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Research Paper: Bullying in Schools

If I slapped you in the face or spit on you would you care? How about telling the school that you peed your pants, even though we both know you didn't. These are just some examples of what many adults and adolescents view as a right of passage. They consider these events something that every youth must experience in life. Yet what they fail to mention is that this “right of passage” is bullying, and it is something that our youth should never have to go through. To truly tackle the issue of bullying in schools we must first understand what it is, its effects, and how to deal with it.

Whilst understanding what bullying is may seem simple and straightforward forward, it is the little differences that can truly separate bullying from aggression. We will never be able to stop bullying in our schools unless we understand what bullying is and whom it affects. According to the CDC, bullying is defined as “any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners, that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance, and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated”(Fast Facts: Preventing Bullying). There are two modes and four types of bullying. The two modes are considered direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying consists of face-to-face negative contact or interactions and is the category into which the four types of bullying fall. Indirect bullying on the other hand is considered clandestine bullying. This type of bullying

involves spreading hurtful and harmful rumors behind someone's back as well as any type of cyberbullying.

The four types of bullying are physical, relational/social, verbal, and property damage. Physical bullying is the use of physical force against the person being bullied. Examples of physical bullying are hitting, punching, kicking, tripping, spitting, and pushing. This form of bullying has the most obvious effect on the victim. Relational/Social bullying occurs when an individual or group spread hurtful and harmful rumors and excludes the victim from the group. This form of bullying harms the victim's reputation and relationships with others. It is meant to isolate and destroy the victim's relationships and friends. Cyberbullying is a tool used in relational/social bullying. Cyberbullying occurs through electronic web forums and various types of social media. This form of bullying is the hardest to identify the perpetrator because of how easy it is to hide behind a screen. Cyberbullying is one of the largest tools that is used to commit relational/social bullying. With just a few clicks someone's entire reputation can be called into question and their lives are forever changed, but not for the better. Verbal bullying is any oral or written harassment that tears its victims down or is hurtful. This includes yelling, calling mean names, making crude hand gestures, threatening, crude or crass comments, and anything handwritten or verbally said that will negatively affect the target. And the final type of bullying is property damage. This type of bullying damages anything that belongs to the victim or is in their possession. It also includes stealing or altering original items, or electronically removing important items (Gladden et al.).

Bullying is widespread and, as seen above, negatively affects many people. Bullying affects those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness the bullying. Bullying is so

common that “About 1 in 5 high school students reported being bullied on school property. More than 1 in 6 high school students reported being bullied electronically in the last year”(Fast Facts: Preventing Bullying). And whilst many students have experienced bullying some youth are more likely to experience being bullied than others:

“Nearly 40% of high school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and about 33% of those who were not sure of their sexual identity experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year, compared to 22% of heterosexual high school students. About 30% of female high school students experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year, compared to about 19% of males. Nearly 29% of White high school students experienced bullying at school or electronically in the last year compared to about 19% of Hispanic and 18% of Black high school students” (Fast Facts: Preventing Bullying).

After understanding who is affected, we can now understand how the effects of bullying during youth can translate to negative effects in adulthood. Adults who experienced bullying in their youth were each affected differently depending on the severity of the bullying and the length in which it went on but one thing that remains is that bullying has carried into their adult years no matter how “grown” they’ve become. Bullying during childhood has led to issues such as a lack of trust in relationships and behaviors of their partners and friends. Adults may be unable to communicate and have poor social skills. Some of the most common effects of bullying are anxiety and depression as well as low self-esteem. Being constantly told as a kid that they are not good enough as well as experiencing life from the outside damages the way

youth view themselves. Without proper counseling, most of those same insecurities which started at a young age carry into the way the individuals view themselves as adults. When they look in the mirror they still see that 8-10 year old that wasn't good enough or pretty enough. While most youths make it through those years with many negative long-lasting last effects, sadly some youth don't make it to adulthood. Unfortunately, many teens view suicide as the only way out of the torment that they are experiencing. It is said that "Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year, according to the CDC. For every suicide among young people, there are at least 100 suicide attempts. Over 14 percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost 7 percent have attempted it"(Bullying and Suicide).

The startling effects of bullying shouldn't just be a cautionary tale or a "right of passage", it should be the fire that ignites change. There are many ideas of ways in which bullying could be prevented but the place where we should start is in the home. Parents who do not serve the Lord need to come to Him and experience the love and the grace of Christ. It is in the heart posture of the parents where they can change and teach their children. There needs to be an emphasis on the value of human life and the lives of people that we don't understand or even get along with. Just because we may not see eye to eye does not mean that someone's life is worth more or less than another. Sadly not everyone wants Christ yet there still needs to be practical ways to prevent not just bullying but its effects over the years. Victims of bullying should get counseled to properly process and work through the negative effects that the bullying had on them. Schools need to put plans and policies in place that make bullying unacceptable. Kids need to be trained to speak up or get an adult involved when they see bullying take place firsthand. Yet one of the oldest yet

most effective ways to prevent bullying is for adults and parents to model how people should be treated. Most bullies bully others because it is their parents who are bullying them or those around them. Because they are seeing negative behavior modeled they perceive it to be acceptable behavior even when it isn't. This needs to change and bullying needs to be stopped.

With these truths and understandings, we are now able to truly tackle the issue of bullying in schools through our understanding of what bullying is, its effects, and how to deal with it. Bullying is not a "right of passage" and should not be treated that way. It is our responsibility to do all that we can to stop bullying and the effects that it carry's into our adult lives. Whether you are/were the bully or being bullied we must bring change so that youth no longer have to experience that pain that many others already experienced.

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