This negative phenomenon has started to appear, lately, on the global and national agenda, acquiring new trends that are in continuous development so that, at present, we can affirm with certainty that the 21st century seems to be a century of challenges. Bullying is a specific form of aggression, which has a repetitive, systematic character, directed against one or more people who have difficulties defending themselves, with the aim of demoralizing them, diminishing their self-esteem and minimizing their role in the social group. In the last period, this phenomenon is increasingly common among children and adolescents, associated with a multitude of negative consequences for both victims and aggressors. The entire community has a moral obligation to prevent this aggression. Unlike physical violence, bullying includes several types of violence, such as: verbal violence (through insults, nicknames or even threats), relational violence (through isolation, spreading rumours) and online violence or as some call it cyberbullying (public posting of derogatory messages, pictures, etc.).

Main part

The notion of “bullying” would translate correctly as an “intimidation”, but it is not limited to this, it starts from simple annoyance, tagging, mocking, spreading rumors and sometimes it can reach to physical violence. Bullying behavior is felt especially when there are economic, racial, cultural, age differences... Children very easily take over this behavior from adults, older children pick up from viewed sources such as television, the Internet 2.

It is necessary to highlight and establish certain conceptual boundaries, because depending on them we will know how we must act or not act in certain situations in society and in the communities which we come from.

1 Pavlencu Mariana, PhD, Associate Professor, Police Lieutenant Colonel. Interests: law, especially public, constitutional law, legal protection of human rights. E-mail: mariana.pavlencu@gmail.com

2 Definition, forms and methods of combating bullying https://www.parintiicerschimbare.ro/bullying-definitie-forme-metode-de-combatere/ (accessed at 19.09.22)
In the last period of time we are a bit confused about this topic because if until a few years ago, the topic of bullying was not taken seriously and was not considered a problem, now, we think, we have gone a little to the other extreme and everything that means conflict between children/adults tends to be categorized as a new phenomenon, the bullying phenomenon.

It is important not to omit this phenomenon from our agenda, not to ignore it, to minimize it, not to consider it as something “normal”, something “natural” to happen between people or justifying it by the fact that between individuals this attempt to tease each other has always been present, but in fact it is not similar to mutual teasing. Bullying has become a component part of the reality of our days, having different forms of manifestation. Globally and nationally, this phenomenon affects a growing circle of people. All the people involved in this phenomenon suffer, the one who bullies, those who are subjected to aggression, suffer the witnesses who sometimes assist helplessly in such situations, either out of fear or the inability to act. These groups of people are suffering and are at risk of being left with psychological sequelae, sometimes even with certain mental health problems, both at their age and often they can remain affected for the rest of their lives.

Bullying has many definitions. It is important to specify that it occurs at least between two people or within a group of people or even between several groups of people. Some doctrinaires believe that the notion of bullying could be replaced with others, such as: aggression, beating, brutality, but we believe that these labels come to “mask” the true phenomenon.

The phenomenon of bullying is characterized by several elements of its own. A first element is that in an emerging conflict the position of superiority is present (someone being bigger, stronger, more beautiful than the other). Another element is intent (the intention to do harm, to make fun of someone, to hurt them in some way, etc.) and a final element is repetitiveness (if this behavior happens only once, we cannot categorize it as bullying, but if this aggressive behavior is repeated several times then it can be categorized as bullying).

Researching the studies in the field, we notice that bullying manifests itself differently, the most frequent manifestations are: intimidation, teasing, harassment, humiliation.

Intimidation is an aggressive behavior that affects the perception of the targeted subjects about their identity and that of other people. It also affects how other people think about those who are intimidated and aggrieved. Intimidation is used to manipulate, control or attack another person. It can manifest itself in the form of beatings, shoving, dispossess of property or their damage. This type of behavior also aims to isolate a child from a group based on certain criteria, through social conditioning (for example: “Get out of here!”, “Don’t talk to him/her!”, “You don’t..."
Teasing is harmful, it includes calling a person names, ridiculing, stigmatizing, actions that cause a person sadness, anger, make that person feel hurt or furious. Usually, teasing is aimed at physical appearance, personal qualities, manner of speaking, clothing, social status. Thus, not infrequently, overweight people happen to be called “whale”, “elephant”, etc., the tallest – “giraffe”, “giant”, shorter people – “dwarf”, individuals with less financial possibilities – “poor”, those who wear glasses – “four eyes”, etc. Teasing becomes harassment when it is repeated regularly and degenerates into threats or even violence.

Harassment ranges from physical to psychological assaults. The behaviors that harassers adopt are repeatedly insulting, hitting, nicknaming, and demeaning those who feel defenseless. Harassment can also manifest itself by spreading false rumours, which leads to damage to the image of the targeted person.

Humiliation manifests itself through shouting, insults and hitting in public, in front of other people: either on the street, in a restaurant, or in the yard. Any form of manifestation of bullying is harmful for harmonious communication in society.

The phenomenon of bullying is present in all social groups of society: kindergarten, school, workplace, community, family but especially it is found in adolescent groups. The consequences of bullying are, as a rule, negative, influencing the behavior of all the witnesses of aggressive actions. This behavior affects the child’s/person’s self-image.

As a result of a study carried out by the “SocioPolis” Investigation and Consultancy Center, at the request of UNICEF Moldova, it was observed that in the Republic of Moldova, approximately 86.8% of the total number of pupils in the 6th - 12th grades are affected by bullying. The influence of bullying on students is different: some students become victims of bullying, others aggressors or witnesses.

Some of the students do not fall into just one group from those nominated above, they are sometimes victims, sometimes witnesses of bullying situations, in some cases aggressors. Practically, every third teenager, participating in the study, in different situations, was both a victim, a witness and an aggressor (34.3%). This category of teenagers is more frequent in the urban environment. Also, knowing all the roles is more common among boys, high school pupils, and those with better academic success. Every 4th pupil (26.2%) is a victim of bullying and has witnessed

---

4 What is bullying and how can we avoid it? http://invento.md/index.php?id=270 (accessed at 27.09.22)
5 Bullying and its effects https://www.clinicaoananicolau.ro/bullying/ (accessed at 29.09.22)
6 Study carried out by the “SocioPolis” Investigation and Consultancy Center, at the request of UNICEF Moldova, Chisinău 2019, https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/3146/file/Bullying-ul%20%C3%AEn%20t%C3%A2ndu%20adolescen%A8%9Bilor%20din%20Republica%20Moldova.pdf (accessed at 02.09.22)
bullying situations on other children. The given situations are also common among girls and secondary school pupils. The share of pupils, who are only in one position, in cases of bullying, is low: 11.0% are only witnesses, 8.5% are only victims and 0.9% only aggressors.  

The latest international surveys show that between 29% and 46% of children are victims of bullying. The UNESCO report Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying, 2019 includes some data on the bullying situation in the Republic of Moldova. The report attests that the total share of child victims of bullying is 34.7% (34.0% among boys and 35.4% among girls) in the Republic of Moldova, being higher than in the neighboring country Romania (33.8%), but lower than in Ukraine (37.6%) and the Russian Federation (42.5%). The report specifies that there are differences by age category, thus, the prevalence is 33.9% for 11-year-old pupils, 38% for 13-year-olds and 32.1% for 15-year-olds.  

Bullying cases involve at least one bully and one victim, and in some cases there are also witnesses. The bully wants to be the coolest by hurting, intimidating or offending those around him. He has a temperamental, inflexible, confident character and does not like to accept the rules established by anyone. Most of the time he lacks empathy and even enjoys causing pain to others. Wants to dominate and control others, exaggerates in ordinary situations. The bully abuses power to intentionally hurt others, deliberately and repeatedly.  

Bullying behavior of the aggressor, which is not stopped in time, leads to the wrong belief, both of the aggressor and of all the witnesses of such behavior, that problems can only be solved by violent methods. In society, bullying behavior leads to the intensification of crime, especially among teenagers and young people, but also to the frequency of psycho-emotional disorders.  

The victim (the aggressed person) is overwhelmed by fear. Some people are prone to abuse because they are “different” from others.  

Within this phenomenon, the witness is the one who sees the bullying phenomenon, but decides not to intervene, most of the time out of fear of becoming a victim himself. Unfortunately, in some cases, the spectators are the ones who instigate the aggressor to abuse the victim. Most viewers passively accept, watching and doing nothing. Very often, passive bystanders form the audience of the bully who wants to gain attention and popularity. Thus, he is encouraged to continue the aggressive behavior even though the bystander can play an important role in stopping such aggression.  

7 Study carried out by the “SocioPolis” Investigation and Consultancy Center, at the request of UNICEF Moldova, Chisinau 2019, https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/3146/file/Bullying-ul%2C%3AEn%20r%2C%20adolescent%2C8%9Bilor%20din%20Republic%20Moldova.pdf (accessed at 02.09.22)  
9 Bullying and the effects of a destructive phenomenon https://www.reginamaria.ro/articole-medicale/bullying-ul-si-efectele-unui-fenomen-distrugator (accessed at 11.08.22)
The main feature of bullying is the asymmetrical and unbalanced power relationship between those who bully and those who are bullied. Furthermore, it is not occasional or a singular event, but a pattern of behavior that repeats itself over time against the same person with an obvious difference in power. Through various acts of bullying, the stronger one systematically, intentionally and cruelly aims to hurt, frighten or intimidate the weaker person by charging himself with pleasant emotions.

In order to more easily identify subjects who may engage in bullying behaviors and to provide appropriate interventions to them, it is necessary to implement different scientifically validated assessment tools that measure both the general frequency of aggression and victimization through bullying, as well as of the specific forms of bullying behaviour. An example is the experience of Australia, which implemented the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument - Bully/Target (APRI-BT), this is a multidimensional scale, consisting of 36 items, developed to measure the frequency of aggression and victimization through bullying among children and teenagers, each in relation to 3 sub-domains – physical, verbal and social. In Australia the scale has been used and tested on a population of children and adolescents, showing adequate psychometric properties.10

Unfortunately, the effects of bullying can be serious, sometimes even fatal. It indicates that people, whether children or adults, who are constantly subject to abusive behavior are at risk of stress, illness and even suicide. Victims of this phenomenon may suffer long-term, or even lifelong, emotional problems, behavioral problems, social problems, loneliness, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, an increase in the frequency of illnesses.

This broad phenomenon, most of the time, leaves physical, verbal, relational and even emotional traces. On the physical level, they can be associated from thrusts and kicks to bites, scratches, and bruises. On the verbal level, we can associate them with yelling, the use of nicknames, threats and insults that bring anxiety and discomfort to the victim. At the relational level, the victims end up isolating themselves, or being intimidated and even manipulated, which will also affect them socially, because they will marginalize and exclude themselves from other situations. Most of the time, emotional bullying leaves more pronounced consequences over time, the victim being affected in the long term by the incident and, along with it, their personality is affected by: decreasing self-esteem; confidence in one’s own strength; trust in those around you; the impossibility of managing tense situations, etc.

Based on these particularities and the way this phenomenon unfolds many researchers believe that this phenomenon can be classified into three basic types of bullying behavior:

— physical: hitting, pushing, snapping, pinching, forcing the other through physical contact;

---

10 Bullying and the effects of a destructive phenomenon https://www.reginamaria.ro/articole-medicale/bullying-ul-si-efectele-unui-fenomen-distrugator (accessed at 11.08.22)
— **verbal:** threats, teasing, insults, mockery, blackmail, nicknames, spreading rumors and lies;
— **emotional/ psychological:** intentional exclusion of someone from a group or activity, manipulation, ridicule.  

Undetected in time, bullying can leave trauma and irreversible repercussions on the person’s adaptability in society, whether we are talking about the victim, the aggressor or even the witness. It is important to know that any problem is easier to prevent than to “treat”. They say that aggression is the strength of the weak. Insults and teasing can mask a negative self-image, a difficulty in expressing what one feels, a desire for affirmation, a sense of failure, jealousy, etc. And so, all this, not assumed, is projected onto the other.  

Currently, many countries in the world are interested in developing educational policies to prevent and combat bullying, because it has serious consequences for both victims and aggressors, including witnesses. People involved in bullying situations, as aggressors, victims or witnesses, are more prone to absenteeism, abandonment of the activities they were previously involved in, have lower performance in all daily activities. Aggressors or victims of bullying are more susceptible to symptoms of depression and anxiety, have low self-esteem, feel lonely, in most cases, lose interest in various activities. The emotional and behavioral problems that both victims and abusers suffer from leave their mark for the whole life. In order to prevent bullying situations, the establishment of various strategies that can be implemented at all levels of education of society members, starting from the family and continuing in the other stages of socialization (kindergarten, school, college) is welcomed. An example at school level would be:

— organizing discussions about bullying, its consequences, prevention strategies at the class and school level;
— organizing discussions with parents about bullying and its consequences;
— ensuring a friendly environment in the classroom and in the school;
— adopting clear anti-bullying and non-discrimination positions and including them in the internal regulations of the institution;
— providing support (training, information and didactic materials) for teachers, the school’s management team and technical staff, so that all can respond adequately to bullying situations;
— providing consultation and support to pupils from school psychologists.

---

11 Bullying behavior https://proform.snsnsh.ro/baza-de-date-online-cu-resurse-educationale-pentru-sustinerea-educatiei-incluzive-de-calitate/comportamentul-de-bullying (accessed at 13.08.22)
12 Bullying and the effects of a destructive phenomenon https://www.reginamaria.ro/articole-medicale/bullying-ul-si-efectele-unui-fenomen-distrugator (accessed at 11.08.22)
There are many situations when not only one person can be the victim of the bullying phenomenon, being harassed and affected; the phenomenon of bullying can also include wider social circles (friends, family members, some witnesses who empathize with the victim or even those who get involved in activities and discussions with an educational purpose).

People who want to contribute to the prevention of this phenomenon are affected by it and sometimes feel powerless, losing confidence in their ability to act, being susceptible to burnout, depression, defensive behavior.

**Conclusions**

An important element is the relationship between parents and their children, in reality not only the school is in charge of educating and training a child and not only the school is responsible for their development. The connection between parents and children is very important and is a resource in the development of children, and this aspect should lead parents to be much more involved.

In order to have a protected and safe society, all members of society need to ensure and respect social-educational norms in everyday life, such as: respect for each other, to understand that any negative action will create discomfort for those in critical situations, to be willing to communicate in a friendly dialogue in order to more easily overcome the situation in which they found themselves. Let everyone contribute to building and maintaining healthy relationships in society or whenever it will be necessary to ask for help. Every member of society is valuable and can be part of the change.

**References**

3. What is bullying and how can we avoid it? http://invento.md/index.php?id=270 (accessed at 27.09.22)
5. Bullying among adolescents from the Republic of Moldova.
6. Study carried out by the “SocioPolis” Investigation and Consultancy Center, at the request of UNICEF Moldova, Chisinau 2019, https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/3146/file/Bullying-ul%20%C3%AEn%20r%C3%A2ndul%20adolescenc%C8%9Bilor%20din%20Republica%20Moldova.pdf (accessed at 02.09.22)
9. Bullying behavior https://proform.snsn.ro/baza-de-date-online-cu-resurse-educationale-pentru-sustinerea-educatiei-incluzive-de-calitate/comportamentul-de-bullying (accessed at 13.08.22)


DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0053.9764
http://dx.doi.org/ 10.5604/01.3001.0053.9764

Keywords: Bullying, aggression, harassment, aggressor, individuals, subjects, behavior, witness, victim.

Summary: One of the pressing phenomena affecting contemporary society at the present stage is bullying. This is a serious form of aggression that can manifest itself in individuals of all ages. Within this phenomenon, there will always be an aggressor – the one who bullies, and a victim - the bullied. Both positions generate important long-term effects in the emotional development of the person. Whether they are victims, abusers or even witnesses to this process, their lives can be deeply marked by the consequences of this abusive behavior. Therefore, the detection and correction of such behavior is a priority for the subjects of the given phenomenon.

Palarbas clave: maltrato a personas vulnerables, agresión, hostigamiento, agresor, individuos, actores, comportamiento, testigo, víctima

Resumen: Uno de los fenómenos más preocupantes que afectan a la sociedad contemporánea es el maltrato a personas vulnerables. Se trata de una forma grave de agresión que puede manifestarse en personas de cualquier edad. Dentro de este fenómeno, siempre habrá un agresor - el que acosa - y una víctima - la persona acosada. Ambos roles provocan grandes repercusiones a largo plazo en el desarrollo emocional de una persona. Sea víctima, agresor o incluso testigo de este fenómeno, la vida de una persona puede quedar profundamente marcada por las consecuencias de estos comportamientos violentos en su desarrollo emocional. Es por ello que detectar y corregir este tipo de actos es una prioridad para los actores del fenómeno en cuestión.