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# **ROLE OF EMPATHY AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE PREVENTION OF BULLYING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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Bullying is a serious problem affecting schoolchildren and adolescents around the world. It comes in many forms, from physical violence to emotional and psychological bullying. This paper will examine the signs of bullying, its consequences, and ways to prevent it. We will discuss how communication and a supportive environment can help combat this problem. Teaching children empathy and the active intervention of others play a key role in preventing bullying. Victim support and cooperation with professionals are also important aspects that can help to address bullying and create a safe, educational environment.

Bullying leaves a deep trace in the lives of affects emotional and social development and school adaptation, and it has severe psychological consequences. Children who have been bullied suffer severe psychological trauma. It does not matter what kind of bullying took place – physical or psychological. Even many years later, in training sessions, people who remember being bullied at school often cry and talk about their harrowing experiences. This is one of the strongest emotional traumas for a child. Therefore, the victim needs to be helped.

Bullying undermines the victim's self-confidence, health, self-esteem, and human dignity [1]. It creates a bullying structure, a social system that includes bullying, victimizing, and observing. A bullying situation never ends by itself; there is always a need for help and protection for the victim, the bully, and the witnesses.

In order to prevent and combat bullying, many researchers are looking for

different and optimal methods. Advocates of the dispositional approach believe that the prevention of bullying should be based on the idea of the need to build communication skills and self-confidence in victims of aggression to develop tolerance of aggressors. It is important to note that this approach believes that the victim of bullying is guilty of provoking aggression towards them.

In the temporal approach to bullying prevention, much attention is paid to the early detection of bullying elements and the organization of psychological support for children in age crises and difficult life situations.

In the contextual approach, bullying prevention is based on changing the system of relations in the organization as a whole and forming alternative methods of defining statuses in the group based on the value of respectful relations.

Adolescence is the most formative period in human life. During this period, all the significant characteristics of human development are actively developing and changing: biological, physiological, personal, mental, and social. There are changes in personality and learning activities, communication, and interaction with peers, teachers, and parents [2].

In adolescence, emotional intelligence is seen as a significant factor in career orientation, school well-being and motivation to learn, propensity to Internet addiction, aggression, deviant behavior, choice of coping strategies, etc. Research on bullying has traditionally assumed that aggressors have lower levels of emotional intelligence. However, recent studies have found that aggressors have higher levels of emotional intelligence, which makes it easier for them to identify the weaknesses of the victim. Aggressors are highly calculating, which allows them to control others through narcissistic behavior. On the contrary, the emotional intelligence of victims of bullying is lower because it is the low level of emotional intelligence that leads to underestimation or misinterpretation of what is happening and, consequently, to the choice of maladaptive reactions and difficulties in regulating one's behavior. Emotional intelligence plays a unique role in building constructive social relationships. This is particularly important during adolescence when the main activity is intimate personal communication. At first glance, the relationship between these indicators seems simple: the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the status of the adolescent in the peer group, and the higher the indicator of group cohesion. However, emotional intelligence is a complex phenomenon; its structural components play a different role in social relationships. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's feelings and those of the person with whom one communicates. The importance of emotional intelligence in intrapersonal and social settings cannot be overstated.

At the age of 16–17, there is an increase in empathic qualities, while emotional self-regulation decreases. There is an improvement in personal emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is closely related to the adolescent's position in

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### PSYCHOLOGIE UND PSYCHIATRIE

the group. Peer relationships are essential for adolescent personality development; group cohesion indicates these relationships. Since emotional intelligence and group cohesion are closely related, it is possible to increase group cohesion by developing the emotional intelligence of group members and vice versa.

There are a number of components in the structure of emotional intelligence: emotional awareness, self-motivation, management of one's own emotions, recognition of other people's emotions, and empathy. Empathy is understood as one person's emotional responsiveness to another's experiences, which is expressed in elementary and personal forms. Empathy is the ability to recognize other people's emotions and feelings, the capacity to empathize with their current state, and the willingness to provide support. It is the ability to genuinely empathize with a close person and a complete stranger and understand the other person's state of mind through facial expressions or gestures, subtle nuances of speech, and characteristic posture.

Students' emotional intelligence, their ability to understand other people's emotions and their own emotional states, and their ability to manage their own and other people's emotions, is largely determined by the general level of empathy development and also depends on the ability to enter into other people's emotional states through empathy and identification. At the same time, intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional intelligence can be developed through the emotional channel of empathy, the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, and to feel another person's emotional state. Developing students' empathy skills helps to prevent bullying because it teaches them to treat their peers as human beings, not as a means of gaining popularity in the classroom. In addition, adolescents with high levels of emotional intelligence are better at coping, building healthy relationships, and making informed decisions.

Finally, to increase emotional intelligence in a way that young people can understand and apply in their lives, a peer-to-peer dissemination strategy and the creation of a trusting and safe environment are important. Psychological support and practical skills training are needed to enable young people to confide in each other, talk about their fears and concerns, and learn to identify their feelings and emotions on their own.

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