Module 7: Intervention strategies for teachers

Objective:
• Equip teachers with practical intervention techniques for addressing bullying when it occurs.
• Differentiate between effective interventions and strategies that may inadvertently escalate the situation.

Summary of content:
• Immediate intervention techniques when witnessing bullying.
• Step-by-step intervention protocols for verbal, physical, and cyberbullying incidents.
• The role of bystanders: engaging students in supporting victims and reporting incidents.
Use simulations to demonstrate the consequences of bystander inaction and active intervention.
• How to involve parents and school administration effectively.

Lesson 1. Immediate intervention techniques when witnessing bullying

How can teachers intervene in an effective way, when bullying occurs in schools? There are different strategies that can be adopted, each one of them being different depending on the students that are involved and the incident.

A very important strategy that the teachers could adopt, so that the students could immediately report if they were a victim or witness of a bullying incident would be to organize a Safe Reporting System in school for these moments. If the teachers from the schools managed to build a safe and anonymous system where the kids could report about a bullying case, even though they were a victim, or just a witness to the incident, it would encourage bystanders to report without fear of retaliation and the students experiencing bullying to seek help and the teachers could help them faster (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Anonymous reporting of the bullying cases often leads to early identification of problems and enables faster intervention by school staff for solving the problem (Guerra et al., 2011).

Another immediate strategy that could be used in schools is to organize the school personnel so that most of the spaces in school would be supervised by a teacher. Bullying frequently happens in areas that are less supervised, like hallways, bathrooms, play grounds. So, having an adult in these areas could reduce the frequency of bullying incidents in school (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Also, when incidents still happen, the school personnel would see them and they can provide immediate support to the victim as well as talking to the bully and helping them understand their mistakes (Swearer at al., 2010).

A very fast and effective strategy for combating bullying is offering **Clear, Structured Responses** as soon as they see an incident happening. For keeping the school as a safe

environment, bullying incidents need to be addressed as soon as they happen, teachers don't need to wait to stop them. By addressing the bullying as soon as it happens, the teachers show that the students' problems are taken seriously and that they are not alone in solving them (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Clear and structured responses may include separating the students at first and talking to them about the problem that occurred, offering counselling to both parties involved, than organizing different activities with the students, during classes, aiming for the empathy development of the students (Espelage et al., 2013).

Reflection/discussion question:

Think of a moment when you witnessed a bullying incident on the hallway on your way to a class. What did you do at that moment and how would you try to help them solve the problem now?

Lesson 2. Step-by-step intervention protocols

Current strategies, which typically rely on teachers to deliver restrictive content, may lead young people to ignore the messages as a form of rejecting authority and asserting independence (Ybarra et al., 2016. Teenagers who participate in these programs gain self-awareness, emotional control, social skills including empathy, perspective-taking, and respect for variety, friendship-building abilities, and a decrease in delinquent conduct.

1. *A first step intervention* is to better understand the factors that may generate a type of bullying behaviour. Anger is considered the most significant predictor of bullying actions, in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research (Endresen & Olweus, 2001).

2. *A second step is to prevent the events by providing assemblies and programs in which the children can be actively involved*.
When bullying is discussed like any other topic, it sets a school-wide standard that bullying is unacceptable. This creates a culture of awareness where everyone, including bystanders, feels a responsibility to discourage bullying. Norwegian school health services attempt to build up mental and physical health, provide positive social and environmental circumstances, and avoid illness (Kvarme et al., 2020).

3. *Guide the children to be involved in the process*
Some studies are reinforcing the idea of helping the children become proactive and in a case study for combating cyberbullying showed the impact of leading children to stand for each other. They created a mentorship system in which older students teach younger students about ethical internet use and cyberbullying avoidance (Media Awareness, 2006). This mentorship program not only encourages children to take important measures against cyberbullying, but it also helping them build leadership qualities.

Another option to engage kids in proactive efforts is to organize a school play focusing on

themes of respect and inclusiveness, utilizing role-play situations to teach positive responses to cyberbullying (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

4. *Emotional program intervention*

Some studies showed that working in small groups with the students that are aggressive and violent by showing them ways to redirect their intense emotions might reduce the undesirable behaviours. For example, in 2021(Gaffney et al., 2021), a study assessed the impact of an emotional literacy intervention aimed at reducing bullying victimization in UK schools. The intervention involved teaching emotional skills to small student groups, with students divided into low emotional development and high emotional development groups based on scores from an emotional test scale given in school. The program included 12 weekly lessons delivered by trained teaching with the purpose of developing with the children four main areas like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills (Gaffney et al., 2021).

The MUDI modules regarding SEL-based teaching and skills provide the necessary resources for teachers/ schools to start implementing emotional programs.

Lesson 3. The role of bystanders: engaging students in supporting victims and reporting incidents

When a bullying act is happening in school is important to have many students that are ready to stand up for the victim and be pro-active in that moment, so we can make sure that we are not reinforcing that behaviour. To foster positive bystander behaviour, students need to have an integrative approach to addressing bullying effectively (Mazzone, 2020).

Case study example:

Adrian is a fourteen years boy who has been experiencing bullying at school for the past few months. It started with name-calling and teasing about his appearance, but it has escalated to physical bullying, including shoving and tripping. Adrian is feeling increasingly isolated and anxious, and his grades have started to slip. He is afraid to tell his parents or teachers about the bullying because he doesn't want them to worry or get involved. While some students may witness the bullying, they remain passive bystanders. They may feel uncomfortable intervening or fear becoming a target themselves. This lack of support reinforces Adrian's isolation and makes him feel   even   more   vulnerable.
When the students are taught to be active and to speak up in this situations, Adrian's experience can look like this: Adrian has a group of supportive peers who actively stand up to

the bullies. They might directly confront the bullies, defend Alex, or report the incidents to a teacher or authority figure. This proactive behavior can significantly reduce the impact of the bullying on Alex.

Firstly, the teachers can increase students awareness of bullying by showing them the various forms that bullying can have, such as physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying, as well as recognizing the signs and potential impacts on victims. This involves educating students about the prevalence of bullying, the emotional and psychological consequences it can have, and the importance of empathy in responding to such situations (Pozzoli & Gini, 2013).

Secondly, students need to develop and practice new skills that can help them intervene in appropriate and constructive ways when they witness bullying. These skills might include assertive communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to safely report incidents to trusted adults or authorities. Role-playing scenarios and guided discussions can help students build confidence and competence in these areas.

Thirdly, the teachers can help students by encouraging and supporting them to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations. It is important to create an enviroment that can foster values and reward positive bystander behaviour, such as stepping in to stop bullying, offering support to victims, or reporting incidents promptly.

It is important to create a routine and to have clear rules that can help students understand the importance of standing up when they meet a bullying situation. One effective approach is to provide students with opportunities to report bullying incidents anonymously. This can be achieved by implemeting secure platforms such as anonymous online reporting forms or suggestion boxes. These channels ensure that students feel safe sharing their experiences without fear of retaliation, encouraging them to come forward with critical information.

Additionally, inviting students to speak at school meetings about their experiences, concerns, and suggestions can empower them and amplify their voices. These provide students with a platform to express their perspectives on creating a bullying-free environment. Hearing directly from their peers can also foster empathy and understanding among students, helping to build a community where everyone takes responsibility for promoting kindness and respect.

On top of that, organizing activities and campaigns focused on creating bullying-free schools can provide values of respect and inclusion in students. Schools can host workshops, interactive theater performances, or team-building exercises that highlight the importance of empathy and the impact of bullying.

Lesson 4. How to involve parents and school administration effectively

Involving the parents in the events that happen during the school hours to their kids is also a very important aspect that should be encouraged by the teachers. This practice requires building a strong partnership between the school personnel and the kids' families, having a clear communication and sharing accountability.

Teachers can help by organizing **workshops for the parents,** for example, where they can explain to them about how to recognize signs of bullying and how to support their children at home and how to be empathic with them and the situations that they are facing. Educating the parents in these aspects can help with improving intervention outcomes by aligning the school and home approaches for bullying interventions. The parents can learn how to recognize warning signs in their kids' behaviour, understanding the things their children go through and also discussing about digital safety, as the frequency of cyber bullying is also increasing (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Another way in which we can involve parents is to include **parents training courses** such as bullying symptoms and impacts, effective communication skills, and good parenting techniques. These programs should promote a supportive home environment for children by providing parents with the knowledge and skills they need to recognize and respond to bullying. These workshops can help parents build a feeling of community by allowing them to share their experiences and encourage one another (Huang et al., 2019).

Schools should create clear communication channels, such as **newsletters, informational meetings, or dedicated sections on the school website**, to ensure parents are aware of anti-bullying policies and procedures. Schools can invite parents to share success stories of how they have helped their children navigate bullying situations, whether by addressing issues at home, supporting their child's emotional needs, or working collaboratively with the school. These stories can be shared during school events, newsletters, or parent-teacher association meetings, inspiring other parents and demonstrating practical solutions that have worked in real-life scenarios.

In addition, schools should urge parents to take an active role in fostering a safe and supportive home environment. This involves offering parents resources, such as guides or workshops, that teach good communication tactics, conflict resolution solutions, and how to inculcate empathy and kindness in their children. Schools can also emphasize the significance of monitoring internet activities to prevent cyberbullying and creating a home environment in which children feel comfortable sharing their concerns.

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