

Stress Hypothesis Model for the Preventatives against Japanese Bullying

- A complementary note to my articles -

Mitsuru Taki

(National Institute for Educational Policy Research)

This note will help you to understand my articles as bellows;
Taki, M. (2001a) *Japanese School Bullying: Ijime - A survey analysis and an intervention program in school -*, A paper presented at the conference of Understanding and Preventing Bullying: An International Perspective, at Queen's University in Canada
Taki, M. (2001b) *Relation among Bullying, Stress and Stressor: A follow-up survey using panel data and a comparative survey between Japan and Australia, Japanese Society, 5*

1. Ijime (Japanese bullying) is done among ordinary children

Taki (2001b), utilizing longitudinal survey data in Japanese schools, discusses clearly that few children who always bully others or being bullied by others can be identified; nevertheless bullying constantly happens in Japanese schools.

Although the rate of children who bully frequently (more than once a week) keeps from 7 to 9 percent at each of 6 survey points in three years, there is no single child who has bullied frequently through whole survey point. Only 0.6 percent of children have bullied others 5 times at 6 survey points and most of frequent bullies did it only once in three years. Furthermore, if we take all bullies into consideration regardless of their frequency, only one seventh of children have never bullied others in three years and half of children engage in bullying at least once a year.

I conclude from these results that most of bullying in Japanese schools is done among ordinary children. The expression of "ordinary children" does not mean children without any problem. It means that, even though they might have some kind of problem, such are not so serious as to make them to bully others frequently and constantly. This characteristic of Japanese bullying is much different from usual delinquencies or anti-social behaviours. This is the reason why I insist on two proposals: Japanese bullying can not be discussed in the context of usual 'one causal model', and a sort of accidental or situational factor should be considered to be well supported in deeper explanation.

2. 'Single causal model' cannot be applied to Japanese Bullying

If children who behave anti-socially are not ordinary, what ought to be done is to find which extraordinary factors make them so. Most of studies to clarify such causal process are based on 'single causal model', such as 'A' in 'family' makes a child to be 'B'. The word of 'family' can be changed to school, community, society and so on. 'A' can be specified to violence, poverty, disruption, uncultivated and so on, as well as 'B' to delinquent, absent from school, violent and so on. When many variables are used to construct both 'A' and 'B' and the rest are as control factors, it is still classified 'a single causal model'. It is not due to its number of variables but its structure to determine whether it is 'a single causal model' or not.

'A Single causal model' has an implicit premise that extraordinary incidents are due to extraordinary causes. However, Japanese bullying comes from the problematic behaviour of ordinary students described as before. While examining frequent bullies' character in each case level, I noticed that each has each problem; some have problems with family, others with teachers or peers. Such individual causes are not common among even frequent bullies.

Moreover, most determinants of societal incidents are complex or synergic with multiple factors. It is useless and unrealistic either to identify a few factors as the determinants of Japanese bullying or to rank them. Even if we can luckily reach to a "true" cause, it is often unfeasible to exclude a factor such as capitalism.

3. Stress hypothesis model

It is crucial to identify a "true" cause of the problem in terms of cure or remedy, even if it is unfeasible to be eliminated. For developing preventatives or making policies, however, we often need not to do so. It looks like prevention against flu. It is necessary for vaccinating to specify the kind of virus, but not necessary for preventing. If we are in good health, we are away from disease even though we are infected with some virus; gargling is also useful for prevention of infection. Japanese bullying in my prior articles in 1992 (in Japanese). Then I came up with my stress hypothesis. I referred to multiple factors via stresses as an intermediary lead to behaviours of bullies. Some incidents can stressfully affect children's mind and generate some kind of stress mentally, such as aggressive, depressive, apathetic and physical. Stress makes them to bully others, to participate in bullying others or reluctant to say not to bully.

Stress does not always affect bully, when children are so tolerate that they can cope with their stress. Stressful experience does not always generate stress either, when children have good supports from others and good view on their lives. Supports and view work well as buffers, so they feel less frustration against stressful experience.

As a matter of fact, Stress-scale is a good predictor whether children bully others or not. We can conclude that children are in low risk to bully others if they feel safe. Low stress looks like high immunity against physical disease. It is another problem which experience is more stressful for children. It is as if which life-style they choose to keep their bodies healthy. Stress-scale is also a good indicator to measure which factor makes children so frustrated.

I illustrate one diagram as below about my survey and its questionnaire.

