

Research: A way to deal with School Bullying and Violence

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Conference Report



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Introduction

School bullying and violence is a phenomenon that is in the focus of public attention in most Western societies. Since the 90's there has been a growing awareness on the problem of SBV followed by an increasing number of studies, the development of programs and in recent years also the establishment of a growing number of web resources (cp. Smith, 2005, Minton & O'Moore, 2004.).

When focusing on the increasing number of studies we get to the main topic of this conference: **researching as a way to deal with SBV**. Related to this various questions have been tackled such as:

- Can we talk about a unique concept of SBV?
- Where does researching on SBV go to?
- Which are the requisites that SBV assessment instruments should fulfill?
- How can we achieve greater coordination among researchers?

The fifth online conference of the VISIONARIES-NET project aimed at bringing together researchers from several European countries that have developed their research on School Bullying and Violence, in order to gather and share the different perspectives of this complex problem. They gave their points of view about the different questions, shared their knowledge and experience, and offered interesting discussions.

In this report we give an overview about the conference's main objectives, its structure, its participants and its main outcomes.

VISIONARIES-NET: the project behind the online conferences

The online conference "Researching: a way to deal with School Bullying and Violence" is the last one of the five online conferences that took place as part of the VISIONARIES-NET project funded by the European Commission within the Socrates Minerva program. Before explaining the topics of this conference we first would like to outline some basic ideas of our project, its background, objectives and the partners that cooperate in this project.

Background and starting point of the project

School and juvenile violence have been rising constantly over the past decade and have wide-ranging implications on our societies (cp. Jäger, Bradley and Rasmussen, 2003). The growing number of national and International conferences on violence in school point out the importance of meetings and networks. Nevertheless, it is obvious that only a very limited number of experts and practitioners get the chance to participate in conferences and exchange their experiences with others, especially on an International level.

The Internet offers new possibilities: One of the benefits of online-discussions or conferences is that they have the potential of bringing together users with different backgrounds - e.g. in terms of culture, education, experiences or citizenship – who would hardly meet in real life. The overall idea behind this project, the VISIONARIES-NET project, is that in spite of all differences in terms of culture, educational or professional background, age and target group

(pupils, parents, researchers etc.) we assume that there are many people from different countries who face similar problems and who can learn from each other. In the VISIONARIES-NET project we invite people affected by and dealing with school bullying and violence to online conferences in order to facilitate discussions, to analyse the situation in a selected field within the broad topic of school bullying and violence and to work out common, sometimes innovative solutions.

The VISIONARIES-NET project, its partners and sponsors

The VISIONARIES-NET¹ project is a European cooperative project from institutes and organisation from four European countries - Germany, France, Spain and Romania. The partners are:

- Centre for Educational Research, University Koblenz-Landau, Germany (co-ordination)
- Department of Education, Faculty of Sciences of Education, Universidad de Córdoba, Spain
- European Forum for Urban Safety, Paris, France
- CONCEPT Foundation, Bucharest, Romania

The project started in October 2004 and ends in November 2006 and it was supported by the Socrates/Minerva program of the European Commission.

The VISIONARIES-NET project builds on the VISIONARY project (2000-2003) – also funded by Socrates/Minerva program of the European Commission - that focused on implementing a European Internet portal on school bullying and violence that aimed at providing information and facilitating communication on school bullying and violence (www.bullying-in-school.info). The portal includes background information, link collections, news section and much more and it was created by partners from Germany, Denmark, Finland, Portugal and the UK.

As a part of the VISIONARIES-NET project this portal was completely updated and extended by additional sections such as blogs, best practice sections and online polls. Apart from this the portal is available in three further languages now: French, Spanish and Romanian.

Objectives of the project

As mentioned above one of the main ideas behind the VISIONARIES-NET project is that in spite of differences in terms of countries, cultures or educational background people can learn from one another.

The VISIONARIES-NET project mainly addresses persons engaged in different kinds of activities related to violence prevention in school. Its main objective is to bring these persons together in online conferences that unite selected groups of experts and practitioners.

Apart from networking the participants of the online conferences, another goal of the project is not only to inform a broader public about the conferences' outcomes but to include them in the discussion process. This will be realized by means of web logs that aim at publishing

¹VISIONARIES-NET is an acronym for 'violence in school - initiative on the net archiving resources for European states: net of experts'.

selected outcomes of the conferences' discussions and that encourage users of the VISIONARY portal to continue the discussion.

The Online Conference “Research: A way of dealing with School Bullying and Violence”

The online conference “Research: a way to deal with School Bullying and Violence” was the fifth from five online conferences of the VISIONARIES-NET project. An overview about the other online conferences can be found at <http://www.bullying-in-school.info/en/content/forum-conferences/online-conferences.html>

Objectives of the conference

The objective of this conference was to bring together experts on School Bullying and Violence (SBV) in order to gather and share the different perspectives of this complex problem

The conference focused on the following **topics**:

- Can we talk about a unique concept of SBV?
- Where does researching on SBV go to?
- Which are the requisites that SBV assessment instruments should fulfill?
- How can we achieve greater coordination among researchers?

Furthermore the conference aimed at giving the participants the opportunity ...

- to meet others people interested in researching in SBV
- to find out more about approaches and ideas from other parts of the world
- to learn and profit from others who deal with the same problems and challenges
- to network with experts from other countries and cultures

Concept, Methodology and Duration

The conference: an asynchronous forum that is open for four weeks

The online conference was not an online conference in the traditional sense that includes multimedia online presentation and is limited to a 2-3 days period.

The “heart” of the conference was a virtual meeting room in form of a so called *asynchronous forum* that was open 24 hours a day to our participants. The form of an asynchronous forum was chosen because there were participants from different countries and time zones and because none of the participants should have been excluded by the time discussions take place or the techniques that were used. In an asynchronous forum, postings from other participants can be read and commented whenever the participants want, so that the participation can easily be integrated in the participants' time schedule.

The forum was open for *four weeks*. As all participants were supposed to be involved in several other activities, a timeframe was chosen that is long enough to accommodate the

participants' professional and other responsibilities and give both – the participants and the moderators - enough flexibility to participate at the online conference. Experiences show that it takes some time to establish good discussions, especially when crossing time zones and when the discussions include intercultural exchange.

The topics: the participants help precisising the topics

The **topics** that were discussed in this conference highly **depended on the interests** of the participants. The participants were considered experts engaged in school bullying and violence prevention. For this reason we came back to their expertise for specifying the topics to be discussed at this conference.

In order to make sure that the experiences, interests and expectations of all participants can be considered for the selection of the topics of the week and the single discussion threads a method was applied that resembled the so called **Delphi approach**. According to a definition of Linston and Turoff (2002) the Delphi method “may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem.” One significant element of a Delphi study is that in a multi-level process a series of questionnaires is applied to a group of pre-selected experts. This series of questionings aims at structuring a field of research that is widely unstructured and which has not been subject of research yet. Within the VISIONARIES-NET project a modified Delphi approach was applied. Questionings of all participants preceded the discussions related to the topics of the week. All participants were asked to answer 3-4 short questions related to each of the four topics of the week. The participants' answers were categorised and served as a starting point for the conference's discussions.

The structure and framework of the conference

As mentioned above the conference's forum was open for a time span of four weeks. According to our original plan it was foreseen to open a new topic of the week with the beginning of the week. For each **topic of the week** it was intended to focus on 2-3 selected topics in separate threads. In order not to have too many discussion threads open at the same time all open threads related to the former topic of the week were intended to be closed once the new threads related to the new topic of the week were opened. In practice this original plan was handled rather flexible in order not to interrupt good and productive discussions and to give participants more time to contribute to the discussions. In consequence the topics of the week partly overlapped so that more than 3-4 topics were open at the same time.

In a four-weeks-conference with several parallel discussions and numerous postings, that is open for 24 hours a day for most participants it's hardly possible to follow all discussions. Therefore the main points of the discussions were summarised in form of short **summaries** for all threads in the topic of the week section. Apart from this a **periodically newsletter** was sent to all participants of the conference in order to inform them about new threads, new summaries or interesting topics that came up in the discussions.

The conference blog: continuing the discussions with a broader audience

It is one of the conference's purposes not to restrict it to a limited group of experts but to include a broader audience of Internet users. For this purpose selected outcomes of the conference were published in a weblog at the VISIONARY portal in order to inform the users of the blog about the conference's outcomes and above all in order to continue the discussions with a broader public.

The conference blog is available at <http://blog.bullying-in-school.info/>

Participants and moderators of the conference

The target groups of the online conference were journalists, media policy makers, researchers, invited guests, NGO or educational institutions representatives.

The fifth online conference "Research: a way to deal with School Bullying and Violence" was moderated by:

M^a José Toscano Moreno (main moderation)
Joaquín Mora-Merchan (Spain) (co-moderation)
Thomas Jäger (Germany) (co-moderation)

The conference included the following 33 participants:

María José Mohedano García (Spain)
Juan Calmaestra Villén (Spain)
Antonio Jesús Rodríguez Hildalgo (Spain)
María Victoria Trianes Torres (Spain)
Rosario del Rey (Spain)
Eugenia Piñero Ruíz (Spain)
Ángela Alfaro (El Salvador)
Adriana Corona (Mexico)
Catherine Blaya (France)
Marisol Moreira Sena (Uruguay)
Silvia Martínez (El Salvador)
Elsye Elpidia (El Salvador)
Andrea Smorti (Italy)
Simon Hunter (Scotland)
Clare Green (Australia)
Andrea Fuentes (Spain/Chile)
Juana Delgado (Spain)
Helga Johannessen (Norway)
Mitsuru Taki (Japan)
Oliviero Facchinetti (Italy)
María Jesús Comellas (Spain)
Fuensanta Cerezo (Spain)
Tom Letson (USA)
Jordi Collell (Spain)
Carmé Escudé (Spain)
João da Silva Amado (Portugal)

Rinus Rodenburg (The Netherlands)
Luciana Grosu (Romania)
Javier Ortega Rivera (Spain)
Chris Henderson (Australia)
Ken Rigby (Australia)

Questionnaire

Before starting the conference a questionnaire was sent to the participants aiming to establish the topics to be discussed during the online conference. The questionnaire comprised five questions and the answers received were the starting point for the discussions.

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to precise the main topic “Research: a way to deal with School Bullying and Violence” that would be discussed in our fifth online-conference.

- 1) Is it possible to talk about a unique concept of SBV? Which are its main defining features? Are these defining features also suitable for new forms of SBV, e.g. dating violence, cyber bullying, happy slapping, etc?
- 2) Is current research able to explain SBV changes over the time? E.g. levels of incidence, new forms of manifestation, the dynamics within the peer group, etc.
- 3) Recently, a wide number of tools have appeared to assess the SBV problem in its different facets. In your opinion, has this fact introduced accuracy on the understanding of the problem or, on the contrary, has it contributed to generate uncertainty? Why?
- 4) How could be the development of instruments be optimized?
- 5) Which are, in your opinion, the new focuses of interest of research on SBV?

The conference’s topics and main outcomes

Topic one: Can we talk about a unique concept of SBV?

Delphi questioning

•Thread 1. Introduction

According to our main moderator’s words, “The answers given to the question “**Can we talk about a unique concept of SBV?**” differ ones from each other. Some of them replay the **classical definition** based on three grounds: *intention, repetition and imbalance of power*, while others point to different directions: i.e. according to some people the precise meaning is found in the silence around the act of violence, others present cultural variables. The new ways of SBV do not always fit the classical definition”.

Trying to answer this question, Thomas Jäger, from the visionary.net team, wonders if we are really talking about the **same phenomenon** because of the big differences in the concept between countries, and doubts whether we could find a common definition.

Referring to the classical definition based on *intention, imbalance, and repetition*

Other researchers, as Andrea Smorty and Joaquin Mora, accept this classical definition but **including** “the effectiveness of the act, the cultural context and the perception of the act”. Smorty also thinks that now we need more studies that deepen qualitatively the meaning children give to “aggressive acts” while Joaquin doubts whether we should use a universal concept to get **more accuracy or adapt it** to the different countries which will difficult comparison.

According to this, Rosario del Rey says that **we need to create agreements to compare results** and wonders whether we should include sexual violence in the same concept.

Tom Letsom from USA provides a “**Simple definition for bullying**” with the purpose of making it easy to understand by students of different countries: “When a kid with an advantage (physical, social or psychological) over another kid continues to use that advantage to make that kid feel bad. (examples: threatened, embarrassed, angry, fearful or lonely)” He includes the following **Types of Advantages**:

- Bigger (physical, psychological)
- Stronger (physical, psychological)
- More Confident (psychological)
- More Popular/more friends (social, psychological)
- More Affluent (social, psychological)

Later, Joaquin Mora-Merchán adds that Spanish kids would understand that situations/definition. But he is not sure if the advantages that Letsom mentioned were causes or consequences of bullying, and, that maybe, **this factor could cause some mistakes** in the understanding of the situation (e.g. increasing the number of students involved, as always we can found other people in better situation than ourselves).

Simon Hunter thinks the question about the **definition can be broken down into two**: one for the children and the other one for professionals. The first one needs an empirical research examination and the second one must be answered by researchers. He also gives some information for Rosario’s question about sexual violence. A recent paper: Pepler, D.J., Craig, W.M., Connolly, J.A., Yuile, A., McMaster, L. & Jiang, D. (2006). “A developmental perspective on bullying. Aggressive Behavior”, 32 (4), 376-384.

The pain, a common matter of bullying for every culture is pointed out by Helga Johannessen. She thinks that before finding a definition we should **find a common word** for it. For her, bullying may be a unique phenomenon or something even worse: **a trend**.

Next it follows an interesting reflection by Rosario Ortega about VSB as a **compromise** among the scientific community of working into an area of aggressiveness **far from the traditional and individual way**. She sees violence as a phenomenon that goes further than bullying itself and thinks that the interpersonal violence where bullying phenomenon can be included also needs an analysis of the complex contextual elements, such as the system of peers’ interpersonal relationships. For her, bullying, **as a complex phenomenon** (an intentional, unbalance, and persistent behavior of physical, psychological and social abuse) **involve both the psychological and the social area of investigation, and we need new**

paradigms. She agrees with the majority of the problems pointed before about cultural factors.

She adds that descriptive studies focused the frequencies and the forms of bullying, but in her opinion, the **persistence and the personal attachment into the group** of kids is one of the most important issues to understand this phenomenon. She also agrees that the **methodological issues** and finding new ways to research about SVB are very important.

About the definition A. Smorti said that, although an only act can cause a big damage, we should leave the **repetition of an act as a necessary condition for bullying to separate it from other violence act.** He suggests that to call bullying we should use types of words different from literal translation of bullying and listen to what children says whether something is bullying or not. He adds that the complexity of the situation should make us use **more qualitative instruments** able to assess from the bully and the victim whether a bullying act occurred.

For Sandra Peters all of the contributions up now “have **similar thoughts** on what constitutes bullying and share a common understanding of bully/victim/bystander relationships”.

As a summary we are going to use Joaquín Mora-Merchán’s reflections within the last contribution of this thread that may illustrate the outcomes of this topic very well.

* “We agree on a common definition characterized by repetition of aggressive events and unbalance”.

* “We agree that different cultures have different interpretations of what could be understood as aggressive behavior (therefore, understood as bullying)”.

* “We have some doubts about the way we can assess the frequency of bullying events. Besides, some postings stress out it seems relevant to use more qualitative instruments/methods to identify bullying experiences”.

* “Moreover, some opinions pointed out we would need to develop new theoretical approaches to study bullying phenomenon, as it appears to be more complex than it has been considered so far”.

·Thread 2. Unclosed questions

After all of the contributions to the introduction; there were some open questions still to be solved and participants were asked for some more answers and their opinions to these points:

-Which would be a common definition for bullying?

-What do children and teenagers understand by bullying?

-Is bullying a trend?

-What do you think about the use of frequency in the identification of bullying events?”

- Are new forms of bullying with more single events different problems?

In this section we only had one, but significant, contribution on the part of Luciana Grosu (Romanian). She is an 18 years old student who tries to give answers to these questions from her experience in both schools/high schools. We think that being so young does a reflection that deserves to be mentioned here.

“Is bullying a trend?”

Yes, it is. It's about gaining other's respect and it's also considered cool. It's actually a normal practice for those who do it, they don't have anymore the feeling that bullying is wrong. They feel they have the right to do this in order to consolidate their position inside a group and express directly their disagreement towards other children` opinions /actions. etc. It's zero tolerance, so bullying is only a problem for the victim. For the aggressor, it's only part of his/her liberty to treat others bad.

Mass-media also encourages bullying and violent behavior (music, movies, etc) ,but this is another problem

What do children and teenagers understand by bullying?

Bullying exists only for the victims. As long as you are not bullied, this word is a fiction. No one cares as long as he/she is not directly affected. However, violence is not the same as bullying, so whenever appear cases of violence, children tend to react, even if they are not affected, because they can feel the danger.

Every victim has his/her own definition about what he/she considers to be bullying. Some children are more sensitive, while other accepts the bullying more easily, if this is the price for being accepted in a certain group. Any hostile behavior is theoretically bullying, but as I said, perceptions vary a lot. I believe it's quite worrying that so many children don't even realize anymore they are bullied as they come to believe they actually deserve it. Most children probably believe bullying is a personal problem, rather than a social issue, that can and should be solved”.

Topic two: Is current research able to explain SBV changes over the time?

Delphi questioning

·Thread 1: Are real problems too far from research?

Thomas Jäger wonders why it looks to be some **misunderstanding between researchers and normal people** and **if researchers are focusing wrong aspects** of the problem for being far away from schools. He also questions whether **it could be a matter of language**.

There are very different opinions about these questions:

-For some people **it is a matter of feeling**. People affected by the problem ask for real and fast solutions because they can feel the **emergency** of stopping children's suffering (Helga Johannessen).

-It looks like we need details of the phenomenon and a “diagnosis” of the situation in the schools to cope with the problem.

Some people, as Sandra Peters, disagree with the idea that researchers don’t focus on really important questions because **their role is to do ongoing research to gain objective knowledge to help school administrators and communities to find effective strategies of prevention and programs:**

“They surely feel for victims and want to help them, but their role is to go beyond the emotional reaction to study not just the victim or the bully, but to search for an understanding of the relationships of all involved--bullies, victims, bystanders, other students, teachers, and parents. They also look at other factors. Studies might show that school situations vary...they might ask why that is. Their studies might show that just having a good friend improves the situation for a victim or is effective in changing a bully’s behavior. They raise important questions on all aspects of bullying. They can’t focus on just one aspect”.

“If programs used in schools are not research-based, they probably won’t work effectively”

But she also thinks, as Helga, that:

-***“Solutions need to come fast”***. For Sandra there is a difference between needs and timing and parents of children that are being bullied only want them to have peace immediately.

-Following this idea but more extreme Rinus Ronderburg, thinks that **after twenty years of research we still don’t have a real method to stop bullying**. These are some his words:

“In this conference again focus is on research rather than **methods**” (...) “Experts always points out their finger to the school and its teachers. They are the ones that should interfere but they have not been given a proper method by those experts”

“So it seems that we have **different understandings** about what we mean to say. I think this could be the reason why we cannot come up with a solution. (...) Survey’s have become confusing as more and more experts are researching on the same subject”.

He says that experts have failed because they do not know what to do yet and asks for **real solutions**. ***“Anti-bullying programs are good before actions, but not as a solution to the victims when bullying is going on”***.

-Despite of these hard accusations, according to Juana Delgado, **researchers are still important** since results can be used for many different issues: *“to program actions, plans or programs, to reframe actions that do not giving the waited for results, to update the approach of a certain intervention or action, to evaluate if a program, action etc. are fulfilling the objectives, etc”*.

Even thinking as Johannessen about the necessity of implementing immediate programs to fight the harassment of the victims *“also is necessary the implementation of prevention programs”*

Oliviero Facchinetti also supports **research as an instrument**: *“Reality is more complex than research can explain, but all good searches that I knew helped me to better understand some situations, to feel encouraged in my job, to better focus my interventions”, etc*

-Thread 2: Is current research able to explain SBV changes over the time?

-Research has advanced and has experienced important changes according to Rosario Ortega, despite of the necessity of still looking for answers to the following *important questions*:

-Are levels of frequency and seriousness of SBV increasing in the schools?
(Widely demanded by society).

-Are the ways of violence changing?

-Are there any changes with regard to the children's involvement and ways of children involvement?

-Can we talk about new ways of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, or are contexts of interpersonal relationships the ones that are changing?

She thinks that we must look for investigations that give answers to the questions.

For her an incipient and attractive interest is appearing on problems such as *causes and consequences, grade of damages to victims, Psychopathology of cruelty and aggressors*, and etc.

-After suffering a hard experience in her own family, Helga Johannessen asks researchers to **listen to the parents** as well as **to focus on the bully**, the reasons of his or her behavior and the ways to stop them. Confirming the importance of focusing the **aggressors**, their psychopathology and their personal features, Rosario Ortega participated again.

-Juan Calmaestra, from Spain, suggests that a differentiated psycho-educational intervention must be carried out for aggressors, victims and spectators. He underlies the role of the **spectators...**

-...While H. Johannessen, thinks that we must pay attention to **“the bully”** *“WHY the bully does such things to another human beings”* and how we can stop him

-For some participants bullying is always the same despite of the ways it occurs. But for others, as H. Johannessen, **bullying is changing over the time**. She thinks that **now is more harmful** because of what children watch in TV with violent contents as if they were funny. She adds that we will always have bullying but we have to stop long term evil bullying; the only problem is that we do not really know when evil bullying is and when harmless.

Her ideas are share by M. J. Toscano.. From a time to this part the aggressors use **new methods to hurt** their victims such as **happy slapping, pc games, TV programs**, etc because of the influence of TV, pc games, internet, etc. Nowadays, unfortunately children have in their power mobile phones, internet connections and a lot of information which they are not ready to handle and consequently this lack of control make them so violent. She **wonders whether we will be able to stop bullying at any time.**

-Agnés Pradet, from the European Forum for Urban Safety goes back to a very important question mentioned by Ros. Ortega: *Are levels of frequency and seriousness of SBV increasing in the schools?*

-After what participants wrote U. Lissmann states that **we need more systematic information** before making decisions.

Topic three: “Recently, a wide number of tools have appeared to assess the SBV problem in its different facets. In your opinion, has this fact introduced accuracy?”

The third topic of our conference offered two different opinions:

-It started with an introduction by R. Ortega. In her opinion *“the instruments to assess school violence and bullying are not contributing to the clarification and better understanding of the phenomenon”* The descriptive methods such as questionnaires, can’t go deeper than the subject’s choice on the proposals of the questionnaire. On the contrary, “the researcher advance, in search of **causes** and **consequences**, going deeper into the **psychological features** of the subjects involved as well as into the risks of being involved in the phenomenon, is opening new prospects”.

According to Ortega, S. Peters and H. Johannessen think that **“questionnaires do not always reflect truth”**. For Peters questionnaires are too general and a deeper understanding can only be reached by researchers studying “many different aspects of bullying and violence on an ongoing, long-term basis, coming up with new findings to share and discuss”.

-Nevertheless S. Hunter, thinks that the **developing of new measures and tools for assessing bullying and school violence is positive**: “in the long-term they will each provide unique insights into the causes of bullying”, together with research mentioned above

J. Mora-Merchán also supports measures and tools and thinks that the problem would be in the way we use the instruments and adds that **new instruments will provide us very useful information**.

Topic four: How could the development of instruments be optimized? Which are in your opinion the new focuses of interest of research on SBV?

R. Ortega opened it stressing **to find the procedures to study the psychological features of both: victims and aggressors**. For her the main problem is the methodological one.

Andrea Smorti (Italy) agrees with Rosario Ortega on qualitative and narrative methods. He agrees that linguistic and cultural aspects are important variables to take into consideration, and suggests **two possible directions (one quantitative and the other qualitative)** of research to improve instruments.

The first one is to **assess the diffusion of bullying and to identify aggressors and victims**. He makes a proposal to get information about the act, the intention, the effect, the unbalance of power and about the repetition. Smorti suggest a questionnaire that includes, in the case of the victim, the following items:

- a) “Think to a companion with whom you are in a bad relation
- b) Does he/she do one or more of the following act (disturbs kicks etc.)
- c) Does he it voluntary
- d) How do you feel after (sad, depressed...)
- e) How do you evaluate this companion (stronger than you, many companion help when he disturbs, he is a leader...)
- f) How often happens what you have described?”

And the second direction is to interpret bullying by people involved to complete the picture about victim and bully by making **autobiographies** of bullying episodes.

H Johannessen supports the identification of the bully and his/her features.

Finally, Simon Hunter thanks Andrea Smorti’s ideas and makes some suggestion about “d” item. Simon is **studying those aspects** in kids **that show resilience** to bullying and thinks that only including negative feelings in that item would exclude important positive information.

“Unsolved questions” within Summaries and Interim Results

Here we repeat the same questions as in “unclose question” to give the audience a new chance to participate.

- Which would be a common definition for bullying?
- What do children and teenagers understand by bullying?
- Is bullying a trend?
- What do you think about the use of frequency in the identification of bullying events?”
- Are new forms of bullying with more single events different problems?

Andrea Smorti, from Italy, does an interesting contribution about different matters. About the **definition** he thinks that, although an only act can cause a big damage, we should leave the **repetition of an act as a necessary condition** for bullying to separate it from other violence act. Andrea suggests that to call bullying we should use types of words different from literal translation of bullying and **listen to what children says whether something is bullying or not.**

Finally he adds that the complexity of the situation should make us use more qualitative instruments able to assess from the bully and the victim whether a bullying act occurred.

Adriana Corona participates from Mexico. She thinks the main problem in Mexico is the **lack of consciousness in adults about the seriousness of the problem.** She defends anti-bullying programs to prevent violence but **including a component of aid to victims** (emotional and therapeutic support).

Helga Johannessen talks about the type of bullies, the young "psychopaths" that do not have any conscience.

Conclusions and Outlook

The online conference “Research: A way to deal with School Bullying and Violence” tried to bring together and network experts engaged in school bullying and violence prevention and

make them learn from one another. For our discussions we invited researchers who have developed their research on School Bullying and Violence, in order to gather and share the different perspectives of this complex problem.

With the idea of gathering all of the participants' experiences, interests and expectations for the selection of the topics for every week, a method was applied that resembled the so called **Delphi approach** and that was very useful for us. The main discussions on this conference wanted to respond to the following questions:

- Can we talk about a unique concept of SBV?
- Where does researching on SBV go to?
- Which are the requisites that SBV assessment instruments should fulfill?
- How can we achieve greater coordination among researchers?

Participants agreed in a common definition characterized by repetition of aggressive events and unbalance. They have some doubts about the way to assess the frequency of bullying events and appeared the necessity of more qualitative instruments and new theoretical approaches to study bullying phenomenon because of its complexity.

Researchers' role is to do ongoing investigation to gain objective knowledge to help school administrators and communities to find effective strategies of prevention and programs in school bullying and violence. The information obtained by research can be very valuable.

From the parents', and others, point of view, it is also important for researchers not to keep completely apart from schools and sometimes have a direct contact with the problems, "catching the feeling". Thus they will have a better understanding of the situation but never in order to have a particular or reduced point of view that could affect the outcomes of the studies.

There was a common worried about the way to deal with the problems that have already happened and the victims. Researches must also help to design ways to support them and to stop the aggressors.

The discussions of this conference can be regarded as a starting point that aims at stimulating further discussions and research. Though the outcomes of the conference drew a picture of the role research has in SBV, there are still many aspects that can be approached on this issue, that couldn't be discussed to time limitations of a 4-weeks-conference with a limited number of participants

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