boredom: the difference is significant except for the difference between bullies and victims.

Variables showing stress

An important indicator of children’s feeling of general well-being is if they have psychosomatic complaints, and if yes, how often they have them. Examining the group averages of three variables a similar pattern can be drawn as in the case of the mood variable values. (Table 12) Those not involved show the best results, followed by the bullies.

Table 12: Mean values of the stress variable and the items of the stress-scale in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
Headache, stomach ache**	3.74	3.32	3.48	3.75	3.70
Feeling tired or exhausted***	2.25	2.23	2.23	2.78	2.60
Bad mood, anxiety***	3.10	2.75	2.67	3.56	3.35
Stress index ***	3.03	2.75	2.79	3.36	3.21

** $p < 0.005$

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

Between bullies and victims there is a significant difference in the mean values of each variable, with the exception of “feeling tired”. This fact shows the load victims carry.

Victims and bully-victims share a similar situation. As research data show, bully-victims encounter the largest amount of stress. Our data do not show this difference between the victims and the bully-victims in this study.

The number of friends

Results of the present research are partly in line with results of literature in other countries. Amongst respondents in our research victims have significantly fewer friends than any other group has. (Table 13). This is in line with the fact that social isolation and being victimized is closely connected (Salmivalli et al., 1997).²⁰

Table 13: Mean value of the variable of Number of friends²¹ in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bullies	Victims	Bully-victims	Not involved	Total sample
Friends	4.52	4.08	4.5	4.49	4.46
N	208	76	61	661	1006

Regarding the number of friends there is no outstanding difference between bullies, bully-victims, and those not involved. However, our research could not provide results on measures of popularity and refusal in the particular groups, the result on the number of friends can only show a rough estimate. This way it is impossible to determine if our sample agrees to results of data from other countries, i. e. that bully-victims are those most often refused in²² peer communities. (Veenstra et al., 2005) However, the difference appearing in the case of victims does indicate the less favourable social status of this group.

²⁰ It is emphasized that our research did not include data on the reciprocity and quality of friendships.

²¹ Numbers refer to the means of coded values of answers (categories), not the real average of the number of friends, but comparison is not without importance.

²² Please note that the relationship between the number of friends and popularity among friends and being refused by friends is not directly associated.

Attitudes towards school

Several research findings have shown that children who feel attached to their school, who like being there, who perform well are less likely to show bullying or / and aggressive behaviour (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Nansel et al., 2003).

The importance of teacher attitudes towards bullying has been emphasized already by Olweus (Olweus, 1993). Dorothy Espelage and her team concluded that the role participants play in the bullying event is positively correlated with the relationship with peers and teachers. Bullies and bully-victims perceive their relationship with their teachers more negative, victims and bully-victims perceive their relationship with their peers significantly more negative (Espelage et al., 2001). A recent publication by Italian researchers shows the same result (Bacchini et al., 2009).

Wienke Totura and her team unveiled further links between factors examined in their multidimensional analysis. They claim that children's assessment about the degree of attention paid by school staff is in close connection with bullying behaviour (Wienke Totura et al., 2009).

In the present study attitudes towards school were examined by 12 statements, which were to measure attitudes towards schooling, studying, teachers, and peer relationships²³. The statements were grouped into the three groups²⁴ of "Affective relations towards school"²⁵, "Study climate"²⁶, and "Social climate"²⁷. Below the correlation between attitudes towards school and roles in bullying behaviours is discussed.

a) Variables showing the affective relationship towards school

Results of Hungary in the 2006 HBSC research show that the proportion of bullies is lowest among those who like their schools (very much or at least a little); it is the highest among those not involved, which is followed by victims and then bully-victims (Várnai et al. 2009, pp.3-4).

Our data show some difference. Liking school appears in the statement of "I like to be at school". As seen in Table 14, it is not the bullies but the victims who like school the least, though the difference between them is not significant. (It is interesting to note that victims and bully-victims differ significantly only on this item. It seems that in this sample bully-victims are not so antagonistic towards school, as shown in international research – see above.)

The affective relationship index obtained by adding up the items shows that victims show the weakest bonding and not bullies. (Table 17) This is understandable when we consider that ordeals of school life make it difficult for them to develop affective relations. Most probably similar reasons stand behind the result that shows that the proportion of those who find school difficult is highest among victims. The last two statements (see later) show that this difficulty is not caused by their studies or rules, but rather by the less satisfactory nature of the time spent together with their peers. School work and rules are the hardest for bullies. Including this group bully-victims show the biggest proportion of indicating too large a workload at school.

23 Questions of the HBSC research were used in designing the attitudes.

24 The appropriacy of the grouping of attitudes was controlled by factor analysis.

25 Four statements, e.g. „I find school difficult”, „I like being at school”.

26 Four statements, e.g. „We learn interesting things at school”, „If I need help, I can count on my teachers”.

27 Four statements, e.g. „Children in my class accept me as I am”, „Most of the children in my class are nice and helpful”.

Table 14: Mean values of the items of the Affective relationship scale index in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
I find school difficult.**	1.47	1.43	1.53	1.60	1.56
I have too many tasks at school.***	1.39	1.49	1.40	1.55	1.51
I like being at school.***	1.50	1.37	1.54	1.62	1.57
School rules are too strict.***	1.53	1.61	1.52	1.68	1.64

** $p < 0.005$

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

The affective relationship index is significantly better for those not involved, compared to the other three participant groups.

It is noticeable that there is no significant difference between the choices of bullies, victims and bully-victims – except for the data mentioned above, which show that bully-victims like school better than victims do. This in other words means that whichever roles children take in bullying, involvement is accompanied by a weaker affective relationship with the school.

b) Variables of the study climate

Studying the proportion of answers given to these questions it is noticeable that –beside the fact that those not involved gave the most favourable answers- victims' answers are significantly better than those of the other two groups (bullies and bully-victims). This result is consistent with what has already been claimed as the victims' attitudes towards studying and teachers being more positive than those of bullies'. It must be caused by the victims' endeavour to ally with adults and try to get compensation for their frustrating position in the group and for being bullied by their peers. The same result appears in the 2006 HBSC data (Várnai et al. 2009, p. 4).

Contrary to the above, here it was not the victims, but the bully-victims who gave the least positive answers, which allows us to think that the attitude towards studying and teachers is the least favourable in their case. It can be said that though from our data the pupils' refusal on them cannot be detected, but teachers' refusal can – it is not likely that this negative attitude should be one-sided.

The study climate index formed by adding up the four variables is best in the case of those not involved, then of victims, then of bullies and lastly of bully-victims (Table 16.). The differences between the groups are significant, except for bullies and bully-victims, and except for comparisons between the victims and those not involved. (Table 15.)

Table 15: Mean values of the study scale items in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
We study interesting things at school.***	1.72	1.81	1.64	1.85	1.81
Our teachers treat us unfairly.***	1.60	1.77	1.59	1.85	1.77
Our teachers are interested in us as persons.	1.64	1.68	1.64	1.73	1.71
If I need help, I can count on my teachers.***	1.75	1.78	1.70	1.90	1.85

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

c) Variables regarding social climate

On variables regarding social climate it can be seen that again those not involved gave positive answers in the largest proportion. (Table 16) The basic pattern of the choices is similar: the largest number of positive answers was given by those not involved, and then follow bullies, bully-victims and finally victims. These results are also in full accordance with the results of the 2006 HBSC study (Várnai et al., 2009, p.4).

On a closer look at the items of the social climate it is remarkable that here bully-victims' answers are closer to victims' answers, – as opposed to variables of the study climate, where bully-victims' answers were closer to those of bullies. Their responses are more positive than those of the victims', but there is no significant difference between them on any of the items.

At the same time the proportion of bully-victims' answers – as a result of their middle position – is close to bullies' answers as well. With regard to the proportion of the answers significant difference is shown only in one item: in the case of "My peers accept me as I am". This item indicates the difference in status between bullies and victims. Victims feel accepted – almost as much as those in the not involved group –, whereas bully-victims and victims do not. Our sample also challenges the popular concept of bullies being frustrated and refused individuals.

As the index obtained from adding up the four variables (Table 17) shows, bully-victims do not differ significantly from bullies or victims, but the other three groups are markedly separate.

Table 16: Mean values of items on the social climate scale in groups of bullying behaviour

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
Most children in my class are nice and helpful.***	1.68	1.55	1.56	1.78	1.73
Children in my class like being together.*	1.84	1.74	1.80	1.87	1.85
Children in my class accept me as I am.***	1.85	1.61	1.64	1.90	1.85
When someone in my class feels sad, there's always someone to console him/her.**	1.74	1.80	1.80	1.85	1.82

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.005$

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

To sum up the results of the index variables we claim that the attitudes of those not involved in bullying events is more positive towards school, studying and peers as compared to attitudes of those involved. Except for the victims' study climate each group markedly differs from the not involved group. Among them the victims share the most difficult situation, their feeling of well-being is the weakest, whereas that of the bullies' is the least disadvantageous. On some markers bully-victims are closer to bullies, on others to victims, but they do not show a significant difference.

Table 17: Mean values of Affective relations, Study climate and Social climate in groups of bullying behaviours

	Bullies	Victims	Bully-victims	Not involved	Total sample
Affective relationship index***	5.61	5.53	5.78	6.28	6.06
Study climate index***	6.71	7.11	6.64	7.40	7.15
Social climate index***	7.09	6.67	6.80	7.40	7.25

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

Attitudes towards bullying

Children's attitudes towards bullying were measured in 12 statements. Our analysis aimed at exploring what inner structure the answers to the statements showed and also if there were statements influencing the answers to the other questions. Factor analysis brought no results. Based on the cluster analysis children can be put into two groups. The values of cluster medians are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Values of cluster centres

	Cluster	
	1 (N=289) „hawks”	2 (N=633) „pigeons”
It is right to ask a teacher to help someone being bullied.	1	2
Children must be punished for calling others names.	1	2
Weak children are as just good as strong ones.	1	2
I think it is OK to punish those who deserve it.	1	2
Children pick on some peers because those annoy them.	1	1
I don't like children who let themselves be pushed around.	1	1
I think children should help those bullied.	2	2
I think weak children are likeable.	2	2
Those bullied should take care of themselves.	1	1
I would not be a friend of a weak child.	2	2
It is never acceptable to bully a weaker person.	2	2
I think strong children should be stopped when they beat weaker children.	2	2

Out of all the statements the four statements given in the table differentiate the children distinctively, since in the rest of the statements agreement is too strong.

As data show, about one third of the children can be termed as "hawks", i. e. individuals having unfavourable attitudes about bullying and victims. Amongst them – as seen above – there are significantly more boys and seventh graders. The academic achievement of „pigeons” is significantly better, but –somewhat surprisingly- their parents' qualifications are significantly lower than those

of the hawks'. The type of the settlements does not correlate with the distribution of this variable.

In the following section means of attitudes towards bullying and their differences according to the groups of bullying behaviour are examined. To make comparison easier contracted variables are analysed: the variable of positive attitudes total (which shows how many of the 15 statements were judged positive), the dividing attitudes (which show how many of the 4 statements²⁸ differentiating hawks from pigeons were judged positive); and the attitudes judged negative (which shows how many of the last three statements²⁹ in list formed this way was judged positive). Group means are shown in Table 19.

If the order of the attitudes appearing in the four groups are compared, no significant differences can be seen, though some values are a bit higher up, some a bit lower.

Table 19: Mean values of attitudes about bullying in groups of bullying behaviours

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Total sample
Attitudes with negative judgement***	3.7	4.11	3.86	3.95	3.9
Dividing attitudes***	6.05	7.04	5.98	6.84	6.64
Positive attitudes total***	18.7	20.56	18.65	20.31	19.91

*** $p < 0.001$ (Anova)

The most positive are the attitudes of the victims and those of not involved, there is no significant difference between them in any of the variables. The victims' attitudes – not surprisingly – are more positive in all cases than those of the bullies. The difference is significant except for three statements only. There is no significant difference between the victims' and the bully-victims' group in the proportion of positive response to the statements.

The bullies and the victims are clearly divided by the variable of the Positive attitudes total and the variable of the dividing attitudes. The most positive attitudes are shown by the victims and by those not involved, followed by – showing a significant difference – the bullies. The most negative attitudes are shown by the bully-victims (although the difference between the last two groups is not significant.)

It is interesting to note that among the four groups there is no significant difference in how the last two attitudes³⁰ within the order of positive responses – based on the full sample responses – are judged. This can be interpreted as children sharing the same opinion about this, and their responses are not influenced by their own experiences about bullying. This seems to show a uniform view, which is too strong to call for an appeal for empathy towards the victim. A very strong, deeply rooted prejudice – i. e. to blame the victim for the bullying³¹ – is shown here, which needs a very patient, consistent effort and special methods to counter.

The relationship between clusters based on attitudes towards bullying and bullying behaviour was analysed. (Table 20)

The proportion of „hawks” is bigger among bullies, but surprisingly children with these attitudes can also be found among victims, although in a smaller proportion. This can be related

28 See Table 15.

29 These are the following: „Children bully others because they annoy them”, „I don't like children who let themselves be pushed”, „Those bullied should take care of themselves.”

30 These are statements of „I don't like children who let themselves be pushed around” and „Those who are bullied should take better care of themselves”.

31 A similarly deeply rooted prejudice appears in the case of women abused or raped, who are often blamed for their situation. Similarly to victims of bullying these women take and accept this prejudice, they feel guilt and blame themselves (as well). (See Judith Hermann: Trauma és gyógyulás. [Trauma and healing] Háttér–NANE, 2003.)

to the phenomenon of the victim's self-blame for being bullied.

It is a similarly interesting finding that there are „pigeons” among the bullies. This might conceal the lack of self-knowledge, or the pressure to meet requirements, but also individuals who are not chronic bullies being put into this group.

The fact that the proportion of „hawks” is highest in the bully-victim group is in line with the results that individuals in this group are characterized by reactive aggression, a weaker self-control, a lower level of self-confidence, weaker social skills and lower social status. (Roland & Idsøe, 2001)

Table 20: *Proportions of clusters of attitudes towards bullying in groups of bullying behaviour (%)*

	Bully	Victim	Bully-victim	Not involved	Full sample
„hawks”	53.2	18.3	57.7	24.0	31.2
„pigeons”	46.8	81.7	42.3	76.0	68.7

Summary

Our study presented some results of research aimed at Hungarian adolescents.

It can be concluded that peer bullying is an everyday phenomenon in primary schools. Name-calling, the most frequent form of bullying, is experienced by almost 30% of the children.

Somewhat surprisingly most students indicated the classroom and the changing rooms as the place where aggressive events happen, which calls our attention to teachers' responsibility and to the importance of surveillance.

Our research found a larger prevalence as compared to findings in the HBSC report, our reference study. The present research shows that 26.7 % of the children are bullies. Among them – as in most studies - there are significantly more boys than girls, more fifth graders and more low achievers. 13.6 % of the children are victims, almost half of whom are exposed to some type of bullying on a daily basis. Among them there are significantly more fifth graders, but the number of boys and girls is equal. About 50 % of them also bully, i. e. they are bully-victims. In this group of participants there are more boys than girls.

The four groups – bullies, victims, bully-victims and those not involved – formed according to their participation in the bullying event markedly differ from each other in their general mood, psychosomatic symptoms, relations to school, to their peers, to their studies and to bullying.

Our research has proved that victims are in a difficult situation. They are the ones with the fewest friends, the worst mood, and they are worst off in psychosomatic symptoms. They dislike going to school most, although they are positively related to studying. Relation to studying is worst in the case of bully-victims; social climate is perceived worse by victims. Those not involved are in the most favourable position on all measures, bullies are in the worst.

From the attitudes about bullying it seems evident that one of the focal points in countering bullying must be this: it is necessary to change the general attitudes of blaming the victims and declaring the bully not guilty.

Unfortunately our questionnaire did not allow differentiating between those chronically bullied and those bullied occasionally. In accordance with trends in international research our further research will attempt to do this. Furthermore, a self-report questionnaire always posits problems of reliability. It would be important to supplement questionnaires with other qualitative measures (observations and interviews). This is hoped to be achieved in the future.

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