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**Bullying in the Higher Education Context
- Case studies from Kenya and Finland**



Abstract

This article investigates bullying in higher education (HE), focusing on undergraduate students, using case studies from universities in Kenya and Finland. It aims to analyse the forms, impact, and coping strategies related to bullying.

The article contemplates the physical, verbal, and social forms of bullying as well as cyberbullying, examining the roles of all participants in bullying scenarios, including victims, bullies, and bystanders. The case studies from Kenya and Finland highlight how cultural and institutional factors influence the nature of bullying. In Kenya, bullying is closely linked to social and economic disparities, while in Finland, it leans more towards psychological aspects.

The effectiveness of anti-bullying measures, such as awareness campaigns, counselling services, and institutional policies, are discussed. The article also explores students' coping mechanisms, evaluating their efficacy in mitigating the impact of bullying.

This article offers insights into the dynamics of bullying in HE and underscores the need for context-specific approaches in policy formulation and interventions. It contributes to the understanding of bullying as a multifaceted issue, necessitating a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach in tackling it within university settings.

Keywords: bullying, higher education, anti-bullying, equality

Bullying in the Higher Education Context - Case Studies from Kenya and Finland

FREQUENT INCIDENTS OF bullying are a prevalent problem among young people. Some youths endure ongoing victimization in various educational settings. It is a common belief that bullying ends when a person becomes an adult. However, several studies show that this phenomenon doesn't end in childhood but may happen at the workplace or university (Campbell 2016; Pörhölä et al. 2016). Bullying in university settings can significantly impact students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and overall campus environment. The objective of this article is to describe the multifaceted nature of bullying among undergraduate university students, and to explore different measures to mitigate it. Case studies from two universities in Kenya and Finland enlighten the theoretical part based on research literature.

BULLYING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Research on bullying has increased since the 70s, and it has mainly focused on children, primary and secondary education, and the workplace. There is limited research in the emerging adult population, especially university students. The reason for this may be that physical and verbal bullying generally declines as children and adolescents grow older and move to higher education. (Campbell 2016; Huttunen 2021.)

However, there is research evidence showing that bullying exists in higher education, too (Campbell 2016; Pörhölä et al. 2016). It is not as common as in elementary school, but it has an equally adverse effect on well-being and coping with studies for the victims of bullying, being thus a major issue also in the university context (Pörhölä et al. 2016; Sullivan 2016).

University offers a prone atmosphere for bullying as there is a vast range of subjects and courses, and the students come from different cultural backgrounds and geographical areas. Academic and social university-related activities occur both on and off campus as well as online. (Sullivan 2016.)

Bullying can be described as hostile behaviour that can be physical, verbal, or psychological, done repeatedly and over time within an unbalanced power relationship, intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the victim (Farrington & Ttofi 2009; Cowie & Myers 2016). At university, bullying may include such behaviour as spreading nasty rumours, ridiculing and demeaning someone, social exclusion, unwelcome sexual advances, or threatening someone, either directly or anonymously online. The most typical form of bullying in higher education is unfounded criticism, belittling, or embarrassment. (Cowie & Myers 2016.)

BULLYING MAY TAKE MANY FORMS

Bullying takes many forms, from direct physical harm (physical bullying); to verbal taunts and threats (verbal bullying) to exclusion, humiliation, and rumour-spreading (relational or social bullying); to electronic harassment using texts, e-mails, or online mediums (cyberbullying) (Hymel & Swearer 2015). These different forms of bullying include different kinds of behavioural characters (Vinney 2021).

Physical bullying is the most obvious form of bullying. The physical forms of bullying comprise physical violence, stealing or harming the property of the victims, or plagiarising their university assignments. Physical bullying causes both short-term and long-term damage. (Pörhölä 2020.)

Verbal bullying involves using spoken or written words to insult, hurt or intimidate. It's not always easy to recognize as it can be disguised as good-natured ribbing or joking between friends. Verbal bullying includes name-calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. While verbal bullying can start harmless, it can escalate to levels that start affecting the individual target. (Vinney 2021.)

Social or relational bullying is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back and it involves social manipulations. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and cause humiliation. (Pörhölä 2020.) It includes lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance (Cowie & Myers 2016).

The Internet is a highly important medium in the everyday social life of university students, a channel to form and maintain social relationships. However, technology can have an adverse impact on the individual, if it is employed to mediate acts of hostility or abuse. (Kokkinos et al. 2014.) As a result of the social media evolution, cyber-bullying has become a new phenomenon at all levels of education. As young adults use the internet and social media most intensively, cyber-bullying seems to be even more prevalent in higher education in comparison with lower levels of education. (Kokkinos et al. 2014).

Cyberbullying is an online and electronic form of bullying. It happens through electronic devices, e.g. smartphones, computers, apps, games, social media, and different websites. Based on a meta-synthesis on cyber-bullying, the report defines it as "any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (Tokunaga 2010).

While offline bullying takes place normally during class time and stops once the victim has returned home, for cyber-bullying there are no limits, boundaries, or time constraints (Foody et al. 2015). It can include abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos. Deliberately excluding others online, spreading nasty gossip or rumours, and imitating others online or using their log-in (Foody et al. 2015).

The Internet has clearly changed the nature of interaction between the victim and perpetrator(s). Despite having different forms, bullying is often a complex combination of different forms and characteristic behaviour from these various forms. Both offline bullying and cyber-bullying can be difficult to verify. Bullying is typically a group process containing peer pressure which is an important creator of bullying behaviours. Common peer experiences and behaviours such as having fun, amusement, teasing, misleading, misrepresentation, and some group rituals may lead to bullying. (Aricak 2016.)

Bullying can also take shape in homophobic and transphobic bantering containing sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic comments. The universities can be characterised by a heterosexual binary position,

leaving room for homophobia and transphobia. It is thus understandable that for LGBT students and staff these institutions can be seen as daunting places to disclose one's sexual orientation. (Rivers 2016.)

DIFFERENT ROLES IN BULLYING

To understand the complexity of bullying situations, behavior, and actions leading to and causing bullying, researchers have defined different roles in bullying situations. This kind of bullying can take any form. There is no clear mutual understanding on the number and naming of the roles but the behaviours and actions included in the role are quite common. For example, Navarro, Yubero, and Larrañaga (2015) use the following division of roles: Victim, ringleader, assistants/reinforcers, bystanders, defenders. While Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996) see the roles as follows: bully/perpetrator, victim, assistant, outsider, and defenders. The bully and victim roles tend to remain stable from school settings to higher education and workplace contexts (Pörhölä 2016).

Even though the terms of the roles vary from one research to another the descriptions of these different roles are quite unified. Salmivalli et al. (1996) determine that a bully is an individual who repeatedly and intentionally attacks, humiliates, or excludes other persons. Navarro et al. see the bully as the person who starts and leads bullying. The role of the victim is also clearly described in various research (Salmivalli et al. 1996; Navarro et al 2015). The victim is the target of bullying.

Usually, the bully doesn't act alone but is accompanied with assistants or reinforcers. Usually, assistants join bullies in attacking a victim while reinforcers, who are not actively involved in the bullying reinforce bullies by, for example, providing an audience or laughing at the victim. (Salmivalli et al. 1996.) Navarro et al (2015) agree with this by stating that "Those who join in with bullies and help them to bully someone are called assistants and people who laugh and encourage bullying when it is taking place are called reinforcers."

Research is also noticeably clear on the role of the bystanders. They are seen as persons who do not take sides with either the bully or the victim and seen as persons who know about bullying but ignore it. Navarro et al (2015) state that bystanders may play a key role in bullying situations as they might have the ability to stop bullying, or they can allow it to continue by ignoring it.

Defenders are seen as people who help victims of bullying. They actively intervene and try to stop the bullying, for example by reporting the teacher about it or trying to comfort the victim of bullying. (Navarro et al. 2015; Salmivalli et al. 1996.)

The consequences of bullying can be large and far-reaching. Although there are certain inconsistent results relating to sex, age, and social context in the research literature, the general finding is that there is a consistent relationship between bullying and mental health problems. Many studies show that increased levels of anxiety, depression, poor self-worth, isolation, and loneliness are the most common psychological outcomes of bullying. (Aricak 2016; Campbell 2016.) Also, the perpetrators of bullying themselves have been found to have the same type of consequences (Campbell 2016).

There are many ways for students to cope with bullying. A study carried out among healthcare students in Finland identified four ways to cope with bullying: tolerating it, addressing it, external support, or personal strengths of the victim (Eronen-Levonen et al. 2015). They are presented in the following table 1:

Table 1. *Ways to cope with bullying (Based on Eronen-Levonen 2015, 155).*

Bullying can also be seen to have positive consequences. Students who have experienced bullying seem to be acting against it and seek to address inappropriate treatment. (Eronen-Levonen et al. 2015.)

A cross-cultural study by Pörhölä et al. (2016) indicates that several cultural and socioeconomic factors vary between different countries and influence on the occurrence, amount, and perception of bullying in universities (e.g., ethnic and cultural diversity, social awareness of bullying, and cultural variance regarding gender differences in bullying).

It is necessary to be able to act preventively against bullying. Although there are students who come to university with a predisposition to bully or be bullied, research evidence shows that interventions at individual, group, and policy levels can alleviate the problem (Aricak 2016).

ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES TO ADDRESS AND PREVENT BULLYING

Institutional policies have an important role in establishing the institution’s social norms. An important strategy to address and prevent bullying in educational institutions is the provision of anti-bullying policies and procedures. Farrington and Ttofi (2009) have carried out a systematic review of anti-bullying programs at schools. Their me-

ta-analysis shows that there is a strong association between a formal anti-bullying policy covering the whole school and a reduction in reported bullying.

An institution that has developed an anti-bullying policy indicates that the management of this institution is aware of the phenomenon and willing to do something about it. The institutional policies often formalize or at least influence its social norms: an anti-bullying policy sends an important message to the students and university staff that all forms of bullying are seen as unacceptable by peers. (Campbell 2016.) However, thorough the anti-bullying policy of a university is, it does not reduce bullying unless the policy is implemented. It is therefore important to transform the written policies into the daily life of the university. (Campbell 2016.)

CURRENT SITUATION AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN KENYA AND FINLAND

Bullying of students in primary and secondary schools in Kenya is a common and well-documented phenomenon, with studies reporting varying data with a prevalence ranging from 28% to 98% (Mokaya et al. 2022). The results vary mainly depending on the type of school funding, whether public or private, and the school's location, whether in a remote or urban area. However, there are few studies on conventional bullying in higher education, and the ones available focus on cyberbullying as experienced by university students (Kibe et al. 2022). Cowie & Myers (2016) argue there are documented cases on how bullying takes place in the university, and it is not only physical, but can also be psychological.

In Finland higher education is free of charge and thus all Finnish persons have equal access to education, regardless of their background and financial situation. Students also can receive financial aid from the state to cover their costs of living during the academic years (consisting mainly of a student loan and support for the rent). The ethnic and cultural diversity in universities is low as the number of international students and staff members is low (Pörhölä & al. 2016).

According to extensive research on the health and well-being of university students carried out in Finland in 2021, 7.0% of students have been bullied by another student and 5.1% by staff (The Finnish Student Health and Wellbeing Survey KOTT2021). The corresponding figures from 2016 (Huttunen 2021) are 7,5% and 5,1%. It can thus be observed that the perceived amount of bullying has decreased slightly over the past years.

There is a general awareness of school bullying as this phenomenon has been studied widely in Finland and thus it has raised a lot of attention in the media. A national-level intervention program has been developed to prevent bullying. Also, the Finnish students are socioeconomically, intellectually, and culturally fairly homogeneous which prevents tensions between students and student groups. For the victims of bullying, the threshold to seek support through health services is low in Finland as they are available for all university students at a very low cost. (Pörhölä & al. 2016.) These may be some of the factors that explain the relatively low rates of bullying also in higher education.

CASE STUDIES FROM KENYA AND FINLAND

Case study from Strathmore University, Kenya

Strathmore University is a highly ranked private university in Nairobi Kenya, with over four thousand students on part-time and full-time basis, pursuing a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Strathmore began

as a college in 1961 and was the first in Pre-independence Kenya to accommodate students from various social, multi-racial and multi-religious backgrounds. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, inspired and encouraged the beginning of such a college and in March 1966, the first intake of 25 Accountancy students were admitted and prepared for the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

Strathmore grew organically from those first students to acquire a Letter of Interim Authority from the Commission for University Education, Kenya. In 2007, the Commission approved the award of a charter for Strathmore to operate as a university. Strathmore's leadership comprises a Vice Chancellor, three Deputy Vice Chancellors, the University Secretary, several senior management staff, the University Council, the Management Board, the Academic Council, and various committees.

Strathmore has eight guiding core values which focus on the individual stakeholder thriving within the campus as well as in society. Key among the values is service to society, which contributes to the betterment of society and inspires students and staff to do good in society and retain a commitment to ethical practice. Strathmore strongly upholds its objective to honour the beliefs, morals and values of the academic profession and help others to do the same. The Strathmore 2022 annual report reinforces Strathmore's value for equal access and opportunity to all levels of education and training for the vulnerable, by offering over 20% of its student population some form of scholarship.

Strathmore student and staff character is guided by the core values of the university as well as written guidelines on conduct in a variety of circumstances.

Methodology

We conducted a small pilot study using simple random sampling techniques among first to fourth-year students in their first semester of learning for their respective years. The students are taking various undergraduate courses at Strathmore University and are being taught by one lecturer. A total of 80 (n=80) responses were received out of a possible 120 respondents, representing a 67% response rate. The 8-question study was anonymous which increased the confidence of the results, and had both closed and open-ended questions.

The aim of the study was to explore students' feelings about the possibility of bullying at university, to determine their understanding of bullying, and to report on the forms of bullying they were aware of, or could be happening in the university.

The quantitative data was analysed using simple percentages because of the small sample size, while the qualitative data was analysed thematically.

Results

Asked if they believed a university student could be bullied, 94% (75) said yes while the rest responded in the negative.

Respondents were asked if they had ever experienced bullying since joining the university and 3 (4%) said they had while 77 (96%) responded in the negative. While this is a fairly low prevalence rate, it is not insignificant and is a valuable indicator on the possibility of bullying existence. Interestingly, when asked what forms of bullying can take place at university, the responses leaned heavily towards bullying for socioeconomic reasons (26%), which specifically stated:

'When students make others feel bad because of not having something i.e. money'
'Where people of a higher social class feel like others have to do things for them'
'Not being included in what the rest are doing because they feel like they are better than you'
'Social exclusion where individuals are left out of a study group'

Respondents also pointed to online related bullying, open hostility and assault; extortion and peer pressure; and social media or cyber bullying, each at 13%. Responses also included body shaming and emotional bullying (6%), as well as verbal bullying 5%.

Students were also asked if they knew a fellow undergraduate student who had been bullied and 25% (20) said yes while 75% had not heard about it.

The survey also sought to find out how students defined bullying. The responses had four clear themes: a power imbalance (4 responses); Intention to harm (16 responses); actual harm (10 responses), while the rest cut across the themes.

Respondents alluded to bullying as:

'To intimidate or coerce people into situations they don't want to be in.'
'Using power over the powerless.'
'Taking advantage of one's state or position.'
'Being looked down upon by other people who think they are better than you socially, financially etc.'

The fourth definition points to the possibility of bullying as a result of social and financial inequality. The majority of the responses pointed to a premeditated effort to cause discomfort to another individual or an element of intentionality. To discuss these occurrences further, students were asked to narrate an experience on bullying that they had or someone they knew had:

'I have experienced being left out of study groups based on my appearance and financial instability with intentions of harming my feelings and discrimination' (grammar slightly corrected).
'The most recent is when a student was told to leave the pitch because he didn't have any sports gear. Which was kind of sad.'
'There's this guy who enjoys commenting negatively on women's posts on social media...especially plus-size women. He always comments "unfat" on the posts. He happened to comment that on my friend's post, and it made her very insecure with her body. She even deleted the post.'
'Social class. So this group of students noticed that I am not equally as stable as they are. While making opinions and orders from lecturers since I was a module leader, they bullied me' (grammar slightly corrected).

Most of the narratives focused on high school bullying rather than bullying at the university, which is an indicator on the lingering effects of bullying pre-university.

We further sought respondents' opinion on how bullying can be prevented. They suggested that bullying can be prevented through education on bullying (24%) on what bullying entails and its effects on individuals. In addition, there were suggestions on the university creating and implementing specific policies on bullying (21%). Others recommended preventive psychoeducation and emotional support for victims of bullying (16%).

Asked whom they would tell if they were bullied, friends (23%) and a university related individual like a lecturer or mentor (22%) and a relative like a parent or sibling (28%) were mentioned. The rest would tell no one and seek ways of dealing with the bully.

Implications

Bullying is no doubt a traumatizing experience, which is more common in secondary and primary schools than in universities in Kenya. The unwritten expectation is that students at university are adults and therefore may not necessarily be exposed to the kind of bullying present at lower levels of education, let alone be bullies themselves. The data in this small study, however, indicates an awareness that students in the university can be bullied. The responses point to bullying as a premeditated act, one that the bully is aware of, intending to exert social power over their victim. Social exertion is not a preserve of lower levels of learning, and it may well point to a higher level of bullying present in higher education, rather than an absence. The literature discusses various forms of bullying in higher education ranging from workplace bullying (Heffernan and Bosetti 2021), to student to lecturer (Asio 2019), down to the more commonly discussed lecturer-to-student bullying. The findings from Strathmore demonstrate a relatively low prevalence of bullying, but an awareness and possibility of bullying nonetheless. The categories of bullying do not significantly differ from findings in an international cross-regional study by Pörhölä et al. (2020) who found that bullying in higher education falls under four categories described earlier in the text.

However, the social exclusion prevalence in the responses by Strathmore University students points to covert background towards socioeconomic inequalities, which may cause some students to feel more privileged than others, and therefore bully the lower-ranking students.

Strathmore is ranked highly as the best-performing private university in various categories in a variety of ranking platforms. As a private university, the majority of students are privately sponsored students. There is, however, a growing number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds on scholarship, and the university aims at increasing the enrollment of needy students under various sponsorship programs, especially because this falls squarely under Strathmore's core values. The remote possibility of socioeconomic bullying, therefore, can unintentionally complicate and compromise the learning experiences of these students.

The findings indicate a clear responsibility on universities to develop guiding documentation to forestall bullying. From the data gathered, there is a felt need by the students for the university to put in measures to prevent this occurrence by way of educating students not just on what bullying is, but also the forms it takes and the effects that it has on a victim. The majority of the responses indicate that the university needs to offer guidelines and even lay down measures that punish proven bullying. While the university has very specific policies and guidelines on discipline and student life while on campus, there is a need to have specific guidelines and a laid down definition of bullying, which would help to contribute to the literature on what bullying entails at higher education.

Some responses linked the need for the university to organize psychoeducation sessions where they explain bullying as well as offer support for victims. The indication is that respondents link bullying to mental health, which is a growing concern for many young people today. This may therefore indicate a readiness for students to expand the mental health education bracket to include not just victims of bullying, but education on how one may be bullying, but is unaware of it, as one respondent indicated.

This was a small interschool study across first year to fourth year students who were on session during the July to September Semester. The study sought to find preliminary data on bullying presence and bullying awareness at Strathmore University. While the results may be indicative of the current situation at the university as almost bullying free, it is by no means a generalizable study, owing to the small population that was sampled.

Case study from Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Laurea University of Applied Sciences is one of the biggest UAS in Finland. Laurea has approximately 8500 students and 650 staff members. Laurea has six campuses located in the Helsinki Metropolitan area. In recent years, Laurea has been successful in various comparisons between universities of applied sciences in Finland. Laurea invests especially in the quality of education and research and development activities. The strategic intent of Laurea is to be an international developer of working life competence and vitality in the Uusimaa region in 2030.

Laurea's guiding values are openness, effectiveness, and responsibility. From the perspective of bullying prevention, all three values are essential. Openness refers to trust and security in all of Laurea's operations. Efficiency is realized in the presence of reliable social relations. Responsibility includes, among other things, the dimension of social responsibility. In a spirit of responsibility, the higher education community takes care of everyone's well-being and participation.

Laurea's special strength lies in its ability to combine expertise from different fields and thus build new understanding and solutions to complex problems. Laurea operates in intensive cooperation with working life. Laurea continuously carries out national and international research, development and innovation projects.

Laurea's state of art on anti-bullying

In Laurea there are already many policies, regulations, rules and guidelines that support anti-bullying and a safe, equal and non-discriminating study environment. All of these policies, regulations, rules, and guidelines are communicated via student intranet and are an important part of every new student's orientation face to face and online. (Laurea 2023a.)

Firstly, in Laurea there are rules of order that apply to every member of the Laurea community, and they are applied in everyday activities of the university community. The rules of order guarantee a safe study and working environments for all members of the community. All members of the Laurea community have a duty to uphold and promote a safe and pleasant university community. The rules of order are based on the University of Applied Sciences Act (953/2011, 24a §). (Laurea 2023b.)

Secondly, Laurea has ethical guidelines. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide support and act as a tool for the everyday operations of personnel and students. The goal is for the guidelines to facilitate everyday encounters in different situations and between different stakeholder groups. The Ethical Guidelines form part of Laurea's set of guidelines, including the equality and non-discrimination plan, safety and security guidelines, and the standard operating procedure. (Laurea 2023c.)

Thirdly, there is an accessibility, equality, and non-discrimination plan in place as already mentioned above. This plan is based on the following principles: Laurea does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or bullying; students are treated equally and non-discriminatingly throughout their study paths; personnel are treated equally and non-discriminatingly in recruitment and at different stages of employment; and Laurea is an accessible and inclusive place to work and study.

The implementation of the goals and measures of the accessibility, equality, and non-discrimination plan is assessed by the Occupational Safety and Health Committee, the Service Unit Management Team, and the Education Management Team. (Laurea 2023c.)

There are also Degree Regulations that include sections that take notice to accessible learning and operating environment, security, safety, and discipline as well as rules and regulations and appropriate conduct (Laurea 2023d).

The student union in Laurea also has its regulations, rules, guidelines, and plans in place. These overlap with Laurea's regulations, rules, guidelines, and plans. The student union has its equality plan, and all its events follow the principles of Safer Space. There is also a named harassment contact person that students can contact when needed. (Laureamko 2017)

The students have a named contact (Head of Student Affairs) who handles harassment and other notifications relating to studying and studies. If the students have experienced or know of a case of inappropriate behavior, bullying, discrimination, or harassment they can contact this person. (Laurea 2023e.)

Methodology

The case study was carried out at Laurea community in September and October 2023. Thematic interviews, using a Teams-video connection, were conducted for experts from the Laurea community who were assumed to have knowledge of the subject of bullying.

The interviewees at Laurea were social welfare counsellor, study psychologist, special education teacher and study manager. One person from the student union Laureamko was also interviewed. Finding interviewees was effortless and everyone agreed to participate right from the first request. All participants considered the topic of the case study important and wanted to contribute to the study. The qualitative research data was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Definition and interpretations of bullying at Laurea

All participants said that Laurea has a common definition of bullying. Participants' recollections of this definition varied. One of the participants described the definition as including the long-term, planned, and long-term development of bullying in the same person.

One of the participants pointed out that although there are common definitions of bullying at Laurea, the definition is often complex and may vary from person to person. According to him, in some situations it may be open to interpretation whether the activity meets the definition of bullying.

One of the participants expressed the view that every member of the higher education community has their own understanding of bullying. Although Laurea's joint documents provide guidelines for defining bullying, identifying bullying is not easy in all situations. Even an experienced higher education professional cannot always say whether a situation is bullying. Finding out about the situation often requires conversations and careful listening.

"Because defining bullying is challenging, the importance of Laurea's ethical guidelines is emphasized. You have to rely on something."

One of the respondents wanted to define bullying through actions: exclusion from the immediate community is bullying. According to the participant's experiences, this is often accompanied by unpleasant talk about the excluded person.

The role of anti-bullying statements in Laurea

Laurea does not have a separate document that focuses only on the prohibition of bullying. However, the ban on bullying comes up in several different documents. These have been introduced earlier in this article.

Such documents include, for example, the Degree Regulations and Rules of Order. Although not all the interviewees remembered the exact content of the rules, they felt that the rules were necessary in the higher education community. Even though important, according to the interviewees, documents are usually not part of everyday life in the higher education community. According to the interviews, the rules are in everyone's own mind. The wrongdoer knows that he or she is doing wrong, and the one who strives for good knows that his aspirations are good.

The rules provide the necessary background support in situations where bullying is dealt with. Bullying is always wrong and forbidden. According to the interviewees, bullying is always wrong. However, there are sometimes problems with how bullying is recognized. Also defining bullying and different interpretations of bullying sometimes cause problems in real-life complex situations.

The same situation may mean humour for one person but bullying for someone else involved in the situation. The university's anti-bullying rules will be introduced especially when bullying has already occurred, and the incident is being investigated. However, several respondents stated that there is room for improvement in the implementation of anti-bullying rules. Ideally, the rules would work to prevent bullying.

"The rules and regulations are appropriate in themselves, but the challenge is how to implement them in the everyday life of the university."

The interviewees said that the very beginning of new student's studies is an important stage for bullying prevention. The new student gets acquainted with Laurea's rules and regulations right from the initial orientation. The same ethical themes come up again and again when a new student is getting to know Laurea. It should not be possible to start your studies without familiarising yourself with the themes of equality and non-discrimination. In so many ways, the topic is communicated and reminded.

"Each member of the community has a responsibility to ensure that anti-bullying statements and principles are in place, and it is safe to study for everyone here."

In addition to the previous, the interviewees reported that Laurea has, for example, declared all of its campuses as a discrimination-free zones through a campaign run by the Ministry of Justice in Finland. Signs stating campuses as discrimination-free zones can be seen throughout the different campuses.

Communication related to bullying within and outside Laurea

Laurea's top management actively communicates both inside and outside the higher education community that bullying or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated. The management has communicated about the matter through multiple channels, utilising, for example, blog posts and public speeches at various events. In addition to these, Laurea's principal has written actively about these themes in his blog.

In addition to the above, the principal meets with students regularly at different campuses at an agreed time. Students have the opportunity to talk directly with the principal about any issues that may be on their minds.

According to Laurea's values, every employee at Laurea is a student vat. In a stressful or frightening situation, the student can turn to any worker who will help the student forward to get the right help. It is important that the staff communicates through their actions that students can come and talk to them, and help is available even in difficult situations.

The management of the school has taken a positive stand on the rights of sexual minorities, among other things. An example of this is Pride Week during which rainbow-coloured Pride flags fly on Laurea's flag poles.

"I am proud that Laurea has taken a clear positive stance on sexual and gender minorities."

Good practices in promoting a non-bullying university

The interviewees considered equality, openness, and responsibility to be important values guiding the entire higher education community. Bullying prevention should be based on these values. The principle of safe space prevails in student union events, and a harassment contact person is present at the events.

According to Laurea's assessment, the mere presence of a harassment person at the event can reduce harassment. A picture of the harassment contact person is published online before the event, which can also help reduce bullying and harassment. The events are large and many representatives of the higher education community participate in them. Considering this, there are quite a few cases of bullying. Of course, every case is too much.

The behaviour of the teaching staff was also highlighted. Everyone in their teaching should be an active influencer in preventing bullying. The teacher's behaviour gives an indication of how to act in bullying situations. Constructive and calm practices create a model for students. The interviewees emphasized that students are constantly adopting practices from their teachers. This makes the responsibility of the teacher great.

"I think it is important to set an example. You learn by example. This is true for better or for worse."

The rules and application of safe space should always be included in every student event. This could make it easier for a slightly fearful student to get involved. According to the actors of the student union, a safe space should be an important part of every union event. This principle should be extended to all activities of the university.

Older students also have a duty to set a good example. In the higher education community, it is natural that younger students admire older students and may even imitate their operating models. This makes older students very responsible. Therefore, they must observe their own behaviour. Older students serve as models for better or for worse. By being a good model, you make a positive contribution to the activities of the university.

For this study, the persons interviewed were selected with purpose. Only staff members specialized in the topic at hand participated. With the exception of the student union representative, no students were interviewed. This limits the adaptability of the results.

CONCLUSIONS

Dealing with bullying publicly and researching it is important so that people dare to approach this phenomenon in general. It is something that can have a large-scale impact on the student's well-being and study atmosphere and therefore the students and universities need to dare to bring it up. Hence, discussing the issue and creating awareness among the students and staff is important. Bullying should not be seen as an individual problem but as an organizational one.

Bullying should be prohibited in all activities of higher education. This should cover teaching and guidance, but also more informal activities, such as student union events. Policies and guidelines are important, but they only

have a real impact when they are integrated into the day-to-day activities of higher education. The staff of higher education, from management to teachers, have an important task in keeping the anti-bullying policy on display both in everyday life and at celebrations. The students and staff should be trained or at least made knowledgeable of the topic in hand.

Looking at higher education culture is essential; it is important that higher education culture promotes non-discrimination and equality. All members of the higher education community should be able to feel safe and equal. Diversity should be seen as a resource and an opportunity.

Learning in higher education takes place not only through formal learning but also informally, through encounters and interactions between diverse people. When we meet diverse people, we can learn new things about each other and humanity in general. In this view, there is no place for bullying. Bullying prevents the opportunities offered by encounters and therefore prevents the realisation of creativity and the emergence of innovations. The best insights are created when people share their insights in a safe atmosphere.

However, based on the literature reviewed for this article, we have learned that bullying in higher education is still weakly identified, scarcely examined, and rarely discussed in public. It is important to develop social awareness of bullying in higher education contexts and develop intervention policies and measures to reduce and prevent it. The two case studies cannot be compared because of the different research methodologies used and because of cultural differences. From these case studies, we have learned that the situations of HEI bullying in Kenya and Finland are very different and that we can learn from each other's experiences.

Every member of the higher education community has a responsibility for a bullying-free community. This responsibility also applies to people who do not bully others themselves. Everyone has a responsibility to intervene in a bullying situation if they see it happening. We believe that a positive approach can have a significant impact. Commitment to positive action is effective in developing a safe higher education culture.

Cultural change towards bullying-free higher education is possible. The first and most important step in preventing bullying is recognising the problem and open discussion about it. Positive change occurs when community members actively stand up against bullying and defend the equality of all.

This article has been written as part of TOTEMK project which contributes to modernizing HE teacher education and develops students learning through new pedagogical methods, and application of modern pedagogical technology. The target of the project is to empower teacher's work to respond effectively to the Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum and to strengthen the teacher education and institutional management in Kenya It is financed by the government of Finland with the participation of 5 higher education institutions (3 from Kenya and 2 from Finland). Socio-cultural issues was one of the topics of the training workshops organized for the teacher trainers. In that context, we learnt that bullying in HE context has received little attention although it is a very important aspect to be taken into account for improving the students' well-being.

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