

Bullying from a cross-cultural perspective

-A comparison between Austria and Japan-

Elfriede GREIMEL¹⁾ and Makiko KODAMA
(Received 2011.2.10)

This paper aims to compare the prevalence of bullying and victimization among students in Austria and Japan and to discuss cross-cultural differences based on the current research. Data from Japan were based on school reports from MEXT (2010) and from students' self-assessments (Morita, 1999). The Austrian data were primarily drawn from international surveys (HBSC data of 2006) and national studies (Grading et al., 2009 etc), and based mainly on self-reports from anonymous students. Overall, the results of this review showed some differences in the prevalence and types of bullying between the two countries. According to the student reports, bullying and victimization in elementary and lower secondary schools occurs at a higher rate in Austria than in Japan. This cross-cultural difference may partly be explained by the fact that Japanese students have a tendency not to report bullying as frequently as students in Western cultures. Regarding the type of bullying in both countries, verbal bullying was most common, but the rate of this type of bullying was much higher in Japan. However in the case of physical bullying, the rate in Austria is higher than in Japan. Social bullying in terms of "taking or hiding things from others" has been reported in both countries to a similar degree.

Key words: Bullying, Austria, Japan

1. Introduction

Over the last few years bullying has been recognized as a major school problem in many countries. Bullying is the most frequently identified form of violence in children and adolescents in schools and has prompted school-wide efforts to address this problem (Smith et al., 1999; Craig et al., 2009). According to the definition of the World Health Organization, bullying "... is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation" (WHO, 2008). In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has defined bullying as "a case in which a child feels distress because of psychological or physical attack by

someone who has a relation to him or her" (MEXT, 2010). This definition means that a bully does not necessarily have higher social status or greater strength than the victim. Building on the definition by Olweus, Morita (1999) defined bullying as "negative acts toward other children, which include speaking ill of the child, making fun of him/her, ignoring or excluding this child from a group, hitting, kicking, threatening, spreading malicious rumors, writing and sending mean notes, writing graffiti on his/her belongings, and other behaviors similar to these." A negative action is "when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact, through words or in other ways" (Olweus, 1993). Bullying also includes teasing spitefully and repeatedly. But the teasing which the teased person enjoys is not included in "bullying" as well as quarrels or fights between children with a similar status or strength. Bullying

1) Medical University Graz, Visiting Professor at Hiroshima University Graduate School of Education, Department of Learning Science (Aug 2010 - Jan 2011)

is a specific type of aggressive behavior intended to harm or disturb and which occurs repeatedly over time. It is characterized by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person and by an imbalance of power, with a person or group perceived as more powerful attacking one that is perceived as less powerful (Nansel et al, 2001). Bullying occurs only when there is an imbalance of power, which may be social power and/or physical power. The aggressor or a group of aggressors are more powerful in some way than the person they are targeting. This suggestion has been widely adopted among researchers and educators.

2. Categorization of Bullying

Bullying includes a wide range of behaviors and can be categorized in direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying is related to physical aggression like hitting, kicking, etc. and verbal aggression such as insults, threats, racial and sexual harassment. Indirect bullying is the manipulation of social relationships to hurt someone by gossiping, spreading rumors or to exclude someone from the peer group (Craig et al., 2009). Violence and bullying can be done one-to-one, by a small group (against one, or against another group), by a whole class or school, and beyond the school setting.

2.1. Specific Types of Bullying

- 1) Physical bullying: to hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock another student indoors
- 2) Verbal bullying: to call another student mean names, make fun of him/her in a hurtful way
- 3) Social bullying: to exclude another student from a group of friends, or ignore him/her
- 4) Sexual bullying (harassment): to make sexual jokes, comments, or gestures that have negative sexual or gender implications
- 5) Racial bullying: to make fun of another student because of his/her racial identity
- 6) Religious bullying: to make fun of another student because of his/her religion
- 7) Cyber-bullying: to use internet service or mobile technologies - such as e-mail, chat room discussion groups, instant messaging, etc. with the intention of harming another person

3. Prevalence of Bullying

Bullying has been reported to occur in almost every school environment around the world with different prevalence rates. Bullying and victimization among students have been studied in various cultural settings. The WHO Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey compared the prevalence rates in 40 European countries, Australia, Canada, and the United States including representative samples of more than 202,000 aged 11-15 year old (Craig & Harel, 2004). Across countries 10.7% reported bullying others, 12.6% reported being bullied and 3.6% reported being both a bully and a victim of bullying. The percentage of students who bullied others two or more times in the previous months was highest in Lithuania (boys 43.6 %, girls 29.5 %) and lowest in Sweden (boys 5.1 %, girls 2.3 %). Similarly, the percentage of students who were victimized two or more times in the previous months was also highest in Lithuania (boys 38.6 %, girls 34.0 %) and lowest in Sweden (boys 5.9 %, girls 5.7 %). Results from a Canadian study indicated that one in twenty (5%) boys and one in fourteen girls (7%) were victimized by others (Craig, Peters, & Konarski, 1998). In a cross-cultural study including three European countries and Japan, 39.4% of the British students, 27% of the Dutch students, 20.8% of the Norwegian, and 13.9% of the Japanese students, reported that they were bullied during the present semester. Among the bullied students, 17.7% (Japan), 17.1% (Norway), 12.4% (England), 11.7% (the Netherlands) were bullied more than once per week during the semester (Morita, 2001).

3.1. Age and Gender

With evolving developmental capacities the nature of bullying and victimization may change with age. There are differences in the nature and frequency of victimization reported by children according to age. Generally, bullying among younger children is proportionately more of a physical or verbal nature and a direct form of aggression (Ayers, Williams, Hawkins, Peterson, & Abbott, 1999; Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1991). In older children, indirect and more subtle forms of bullying tend to occur more often. Physical aggression tends to decrease whereas verbal aggression tends to

increase (Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005). As children develop in their social understanding, they become more capable of indirect forms of aggression (Craig et al., 2009). Despite these differences in the kinds of bullying most experienced by different age groups, children typically report being bullied less often as they get older, although being victimized tends to increase when children move from primary to secondary school (Rigby, 2007).

Gender differences have been found indicating that male students are more likely than female students to be involved in direct physical bullying and that boys and girls are equally involved in direct verbal bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom, 2001; Sourander, Helstelae, Helenius, & Piha, 2000). Girls are generally more often involved in indirect forms of aggression, such as excluding others, rumor spreading and unpleasant manipulating of situations to hurt those they do not like. On the other hand girls tend to use more indirect and subtle forms of harassment, including rumor spreading, gossiping, manipulation of friendships (e.g. depriving another girl of her best friend), name calling and social exclusion (Selekman & Vessey, 2004). Olweus (1994) observed that boys are generally more violent and destructive in their bullying behavior than girls. Common physical traits of bullying include actions causing physical injury (hitting, kicking, punching, tripping); taking money, lunch or homework; taking or damaging belongings of others (Selekman & Vessey, 2004). Japanese girls are more likely to perform social acts of bullying in terms of excluding a victim from the peer group (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999). Bullying tends to be a within-the-same-sex phenomenon, with male students being especially unlikely to be bullied by female students. Hoshino (2001) reported that 64.2% of the bullied female students were bullied by female students, and 82% of the bullied male students were the victims of male students.

There is an evidence that verbal means of harassment are the most common forms of bullying for boys and girls. The most frequent type of verbal bullying is teasing and calling bad names, followed by physical bullying such as hitting, kicking and other threats (Richter, Palmary, & de Wet, 2000;

Seals & Young, 2003). Some research on gender of school bullies suggests that girls and boys are equally harassed regarding severity and prevalence and that there is little consensus regarding the gender of perpetrators of indirect bullying (Nansel et al., 2001; Natvig et al., 2001; Sourander et al., 2000).

4. Effects of Bullying on Mental Health

Being bullied at school typically has negative effects on the physical and psychological well-being of students who are frequently and severely targeted. Previous research suggests that there are short- and long-term consequences for both the perpetrators and victims of bullying. Bullying may have an adverse effect on youths' physical, emotional, and social development. Children exposed to systematic victimization by their peers suffer from adjustment problems. Victimization is often associated with depression, loneliness, social anxiety, and low social self-esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Victimization is related to school avoidance, low academic achievement, and lack of school enjoyment. Furthermore, victimization has several interpersonal correlates such as rejection, having few friends, and low friendship quality. Students involved in any kind of aggressive behavior consistently reported more frequent alcohol use (Nansel et al., 2001). Also suicidal thoughts and suicidal behavior were associated with victimization in the peer group. Students who are chronic victims of bullying experience more physical and psychological problems than their peers who are not harassed by other children (Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996) and they tend not to grow out of the role of victim. Psychosomatic symptoms among victimized children are more common compared to students who are not involved in aggressive behavior (Kumpulainen et al, 1998). Chronically victimized students may be at risk to develop depression, poor self-esteem, and other mental health problems in adulthood (Olweus, 1993). Since bullying is a relationship problem power and aggression in bullying can transfer to other relationships through sexual harassment, workplace harassment, as well as marital, child, and elder abuse.

Not only victims are at risk for short- and

long-term problems, bullies are also at increased risk for negative outcomes. Byrne (1994) found that elementary students who were bullies attended school less frequently and were more likely to drop out than other students. Several studies suggest that bullying in early childhood may be a critical risk factor for the development of future problems with violence and delinquency. Bullies were several times more likely than their nonbullying peers to commit antisocial acts, including vandalism, fighting, theft, drunkenness, and truancy, and to have an arrest by young adulthood (Olweus, 1993). In a cross-national survey including 25 countries showed that victims or both, bullies and victims reported significantly poorer relationships with classmates than noninvolved students. Bullies have peer groups that support their aggressive behavior whereas victims often have lacking access to prosocial peers who provide role models of appropriate social skills, and also protection against bullying (Olweus & Sweden, 1999). There are inconsistent findings about the adjustment of school bullies. Being bullied may lead to poor emotional adjustment by negatively shaping youths' self-concept. Some studies seem to suggest that aggressive children and/or adolescents are neither insecure nor anxious (Olweus, 1994). Anxiety and depression are equally common among bullies and victims (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, 2000). Victims and bully-victims clearly demonstrated poor emotional adjustment and greater levels of health problems. There are only a few studies that have examined the relationship between bullying and health problems (Rigby, 1999; Williams et al., 1996; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2001).

5. Cross-cultural Comparison

5.1. Bullying in Japan

In Japan, MEXT administers surveys on bullying in schools every year. The investigation includes every national, public, and private elementary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school throughout Japan.

The result of the survey in 2010 showed that the number of the elementary schools in which bullying occurred was 7,043 (31.6% of all the

elementary schools in Japan), lower secondary schools was 5,876 (53.9%), and upper secondary schools was 2,100 (36.5%) in fiscal year (FY) 2009(MEXT, 2010). It also showed that the number of the cases of bullying at elementary schools was 34,766, lower secondary schools was 32,111, and upper secondary schools was 5,642 in FY 2009. The number of cases broken down by victim gender and school year are is shown in Table 1. The number for 1st year students at lower secondary school (generally 12 year olds) was the highest, as usual in Japan. MEXT (2010) also reported the number of cases of each type of bullying (Table 2). This showed that the number cases of verbal bullying reported was greater than the other types of bullying in all school settings.

Morita (1999) investigated the prevalence of bullying among 5th (10-year olds) and the 6th grade students (11-year-olds) at national or public elementary schools, and students of national or public lower secondary schools (12,13,14-years olds) in Japan, who were sampled using a stratified multi-stage method, and the valid responses numbered 6,906. The result of his investigation showed that 13.9% of the sample was bullied and 17.0% bullied others during the second term of FY 1996. But the ratio of victims among girls was higher than that among boys. The ratio of the victims to bullies at each grade is also shown in Table 3. Regarding victims, the ratio for elementary school 5th graders (10-year olds) was the highest, and after the 5th grade the ratio decreased with age.

The reported cases are shown broken down by types of bullying in Table 4. According to this

Table 1. The number of cases of bullying in Japan (MEXT, 2010)

	grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	total
	age	6	7	8	9	10	11	
elementary school	total	3,833	5,157	5,692	6,499	7,055	6,530	34,766
	boys	2,201	2,846	3,239	3,572	3,770	3,537	19,165
	girls	1,632	2,311	2,453	2,927	3,285	2,993	15,601
	grade	1	2	3				
	age	12	13	14				total
lower secondary school	total	15,906	10,899	5,306	—	—	—	32,111
	boys	8,914	6,082	3,088	—	—	—	18,084
	girls	6,992	4,817	2,218	—	—	—	14,027
	grade	1	2	3				
	age	15	16	17				total
upper secondary school	total	3,230	1,658	754	—	—	—	5,642
	boys	2,140	1,109	477	—	—	—	3,726
	girls	1,090	549	277	—	—	—	1,916

notes: "age" in this table means the age of the majority of children in each grade when the FY begins.

Table 2. Numbers of cases of each type of bullying in Japan (MEXT, 2010)

		elementary school		lower secondary school		upper secondary school		total	
Physical bullying	Being knocked lightly or being hit or kicked as pretending to play with	8,119	23.4%	6,219	19.4%	1,338	23.7%	15,676	21.6%
	Being knocked, hit or kicked violently	2,098	6.0%	2,382	7.4%	594	10.5%	5,074	7.0%
Verbal bullying	Being teased, made fun of, spoken ill of, threatened, or said mean and unpleasant things	23,055	66.3%	20,785	64.7%	3,157	56.0%	46,997	64.8%
Social bullying	Being ignored or excluded from a group	8,334	24.0%	6,303	19.6%	842	14.9%	15,479	21.3%
	Money or belongings are extorted	746	2.1%	1,021	3.2%	387	6.9%	2,154	3.0%
	Money or belongings are hidden, stolen, broken, or thrown away	2,689	7.7%	2,842	8.9%	473	8.4%	6,004	8.3%
Cyber bullying	Libelous or malicious rumors spread via computer or mobile phone	301	0.9%	1,898	5.9%	948	16.8%	3,147	4.3%

notes. The percentages the number of cases by type out of the total number of all reported cases of bullying. The number of reported cases of bullying in elementary schools was 34,766, in lower secondary schools it was 32,111, and in upper secondary schools it was 5,642.

Table 3. The ratio of victim/bully in Japan (Morita, 1999)

grade	grade/age					sex		total
	elementary school		lower secondary school			boy	girl	
	5	6	1	2	3			
age	10	11	12	13	14			
victim	20.4%	16.4%	14.2%	12.9%	9.0%	13.1%	15.8%	13.9%
bully	19.3%	24.9%	18.7%	16.4%	11.1%	18.4%	17.5%	17.0%

notes. "age" in this table means the age of the majority of children in each grade when the FY begins.

result, the amount of verbal bullying was high in both elementary school and lower secondary school, and this concurs with the results in shown MEXT (2010).

According to the responses of those who classified themselves as ‘bullies’ ($N=1,175$) in Morita (1999), the percentage of those who answered “Bullying alone” among boys was 33.6% and among girls it was 14.1%. The percentage of those who responded “Bullying with one or two friends” among boys was 32.2% and among girls it was 36.2%. The percentage of those who answered “Bullying with

Table 4. Types of bullying as reported by victims in Japan (Morita, 1999)

		elementary school	lower secondary school
Physical bullying	Being hit, kicked, or threatened	39.8%	33.3%
Verbal bullying	Being spoken ill of or made fun of	88.3%	85.2%
Social bullying	Being ignored or excluded from a group	60.0%	54.2%
	Money or belongings are stolen or broken	16.7%	17.7%
	Being the subject of malicious gossip / Graffiti are written on belongings	31.8%	34.6%

notes. These percentages reflect the number of victims who reported each type of bullying out of the total number of victims reporting. Many victims reported being the subject of more than one type of bullying.

three or more friends” among boys was 34.2% and among girls it was 49.7%.

Morita (1999) also asked the victims ($N=959$) about the period of bullying. The results showed that bullying over a short period, which was classified as less than one week, accounted for 46.4% of reported cases. On the other hand, bullying over a longer period of time, which was classified as being more than one school term, accounted for 27.9% of the reported cases. Regarding bullying over a short period, the percentage among cases in the 5th grade of elementary school was 56.1%, however the percentage of cases of this type in the 3rd year of lower secondary school greatly decreased and was only 36.4%. On the other hand, the percentage of cases involving bullying over a longer period of time increased with age, as the rate in the 5th grade of elementary school was 20.3% and for the 3rd year of lower secondary school it rose to 41.4%.

5.2. Bullying in Austria

The Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national project initiated in 1982. The project was adopted by the World Health Organization as a WHO collaborative study. Austria was among the first countries participating in this survey that aims to assess health-related behaviors and the life circumstances of students including bullying and victimization in schools. Membership of HBSC is restricted to countries and states within the WHO European region with 43 participating countries today. HBSC surveys are being carried out every four years and provide an opportunity to study bullying in a large multinational sample of school-aged children. The HBSC is a school-based survey and data are collected through self-completion questionnaires administered in the classroom. Using international standard measures, students are asked to report if and how many times they have been bullied at school in the past two months and how often they had taken part in bullying another student.

The HBSC results showed that Austria is one of the EU countries with highest bullying rates ranking third out of 35 countries. Compared to most European countries, 13 year-old students were found to score higher on victimization and bullying (Craig & Harel, 2004). Table 5 shows the prevalence rates of bullying and victimization in Austrian schools

according to the HBSC data of 2006.

In all age groups (11, 13, and 15 years) male students were more often bullies or both, a bully or a victim. Among boys the rate of bullying others increased by age with a prevalence of 60% in the oldest age group. For girls the highest prevalence rates of bullying others were found in the middle age group (42.3%). In both genders the prevalence rate of being bullied increased by age to 44.1% and 50% respectively, with girls being victimized more often than boys. Being both, a bully or a victim was reported highest in 13-year old boys with 65.1% compared to 26.3% of girls in the same age group. Overall the largest gender difference was found when students are involved in both, being bullied or being victimized (59.4% boys vs. 23.7% girls).

In a national study it was found that about 10% of students attending general secondary schools (grades 5 – 8) bully their peers at least once a week and about 10% of students are victims of severe harassments. These figures were found on a sample level regardless of measurement method (self versus peer nominations) although the correlations between

Table 5. Prevalence of bullying in Austrian schools (students self-reports)

		Age			total
		11 years	13 years	15 years	
Bullying	boys	34.6%	55.3%	60.0%	50.0%
Others	girls	20.6%	42.3%	33.8%	32.2%
Being	boys	32.1%	41.4%	44.1%	39.2%
Bullied	girls	42.7%	48.6%	50.0%	47.1%
Being both	boys	57.3%	65.1%	55.8%	59.4%
bully or victim	girls	16.4%	26.3%	25.5%	23.7%

notes. HBSC data 2006 (data from 2010 are not yet available)

Table 6. The percentage of different types of bullying by gender in upper secondary schools in Austrian 2009 (students self-reports)

Types of Bullying		Gender	
Verbal bullying	Being teased, to say mean or unpleasant things to others	boys	34.7%
		girls	29.7%
Physical bullying	Being hit, kicked, or knocked out	boys	13.6%
		girls	19.0%
Social bullying	Taking or hiding things from others	boys	16.6%
		girls	6.6%
Cyber bullying	Sending mean text messages, videos or photographs using PC or mobile phone	boys	7.6%
		girls	3.1%

notes. Grade 9 students ($N=761$) from 10 different schools in Vienna (Grading et al, 2009)

these two measures were low (Strohmeier & Spiel, 2001). However, prevalence rates of bullying and victimization in schools are usually not reported at a school-class level. Atria, Strohmeier, & Spiel (2007) analyzed rates of bullying and victimization in 86 different school classes including 1,910 students (grades 4 to 9). Tremendous variability in the occurrence of bullying and victimization were found between school classes ranging from 0 to 54.5% indicating that there are very peaceful and very violent school classes in Austria. These differences are shown for various types of bullying, methods of measurement and frames of reference. As shown in Table 6, Grading, Strohmeier, & Spiel (2009) found that the most common type of bullying was verbal bullying such as “to say mean things” (boys 34.7% versus girls 29.7%). Physical bullying (“to hit, kick, or push others”) was reported in 19% of boys and 13.6% of girls. “Taking things from others” a type of social bullying had a lower prevalence especially in girls (boys 16.6% versus girls 6.6%), “threatening others” showed a similar pattern (boys 13.7% versus girls 7.7%). Among the sample of 14-19 year old students from 10 different schools in Vienna, cyber bullying and cyber victimization was reported comparatively rarely, but was higher in boys (boys 7.6% versus girls 3.1%).

6. Interventions

Aggressive behavior in childhood is a risk factor for violence and criminal behavior in adulthood. Therefore violence prevention strategies should be implemented in school to reduce aggression, increase empathy and produce improvements in behavior. Several cases of children who have died or been seriously impaired by bullying raised awareness of the seriousness of bullying problems for both children who bully and children who are victimized. Children repeated targeted with offensive and threatening messages can become very distressed and need help. Today researchers and educators in most industrialized nations recognize bullying as a significant problem. Several countries have national campaigns to address bullying problems or have implemented preventing bullying programs effectively in schools.

Olweus et al. (1999) was a pioneer of early research and bullying prevention program development implemented a comprehensive school-based program. The ‘Olweus Bullying Prevention Program’ has been recommended in the Consensus paper of the European Communities in 2008 (Jané-Llopis & Braddick, 2008). This school-based prevention program attempts to create safe and positive learning environments for school children aged six to fifteen years old. It is a multi-level and multi-component program including school-wide, classroom-level and individual-level interventions. The program involved interventions at three levels:

- School wide interventions: A survey of bullying problems at each school, increased supervision, school wide assemblies, and teacher training to raise the awareness of children and school staff regarding bullying.
- Classroom-level interventions: The establishment of classroom rules against bullying, regular class meetings to discuss bullying at school, and meetings with all parents.
- Individual-level interventions: Discussions with students identified as bullies and victims.

This intervention program aims to reduce existing bully/victim problems inside and outside of the school setting as well as prevent the development of new bully/victim problems by improving peer relations and reducing opportunities and rewards for bullying. The program was found to be effective in reducing bullying and other antisocial behavior among students in primary and junior high schools. Within two years of implementation, both boys' and girls' self-report indicated that bullying had decreased by half. These changes in behavior were more pronounced the longer the program was in effect. Moreover, students reported significant decreases in rates of truancy, vandalism, and theft and indicated that their school's climate was significantly more positive as a result of the program. Schools that were more active in implementing the program observed the most marked changes in reported behaviors. The core components of the Olweus anti bullying program have been adapted for use in several other cultures, including Canada, England, and the United States. Results of the anti bullying efforts in these countries have been similar

to the results experienced in the Scandinavian countries. However, the high success of intervention method could not be replicated outside Norway. Given the effort that schools in many countries are now making to reduce bullying among students, we need to know what kinds of interventions are most effective. A comprehensive examination of the effectiveness interventions has been provided by Smith, Pepler, & Rigby (2004). In a meta-analysis 13 evaluative studies were examined that are relevant to reducing bullying primarily among young children. These studies were undertaken in a wide range of geographical areas in Australia, Europe and the United States. In each case, measures were taken of the extent of the bullying as perceived by students before the intervention and afterwards. Most violence prevention programs reported some measure of success in decreasing violence. However, not all evaluations have been successful in their efforts to reduce aggressive behavior. For example, Orpinas et al. (2000) conducted an evaluation of the Students for Peace program using a strong research design. This multi-component program was evaluated over three years with 9,000 students. Few positive effects were found concerning the goals of reducing aggressive behaviors, fights at school, or injuries due to fighting, being threatened, or missing classes due to feeling unsafe. The multitude of ways that were used to measure reductions in violence makes comparisons across programs and across cultures challenging.

7. Discussion

School bullying has received much attention as an emerging social problem in many countries around the world. This paper aims to compare the prevalence of bullying and victimization among students in Austria and Japan and to discuss cross-cultural differences based on the current research. Data from Japan were based on school reports from MEXT (2010) and from students' self-assessments (Morita, 1999). The Austrian data were primarily drawn from international surveys (HBSC data of 2006) and national studies (Grading et al., 2009 etc), and based mainly on self-reports from anonymous students. Peer nominations have also been included. The review of literature revealed

that international comparison are challenging since researchers have used different definitions for bullying, various measurement methods, like teacher reports, students report or peer nominations which do not necessarily offer the same information.

Many scientists around the world including investigators from Japan and Austria have accepted Olweus' definition of bullying (Smith et al, 1999; Morita et al. 1999; Grading et al, 2009; Strohmeier, Spiel, & Grading, 2008; Craig et al, 2009; Due et al, 2005) although socio-cultural differences in the nature and definition of school bullying may exist. In German language no exact translation of the word 'bullying' exists. The term which is used in German varies regarding their connotations and none of them is fully equivalent with the English term. There is no clear separation between mobbing and bullying. Recently the term "mobbing" has been used in a work-related context whereas "bullying" has been considered as a type of violent behavior in school environments. In Japan the corresponding word for bullying is "Ijime" which means "to treat a weak person harshly" or "to be cruel to, to tease, to annoy, to bully". It involves bullying in order to gain some sort of advantage over others, who are handicapped and stigmatized in terms of their physical characteristics, social class background, meek personality, and so on (Naito & Gielen, 2005). "Ijime" is frequently used in everyday speech both for certain school situations and for other forms of "mobbing" in work situations or elsewhere. Several Japanese researchers have expressed dissatisfaction in relation to Olweus' general framework (Ogi, 1997; Taki, 2001). Some definitional problems have become evident and prototypical bullying in Japan maybe different from that of bullying in the more individualistic Western countries. In Japan, MEXT changed the definition used for bullying in 2006. The previous definition cited "a case in which a child feels serious distress because of continuous psychological or physical attacks by someone who is stronger or of higher social status", which indicated that there should be some differences of strength or status between a bully and a victim. Morita (1999) reported that 80.0% of bullies were classmates of the victims. As it was difficult for teachers who made reports about bullying to judge whether the child

who acted as the attacker was actually stronger or of higher status than the victim, MEXT revised their definition.

In this research paper, we focused on an internationally widely accepted definition of bullying. For the cross-cultural analysis we referred to behavior based items in a social school context and compared types of bullying in Austria and Japan. Overall, the results of this review showed some differences in the prevalence and types of bullying between the two countries. According to the student reports, bullying and victimization in elementary and lower secondary schools occurs at a higher rate in Austria than in Japan. In Austrian schools 50.0% of boys and 32.2% girls reported bullying others whereas in Japan the prevalence was much lower (boys 18.4% versus girls 17.5%). Among the victims the number was about three times higher in Austria (boys 39.2% versus girls 47.1%) compared to Japan (boys 13.1% versus girls 15.8%). This large cross-cultural difference has to be interpreted with caution and may partly be explained by the fact that Japanese students have a tendency not to report bullying as frequently as students in Western cultures. Matsuura (2001) found that 53% of the bullied students in Japan did not want it to be known that they were bullied. Japanese students tend to hide that they were victims of bullying and estimated number of unreported cases may be higher compared to Austria. This observation is in agreement with other research findings and tends to hold true especially for the older students. Numbers based on school reports are usually lower than those reported in surveys of students. The data from Japan showed that the result of students self-reports was different from the result of MEXT (2010) very much. One reason is the difference of the definition and the subject. Another reason is the difficulty of finding the bullying. According to Morita (1999), 33.4% of the victims answered that they had told about bullying to nobody. The actual number of the bullied students in Japan who do not report being bullied to anybody may be higher than in Western countries.

Regarding the type of bullying in both countries, verbal bullying was most common, but the rate of this type of bullying was much higher in Japan (over 80%) compared to in Austria (about 30%). In younger Japanese students the prevalence

is almost 90%. Due to a lack of data from Austria no direct comparison can be made. However in the case of physical bullying, the rate in Austria is higher than in Japan. Social bullying in terms of “taking or hiding things from others” has been reported in both countries to a similar degree. “Being ignored or excluded from the group” is more common among students in elementary and lower secondary schools in Japan. Teachers are only aware of a fraction of the daily life of students and their social relationship with peers. They are not able to observe students and detect the various types of bullying in- and outside school. As for the teachers’ awareness in Japan, 30% (primary schools), 40% (junior high schools), and 70% (senior high schools) of the teachers stated that there was no bullying even in those cases when students reported bullying in their classes (Council for Research on Children and Students’ Problematic Behaviors, 1996). Similarly, a large number of Japanese parents of students who were bullied more than once during the school year indicated that their children were not bullied or that they did not know whether they were in the classrooms.

Data from Japan (Morita, 1999) showed that group bullying is high especially among girls (49.7 %). Given the collectivistic nature of Japanese society, groups often bully persons who deviate from explicit or implicit social standards and break the harmony of the group. Although we do not have comparable data from Austria it seems that this type of bullying is prototypical behavior of mainly Japanese girls. This is in line with previous literature that bullying by large and often female groups of students is disproportionately common in Japanese schools (Naito & Gielen, 2005). In the Austrian data gender differences were markedly greater in terms of the prevalence of bullying and victimization indicating that significantly more boys are bullies or both, a bully or a victim. This is in line with research conducted in European countries (Craig et al, 2009; Due et al 2005) but as the data suggest it may not be true for Japan.

Reducing bullying in schools is one of the key priorities of the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being of the European Union (Jane-Llopis & Braddick, 2008). Recently National Strategy to prevent bullying have been established in Austria

as well as in Japan. MEXT views the problem of bullying as being one of the most important problems facing schools. MEXT started the “project concerning emergency measures for bullying” in 2008 in order to cope with the problem of bullying, as it had recently become an issue of great public concern in Japan (MEXT, 2008). This project has three sub-projects. One of these is to investigate ideal ways to establish and dispatch of teams consisting of outside experts in order to support schools trying to solve bullying problems. Another is project devoted to the promotion of activities to foster sociability in school children, such as peer-support or social-skill-training etc. And finally there is a project aimed at students to promote and support autonomous activities that will help eradicate bullying. In Austria a national strategy was developed in 2008 to address preventive measures with regard to violence in schools. The objectives of this strategy are to increase the sensitivity to and knowledge of the different types of violence/bullying, to improve social competences as well as competences and strategies to deal with violence, and to enhance students responsible behavior and civil courage vis-à-vis violence. The implementation of violence prevention programs in schools is one of the focus of the Ministry of Education in Austria for the future.

While schools bullying has become a common problem across countries, direct comparisons concerning the prevalence and the nature of bullying has not been possible because of methodological variation across studies. However, national and cross-cultural research of the nature of bullying and prevalence estimates increases the understanding of the problem. More comparative studies about the etiology and the psychosocial and behavioral determinants including cultural factors are important. International collaborations are required to establish effective prevention strategies for individual cultures to reduce bullying in schools.

References

- Atria, M., Strohmeier, D., & Spiel, C. (2007). The relevance of the school class as social unit for the prevalence of bullying and victimization. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 4(4), 372-387.
- Ayers, C. D., Williams, J. H., Hawkins, J. D., Peterson, P. L., & Abbott, R. D. (1999). Assessing correlates of onset, escalation, deescalation, and desistance of delinquent behavior. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 15, 277-306.
- Baldry, A. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2000). Bullies and delinquents: Personal characteristics and parenting styles. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 10, 17-31.
- Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1991). The development of direct and indirect aggressive strategies in males and females. In Bjorkqvist, K., Niemela, P. (Eds). *Of mice and women: aspects of female aggression*. (pp.51-64). New York: Academic Press.
- Byrne, B. J. (1994). Bullies and victims in school settings with reference to some Dublin schools. *Irish Journal of Psychology*, 15, 574-586.
- Council for Research of Children and Students’ Problematic Behaviors (1996). Jidou seito no ijime ni kansuru ankeitochousakekka [Results of questionnaire survey on bullying of children and students]. Government Report.
- Craig, W. M. & Harel, Y. (2004). Bullying, physical fighting and victimization. In C. Currie (Ed.), *Health behaviour in school-aged children: A WHO cross national study*. (pp. 133-144). Genf: WHO.
- Craig, W., Harel-Fisch, Y., Fogel-Grinvald, H., Dostaler, S., Hetland, J., Simons-Morton, B., Molcho, M., Gaspar de Mato, M., Overpeck, M., Due, P., Pickett, W., HBSC Violence & Injuries Prevention Focus Group, and HBSC Bullying Writing Group (2009). A cross-national profile of bullying and victimization among adolescents in 40 countries. *International Journal of Public Health*, 54 (Suppl 2), 216-224.
- Craig, W. M., Peters, D., & Konarski, R. (1998). Bullying and victimization among Canadian school children. Available online from Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada at <http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/arb/publications/research/abw-98-28e.shtml>
- Due, P., Holstein, B. E., Lynch, J., Diderichsen, F., Gabhain, S. N., Scheidt, P., Currie, C., & The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Bullying Working Group (2005). Bullying

- and symptoms among school-aged children: international comparative cross sectional study in 28 countries. *European Journal of Public Health*, **15**(2), 128-132.
- Grading, P., Strohmeier, D., & Spiel, C. (2009). Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying: Identification of Risk Groups for Adjustment Problems. *Journal of Psychology*, **217**(4), 205-213.
- Hawker, D., & Boulton, M. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines*, **41**, 441-455.
- Hoshino, K. (2001). Higaishya to Kagaishyatono Kankei [Relations between bully and victim]. In Y. Morita (Ed.), *Ijime no kokusai hikaku kenkyu [Cross-national study of bullying]* (pp. 73-92). Tokyo: Kaneko shyobou.
- Jané-Llopis, E. & Braddick, F. (Eds). (2008) *Mental Health in Youth and Education. Consensus paper*. Luxembourg: European Communities
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpelä, M., Rantanen, P., & Rimpelä, A. (2000). Bullying at school - an indicator of adolescents at risk for mental disorders. *Journal of Adolescence*, **23**, 661-674.
- Kumpulainen, K., Räsänen, E., Henttonen, I., Almqvist, F., Kresanov, K., Linna, S., Moilanen, I., Piha, J., Puura, K., & Tamminen, T. (1998). Bullying and psychiatric symptoms among elementary school-age children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, **22**, 705-717.
- Matsuura, Y. (2001). Higaisha no ningenkankei [Relation between bullied students and bullies]. In Y. Morita (Ed.), *Ijime no kokusai hikaku kenkyu [Cross-national study of bullying]* (pp. 113-112). Tokyo: Kaneko shyobou.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2008). Heisei 20 nendo monbukagaku hakusho [2008 White Paper on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japanese] from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpab200801/index.htm
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2010). Heisei 21 nendo "Jido-seito no mondaikodo tou seitoshidoujou no shomondai ni kansuru chosa" ni tuite [The result of the Survey of Problems Associated with Teaching Students with Undesirable Behavior in FY 2009] from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/22/09/_icsFiles/afildfile/2010/09/14/1297352_01.pdf
- Morita, Y. (1999). *Nihon no Ijime -Yobo · taio ni ikasu detashu [Bullying in Japan -The data for prevention and measures]*, Tokyo, Kaneko shobou.
- Morita, Y. (2001). Ijimehigai no Jittai [Facts about victims of bullying]. In Y. Morita (Ed.), *Ijime no kokusai hikaku kenkyu [Cross-national study of bullying]* (pp. 31-54). Tokyo: Kaneko shobou.
- Morita, Y., Soeda, H., Soeda, K., & Taki, M. (1999). Japan. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tos, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 309-323). London: Routledge
- Naito, T., & Gielen, U. (2005). Bullying and Ijime in Japanese Schools: A Sociocultural Perspective. In Denmark, F. L., Krauss, H. H., Wesner, R. W., Midlarsky, E., & Gielen, U. P. (Eds) *Violence in Schools* (pp. 169-190). US: Springer.
- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, **285**(16), 2094-2100.
- Natvig, G. K., Albrektsen, G., & Qvarnstrom, U. (2001). School-related stress experiences as a risk for bullying behavior. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, **30**, 561-575.
- Nishina, A., Juvonen, J., & Witkow, M. (2005). Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will make me feel sick: the psychosocial, somatic, and scholastic consequences of peer harassment. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, **34**, 37-48.
- Ogi, N. (1997). *Ijime boushi jissen puroguram [Program for preventing bullying]*. Tokyo: Gakuyo shobou.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell publisher.
- Olweus, D. (1994). Bullying at school: Long term outcomes for the victims and an effective school-based intervention program. In R. Huesmann (Ed.) *Aggressive behavior: Current perspectives. Plenum series in social/clinical psychology*. New

York: Plenum Press

- Olweus, D., & Sweden (1999). In Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R., & Slee, P., (Eds). *The Nature of School Bullying: A Cross-national Perspective* (pp. 7-27). NY: Routledge.
- Orpinas, P., Kelder, S., Frankowski, R., Murray, N., Zhang, Q., & McAlister, A. (2000). Outcome evaluation of a multi-component violence prevention program for middle schools: the Students for Peace project. *Health Education Research*, **15**(1), 45-58.
- Richter, L., Palmarty, I., & de Wet, T. (2000). The transmission of violence in schools: Birth to ten children's experiences of bullying. *Urban Health & Development Bulletin*, **3**,19-22.
- Rigby, K. (1999). Peer victimisation at school and the health of secondary school students. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, **68**, 95-104.
- Rigby, K. (2007). *Bullying in schools and what to do about it* (Updated, revised) Melbourne: Australian Council for Education Research.
- Seals, D., & Young, J. (2003). Bullying and victimisation: Prevalence and relationship to gender, grade level, ethnicity, self-esteem, and depression. *Adolescence*, **38**(152), 735-747.
- Selekman, J., & Vessey, J. A. (2004). Bullying: It isn't what it used to be. *Pediatric Nursing*, **30**(3), 246-249.
- Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, Olweus, D., Catanano, R., & Slee, P.T. (Eds). (1999). *The Nature of School Bullying: a Cross-National Perspective*, London: Routledge.
- Smith, P., Pepler, D., & Rigby, K. (2004). *Bullying in Schools: How successful can interventions be?* Cambridge University Press.
- Sourander, A., Helstelae, L., Helenius, H., & Piha, J. (2000). Persistence of bullying from childhood to adolescence –a longitudinal 8-year follow-up study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, **24**, 873-881.
- Strohmeier, D., & Spiel, C. (2001). Outsiders at school. Bullying as group phenomenon. Paper presented at the 6th Workshop on “Aggression”, November 9-10, 2001, Jena, Germany.
- Strohmeier, D., Spiel, C. & Gradinger, P. (2008). Social relationships in multicultural schools: Bullying and victimization. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, **5**(2), 262-285.
- Taki, M. (2001). Kokusai hikakuchousakenkyu no igi to kongono kadai [Significance of cross-national studies and future tasks]. In Y. Morita (Ed.), *Ijime no kokusai hikaku kenkyu [Cross-national study of bullying]* (pp. 192-203). Tokyo: Kaneko shyobou.
- WHO (2008). Definition and typology of violence. from <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/print.html>
- Williams, K., Chambers, M., Logan, S., & Robinson, D. (1996). Association of common health symptoms with bullying in primary school children. *British Medical Journal*, **313**, 17-19.
- Wolke, D., Woods, S., Bloomfield, L., & Karstadt, L. (2001). Bullying involvement in primary school and common health problems. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, **85**, 197-201.