



# Self-evaluation of individual dignity as a predictor of bullying among primary school children

## Auto evaluación de la autoestima para predecir la exposición al bullying en los estudiantes de secundaria

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#### ABSTRACT:

The article deals with the self-evaluation cognitive, emotional and behavioral components of individual dignity as a predictor of bullying among primary school children. The questionnaire «Assessment of children's dignity» was used to study the self-evaluation of individual dignity. The MPVS-24 method was used to identify the exposure to bullying. According to the results, the presence of significant differences in a number of indicators of individual dignity and bullying among primary school children were identified.

**Keywords:** Bullying, individual dignity, primary school children

#### RESUMEN:

El artículo trata la autoestima como un predictor de la exposición a bullying en niños pequeños. Se investigan los componentes cognitivos, emocionales y conductuales de las virtudes individuales de los niños, las formas de manifestación de bullying y su relación. Para el estudio de la autoevaluación se utilizó el cuestionario "evaluación de los méritos del niño" K. Dalsgaard, para identificar la exposición a bullying y se usó la metodología Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale. La muestra fue de 42 alumnos de 10 a 11 años (22 niños y 20 niñas). Los resultados del estudio empírico revelaron diferencias significativas en varios indicadores de las ventajas individuales y la exposición de bullying a los estudiantes de secundaria.

**Palabras clave:** Bullying, méritos individuales, estudiantes de secundaria.

## 1. Introduction

The school has a special place among the institutions for socialization, allowing children to acquire social experience. Often the indifference or mistakes of teachers, as well as negative relationships with peers in school are more important for school children and entail more severe consequences in the future than intra-family disagreements or loss of family influence. Meanwhile, the safety for all participants of the educational process is a necessary condition the effectiveness of training. However, unfortunately, in the educational environment, questions are increasingly raised about the manifestation of aggression among schoolchildren. School bullying and humiliation by both

school children and teachers have a negative impact on the atmosphere in the school, and fear and depression affect pupils' attendance, concentration and performance (Regush, 2009).

Increasingly, there are reports of child abuse, posted videos about beating and bullying classmates and physically weaker children, and we can observe this in the media, especially on the Internet. This is a confirmation that this problem is taking on a massive character and is relevant. It is important to understand that bullying affects not only its immediate participants, but also all pupils in the classroom, school and, ultimately, a much wider range of people, which is also confirmed by research in this field (Petrosiants, 2011).

For the first time the problem of school violence arose in the early 20th century, but a systematic study of this problem was carried out by Scandinavian scientists D. Olweus, P.P. Haniman, A. Pikas, E. Roland (Roland, 1989). They developed the concept of bullying and defined it as harassment, discrimination, persecution. Much attention was paid to the problem of bullying in the works of D. Lain, E. Miller (Lain, Miller, 2001), M. Solberg, D. Olweus (Solberg, Olweus, 2003), K. Rigby (Rigby, 1995), etc.

What is bullying? As D. Olweus described it, bullying is a special kind of violence when one person (or group) physically attacks or threatens another person (group), the latter of whom is weaker and cannot defend himself either physically or morally (Olweus, 1978). The distinctive features of bullying are regularity (repeatability over time) and the fact that the subjects of interaction ("offender" and "victim"), as a rule, are representatives of the same social group. These characteristics make it possible to understand the difference between bullying and the occasional fight or quarrel that sometimes occurs between people.

D. Lain gives the following definition: "Bullying is a prolonged physical or psychological abuse by a group or an individual against a person who is unable to defend himself a given situation" (Grebennikova, 2017).

Currently, bullying as a form of violence around the world is receiving great attention. Several large national and international servers (such as Bullying.org, Bullying Online, Stop bullying, Bullying.net, etc.) are entirely devoted to bullying (Olweus, 1991).

School violence manifests itself in several forms. Firstly, these are physical manifestations of *harassment*: blows, kicks, pokes, etc. According to experts, this form, although it is the most painful from the point of view of an outside observer, is not the most common. It is known that boys more often than girls use physical influences (Volchegorskaya, Zhukova, Frolova, Shishkina, Kalugina, 2019). The second and most common variant of bullying is verbal impact: mockery, ridicule, gossip, etc. Having become a universal laughingstock, the victim finds himself in a situation where he cannot protect himself.

What are the causes of school bullying? This question is extremely complex, but, nevertheless, scientists presumably name several basic ones: academic performance, appearance, manner of dressing, dialect, physical strength, self-esteem, fear and anxiety, depression, diseases of the musculoskeletal system, popularity. However, it should be said that it is very difficult to experimentally prove all these causes, since some of them can simultaneously be the consequences of this phenomenon. Of particular interest in the study of school bullying is the question of the personal qualities of the persecutors and their victims.

In recent years, a new methodological and theoretical context for studying the strengths and weaknesses and resources of the individual has become positive psychology - a direction that proclaims the need to balance the primary attention to deviations, problems and diseases, close attention to the positive aspects of the personality and its functioning. Positive psychology is based on the concept of "authentic happiness" by the American scientist M. Seligman, who for the first time suggested considering the formation of a positive assessment of life satisfaction in connection with the development of the most powerful aspects of the human personality — positive personality traits, united by the concept of "individual virtues" (Seligman, 2006). The concept of "dignity" expresses a person's attitude to life, its meaning and values. It is an extremely deep and capacious concept, having a very specific ethical dimension and content. The dignity of the person is characterized by the comprehension and objective self-esteem of the individual of his social significance as a person, the emotional living of the need to strengthen and develop self-respect and resistance on this basis, as well as the ethical self-regulation of his actions and deeds, the mobilization of volitional efforts that allow him to behave in a worthy manner in any life circumstances. The model of personal dignity in the context of moral relations includes a syncretic combination of interrelated and interdependent elements. The structure of individual dignity, which is a unique combination of positive qualities of an individual, contains

cognitive, emotional and behavioral components, the identification of which is based on self-assessment of one's own qualities, abilities, and worldview (Volchegorskaya, 2011).

Younger school age is the age of greatest prosperity in the affective-need sphere, the age of the predominance of positive emotions and personal activity. It is this age that is favorable for the formation of the individual virtues of primary school children. The present study is devoted to identifying the role of self-evaluation of individual dignity as a predictor of bullying among primary school children.

## 2. Methods

The sample consisted of 42 primary schoolchildren aged 10-11 years. Of these, 22 boys and 20 girls.

As a tool for studying the individual dignity of primary schoolchildren, we selected the questionnaire Applicability of Character Strengths Rating Scales (Seligman, 2006). The questionnaire consists of 48 questions that make it possible to evaluate twenty-four personal qualities combined in six groups: wisdom and knowledge (curiosity, love of knowledge, openness to the new, originality, ability to communicate, ability to see perspective); courage (bravery, perseverance, integrity of character); humanism and love (kindness, the ability to love and be loved); justice (collectivism, justice, leadership skills); temperance (self-control, prudence, humility and modesty); transcendence or spirituality (aesthetic feeling, gratitude, hope, faith, ability to forgive, humor, enthusiasm). The number of points for each personal quality can vary from 0 to 10. The higher the total value, the more expressed is the specific (individual) dignity of the child.

**Table 1**  
Questionnaire Applicability of  
Character Strengths Rating Scales

<b>№</b>		<b>Very similar to me</b>	<b>In general, similar to me</b>	<b>Maybe, similar, maybe not</b>	<b>Not about me</b>	<b>Absolutely not about me</b>
1	I'm not bored, even when I'm alone					
2	If I want to find out something, I look at a book or a computer					
3	I'm happy to learn something new					
4	I hate going to museums					
5	When my friends and I fight during a game, I usually understand why this happens					
6	My parents often notice that I'm wrong					
7	I keep thinking of new things to do					
8	I like to dream more than others					
9	I can easily join any company					
10	When I'm happy, sad, or angry, I always know why					
11	My behavior makes people think I'm older than I really am					

12	I always know what's important in my life					
13	I'm not afraid to defend my opinion, even if it's scary					
14	Even if others disagree, I do what I think is right					
15	My parents often praise me for getting the job done					
16	I get what I want because I work hard					
17	I wouldn't read someone else's letter or diary					
18	I'm willing to lie to get out of trouble					
19	I try to be friendly with my new classmates					
20	Recently, I voluntarily helped a neighbor (parents)					
21	I know that for someone I am the most important person					
22	Even if we often quarrel with family or friends, I still love them in my heart					
23	I really like to do something together with others (in a circle or in a section)					
24	At school, I'm good at working in a team					
25	Even if I don't like someone, I still try to be honest with them					
26	I always admit when I'm wrong					
27	In any game, I'm asked to be the captain					
28	I am a leader and my friends respect me					
29	If I need to do something, it's easy for me to give up the TV					
30	I'm always late					
31	I try not to associate with suspicious people					
32	Adults always approve of my reasoning and actions					
33	I prefer to listen to others rather than talk about myself					
34	They say I like to show off					
35	I love listening to music, watching good movies,					

	and dancing beautifully					
36	I like to watch the leaves turn yellow on the trees in autumn					
37	There have been many events in my life that I could say "thank You" for					
38	If I get a bad rating, I always hope that I will answer better next time					
39	If I get a bad rating, I always hope that I will answer better next time					
40	When I grow up, I will be happy					
41	I believe that every person is unique and should strive for a great goal					
42	When things go wrong, the thought of something Divine lifts my spirits					
43	Even if I was offended, I try not to take revenge					
44	I forgive people for their mistakes					
45	My peers often have fun with me					
46	If my friends and I are in a bad mood, I try to cheer everyone up with jokes					
47	I like my life					
48	When I Wake up in the morning, I rejoice in a new day					

To study direct and indirect victimization, the adapted method The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale-24 (MPVS-24) was used, designed to assess direct and indirect victimization: 24 forms of victimizing actions. We studied 5 types of victimization (physical and verbal victimization, social manipulation, social rejection and assault on property) (Mynard, Joseph, 2000).

**Table 2**  
Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale-24

<b>Nº</b>	<b>Below is a list of things that some children do to other children. How often during the last school year has another pupil done these things?</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Once</b>	<b>More than once</b>
1	Punched me			
2	Tried to get me into trouble with my friends			
3	Called me names			
4	Took something of mine without permission			
5	Kicked me			

6	Tried to make my friends turn against me			
7	Made fun of me because of my appearance			
8	Tried to break something of mine			
9	Hurt me physically in some way			
10	When I tried to play with one person, another person would not let me			
11	Made fun of me for some reason			
12	Stole something from me			
13	Beat me up			
14	Made other people not talk to me			
15	Swore at me			
16	Deliberately damaged some property of mine			
17	Sent me a nasty text			
18	Ignored me			
19	Said something mean about me on a social networking site			
20	Refused to talk to me			
21	Wrote spiteful things about me in a chatroom			
22	Would not let me join in their game			
23	Wrote nasty things to me using instant messenger			
24	Had a secret and would not tell me			

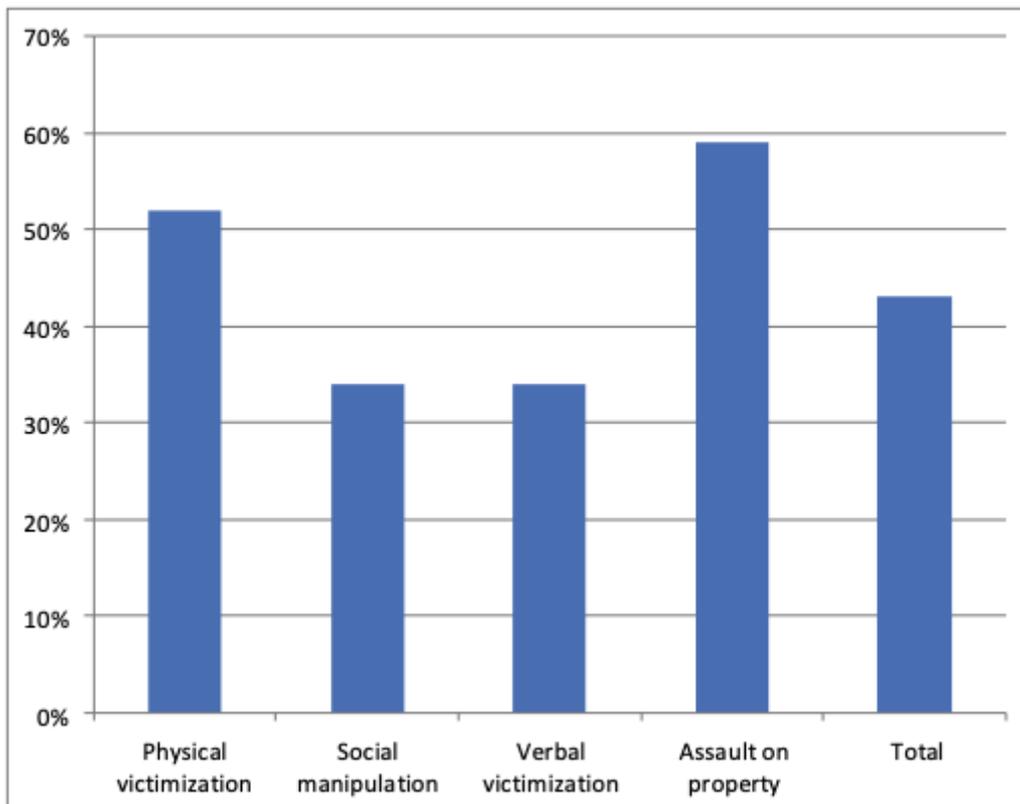
### 3. Results

The questionnaire "Assessing the dignity of a child" revealed that younger pupils rated their bravery, perseverance, integrity of character ( $8.89 \pm 1.6$  points), as well as their self-control, modesty and humility ( $8.60 \pm 1.9$  points) most highly. At the same time, primary schoolchildren rated their kindness, the ability to sincerely love and accept love in return ( $5.43 \pm 1.9$  points), as well as justice and generosity, the desire for leadership and maintaining good relations with classmates ( $5.76 \pm 2.5$  points) much lower.

The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale-24 technique revealed that 52% of the children surveyed underwent physical victimization, while 34% of primary schoolchildren underwent verbalization. 34% of children experienced social manipulation, 59% of primary schoolchildren were attacked by property.

Figure 1. shows data on the types of victimization that subjects were exposed to.

**Figure 1**  
The diagnostic of the susceptibility of primary schoolchildren to bullying



Thus, the results of the study allow us to conclude that younger pupils in the study group were more exposed to physical victimization and assault on property. To a lesser extent, children underwent social manipulation and verbal victimization.

All schoolchildren were divided into 3 groups according to victimization levels. The first group included children with a low level of victimization (8-15 points), the second group included children with an average level of victimization (16-24 points), the third group included children with a high level of victimization (25-32 points). This allowed us to compare children with different levels of victimization in terms of the severity of **self-evaluation** of individual dignity.

Comparison of the results of 2 methods allowed us to identify statistically significant differences according to the Mann-Whitney criterion. So, children with a higher level of victimization are less inclined to find manifestations of such qualities as collectivism, justice, leadership qualities ( $P < 0.05$ ). They also reliably lower evaluate the formation of self-control, prudence and humility ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## 4. Conclusions

The results of the study allow us to consider the child's view of the individual dignity of his personality as an important basis for the manifestation of victimization among primary school children.

The most pronounced dependence of victimization indicators on the personal dignity of a younger pupil concerns two groups of children's personal dignity: justice (collectivism, justice, leadership qualities) and temperance (self-control, prudence, humility and modesty).

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