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The Cognitive Boundary of Invisible Bullying as a Distinct Form of Campus Bullying

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Abstract. With the continuous development of the field of education and the continuous deepening of the study of bullying, hidden bullying has not been paid enough attention to by the society because of its imperceptible characteristics. However, for more hidden bullying, the society pays less attention to it. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between invisible bullying and cultural background and neuropsychology, and to test the mechanism of teachers' intervention and parents' attention to invisible bullying. Based on the study of different cultures and the functional reorganization of neural circuits during adolescence, this paper uses literature review analysis to analyze the effects of different races, genders, social status, and economic conditions on the nervous system during adolescence. The study found that different races, genders, and social status are significantly negatively correlated with the probability of adolescents being bullied, and they are more likely to encounter invisible bullying during adolescence. Regarding the governance of invisible bullying, the society should form a multi-faceted protection network of home, society and school to protect them from the harm of invisible bullying.

Keywords: Bullying, hidden bullying, education

1. Introduction

In today's society, invisible bullying is spreading quietly. The traditional definition of campus bullying created by Dan Olweus has been difficult to cover the complexity of such behaviors. It is not only misunderstood as a joke by some groups, but also a social problem that needs to be addressed urgently.

Through in-depth analysis, this study aims to restore the truth of invisible bullying that is covered up in jokes, inadvertently and sensitively. The isolation, exclusion and cynicism in the group bring no less psychological trauma than direct physical bullying. Many individuals may inadvertently become the perpetrators of such bullying. Introducing invisible bullying into the research topic has important theoretical and practical value : on the one hand, by analyzing the psychological mechanism, it guides the public to re-examine and correct the bullying behavior in daily interaction ; on the other hand, by constructing a coping mechanism to help victims, they can be identified in time when they encounter invisible bullying, so as to achieve effective psychological defense and self-redemption.

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This paper adopts the systematic literature review research method, through reading, sorting out and summarizing the existing research results, combing and summarizing the influencing factors and intervention mechanism of invisible bullying on campus. Literature retrieval was conducted in the core collection of Web of Science, PsycINFO, CNKI and Google Scholar databases. The literature in the past three years was mainly retrieved. The key words were school bullying. The literature was traced back by searching the key words to retrieve and incorporate the relevant literature. The literature was analyzed and the literature was sorted out by analysis method. First of all, read through the full text, extract the research methods, core ideas, and conclusions of the article. According to the theme, for example : the relationship between campus groups and invisible bullying, the psychological impact of invisible bullying, and how individuals should respond to invisible bullying. Finally, it summarizes, summarizes the research direction, and integrates the data.

The limitations of the research mainly lie in the existing research. Most of the studies are cross-sectional surveys, and it is difficult to determine the variables. There is a real causal relationship between school climate, family environment, and bullying. The research on invisible bullying is now in its infancy, and the measurement tools and theoretical framework are still immature. The invisible bullying framework shown in the study still needs to be tested. Even if the graffiti method is used to explore the hidden bullying experience of Jamaican high school students, the method is novel but the sample representation is limited.

In summary, future research needs to conduct more rigorous cross-cultural comparative studies, develop more rigorous measurement tools, expand the number of research samples, and adopt a large number of longitudinal studies and intervention experiments.

2. Invisible bullying in different cultures

The systematic study of school bullying began in 1970 and was pioneered by Dan Olweus. He defined school bullying as the repeated negative behavior of students from one or more classmates over a period of time [1].

About invisible bullying, often refers to those insulting, joking, derogatory, isolated, sensitive to this kind of mental attack. In the traditional sense, people often think that school bullying is an extreme physical attack, but in fact, language bullying is particularly serious, because it is extremely hidden and difficult to intervene.

These language-based insults are covert, subtle, and imperceptible, and Pierce calls them subtle violations [2]. Nowadays, the study of microaggressions is mostly used in adults, but in fact many students have also experienced such microaggressions. At a high school in the Midwest of the United States, researchers have conducted discussions and interventions on microaggressions [2]. They found that a person is subject to invisible aggression, often related to his race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and social status. These overlapping social factors tend to increase the probability of micro-infringement.

There are few studies on the micro-violence of adolescents, especially in different countries, and the reasons are also significantly different. The Institute has shown that black girls in the United States are more likely to experience racially marginalized bullying due to color problems, and that inaction at school exacerbates this and may eventually lead to dropout [3].

Relevant research shows that school bullying has a wide range of impacts. In Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan, the prevalence of school bullying among children and adolescents ranges from 7 % to 35 % [4]. This kind of bullying is not only at the physical level, but also in the form of language insult, social status attack, social exclusion and other invisible forms. The reason why they are violated is related to race, gender, and physical condition. These problems

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overlap, and the more factors are superimposed, the greater the probability of being bullied. These bullying causes students to lose self-confidence and feel inferior [5]. Teachers naturally occupy a high position in the hierarchy, which is an unequal power and exacerbates the occurrence of school bullying. Teachers may use the formal power given by the system for negative purposes [6].

In China, the survey of 700,000 primary and secondary school students by East China Normal University in 2024 shows that one of every five students will encounter campus bullying. When students are in interpersonal communication, some students, especially those whose social skills are developing, are relatively introverted in personality and relatively small in social circle, and may face higher social risks due to their own characteristics. These students are particularly vulnerable to persistent verbal attacks and social exclusion — such as being told "you are too lonely," "no one likes you," or "nobody wants to be your friend" — and may consequently experience sustained psychological trauma that negatively affects their emotional well-being and social development. When suffering from language bullying, it is difficult to get help from teachers and parents. Researchers have shown that school bullying is more than physical bullying. In those corners that parents and teachers cannot see, language bullying continues to harm students, and it is difficult for adults to intervene. The iceberg theory shows that when people see the tip of the iceberg, the greater crisis has long been buried in a deeper level, waiting to be excavated. The same is true of children, waiting to be excavated, discovered, and redeemed [7].

In another Chinese study, taking into account China's unique educational background, through the school atmosphere as an important environment for the growth of students found that [8]. The research shows that the school atmosphere with friendly teacher-student relationship, mutual respect and tolerance among students, and fair school rules has a significant negative correlation with bullying behavior, that is, the better the school atmosphere, the stronger the students' sense of connection, and the lower the incidence of bullying behavior. Research shows that school bullying intervention not only stays in the punishment of students' individual behavior, but also should pay attention to the overall atmosphere of the school, promote the communication between teachers and students, and create a loving environment, so as to significantly reduce the occurrence of students' bullying behavior.

At a high school in Jamaica, researchers used graffiti to do research on the Invisible Bullying Hybrid Method. Graffiti, as a kind of inner emotional painting, has been applied in many disciplines. Researchers integrate graffiti into art therapy. This kind of art expressed by vision can effectively reduce people's pressure and release unspeakable sounds through graffiti. Researchers use graffiti as an important tool for mixed research methods. It provides a liberating way of expression for teenagers who are not willing to cut their wounds directly, so that they can convey those' unspeakable' personal experiences in a non-verbal way. The study of graffiti mixing method shows that middle school students in Jamaica are faced with the problem of invisible bullying. Teenagers have found differences in race, gender, religion, and social status between people through daily life and social contact. These differences lead to bullying among students. In modern society, due to the development of the network, teenagers have learned to use the network, which provides a new place for bullying, and the network is full of different people. Because of differences in social status, economic status, and physical appearance, these factors exacerbate invisible bullying among adolescents [9].

3. Invisible bullying and psychology

During puberty, the neural circuits undergo profound functional reorganization, which is collectively reflected in the emotional networks involved in the processing of social activities and emotional

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regulation. At this time, the prefrontal cortex is not yet mature, and the reactivity of the limbic system is significantly enhanced. This special neurobiological background has led to the fact that social interaction has been given a strong meaning. Invisible bullying has become a potential threat to the mental health of adolescents in this context. This situation is often undetected by adults, but it has a profound impact on the mental development of adolescents.

Because invisible bullying is not a physical attack, it is more a linguistic bullying and social manipulation. This social manipulation is difficult to resist for students in adolescence. And those teenagers who have been abandoned, because of the emotional unavailability and exclusion, as well as the individual's perception of important others and social institutions. After puberty, individuals not only need independent development, but also need to maintain a safe attachment relationship. When these dual needs encounter the experience of abandonment, they are more likely to fall into the dilemma of invisible bullying.

A large number of studies have consistently shown that invisible bullying is more likely to occur in adolescent groups. According to the differences in measurement tools and cultural backgrounds, the reported rate of implicit bullying among adolescents ranged from 15 % to 35 % [10].

In early adolescence, the importance of peers increased significantly and peaked, and decreased significantly after puberty. Peer acceptance at this stage has become the core task of individuals to adapt to society during adolescence. After puberty, friendships gradually move closer to reciprocity, and the probability of suffering from invisible bullying gradually decreases [10].

A large number of experiments have shown that invisible bullying increases the susceptibility to depression through negative evaluation of individual and social information. Teenagers who have suffered from invisible bullying for a long time often fall into the social mode of self-denial. This distorted perception of being unacceptable and not good enough to be internalized as a self-feature still works even after the end of bullying [10]. Under the control of this cognition, the individual's cognition of society and peers is gradually blurred, and it is easy to make extreme behaviors, or to interpret the aggressive behavior of others. This kind of extreme behavior further aggravates social avoidance and emotional out of control, and finally forms a vicious circle.

In the study of functional neuroimaging, the above-mentioned psychological process provides biological research clues. Adolescents with a history of peer victimization have anterior cingulate cortex and posterior cingulate cortex in the brain in the face of social and interpersonal related stimuli. These brain regions closely related to social pain provide changes in activation patterns [10]. This neural feature is similar to the brain activity of patients with depression. At the same time, social exclusion experience can also activate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA axis), leading to individual stress disorders in this situation. This dysfunction of the stress response system reduces the body's physiological reserve to cope with daily challenges, thereby increasing the onset of depressive symptoms.

Rumination plays an intermediary role. Rumination is a pattern that triggers repeated thinking when an individual feels pain [10]. In this mode of rumination, teenagers who encounter invisible bullying often think repeatedly. They keep asking why they become the goal and how to solve it. This repetitive behavior may have been to solve the problem, and the lack of things backfired to amplify the depression. The empirical study of McLaughlin and Nolen-Hoeksema on 1,065 adolescent samples confirmed that rumination mediates the relationship between peer victimization and depression, and this effect is stronger in girls than in boys [10].

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4. Suggestions and governance

Today's society and schools should strengthen the identification and intervention of invisible bullying, because this kind of bullying often occurs not in physical injury, but more in language and behavior. Because of the particularity of this kind of bullying, teachers' intervention should start from identification and prevention, and systematic intervention should be formed in many aspects of home-school cooperation. Because of the concealment of its existence, the victim is not easy to notice that he is hurt, and it is difficult for teachers to find out from the shallow and subtle classroom contact.

The primary task of teachers is to establish their recognition ability. There is a lag in the cognition of teachers in identifying invisible bullying, often ending in the tone of joking with classmates. They should be regularly involved in psychological training, so that teachers can find invisible bullying through micro-expressions, social relationships, etc., and effectively identify their recognition ability. Focus on highly sensitive students, focus on vulnerable groups, rather than waiting for the event to be exposed to solve.

Teachers should work together with students at the beginning of the semester to formulate class appointments and explicitly include hidden bullying behaviors such as exclusion, snub and spreading rumors into the list of prohibitions. Teachers need to show students that implicit bullying also triggers the intervention process, not a joke. Classroom interaction should reduce social exclusion opportunities. Invisible bullying often occurs in free groups, and socially marginalized students are easily excluded. Therefore, it is necessary to consciously take random grouping by drawing lots, rotate group leaders, assign work to students, and fundamentally prevent invisible bullying. By integrating the content of social emotional learning into the classroom, teachers can cultivate students' empathy in Chinese, moral and rule of law classes, and how to solve social differences, how to help each other in the face of bullying among students, and integrate these contents into the curriculum.

If invisible bullying has occurred, intervention policies should start from many aspects. The primary action should be to stop bullying, protect the victims of bullying, and provide them with a safe space. For the victims, it is mainly to provide psychological counseling, restore the sense of security and social function, and avoid the secondary injury caused by excessive questioning. The bullies should be intervened and corrected, combined with psychological teachers to evaluate them, start anti-bullying procedures, and practice non-aggressive resolution strategies.

Those traditional and simple punishment-centered solutions often have short-term effects on the solution of bullying, and even strengthen the hostility of the perpetrators to the victims. More and more schools are beginning to introduce restorative approaches, irresponsible approaches, which shift the responsibility for solving problems to the student group itself. Interview all the students involved one by one, start from the bully to reduce the risk of retaliation, and finally confirm with the victim whether the improvement has occurred.

In terms of family, create a warm and supportive family atmosphere. Studies have consistently shown that parents' emotional warmth and support can help children resist peer harm, because a good family environment can establish an effective emotional buffer and enhance their ability to face difficulties. The study found that children who are isolated, unsociable, and weak in interpersonal skills are more likely to become bullying targets. Parents should help children establish positive self-cognition in daily life.

In view of invisible bullying, the society should closely link family and school. Teachers should take the initiative to inform parents of the characteristics and early warning signals of invisible

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bullying, so that parents can identify the victimization status that students may be experiencing at home. Schools are responsible for monitoring, intervention and disposal during school, and parents are responsible for emotional comfort, behavior observation and timely feedback at home. Separate it from jokes, or interpersonal friction, and create a safe environment with zero tolerance for invisible bullying.

The society should link the three points of prevention in advance, support in the event, and punishment afterwards. Create a safe and healthy environment for students, protect their mental health, and let them grow up safely.

5. Conclusion

The harmful effects of invisible bullying have gradually deepened with the development of the times, which is a problem that the whole society should pay attention to. It can occur in different countries, different races, but caused the same harm. Even if this hidden bullying behavior controls the impact of direct abuse, it still has a profound impact on the development of human behavior. Invisibility should not only be regarded as individual deviation, but should be regarded as bullying. In the school's moral order and daily interaction, those verbal humiliation, public ridicule or abuse of power, fighting will leave lasting emotional trauma. Whether it is the secret bullying of Jamaican high school students or the joking debasement in Australian classrooms, the common harm of invisible bullying is that it gradually erodes the individual's sense of belonging and dignity through continuous, repeated small injuries, because it is not easy to be detected and is often condoned in silence. Therefore, family and school should work together to weave a protective network for children, protect children from its harm, and face up to the universality and harm of invisible bullying, which has become a common issue for the whole society to deal with.

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