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# Global Experience in Bullying Prevention

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## Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the theoretical and applied aspects of bullying prevention in different countries and to develop proposals for effective measures to prevent bullying in Ukraine based on a comprehensive analysis of foreign experience. The methodological tools were selected in accordance with the set goal, the specifics of the object and the subject of research. The study used the dialectical method of scientific knowledge of socio-legal phenomena in their contradictions, development and changes, which makes it possible to objectively assess the level and effectiveness of preventing bullying in Ukraine; formal and logical method, which identified the elements of the legal mechanism for preventing violence; the comparative legal method was used in the analysis of current legislation and international regulations. The theoretical basis of the publication was the works of domestic and foreign scientists devoted to the aspects of bullying prevention. The scientific novelty of the publication consists in highlighting the main measures to prevent bullying in foreign countries. A number of recommendations are proposed that can be used in preventive measures against bullying and to help victims. As a result of the catastrophic spread of bullying in the country, there is an urgent need to constantly update methodological recommendations for teachers and psychologists to prevent this phenomenon in educational institutions. Following the example of such countries as Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland, the United States of America, Spain, Norway, Canada and Japan, special programmes should be introduced in the educational environment to educate young people in the spirit of tolerance towards each other, democracy, humane attitude towards peers and other positive aspects. Combined with numerous legal mechanisms, this approach will help to eradicate bullying not only in practice but also in the consciousness of Ukrainian society

## Keywords:

bullying; anti-bullying measures; victim; aggressor; foreign experience; prevention of bullying

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## Introduction

While in the world the issue of school bullying has been widely studied since the 80s of the last century, the attention of Ukrainian researchers to this issue has intensified only in the last decade (the first studies in Ukraine began only in 2005). This is primarily due to the fact that today bullying among Ukrainian schoolchildren has become widespread (or, perhaps, society has begun to witness manifestations of this phenomenon more often due to the publication of horrific videos where children bully each other). According to the World Health Organisation, Ukraine ranks fourth in the prevalence of aggression among adolescents after Russia, Albania and Belarus [1].

Disappointing statistics raise concerns of all those who can help to overcome the problem - parents, teachers, human rights activists, psychologists, and policymakers in the field of education.

The purpose and objectives of the publication are to study foreign experience in preventing bullying and to find out the possibilities of its application in Ukraine.

## Results and Discussion

Bullying is a form of violence that is intentional, manifested in prolonged aggression associated with repeated actions of a physical, mental, economic, sexual nature by a person or group of persons who have advantages (physical, psychological, etc.), with the possible use of technical means committed for a specific purpose (intimidation of a person, punishment for committing an act, moral humiliation, coercion to confess to something, etc.), which causes various kinds (social, material, moral, physiological, psychological, etc.) negative consequences and is dangerous to human life and health [2].

Bullying is an international phenomenon that is studied by scientists from different countries: the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Norway, Finland, etc. Russian scientist I. Cohn noted that over the past 20 years, bullying has become an international socio-psychological and pedagogical term, which means a complex set of social, psychological, criminological and legal problems [3]. This is in fact a scaled-down version of the terrorist act. On the one hand, the persecutor oppresses the victim, on the other hand, he makes it clear to all witnesses, to the whole class who is "in charge". Researchers emphasise that criminals are brought up under such conditions. Schematically, it can be described as follows: child bullying – radicalisation – violent extremism... And finally, the most acute form – terrorism.

The consequences of the impact of bullying on pupils and students are published in the reports of the Center for Disease Control and the National Center for Education Statistics, namely, people who are

bullied have an increased risk of poor adaptation to school, sleeping difficulties, anxiety and depression; have mental health and behavioural problems; bullying also negatively affects well-being (19%), relationships with friends and family, school activities (14%) and physical health (9%); they are twice as likely as their peers to experience negative health consequences, including headaches and stomachaches. Young people who self-blame and believe they deserve to be subjected to violence are more likely to experience negative consequences such as depression, long-term victimisation and injustice [4].

In developed countries, the study of bullying began in the 80s of the twentieth century with the further consolidation of the problem of "school violence" in the legislation. Today, such countries as India, Ireland and Singapore have the strictest "minors" legislation - imprisonment is possible from the age of 7, including for bullying. In the UK, Switzerland, the USA and Australia, people are imprisoned from the age of 10 (for example, in the state of Pennsylvania (USA), the court sentenced an 11-year-old convict who shot a pregnant woman to life imprisonment).

Obviously, the creation of an effective legal mechanism to counteract such a phenomenon as bullying in Ukraine requires consideration of foreign experience, because this problem has no borders and the issue of security of educational space arises even in socially prosperous countries.

Outlining the world experience on this issue, it should be noted that one of the first countries where the issue of bullying was considered at the national and legislative levels was Sweden. In addition to the laws protecting victims of bullying, there is a systematic preventive work enshrined in the legislation, which is carried out by state institutions and non-profit organisations "Friends" [5].

In the United Kingdom, Facebook joined the fight against bullying in cyberspace by organising a network of "Internet officers" in each secondary school, and in 2014, Yale University, together with Facebook, launched a special online project "Bullying Prevention Centre". At the same time, the Prince William Foundation announced the launch of a project that teaches children aged 11-16 to counteract online bullying [5].

The formation of special anti-bullying programmes at the regulatory level is a tool used in other Eurozone countries. For example, Finland has launched the "KiVa" programme in the period from 2006 to 2009, and it has been functioning quite effectively to this day. The programme is targeted at all pupils of secondary schools from 5 to 11 years old. Its mission is to reduce school bullying and peer victimisation. A key focus of the Finnish programme is working with minors. Within its activities, children are taught to recognize bullying behaviour and to

counteract it using collective resources. The Finnish program contains both universal actions to prevent bullying and specific actions that consist of direct intervention in instances of school bullying. Thus, specific actions can be considered the use of animated lessons and video games as a supplement to booklets and communication with teachers. At the same time, each school has a team of three teachers (or other school staff) and a class teacher who jointly study a certified or detected case of bullying [6].

These cases are considered through a series of individual and small group discussions with victims or initiators, and then systematic meetings are organised. Alternatively, the teacher meets with two to four classmates of high social status in the class, encouraging them to support each affected child. Universal actions to combat school bullying are 20 hours of classes on this topic, which are conducted by teachers during the school year. The main goals of such classes are to raise awareness of the role that the group plays in countering bullying and to increase the sense of empathy for victims of bullying. During such classes, discussions, group work, role-playing exercises are organised, resulting in the formation of internal rules for the class to avoid and prevent bullying [7].

In the United States, unlike Ukraine, there is a multi-layered system of anti-bullying, which consists of state influence on the educational system and regional anti-bullying policies. Besides, there are many NGOs that monitor, control, promote legislative initiatives, prevent bullying, rehabilitate victims or socialize and patronise bullies. There are certain standard requirements for anti-bullying laws that can be taken into account if Ukraine adopts anti-bullying laws. For example, the Law of Ukraine “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Counteracting Bullying”

Does not have any recommendations or instructions on anti-bullying policies to be implemented by educational institutions, as the law does not provide for the education of specialists in the prevention of bullying and response to its manifestations. Thus, despite the fact that this law imposes obligations on participants in the educational process to implement anti-bullying policy, comply with its requirements and monitor its proper implementation, it is still formal in nature, as it does not contain a mechanism to combat bullying. American laws have inexhaustible lists of actions that can be interpreted as bullying and cyberbullying [8].

Ukraine does not have a codified definition of “cyberbullying” at all, and “bullying” is used in a broad sense, without specifying some components, so each interprets it independently. The direct definition of bullying, which amends the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences, does not show

a systematic approach, but the Law of Ukraine “On Education” does. This indicates the imperfection of domestic anti-bullying legislation and the need to improve it in view of foreign experience [8].

All states have their own anti-bullying laws, each of which has local policies to address this issue. Relevant laws and regulations governing various aspects of the problem focus on both individual and school responsibility for safety, giving due consideration to anonymity and confidentiality [5].

Another subject of debate in US academic and political circles is the zero-tolerance approach adopted by many schools after the tragedies at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech. Critics of the zero-tolerance policy agree that children at high risk of misconduct should face certain disciplinary penalties, but drastic measures to curb minor violations do more harm than good. In many cases, the school administration's response was exaggerated and disproportionate to the perceived threat. There are also racial disparities among students who are subject to strict disciplinary measures in response to bullying. African-Americans and low-income Latinos are mostly subject to suspension, expulsion, and criminal liability.

This policy does not consider the individual circumstances of violations, imposing equally severe disciplinary responsibility on all students who violate school rules. For example, in 2001, the American Bar Association voted to repeal zero-tolerance laws in schools, due to the lack of effectiveness of these policies and their discriminatory application. However, almost 90% of Public Schools in the United States have some form of zero-tolerance policy [9].

The foundations of anti-bullying in Spain were laid in the 1990s. In particular, the first programme developed in Spain was the SAVE project, which combined a research initiative with a set of preventive actions aimed at reducing cases of victimisation and violence in primary and secondary schools. Such actions are primarily aimed at developing a sense of security, communication skills in schoolchildren, and awareness of common values among teenagers.

Besides, the project implementation included activities with the teaching staff, namely, training on anti-bullying at school, as well as cooperation of teachers in this area. At the personal level, work on critical thinking skills was carried out to promote empathy and the ability to reflect. The most effective vector of the “SAVE” project is the democratisation of the process of managing the coexistence of schoolchildren in the team, and emotional and value-based education. Democratisation was carried out through the introduction of clear rules that were focused on establishing positive interpersonal relationships [7].

The most effective anti-bullying initiative is the Norwegian nationwide Dan Olweus programme.

It was thoroughly studied in a large research project, which involved 2500 children from 42 schools over a period of two and a half years. The results of long-term monitoring demonstrated the effectiveness of the program – the number of incidents related to harassment decreased by 30-50%. At the same time, the indicators of antisocial behaviour (drinking, theft, vandalism, etc.) decreased and the overall climate in schools improved [10].

The key to success lies in a systematic approach to the issue of bullying: psychologist and scientist Dan Olweus insists on the importance of working with a range of social roles: the so-called “bullying circle” consists not only of the victim and the aggressor but also of supporters and passive observers. This initiative is based on the principles of creating a welcoming and friendly school (and ideally home) environment and focuses not on punishment but on encouraging peaceful coexistence with clearly defined boundaries for unacceptable behaviour [5].

The programme is based on 4 key principles:

- creating a school (and ideally home) environment characterised by warmth, positive attitudes and adult engagement;
- clear boundaries of unacceptable behaviour;
- consistent application of non-punitive, non-physical sanctions for unacceptable behaviour and violation of the rules;
- the presence of authoritative adults - role models.

Besides, the programme has two main lines of work – prevention, i.e. avoidance of bullying, and response to bullying [5].

The prevention part of the campaign includes: creating a positive environment where relationships between participants are built on mutual respect; informing students, staff and parents about the types of bullying and its impact; external anti-bullying programmes for students at risk; an annual survey on bullying in the school or college; a clear and accessible document on the rights and responsibilities of students [10].

These activities have contributed to a reduction in student complaints of bullying and harassment by more than 50%; a significant drop in student reports of general anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy; and a clear improvement in the social climate in the classroom, as evidenced by student reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships and attitudes towards school work and school.

The prevention programme has been improved, expanded and further evaluated in five additional large-scale projects in Norway. Statistics further showed successful prevention of bullying in schools. Starting with the initiative of the Norwegian government, the Olweus bullying prevention initiative has received the status of a priority national

programme, which is widely implemented in primary and secondary schools throughout Norway and is now one of the most studied and effective [10].

The experience of Canada is also relevant. In particular, the concept of “bullying” is defined in this country at the legislative level. Thus, according to the Education Act of the province of Quebec (Part 13, paragraph 1.1), “bullying” is a direct or indirect behaviour, comment, action or sign, in particular made through social networks, with the intent to cause physical or psychological harm, humiliation, intimidation, social exclusion. Canadian schools attach great importance to working with witnesses of bullying: they work to raise their awareness of this phenomenon and its consequences, teach witnesses of bullying how to respond to cases of bullying, and develop their confidence in the need to protect the victim. Another issue is that teachers or school staff are often absent when a bullying incident occurs and do not always intervene to stop it [11].

Canada, after recognising the issue of bullying, immediately began preparing relevant legislation, which required the Ministry of Education to develop policies and guidelines for the prevention of bullying, disciplinary measures for inappropriate behaviour, including more serious punishment for repeated bullying. Currently, in Canada, fines can be imposed even on witnesses of bullying who do not report it to responsible persons or those who can intervene in the situation. Also, according to the federal law “On Educational Institutions” (2011), each school must hold an annual bullying awareness week and organise training to counteract this phenomenon.

It should be mentioned that Canadian schools are transitioning from a zero-tolerance approach to addressing bullying (common in the 1990s) to a more constructive and preventive approach. The zero-tolerance approach consisted of strict sanctions against students who initiated bullying (suspension from school or expulsion from school). Despite this, the preventive approach demonstrates much greater effectiveness. It consists in creating a school-wide culture of respect and understanding; integrating the anti-bullying component into the educational process and extracurricular and informal activities; consideration of the severity of bullying behaviour, and the factors that cause it, to make adequate intervention; conducting ongoing monitoring and recording of bullying cases; using restorative justice to restore the relationship between the offender and the victim; eliminating the harm caused by bullying [12].

Japan has been moving towards recognising the problem of bullying at the legislative level for quite a long time. This is explained by the cultural specifics of the country – bullying has always been perceived by the Japanese as a phenomenon quite acceptable in the school environment (primarily

among boys, as girls did not attend school in the past). Thus, it is believed that bullying of peers should toughen the character, and therefore it was humiliating and shameful to complain about such actions by classmates. It was assumed that those who are not able to cope with bullying on their own will not be able to protect either their loved ones or their homeland in the future.

Today, the current law obliges the school administration to report serious cases of harassment to the police. At the same time, educational institutions must form an effective organisational structure to counteract bullying at school. In particular, it provides for the establishment of a special commission to investigate the causes and consequences of incidents, and the development of school policies to prevent bullying. In addition, the authorities request regular monitoring of social networks and other Internet platforms to identify bullying of children in the online space [5].

The author offers a number of recommendations to counteract and prevent the spread of bullying and its consequences in educational institutions of Ukraine:

- increase the number of subjects that would give an idea of real life, values and relationships inherent in the "adult world", including the skills of nonviolent conflict resolution. Addressing the issues of confronting violence not only in case of bullying in the classroom or once (class hour), they should become part of various classes (literature, law, history, etc.), in particular the introduction of the values of peaceful settlement of issues, empathy, justice, safe use of the Internet through various subjects. That is, the prevention of bullying in the community should not be a one-time event, but a systematic process throughout the entire period of the child's education [5];

- the participation of a teacher or psychologist in the educational institution with the skills to help victims of bullying and knowledge of methods of influencing aggressors. This recommendation is based on the judgments of high school and college students who reported in a survey that the most helpful things teachers can do are: listen to them; talk to them afterwards to make sure the bullying has stopped; and provide advice [4];

- to shift priorities from knowledge transfer to the system of skills development and their use. In the context of counteracting violent behavior, it is primarily about increasing the number of hours for pedagogical activities (including extracurricular

activities of the group), strengthening the discussion component in humanitarian subjects, modeling conflicts and their resolution;

- introduce subjects that would meet the challenges of our time. For example, the basics of conflictology, virtual space safety. It is not just about optional or variant courses, but about compulsory classes. In particular, Israel provides a training programme that teaches children to resist cyberbullying [5];

- develop an electronic system for reporting bullying cases at a school or college. Such a system can be implemented, for example, on any convenient messenger platform – Facebook, Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp; have short columns for quick completion with a minimum of manual input. Prompt receipt of information will enable teachers and psychologists to quickly and efficiently respond to an act of aggression and provide support to the victim;

- to create centres for the prevention of bullying throughout the country, given the catastrophic spread of this phenomenon in the country. To draw the attention of pupils and students to the confidentiality of information on violent acts provided to the e-system of bullying reports, and to tactful communication that does not degrade the dignity of both parties [4].

The scientific novelty of the publication is that it outlines the main measures to prevent bullying in foreign countries. The author proposed a number of recommendations that can be used in preventing bullying and helping victims in Ukraine.

## Conclusions

In the civilized world, bullying is considered as a rather serious social and pedagogical problem of our time. The practice of foreign countries demonstrates that effective prevention of bullying in schools requires a well-coordinated organisation of both intra-system and interdepartmental interaction, which is based on a clear legislative and regulatory framework.

To effectively prevent and counteract bullying in Ukraine, it is necessary to address the issues in this area at the legislative level. The introduction of a three-level system of measures for its prevention and criminal liability will be efficient. In addition, a prerequisite for the prevention of bullying is the training of teachers and psychologists to address bullying in secondary schools with the mandatory involvement of psychological services, educational authorities, community members, churches, law enforcement agencies.

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# Світовий досвід запобігання булінгу

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## Анотація

Метою статті є дослідження теоретичних і прикладних аспектів запобігання булінгу в різних державах і розроблення пропозицій щодо дієвих заходів запобігання булінгу в Україні на підставі всебічного аналізу іноземного досвіду. Методологічний інструментарій обрано відповідно до поставленої мети, специфіки об'єкта й предмета дослідження. У процесі дослідження використано діалектичний метод наукового пізнання соціально-правових явищ в їхніх суперечностях, розвитку та змінах, що дає змогу об'єктивно оцінити рівень й ефективність запобігання булінгу в Україні; формально-логічний метод, завдяки якому виявлено елементи правового механізму запобігання насильству; порівняльно-правовий метод застосовано під час аналізу чинного законодавства та міжнародних нормативних актів. Теоретичним підґрунтям публікації стали праці вітчизняних й іноземних учених, присвячені аспектам запобігання булінгу. Наукова новизна публікації полягає у висвітленні основних заходів запобігання булінгу в іноземних державах. Запропоновано низку рекомендацій, які можна буде використати в запобіжних заходах щодо булінгу та для допомоги постраждалим. Унаслідок катастрофічного поширення булінгу в країні постала гостра потреба в постійному оновленні методичних рекомендацій для вчителів і психологів щодо запобігання цьому явищу в освітніх закладах. Наслідуючи приклад таких країн, як Швеція, Велика Британія, Фінляндія, Сполучені Штати Америки, Іспанія, Норвегія, Канада та Японія, слід запровадити в середовищі освітянської діяльності спеціальні програми, метою яких стане виховання молоді в дусі толерантності один до одного, демократизм, людяне ставлення до однолітків й інші позитивні аспекти. У поєднанні з численними правовими механізмами такий підхід сприятиме викоріненню булінгу не лише на практиці, а й у свідомості представників українського суспільства

## Ключові слова:

булінг; антибулінгова робота; жертва; агресор; іноземний досвід; запобігання булінгу