




# THE IMPACT OF **BULLYING**



Francisco J. Lobato Carvajal

*Dykanson, S.L.*



THE IMPACT OF BULLYING

Francisco J. Lobato Carvajal

*Doctor of Psychology and Pedagogy*

*Professor, Universidad de Baja California (Mexico)*

*Founder, Instituto Superior de Psicología y Educación (Spain)*

*Dykinson, S.L.*

Todos los derechos reservados. Ni la totalidad ni parte de este libro, incluido el diseño de la cubierta, puede reproducirse o transmitirse por ningún procedimiento electrónico o mecánico. Cualquier forma de reproducción, distribución, comunicación pública o transformación de esta obra solo puede ser realizada con la autorización de sus titulares, salvo excepción prevista por la ley. Diríjase a CEDRO (Centro Español de Derechos Reprográficos) si necesita fotocopiar o escanear algún fragmento de esta obra ([www.conlicencia.com](http://www.conlicencia.com); 91 702 19 70 / 93 272 04 47)

Editorial DYKINSON, S.L. Meléndez Valdés, 61 - 28015 Madrid  
Teléfono (+34) 91 544 28 46 - (+34) 91 544 28 69

e-mail: [info@dykinson.com](mailto:info@dykinson.com) / [www.dykinson.es](http://www.dykinson.es) / [www.dykinson.com](http://www.dykinson.com)

Este libro ha sido sometido a evaluación por parte de nuestro Consejo Editorial.  
Para mayor información, véase Consejo Editorial:  
[www.dykinson.com/quienes\\_somos](http://www.dykinson.com/quienes_somos)

© Los autores  
Madrid, 2026

ISBN: 979-13-7047-048-7

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	9
1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BULLYING.....	11
1.1. Concepts and theoretical foundations of bullying.....	11
1.2. Types and forms of bullying.....	15
1.3. Prevalence of bullying.....	19
1.4. Risk factors.....	23
1.5. Protective factors.....	31
2. BULLYING AS A GROUP PHENOMENON: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILES OF INVOLVED ROLES.....	43
2.1. Methodological and conceptual considerations for role profiling..	43
2.2. Role taxonomy: the group participation model.....	44
2.3. Psychological profile of victims.....	45
2.4. Psychological profile of perpetrators.....	46
2.5. Psychological profile of the bully-victim.....	47
2.6. Psychological profiles of bystanders.....	47
2.7. Cross-cutting psychological processes differentiating roles.....	49
2.8. Implications for assessment and profile-based intervention.....	49
3. IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING.....	51
3.1. Conceptual framework of impact: dimensions, temporality, and mechanisms.....	61
3.2. Consequences for victims.....	53
3.3. Consequences for perpetrators.....	55
3.4. The highest-risk profile: the bully-victim.....	56
3.5. Consequences for bystanders.....	56
3.6. Moderators of impact: why some individuals are more affected than others.....	57
3.7. Implications for prevention and intervention.....	57

4. BULLYING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CYBERBULLYING.....	59
4.1. Conceptualization: a growing phenomenon.....	59
4.2. Key characteristics of cyberbullying.....	61
4.3. Classification and typology of cyberbullying.....	63
4.4. Prevalence and explanatory models.....	67
4.5. Consequences of cyberbullying.....	69
4.6. Specific intervention strategies.....	71
5. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON BULLYING.....	79
5.1. Recent studies in the United States.....	80
5.2. Recent studies in Morocco.....	84
5.3. Recent studies in Mexico.....	88
5.4. Recent studies in France.....	93
5.5. Recent studies in the United Kingdom.....	96
5.6. Recent studies in Italy.....	99
5.7. Recent studies in Japan.....	102
5.8. Recent studies in Spain.....	106
6. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT OF BULLYING.....	110
6.1. Foundations and data collection instruments.....	110
6.2. Questionnaires.....	112
6.3. Sociometric techniques.....	115
6.4. Interviews.....	118
6.5. Observation.....	122
7. CONFLICT MEDIATION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.....	126
7.1. The nature of conflict.....	127
7.2. Characteristics of conflicts.....	130
7.3. Types of conflict.....	131
7.4. The conflict cycle.....	133
7.5. Conflict analysis and management styles.....	134
7.6. Foundations of mediation.....	137
7.7. Implementation, process and principles of school mediation.....	138
7.8. Mediation techniques.....	140
7.9. Types, conditions, and stages of school mediation.....	141
7.10. Peer mediation: student helpers.....	142

7.11. Emotional aspects and techniques of mediation.....	145
7.12. The contribution of school mediation.....	152
8. KEY PRINCIPLES OF INTERVENTION.....	154
8.1. Whole-school intervention.....	154
8.2. Targeted intervention strategies.....	155
8.3. Design and development of an intervention program.....	160
9. EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS.....	163
9.1. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP).....	163
9.2. KiVa Anti-Bullying Program.....	163
9.3. Second Step Program.....	166
9.4. Steps to Respect.....	169
9.5. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).....	171
9.6. Friendly Schools Program.....	174
9.7. TEI Program (Peer Tutoring / Peer Mentoring Program).....	180
REFERENCES.....	183



## INTRODUCTION

The frequent news reports of suicides among minors as a result of the bullying they have been subjected to are devastating. These fatal outcomes are a reality that shows there is still much to be done regarding the prevention of and fight against bullying.

We are living through an ongoing tsunami of global transformations—unpredictable and occurring at such speed that it is virtually impossible to know where we are heading—resulting in uncertainty and continuous demands on schools, teachers, and society as a whole to fulfill their roles in ways adapted to new challenges.

Today's educational institutions aim to educate citizens and communities in an environment characterized by a globalized economy, migratory movements, the emergence of pandemics, energy and economic crises, high levels of inequality, recurrent armed conflicts, and the growing influence of digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

In this context, bullying—together with all forms of school violence—constitutes a problem with serious personal, academic, family, and social consequences. For this reason, it is necessary to devote greater attention to it and to grant it priority relevance for teachers, schools, researchers, and the media.

As has been noted, there is scarcely a day when news does not report suicides among adolescents after suffering bullying; moreover, the suffering of survivors will lead to significant psychological and emotional sequelae. From this standpoint, we must be clear that there is no greater human right than respect for one's own physical, psychological, and emotional integrity, and no greater obligation than respect for that of others. The school, as an institution that safeguards rights, fulfills a fundamental role in coexistence as a supreme value, in its very existential meaning, which leads to fairer, more livable, and more democratic societies. Without a school free from violence, there can be no society free from violence.

Psychoeducational research offers a diagnostic lens through which to examine these challenges and provides evidence regarding the educational actions that work best to address them. The reduction and prevention of violence and social exclusion, together with the promotion of students' holistic development within a framework of coexistence, is already a reality in many schools committed to an education grounded in cooperation, participation, equal opportunities, and inclusion.

Educational institutions must address bullying as a priority, promoting coexistence as the central axis of educational action. It is important to understand the reality present in each group and throughout the school context in order to address

each problem efficiently and to promote preventive actions that improve students' climate and coexistence, for the benefit of the entire educational community and the broader social context.

## 1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BULLYING

Bullying currently constitutes one of the most relevant and persistent problems in the educational field. Its high prevalence, as well as the diversity and severity of its psychological, social, academic, and life consequences, have positioned this phenomenon as a priority both for scientific research and for the design of educational policies and intervention programs. Various studies have shown that sustained involvement in bullying situations is associated with a greater risk of developing internalizing and externalizing symptomatology, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, low academic performance, and social adjustment problems that may persist across the life course (Hemphill et al., 2014).

For decades, bullying research has focused primarily on identifying individual and contextual risk factors, such as certain personality characteristics, deficits in social skills, or dysfunctional family contexts. However, this approach has important limitations, as it does not adequately explain why many students exposed to adverse contexts do not develop significant problems or become involved in bullying dynamics. In this regard, recent literature has highlighted the need to adopt a complementary approach centered on protective factors, understood as personal, relational, and contextual resources that reduce the likelihood of involvement in bullying or buffer its negative effects (Zych et al., 2019).

From this perspective, the prevention of school bullying cannot be limited to eliminating problematic behaviors; rather, it must be oriented toward the promotion of competencies, bonds, and healthy educational contexts. This approach is especially consistent with well-being promotion models and current educational policies, which emphasize the importance of school coexistence, inclusion, and students' holistic development (UNESCO, 2023).

### 1.1. Concepts and theoretical foundations of bullying

The concept of bullying has undergone significant changes over recent decades, moving from definitions focused exclusively on direct aggression to more complex conceptualizations that incorporate group, relational, and contextual dimensions. Despite this evolution, there is international consensus regarding a set of core elements that differentiate bullying from other interpersonal conflicts: intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance.

### *Pioneering Definition and Classical Framework*

The first author to use the term bullying was the Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus, who also developed the first anti-bullying program and is considered the reference author in the field. His definition remains the conceptual starting point for most current research:

A student is a victim of bullying when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions by one or more students, with a power imbalance that makes it difficult for the victim to defend him- or herself (Olweus, 1993, 2013).

This definition clearly establishes the three essential criteria of bullying and has been widely adopted in international studies, intervention programs, and regulatory frameworks. Olweus also stresses that bullying does not include conflicts between peers with equivalent power, nor isolated incidents.

### *Descriptive and Contextual Approach*

An extension of the classical definition that incorporates a more descriptive and contextual perspective is as follows:

Bullying refers to a set of aggressive, intentional, and repeated behaviors that occur within a relationship characterized by a power imbalance and may manifest in physical, verbal, or relational forms (Smith et al., 2012).

This highlights the diversity of forms bullying may take and emphasizes the importance of the social context in which it occurs, particularly within the school setting. This approach has been key to developing typological classifications of bullying.

### *Bullying as a Group Process*

Another definition introduces one of the most relevant conceptual advances by defining bullying as a group phenomenon:

Bullying is a social process in which one or more students repeatedly aggress another student with less power, and it is maintained by the responses of the peer group, which may reinforce, permit, or inhibit aggressive behavior (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 2010).

This definition shifts the focus from the individual to the relational system, explicitly incorporating the role of bystanders and the group's implicit norms. This approach has decisively influenced intervention programs such as KiVa.

### *Socio-Ecological Model*

From a socio-ecological framework, bullying is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon:

Bullying is repeated aggressive behavior that occurs within interpersonal relationships marked by a power imbalance and is influenced by individual, relational, institutional, and sociocultural factors (Swearer & Espelage, 2011; Swearer et al., 2014).

This definition emphasizes interaction across levels (individual, family, school, community) and is particularly relevant for designing educational policies and comprehensive prevention programs.

### *Emphasis on Impact*

A definition aligned with international consensus and empirical evidence derived from meta-analyses would be:

Bullying is defined as a specific form of peer aggression characterized by repetition, intentionality, and power imbalance, and it may have severe and long-lasting consequences for the psychological and social development of those involved (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009).

This definition highlights the long-term impact of bullying, connecting theoretical conceptualization with empirical findings on mental health and psychosocial adjustment.

### *Functional and Evolutionary Approach*

From an evolutionary and functional framework, a definition that emphasizes the adaptive purpose of the behavior is proposed:

Bullying is strategic, repeated aggressive behavior directed toward individuals with less power, aimed at obtaining or maintaining status, resources, or social dominance within the group (Volk et al., 2014).

This approach introduces an important nuance by considering bullying as functional behavior within certain social dynamics, which has generated debate and enriched the theoretical field.

### *Integrative Approach*

In line with contemporary definitions, an integrative perspective proposes:

A set of abusive, intentional, and repetitive actions, sustained over time and based on a power imbalance, carried out face-to-face or virtually (cyberbullying) by one or more individuals toward another person, the victim, who is in a situation of defenselessness, with the aim of causing physical, psychological, or social harm, generating negative consequences not only for the person who suffers it but also for those who perpetrate it and those who observe it (Lobato, 2023).

This definition coherently integrates the internationally agreed core criteria—intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance—initially formulated by Olweus (1993, 2013) and widely accepted in subsequent scientific literature (Smith et al., 2012; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

This last proposed definition includes several distinctive elements that place it within the most current conceptualizations of school bullying:

- a) Explicit integration of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying.

In line with contemporary developments in the field, the definition does not separate both phenomena but conceives them as manifestations of the same process of power abuse, consistent with the approaches of Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) and Kowalski et al. (2014).

- b) Centrality of the victim's defenselessness.

The notion of defenselessness appears explicitly as a direct consequence of the power imbalance, reinforcing the conceptual distinction between bullying and interpersonal conflict, in line with Smith et al. (2012) and Volk et al. (2014).

- c) Consideration of multidimensional harm.

The definition acknowledges physical, psychological, and social impact, connecting with empirical evidence showing persistent negative consequences for victims' mental health and psychosocial adjustment (Copeland et al., 2013; Arseneault, 2018).

d) Inclusion of perpetrators and bystanders as affected.

A particularly relevant feature is the explicit incorporation of consequences for perpetrators and bystanders, aligning with models that conceive bullying as a group process maintained by peer dynamics (Salmivalli, 2010; Swearer et al., 2014).

This approach goes beyond traditional dyadic definitions and reinforces the need for preventive and institutional interventions.

In summary, all these definitions show a high degree of consensus regarding their core elements, while incorporating increasingly complex perspectives that recognize bullying's group-based, contextual, and systemic nature. This conceptual evolution has enabled the development of more precise assessment instruments and more effective intervention programs aligned with international scientific evidence.

## 1.2. Types and forms of bullying

Bullying may present the following typologies:

Physical bullying:

This is the most violent form and the one that generates the greatest impact. It can be divided into direct physical bullying, such as overt aggressive acts including hitting, beatings, or causing injuries (Björkqvist et al., 1992), and indirect physical bullying, which involves more subtle actions directed at the victim, such as hiding or destroying school materials, clothing, or other personal belongings, or stealing from the victim (Olweus, 1983; Ortega-Ruiz, 1997, 2001, 2013).

Verbal bullying:

This form involves the use of words to ridicule, mock, or demean others. It may be direct, including insults, name-calling, derogatory comments made in front of the victim, contempt, challenges, or provocations; or indirect, such as speaking negatively about a person behind their back or spreading false rumors or misinformation (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Olweus, 1983; Ortega-Ruiz, 1997, 2001, 2010, 2015).

Social or relational bullying:

This type involves social isolation, exclusion, and/or marginalization of an individual, who is gradually distanced from peers until they are left without social support or friendships. It may be direct, such as expelling a peer from a friendship

group, excluding them from games or group activities, pressuring others not to interact with the victim, or publicly humiliating them; or indirect, such as ignoring or refusing to speak to a person (Olweus, 1983, 2006).

Threats and blackmail:

This category includes intimidation and coercion, either verbal or involving the use of weapons, aimed at forcing the victim to comply with the bully's demands (Ortega-Ruiz, 1997, 2010, 2015).

Sexual harassment:

This form occurs mainly during adolescence. It may be verbal, when the aggressor directs obscene comments or sexual insinuations toward the victim, or physical, when abuse involves bodily contact and/or unwanted touching (Olweus, 1983, 2006; Ortega-Ruiz, 2010, 2015).

Psychological bullying:

This includes behaviors that contribute to the deterioration of the victim's self-esteem, increasing insecurity, fear, and even feelings of guilt regarding the problematic situation. Psychological bullying is also an implicit consequence of other forms of bullying (Avilés, 2006; Olweus, 1983, 2006).

Ovejero (2013) classifies bullying according to the characteristics of the victims and the context in which the abuse occurs:

According to victim characteristics:

Gender-based bullying:

This form has gained increasing relevance and primarily refers to harassment within adolescent romantic relationships, where emotional manipulation is one of its main expressions. It is often considered a precursor to behaviors that may later evolve into gender-based violence. Rodríguez and Sánchez (2019) define it as any form of aggression or victimization occurring within a romantic relationship, which may manifest physically, sexually, psychologically, through stalking, or via digital media.

### Homophobic bullying:

In general terms, homophobia refers to attitudes or beliefs that promote and sustain discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals (Rivers, 2013). Homophobic bullying is understood as violence directed toward individuals whose biological sex, identity, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression diverge from normative patterns (Elipe, 2019). It targets students who have openly disclosed their homosexuality or bisexuality within the educational context, as well as those presumed to have a non-heteronormative orientation—whether accurate or not—based on gestures, tone of voice, manner of speaking, or clothing. As described by Elipe (2019), it also affects transgender individuals, questioning youth (those uncertain about their orientation), queer individuals (those who challenge binary gender norms), and any other gender identity or expression encompassed within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Social reactions are thus directed against those who deviate from socially prescribed gender roles. These reactions may include rejection, intolerance, and prejudice, manifesting along a continuum from discomfort to physical or sexual violence, whether individual, group-based, or institutional (Platero & Gómez, 2008, p. 34). The term homophobia also includes biphobia, lesbophobia, and transphobia—that is, aggression toward any individual of sexual diversity who is not, or does not appear to be, heterosexual (Feijoo, 2018). In sum, homophobic or LGBTQ+-phobic bullying is multidimensional and involves violence against sexual and gender diversity.

### Racist bullying:

Victims are often members of ethnic minorities. This type combines an aggressive component with a racist one, used to exert abuse and assert dominance by those who perceive themselves as superior. However, these components do not always coexist; for example, students belonging to an ethnic group may be bullied without explicit racist motives, or racism may occur without constituting bullying (Junger, 1990; Rigby, 2002).

### Bullying toward students with special educational needs (SEN):

This constitutes one of the most persistent and concerning forms of victimization in educational contexts. Research consistently shows that students with disabilities, neurodevelopmental disorders, learning difficulties, or other specific educational support needs are at higher risk of being bullied compared to peers without SEN (Sentenac et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2015).

This heightened vulnerability is explained by the interaction of multiple individual and contextual factors. At the individual level, students with SEN may experience difficulties in social skills, communication, emotional regulation, or understanding implicit social norms, increasing the risk of rejection and exclusion by peers (Rose & Gage, 2017). Additionally, visible characteristics such as assistive devices, curricular adaptations, or atypical behaviors may become sources of stigmatization, reinforcing the power imbalance inherent in bullying.

Within this relational framework, students with SEN often occupy peripheral social positions within the classroom, with more limited support networks and reduced capacity to defend themselves against repeated aggression. This situation facilitates the chronicity of bullying and hinders its detection, particularly in relational or psychological forms such as systematic exclusion, covert teasing, or ridicule (Twyman et al., 2010).

Research has shown that the impact of bullying on this group may be especially severe. Victims with SEN exhibit higher levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and somatic symptoms, along with a significant deterioration in emotional well-being and perceived school safety (Hebron & Humphrey, 2014). In some cases, bullying exacerbates pre-existing difficulties and increases the risk of school absenteeism, social withdrawal, and academic failure.

From both educational and ethical perspectives, bullying directed at students with SEN represents a serious violation of the principles of inclusive education and the right to equal educational opportunities. The literature emphasizes the need for targeted preventive strategies, including student sensitization, strengthening social and communication skills, promoting inclusive attitudes, and ensuring active teacher involvement in early detection and systematic intervention (Rose et al., 2015).

In this regard, preventing bullying toward students with SEN requires comprehensive approaches that simultaneously address the individual, the peer group, and the overall school climate, fostering an educational culture grounded in respect for diversity, empathy, and inclusion.

According to the setting in which bullying occurs:

Bullying may be traditional, when it takes place directly and face-to-face within the school environment, or electronic (cyberbullying), when it occurs indirectly through digital means. Increasingly, peer abuse is occurring in virtual contexts due to the widespread use of communication technologies such as mobile phones and various internet-based platforms, including instant messaging (e.g., WhatsApp), email, and social networking sites. The prevalence of cyberbullying is estimated to range between

one-third and one-half of all peer maltreatment cases (Wang et al., 2009; Avilés et al., 2011).

### 1.3. Prevalence of bullying

The prevalence of bullying is one of the fundamental indicators for understanding the true magnitude of the phenomenon and for properly guiding educational policies, prevention strategies, and psychoeducational interventions. Since the first systematic research on bullying, estimating prevalence has been a central goal, both to make the problem visible and to legitimize its consideration as a public health and school coexistence issue (Olweus, 1993; UNESCO, 2023).

However, prevalence is not a single, homogeneous figure. Rates vary considerably depending on multiple factors, such as the operational definition of bullying, the measurement instruments used, the time period considered, students' age, the sociocultural context, and the role analyzed (victim, perpetrator, perpetrator-victim, or bystander) (Modecki et al., 2014; Zych et al., 2015). This variability has generated important methodological debates in the scientific literature and requires prevalence data to be interpreted with caution and rigor.

Bullying prevalence refers to the proportion of students who have been involved in bullying situations over a given period. Empirical research commonly distinguishes three main indicators:

- Point prevalence, reflecting involvement in bullying at a specific moment.
- Period prevalence, typically referring to periods such as the last two or three months.
- Lifetime school prevalence, capturing accumulated bullying experiences across schooling.

These temporal differences strongly influence prevalence estimates, as longer periods tend to yield higher figures (Olweus, 1993; Modecki et al., 2014).

In addition, prevalence can be analyzed by differentiating roles: victims, perpetrators, perpetrator-victims, and bystanders. This distinction is essential, as each role presents different rates and risk profiles (Zych et al., 2015).

International studies agree that bullying is a highly prevalent phenomenon across educational systems worldwide. Reports from international organizations estimate that

between 20% and 35% of students have been involved in bullying situations at some point in their schooling, whether as victims, perpetrators, or both (UNESCO, 2023).

UNESCO's report *Behind the Numbers* (2023) indicates that approximately one in three students worldwide has experienced some form of school bullying, highlighting the magnitude of the problem and its cross-cutting nature across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Recent meta-analyses confirm this high prevalence, though with wide ranges of variation. Modecki et al. (2014) estimated victimization rates ranging from 10% to 30%, depending on the type of bullying and the assessment method used.

### *1.3.1. Prevalence by role in bullying*

#### a) Prevalence of victimization

Victimization is the most studied role in bullying research. Victimization rates vary considerably, but most studies place prevalence between 10% and 25% of students in recent periods (Modecki et al., 2014; Zych et al., 2015).

Longitudinal meta-analyses show that a smaller, but clinically relevant, proportion experiences chronic victimization, characterized by repeated and prolonged episodes. This group presents the highest risk of negative psychological consequences (Reijntjes et al., 2010).

#### b) Prevalence of perpetration

The prevalence of aggressive behavior tends to be lower than victimization. Estimates indicate that between 5% and 15% of students report having engaged repeatedly in bullying behaviors (Cook et al., 2010).

This difference can be explained, in part, by social desirability bias and the tendency to underestimate one's own aggressive behavior in self-reports (Olweus, 1993).

#### c) Prevalence of the perpetrator-victim profile

The perpetrator-victim group, though smaller, is of special clinical and educational relevance. Prevalence typically ranges between 3% and 8%, depending on the context and assessment method (Cook et al., 2010).

Numerous studies have shown that this group presents the poorest psychosocial adjustment, combining characteristics of both victimization and aggression (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

#### d) Prevalence of the bystander role

The bystander role is the most frequent in bullying dynamics. It is estimated that more than 70% of students have witnessed bullying episodes at some point in their schooling (Salmivalli, 2010).

This high prevalence underscores the group-based nature of bullying and the importance of intervening in social norms and bystander behavior.

#### *1.3.2. Prevalence by age and educational stage*

Bullying prevalence varies by age and educational stage. Most studies agree that victimization and perpetration increase in late primary education and peak during preadolescence and the early years of secondary education (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

Subsequently, prevalence shows a slight decrease at higher educational stages, although certain forms of bullying—especially relational bullying and cyberbullying—may persist or even increase in mid-to-late adolescence (Modecki et al., 2014).

#### *1.3.3. Gender differences in prevalence*

Gender differences in bullying prevalence have been widely studied, though findings are not uniform. In general terms, boys show higher rates of involvement in physical bullying and perpetration, whereas girls tend to show higher rates of relational bullying and indirect victimization (Cook et al., 2010; Zych et al., 2015).

However, when all forms of bullying are considered together, overall gender differences tend to diminish, suggesting the need for assessment approaches sensitive to different bullying modalities.

#### *1.3.4. Cyberbullying prevalence and its relationship with traditional bullying*

Cyberbullying has increased notably in recent decades, in parallel with the expansion of digital technology use among children and adolescents. Prevalence estimates typically range between 5% and 20%, depending on the time period and assessment method (Modecki et al., 2014).

Research indicates significant overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, such that many students involved in one modality are also involved in the other (Kowalski et al., 2014). This overlap complicates the estimation of independent prevalence rates and reinforces the need for integrated approaches. +

#### *1.3.5. Methodological variability in prevalence estimates*

##### a) Operational definitions and repetition criteria

One of the main factors explaining variability in prevalence figures is the operational definition of bullying. Studies requiring strict criteria of repetition and power imbalance tend to provide more conservative estimates than those using broader definitions (Olweus, 1993).

##### b) Assessment instruments

Prevalence also varies depending on the instrument used. Self-reports tend to yield higher rates than sociometric nominations or teacher reports, reflecting differences in perception and visibility (Cook et al., 2010).

##### c) Cultural and social context

Cultural differences influence the perception, definition, and reporting of bullying. International comparative studies have shown significant variations between countries, related to social norms, educational policies, and attitudes toward violence (UNESCO, 2023).

#### *1.3.6. Temporal trends and implications of bullying prevalence*

The temporal evolution of bullying prevalence is a topic of debate. Some studies suggest stabilization or slight declines in certain countries, coinciding with the

implementation of systematic prevention programs. However, other research indicates that new forms of harassment—especially cyberbullying—may be offsetting these declines (Zych et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2023).

High prevalence rates have important implications for educational practice and public policy. First, they justify the need for universal prevention strategies reaching all students. Second, they highlight the importance of selective interventions aimed at higher-risk groups, such as chronically victimized students and perpetrator-victims (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

The prevalence of bullying confirms that it is a widespread and persistent phenomenon in educational systems worldwide. Available figures, though variable, indicate that a significant proportion of students are involved in bullying dynamics at some point in their educational trajectories. This high prevalence, together with the severity of associated consequences, reinforces the need to address bullying as an educational and public health priority through comprehensive, sustained, evidence-based approaches.

#### 1.4. Risk factors

The systematic study of possible risk and protective factors for harmful behaviors affecting individuals and societies has become a central axis in prevention and is also the foundation for health education and health promotion (Coie et al., 1993). Moreover, recent evidence confirms the multicausal and ecological nature of bullying, reinforcing interaction models between personal, family, school, and sociocultural factors (Espelage & Hong, 2019; Zych et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2023). Likewise, recent meta-analyses confirm the cumulative role of risk factors and the moderating function of protective factors (Gaffney et al., 2021).

Before continuing with factors related to bullying, it is necessary to define and have a precise idea of what constitutes risk factors. In this regard, Benard (2004) proposes that risk factors are elements that increase the probability that a problem will occur later in a person's life. The presence of a risk factor does not guarantee that a negative outcome will inevitably occur, but it does increase the probability that it will.

Along these lines, some clarifications regarding risk factors are important. The presence of risk factors does not inevitably imply the emergence of bullying. However, the accumulation of multiple risk factors and the absence of protective factors significantly increase students' vulnerability (Hemphill et al., 2014). That is, it does not necessarily mean that problem behaviors will develop; it only means that,

compared to an individual without those factors, there is a higher probability of becoming involved in those behaviors. Thus, risk factors do not have the status of causes in the strict sense; they are predictive elements, but they do not imply a direct and linear cause. Moreover, it is also necessary to consider that no risk factor by itself allows adequate prediction of problem behavior. It is generally accepted that these factors operate interrelatedly: they interact, modulate one another, and exert mutual influence.

#### *1.4.1. Individual risk factors*

There are two personal-domain characteristics that have been investigated most thoroughly: gender and age.

Gender is a personal factor that appears very frequently in investigations of aggressive behavior across developmental stages, both in childhood and adolescence. Males and females assume roles differently. There are relevant differences in elements such as how individuals relate to others in situations involving bullying. From early childhood through secondary education, boys are more strongly represented when teachers and peers assess aggressive behaviors toward peers or adults, bullying, and externalizing behavior problems. In recent years, however, research has advanced toward identifying more qualitative divergences; that is, there is interest in understanding the ways in which girls display aggressiveness, not only the fact that they do so less frequently than boys.

Several studies on adolescent girls show that they more frequently employ less direct forms of harassment, such as social ostracism and spreading false information (Benton, 1992; De la Villa & Ovejero, 2013; Yubero et al., 2015).

In summary, it can be stated that the type of abuse used by boys and girls differs, with girls' forms being more psychological and subtle and, therefore, more difficult to observe.

With respect to age, many studies analyzing the presence of bullying in the school environment show that the period of highest incidence of peer bullying occurs during the transition from primary to secondary education, between the ages of twelve and fifteen (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2014; Ortega-Ruiz, 1997; Piñuel & Oñate, 2007; Sánchez, 2019). In addition, the form of aggression also varies as a function of age: whereas physical aggression is most commonly used among younger students, verbal aggression and less direct forms progressively increase over time.

Ortega-Ruiz and Mora-Merchán (2000) proposed two assumptions to explain the decline of school bullying with age. The first assumption argues that the number of episodes does not decrease with age; rather, the forms used change in ways that

escape conventional measurement tools. The second assumption suggests that the problem decreases because the group finds other, more socially accepted mechanisms to fulfill the same function.

Other widely studied factors associated with abnormal aggressive behavior include the psychological dimension.

O'Donnell et al. (1995) indicate that the absence of social competencies is a cause of aggressive and antisocial behaviors. From this perspective, it has been shown that a lack of skills and low involvement in prosocial behaviors among aggressive students in middle childhood predict delinquency problems later on.

Among the psychological dimensions related to aggressive behavior in adolescence and childhood, impulsivity, lack of empathy, and an external locus of control stand out.

- **Impulsivity:** a lack of impulse control that usually manifests in acting and speaking without prior reflection. As an innate factor, it does not facilitate the regulation of aggressive behavior in interactions with others. Such regulation, which should gradually develop during personal growth, would promote a shift from physical and verbal aggressive behavior toward forms such as reflecting, discussing, conversing, understanding, and others that are more socially accepted and yield better long-term outcomes. However, in impulsive individuals this developmental process tends to occur later, making sustained educational intervention necessary to support it.
- **Locus of control:** an attribution of causality. This involves a process through which people establish a causal link between behavior and its effects. Individuals characterized by an internal locus of control tend to display fewer aggressive behaviors than those characterized by a predominance of an external locus of control (Wallace, 2012).
- **Empathy:** commonly understood as “putting oneself in another’s place.” It is a cognitive—and above all emotional—response in which a person perceives another individual’s emotional state and condition, which translates into understanding and support.

### *1.4.2. Family risk factors*

A key element in human socialization is the family. In order to explain the development of aggressive behavior, family factors have been studied, including relationships among family members and parents' child-rearing styles.

These conditions related to family structure play a key role in the relationships that minors develop with peers at school (Duncan, 1999). The family is a field for learning skills; moreover, if relationships among its members are not healthy, it can become a source of learning responses through aggressive behavior as an inadequate and unjustified way of relating to peers.

However, although it is important, it remains only one factor, which must be considered alongside others in order to provide as complete an explanation as possible for the phenomenon of aggressiveness at school. Therefore, it would only be possible to speak of risk elements that foster the development of an aggressive personality, which may be overcome thanks to the influence of other dimensions, such as social, school, and personal factors.

Early childhood is characterized as a fundamental developmental stage in which emotional attitudes and the lack of affection toward children on the part of parents constitute a decisive family factor in the emergence of aggressive behaviors. When children develop fragile emotionality due to inadequate or impoverished relationships, a greater degree of violence occurs compared to children raised in families with healthier and more affectionate relationships (Giménez-Dasí & Quintanilla, 2018). Ultimately, optimal emotional development is a protective factor against the emergence of aggressive behaviors.

Another important issue to consider is the family educational style, especially regarding the presence of limits and rules. Likewise, if parents impose frequent repeated punishments (physical and verbal), children will internalize patterns of aggressive behavior, which they will reproduce and even increase over time.

Conversely, if parents are highly permissive and tolerant with the child (excessive freedom, lack of clearly established limits, high degree of permissiveness), they will facilitate the emergence of aggressive acts in the child.

Finally, the key role of family structure as a trigger for aggressive behavior cannot be overlooked. Some authors note that aggressiveness increases in disorganized families in which there have been cases of child maltreatment, or in families characterized by the continuous absence of the father.

### *1.4.3. School risk factors*

Alongside the family, the other major context of children's socialization is the school. There they spend many hours, get to know and interact with peers, learn concepts, internalize norms—in other words, they learn to live together in classrooms and recreational spaces. However, just as we previously noted that the family may foster the learning of aggressive interactions with peers through the reproduction of aggressive models and reinforcement of such behavior, the educational environment may also predispose and favor these negative learnings.

Aggression is not taught in formal learning situations, but the school conveys beliefs and values both consciously and unconsciously through verticality—that is, through students' interactions with teachers—by means of what is known as the hidden curriculum, made up of the stock of values and ideas that the school institution transmits without prior planning. Violence may appear in interpersonal relationships among peers (horizontal relationships) and between students and teachers (vertical relationships). These relationships can provide direct learning, in which students perceive reinforcement and approval for aggressive behavior, as well as vicarious learning, in which they learn by observing peers who receive reinforcement for aggressive behavior.

The Elton Report (Ortega-Ruiz, 2008) basically indicates that the school environment is vital for changing negative behaviors, since it can foster values of coexistence and positive social relationships, as well as clear disapproval of violent behaviors, and promote a new role for bystanders so that they become more active against school bullying.

By contrast, in schools with aggressive climates, where violent behaviors have occurred and have not been evaluated or sanctioned, it is possible that an influence is generated on students who witness violence. This influence may lead them, even if they feel understanding toward victims, to adopt the “safe” behavior of not intervening and even to become desensitized to others' suffering.

Other aspects to consider include the physical features of the school, its organization and spatial layout, dimensions, and the years since the building was constructed. There are significant relationships between lack of order and cleanliness, limited space, overcrowding, and high levels of violence. In this regard, the school must ensure the safety of its members through supervision of its spaces: playgrounds, dining areas, and so forth.

Not only physical and structural elements can influence or contribute to the emergence of violence; the norms and rules established and the way the school functions—whether authoritarian or more open and democratic—as well as how relationships with teachers unfold and the possibility for students to participate

directly in aspects that shape school life, are also elements to be considered in the emergence or perpetuation of this problem.

To conclude this factor, given the key role the school institution can play in developing and promoting coexistence-related skills, we must strive for schools to be protective and safe environments in which, without exception, all members can have the best opportunities for learning and development, without negative traumatic experiences that distort the educational purpose society expects from the function of school institutions.

#### *1.4.4. Community and sociocultural risk factors*

The causes underlying the genesis of aggressive behavior are diverse. All those described above occur within an encompassing framework, such as the very social environment of which we are part; in its structures and in itself, this environment is often violent. Elements such as underemployment, the impossibility of accessing housing, and pockets of poverty are violent and have, among other consequences, marginalization, delinquency, and drug addiction.

The most studied aspect is the one focused on mass media, especially television and the internet, which transmit values and beliefs and shape public constructions and opinion groups. Scenes of violence appear very frequently in these media and are observed by citizens, including children. Regarding the reproduction of violence through films and television series, research indicates that the values and behaviors seen on television or in cinema influence viewers' behavior in the immediate time that follows. However, the medium- to longer-term role is not well defined and is determined by additional variables that shape its effects. Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly vulnerable children and adolescents for whom this influence may occur more easily.

The bystander effect refers to habituation to frequent and indiscriminate violence present in the media (Clemente, 2016). This accommodation often results in passivity—doing nothing—and in reduced appreciation of other people's feelings or needs and reduced empathy toward them.

Teachers, from early childhood education onward, should teach habits for critically viewing television or any audiovisual medium (such as YouTube); they should attempt to influence local programming to reduce episodes of aggression and violence in children's and youth programming; invest their greatest energies in counteracting this influence by working in class on social and prosocial skills

objectives; and seek to involve parents in monitoring what their children watch, especially on newer channels or media such as TikTok, and in observing their sons' or daughters' behavior.

Some guidelines to help parents provide this educational monitoring may include:

- Planning what the child will watch, avoiding violent programs.
- Accompanying children while they watch television and sharing some programs, attempting to educate them through the content.
- Offering interesting alternative leisure and entertainment options different from what television and media provide.
- Emphasizing the exaggerations found in many advertisements.
- Reporting inappropriate content broadcast at prohibited times.

Although media influence is a reality, some studies show that minors differentiate very well between the world of fiction and the real world, especially when they have been educated to do so, and can, from an early age, adopt critical attitudes toward films and series with exaggerated plots (Clemente, 2016). This should be an educational goal for reasonable media consumption and should be addressed especially within the family, where children spend more hours watching television. The school should also promote a critical and reflective attitude regarding violent acts in the social and school context, and so forth. To this end, there are audiovisual materials and documents that can effectively support teachers in this task.

Another cause found in the genesis of socially violent acts is attributed to negative uses of the digital world, which becomes a continuation of face-to-face bullying occurring in schools.

The advancement of digital technologies has made access to and use of the internet an almost universal reality among children and adolescents. According to a report by the European Parliament (Smahel et al., 2020), around 90% of young people in the European Union use the internet regularly, and the use of social networks and digital devices becomes more widespread with age during childhood and adolescence.

“Most teenagers are not addicted to social media; if they are addicted to anything, they are addicted to each other” (Boyd, 2014, p. 80). Through mobile phone calls, email, WhatsApp, and fundamentally social networks (Instagram, Snapchat, and

especially TikTok), adolescents consolidate their relationships. However, inappropriate use of these resources can become a potentially dangerous vehicle.

Bullying through social networks (cyberbullying) has established a new “battlefield” and has become a growing problem.

At the cultural level, it is important to investigate values and beliefs about violent behavior, since the way in which students organize their thinking about aspects of social reality influences their judgments about violent events more than the existence of sociocognitive deficits (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005).

According to Fatum and Hoyle (1996), among adolescents there is a code of conduct according to which they believe that if they do not receive the respect they deserve, they must respond with aggression, and if this occurs in front of peers, the intensity of the aggression should be greater. Unhealthy relationships at these ages generate a wide range of negative emotions: anger, fear, anxiety, and frustration, among others.

Some students need, in order to manage their anger and fears, to redefine the concept of what violence is. Even if they recognize, in isolation, that assault, rape, murder, and so forth are violent behaviors, when referring to fights and aggression in a personal sphere, ethical and moral considerations appear distorted. Insofar as they do not view these acts as violence, they perceive them rather as normal self-defense or as “looking good” in front of their peers in order to gain others’ respect.

In adolescence, there is also very little confidence that adults can help them with problems involving peers. As a result of this belief, handling problems oneself, immediately, and with a physical response seems most attractive. Therefore, they understand that violent response has the nuance of seeking personal safety by resolving the problem immediately and effectively.

This model may be implicit in the social framework and in mass media. Fights between groups or gangs among youth should be situated within this violent subculture, which assumes that some groups accept violence as a preferred response style to “offenses.” Their members internalize group values that support and guide violent behavior. Dominant values influence beliefs and attitudes, which in turn are reflected in behavior.

To explain correlations between violence and demographic dimensions, values are decisive (Felson et al., 1994). In educational psychology, there has been difficulty studying violence in schools. Providing an explanation for violence by focusing only on individual factors, such as a cognitive-behavioral deficit, and not paying attention to other contextual risk factors (poverty, media violence, etc.) is inadequate; however, cultural and contextual factors are revealed as significant to explain, at least in part, aggressive behavior.

Addressing and preventing this problem is difficult, since some of these factors are not modifiable and because causes cannot be established with certainty, which makes cases of violent acts very diverse and difficult to classify. Perhaps for this reason, action should be taken more from personal factors than from the context or social factors. From a personal perspective, the transformation of attitudes and values can be achieved through educational action.

In summary, we could say that school bullying originates from many causes; that is, personal, school, family, and sociocultural variables are involved. This makes it difficult to implement a single, specific intervention to eradicate it. Nevertheless, action must be based on a global approach to the problem, far from the common tendency to blame only the violent individual.

### 1.5. Protective factors

Protective factors are those that reduce the negative effects of exposure to risk and stress, such that some individuals, despite having lived in disadvantaged contexts and having experienced adversity, lead a normalized life. They can also be conceived as internal or external resources that modify risk (Benard, 2004). Therefore, they refer to those elements, characteristics, or conditions that help reduce the likelihood that a person will experience school bullying or mitigate its effects if it occurs. These factors may be present in the individual, in the social or family environment, or within the school.

#### *1.5.1. Individual protective factors*

Individual protective factors refer to psychological resources and personal competencies that foster students' social and emotional adjustment and reduce the probability of involvement in bullying situations. The scientific literature agrees that these factors do not eliminate bullying by themselves, but they do reduce its likelihood and, especially, buffer its negative effects (Zych et al., 2019).

Individual protective factors are an essential component in understanding and preventing bullying, since they directly influence the way children and adolescents interpret, cope with, and respond to bullying dynamics. From an ecological and developmental perspective, these factors do not operate in isolation but in constant interaction with the family, school, and sociocultural context, modulating students'

vulnerability or resilience in the face of bullying experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Research has shown that certain personal resources can reduce the likelihood of victimization, limit involvement in aggressive behaviors, and buffer the psychological impact of bullying when it occurs (Zych et al., 2019). These individual protective factors are primarily related to socioemotional, cognitive, and coping competencies, as well as personality variables and psychological adjustment.

a) Emotional regulation and self-control

Emotional regulation capacity constitutes one of the most relevant individual protective factors against bullying. Students who show adequate control of their emotions, especially in situations of interpersonal stress, are less likely to react impulsively or maladaptively to provocations, which reduces the risk of conflict escalation and repeated victimization (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Likewise, emotional regulation buffers the psychological impact of bullying by facilitating the management of emotions such as anxiety, anger, or sadness and promoting more adaptive coping strategies (Reijntjes et al., 2010).

b) Positive self-esteem and a well-adjusted self-concept

Positive and realistic self-esteem has been identified as an important protective factor against bullying victimization. Students with a solid and well-adjusted self-concept tend to show greater personal confidence, less dependence on external approval, and a greater capacity to withstand humiliation and social exclusion (Arseneault, 2018).

Self-esteem does not function only as a barrier against victimization; it also influences how students interpret bullying behaviors, preventing maladaptive internal attributions that reinforce learned helplessness.

c) Social skills and interpersonal competence

Social skills constitute a fundamental pillar of individual protection against bullying. The ability to communicate assertively, establish positive relationships, negotiate conflicts, and seek social support has been associated with lower levels of victimization and a greater likelihood of receiving support from the peer group (Salmivalli, 2010).

Socially competent students tend to occupy more integrated positions within the classroom group, which reduces the power asymmetry that characterizes bullying and makes it more difficult for bullying dynamics to consolidate.

#### d) Empathy and social sensitivity

Empathy, both cognitive and affective, acts as a particularly relevant protective factor against involvement in the perpetrator role. Students with higher levels of empathy are less likely to engage in bullying behaviors, as they are more sensitive to others' suffering and less inclined to legitimize violence (Gini et al., 2007).

In addition, empathy fosters prosocial and victim-defending behaviors, contributing to the creation of more protective group environments.

#### e) Perceived self-efficacy and coping skills

Perceived self-efficacy, understood as the belief in one's own capacity to handle difficult situations, has been linked to greater resilience in the face of bullying. Students who trust their ability to cope with interpersonal conflicts show a greater willingness to seek help, report bullying, and use active coping strategies (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Protective coping strategies include seeking social support, active problem solving, and using institutional resources, as opposed to avoidant or resignation-based strategies that may perpetuate victimization.

#### f) Resilience and positive adaptation to adversity

Resilience is defined as the capacity to adapt positively in the face of adverse experiences. In the context of bullying, individual resilience allows some students to maintain relatively adequate psychological adjustment despite having experienced school bullying (Arseneault, 2018).

Resilience does not imply the absence of distress, but rather the capacity to recover and reorganize, drawing on internal and external resources. This construct integrates multiple individual protective factors, such as emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose.

#### g) Assertiveness and boundary setting

Assertiveness constitutes another relevant individual protective factor. Students capable of expressing their personal limits clearly and firmly, without resorting to

aggression or submission, are less likely to become chronic victims of bullying (Reijntjes et al., 2010).

Assertiveness facilitates early interruption of aggressive behaviors and contributes to changing the perpetrator's perception of the victim's vulnerability.

#### h) Sense of identity and personal belonging

The development of a positive sense of personal identity, grounded in acceptance of one's own characteristics and valuing diversity, acts as a protective factor against specific forms of bullying, such as harassment based on cultural identity, sexual orientation, or special educational needs (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

A strong sense of identity reduces internalization of stigma and fosters psychological resistance to discrimination.

#### i) Academic motivation and school engagement

Academic motivation and engagement with school have also been identified as individual protective factors. Students involved in their educational process and with clear academic goals tend to show stronger connection to the school and benefit from support networks that reduce the risk of victimization (Salmivalli, 2010).

### *1.5.2. Protective factors in the family context*

The family context plays a central role as a protective factor against school bullying, both in preventing victimization and in reducing the likelihood of perpetration, as well as in mitigating the psychological impact of bullying when it occurs. From an ecological developmental perspective, the family constitutes the first microsystem in which patterns of relationship, emotional regulation, and social values are acquired, decisively influencing the way children and adolescents relate to their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Empirical research has consistently shown that certain family resources and dynamics buffer risk and promote more adaptive psychosocial adjustment trajectories in potentially adverse school contexts (Baldry & Farrington, 2005).

#### a) Positive family climate and emotional support

One of the most relevant protective factors within the family domain is the existence of a positive affective climate, characterized by relationships based on affection, acceptance, and the emotional availability of parental figures. Emotional support perceived by the child has been associated with lower levels of victimization and with a greater capacity to cope with bullying situations (Lereya et al., 2013).

When children and adolescents feel listened to, understood, and validated in the family environment, they are more likely to communicate bullying experiences and seek help early. This open communication facilitates early detection of bullying and reduces the risk of victimization becoming chronic (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

#### b) Open family communication and parental supervision

Open, bidirectional communication between parents and children constitutes another key protective factor. Families that promote dialogue spaces in which everyday school experiences, peer relationships, and the use of digital technologies are discussed foster greater perceived support and security in the child (Baldry & Farrington, 2005).

Likewise, adequate parental supervision—understood not as excessive control but as balanced interest in and monitoring of the child’s school and social life—has been linked to lower rates of involvement in bullying, both in the victim and perpetrator roles (Lereya et al., 2013). This supervision is especially relevant for preventing cyberbullying.

#### c) Democratic and consistent parenting Styles

Democratic parenting styles, characterized by high levels of affection and clear, consistent rules, have been identified as an important protective factor against school bullying. This educational style fosters the development of emotional self-regulation, empathy, and respect for others, reducing the likelihood of aggressive behaviors and facilitating adaptive responses to victimization situations (Baldry & Farrington, 2005).

By contrast, normative consistency and clarity of limits help generate a sense of security that facilitates internalization of social norms and constructive conflict resolution.

#### d) Modeling social skills and conflict resolution

The family context also serves as a privileged space for vicarious learning of social skills. Children who observe parental models based on assertive communication, peaceful conflict resolution, and mutual respect tend to reproduce these patterns in their peer relationships (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

This positive modeling strengthens social competencies that function as protective factors against bullying, such as assertiveness, empathy, and the ability to seek social support.

#### e) Fostering self-esteem and a sense of competence

Family support plays an essential role in the development of positive, realistic self-esteem. Evidence indicates that minors with a positive perception of themselves and their capabilities show lower vulnerability to victimization and greater resilience in the face of adverse experiences at school (Lereya et al., 2013).

Recognizing achievements, reinforcing individual strengths, and emotional validation contribute to building a solid self-concept that buffers the impact of school bullying.

#### f) Family involvement in school life

Finally, active family involvement in school life constitutes a relevant protective factor. Collaboration with the educational center, fluid communication with teachers, and participation in school activities facilitate a coordinated response to bullying situations and reinforce students' perception of institutional support (Baldry & Farrington, 2005).

This involvement conveys to the child the message that they are not alone and that there are available adults committed to their well-being, which reduces the emotional impact of bullying and facilitates addressing it.

### *1.5.3. Protective factors in the educational center*

The educational center is one of the most relevant contexts for preventing school bullying, given that it is the main space where peer interactions take place and where coexistence dynamics can be detected, regulated, and transformed. From an ecological

approach, the school acts as a key microsystem capable of generating protective conditions that reduce the likelihood of bullying and buffer its impact when it occurs (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

Research has shown that certain factors present in school organization, school climate, and teaching practices function as powerful protective factors, influencing both a decrease in victimization and a reduction in aggressive behavior (Gaffney et al., 2021).

#### a) Positive and safe school climate

One of the most consistent protective factors in the educational context is the existence of a positive school climate, characterized by relationships based on respect, trust, and a sense of belonging. A safe and welcoming school climate has been associated with lower rates of bullying and greater student willingness to report bullying situations and intervene as defenders of victims (Wang et al., 2013).

When students perceive the school as a fair, predictable, and protective space, tolerance for violence decreases and prosocial norms that inhibit bullying are strengthened.

#### b) Clear norms and institutional anti-bullying policies

The presence of clear, explicit, and shared norms regarding coexistence and non-tolerance of school bullying constitutes a fundamental protective factor. Schools with well-defined protocols known by the entire educational community show lower levels of bullying and more effective responses to detected incidents (Gaffney et al., 2021).

These norms must be accompanied by coherent and consistent implementation by teachers and the leadership team, avoiding ambiguous messages that may reinforce impunity for aggressive behavior.

#### c) Teachers' role and adult response

Teachers play a central role as protective agents against bullying. Evidence shows that perceived teacher support and availability significantly reduce the likelihood of victimization and favor early interruption of bullying dynamics (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

A rapid, firm, and empathetic adult response to the first signs of bullying acts as a clear normative message for the peer group, delegitimizing violence and reinforcing

prosocial behaviors. By contrast, inaction or minimization of the problem may become a risk factor.

e) Promoting coexistence and socioemotional skills

Educational programs oriented toward socioemotional education, coexistence, and peaceful conflict resolution constitute an important protective factor at the school level. These interventions foster the development of empathy, emotional self-regulation, and social skills—key competencies for preventing the emergence of bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

The systematic integration of these contents into the curriculum contributes to creating a school culture based on mutual respect and cooperation, reducing social acceptance of aggression.

e) Peer involvement and bystander empowerment

Given the group nature of bullying, bystander empowerment has been identified as a particularly effective protective strategy. Schools that actively promote students' involvement in defending victims and reporting bullying achieve significant reductions in bullying prevalence (Salmivalli, 2010).

Promoting collective responsibility and prosocial leadership among students contributes to transforming the group's implicit norms and weakening the power dynamics that sustain bullying.

f) Educational inclusion and attention to diversity

Promoting an inclusive education sensitive to students' cultural, functional, and social diversity acts as a protective factor against bullying. Schools that value diversity and adopt inclusive practices reduce stigmatization and social exclusion, especially among vulnerable groups (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Attention to diversity, the use of cooperative methodologies, and adaptation of educational environments foster equitable participation and a sense of belonging, reducing the conditions that facilitate bullying.

g) Coordination with families and the community

Finally, coordination between the educational center, families, and other community agents strengthens the school's protective capacity against bullying.

School–family collaboration allows for a coherent and sustained response, promoting early detection and appropriate support for students involved (Gaffney et al., 2021).

#### *1.5.4. Community and sociocultural protective factors*

School bullying cannot be understood or addressed exclusively from the individual, family, or school domain. From an ecological developmental approach, the community and sociocultural context constitutes a key level of influence that can act as a risk factor or, conversely, as a powerful protective factor against bullying (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2010). Social norms, cultural values, community resources, and public policies decisively influence how peer violence is perceived, tolerated, or rejected.

Scientific literature has emphasized that community environments characterized by high levels of social cohesion, civic participation, and commitment to childhood and adolescence foster safer contexts and reduce the likelihood of the emergence and maintenance of school bullying (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

##### a) Social norms and prosocial cultural values

One of the main protective factors at the sociocultural level is the existence of clear social norms that reject violence and discrimination. Societies and communities that promote values such as respect, equality, social justice, and peaceful coexistence generate normative frameworks that delegitimize bullying and hinder its normalization (UNESCO, 2023).

When bullying is socially perceived as unacceptable and contrary to collective values, implicit tolerance decreases and adults' and young people's willingness to intervene in situations of abuse increases.

##### b) Social cohesion and a sense of community belonging

Social cohesion is a relevant protective factor against bullying. Communities in which there are strong bonds among members, support networks, and a strong sense of belonging offer more protective contexts for children and adolescents (Bradshaw et al., 2014).

This sense of belonging favors informal monitoring, mutual support, and early detection of problematic situations, reducing the social isolation that often characterizes victims of school bullying.

#### c) Community resources and positive socialization spaces

The availability of accessible, high-quality community resources—such as youth associations, sports activities, cultural activities, and educational leisure opportunities—acts as an important protective factor. These spaces provide opportunities for positive socialization, the development of social skills, and the construction of support networks outside the strictly school context (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Participation in structured community activities has been associated with greater emotional well-being, lower involvement in problem behaviors, and a reduced risk of peer victimization and aggression.

#### d) Media and public discourse

Media and public discourse play a relevant role in shaping social attitudes toward bullying. Responsible visibility of school bullying, as well as the promotion of messages that foster empathy, diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution, contributes to creating a protective sociocultural climate (UNESCO, 2023).

By contrast, discourses that trivialize violence, reinforce stereotypes, or legitimize social exclusion may function as structural risk factors.

#### e) Public policies and normative frameworks

Public policies aimed at protecting childhood and adolescence constitute a fundamental sociocultural protective factor. The existence of laws, protocols, and national strategies for preventing school bullying sends a clear message of zero tolerance toward violence and strengthens schools' and social services' capacity to act (Bradshaw et al., 2014).

Likewise, training professionals in the educational, health, and social sectors in the detection and management of bullying strengthens the community protection network.

#### f) Intercultural approach and prevention of discrimination

In socioculturally diverse contexts, promoting an intercultural approach and active anti-discrimination policies acts as a key protective factor. Positive valuation of cultural, ethnic, and social diversity reduces stigmatization of certain groups and prevents specific forms of bullying, such as racist or xenophobic harassment (Benner et al., 2018).

Education in human rights and democratic citizenship contributes to generating communities that are more inclusive and resilient in the face of peer violence.

#### g) Coordination across systems and shared responsibility

Finally, coordination among different community systems—education, social services, health, associations, and public administrations—reinforces the protective character of the sociocultural environment. Addressing bullying as a shared responsibility rather than one exclusive to the educational center fosters more coherent, sustained, and effective responses (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

In conclusions, the analysis of protective factors against school bullying shows that bullying cannot be understood or addressed from a reductionist approach focused exclusively on the individual. On the contrary, accumulated scientific evidence underscores the need to adopt an ecological and integrative approach in which individual, family, school, community, social, and sociocultural factors interact dynamically, shaping contexts of greater or lesser vulnerability to peer violence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

At the individual level, resources such as emotional regulation, self-esteem, social skills, empathy, self-efficacy, and resilience act as fundamental buffers of risk, reducing the probability of victimization and promoting adaptive responses to bullying situations. However, these personal factors do not develop in isolation, but are profoundly influenced by the relational and educational experiences provided by the environment.

In this sense, the family context emerges as an essential protective nucleus, providing emotional support, positive relational models, democratic parenting styles, and open communication that facilitates early detection of bullying and effective support for the child. Families that promote secure and coherent bonds contribute decisively to strengthening students' coping capacity and preventing the chronicity of victimization.

The educational center, for its part, plays a strategic role as a privileged setting for prevention, concentrating peer interactions and possessing high normative and

educational potential. A positive school climate, the presence of clear anti-bullying norms, active teacher involvement, the promotion of socioemotional competencies, and peer-group empowerment constitute key protective factors that reduce tolerance for violence and foster coexistence grounded in respect and inclusion.

Beyond the school, community and sociocultural factors broaden the framework of protection, influencing social norms, collective values, and the support opportunities available to children and adolescents. Cohesive communities, with accessible educational and leisure resources, responsible public discourse, and clear anti-discrimination policies, generate environments that are less permissive of school bullying and reinforce shared social responsibility for protecting childhood.

At the social and structural level, the existence of solid normative frameworks, public policies for protecting childhood, a culture of human rights, and the reduction of social inequalities act as transversal protective factors by establishing clear limits to violence and promoting conditions of equity that hinder the emergence of exclusion dynamics and abuse of power. These structural elements reinforce and sustain preventive actions developed at levels closest to students.

Taken together, protective factors against bullying configure an interdependent system in which the effectiveness of each level depends on its articulation with the others. Preventing school bullying therefore requires multi-level, sustained, and coherent strategies that combine strengthening individual resources with creating safe, inclusive family, school, and social environments committed to students' well-being.

From this perspective, addressing bullying does not only mean intervening in situations of violence, but actively building protective contexts that promote coexistence, empathy, and respect for diversity. This comprehensive approach not only reduces the prevalence of school bullying, but also contributes decisively to the healthy development of children and adolescents and to the construction of more just and resilient educational communities.

## 2. BULLYING AS A GROUP PHENOMENON: PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILES OF INVOLVED ROLES

Bullying, as a complex social phenomenon, cannot be adequately explained through a binary perspective (perpetrator–victim). Evidence has shown that bullying operates as a group process, sustained by norms, status hierarchies, and social reinforcement, in which multiple roles (defenders, reinforcers, assistants, passive bystanders) influence the continuation or dissolution of harassment (Salmivalli, 2010; Olweus, 1993). Consequently, “participation” in bullying is not limited to exercising or suffering aggression; it also includes witnessing, supporting, reinforcing, remaining silent, or intervening, and each role is associated with distinct psychological patterns (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

This chapter offers an in-depth conceptualization of roles and their associated psychological profiles, integrating: (a) individual traits and processes (empathy, emotional regulation, moral cognitions), (b) social motivations (status, dominance, belonging), and (c) transactional mechanisms (how role and context mutually reinforce each other over time) (Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Salmivalli, 2010).

### 2.1. Methodological and conceptual considerations for profiling roles

Psychological profiles depend on how bullying is measured (self-reports, peer nominations, teacher reports). Self-reports capture internal experiences (fear, shame) but may underestimate perpetration due to social desirability, whereas peer nominations more accurately capture social structure and status (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, 2010). Therefore, any “clinical” or “psychological” profile must always be interpreted as probabilistic rather than deterministic.

#### a) Heterogeneity: there is no single type of perpetrator or victim

The literature emphasizes within-group diversity: there are “popular” perpetrators (high status) and “marginal” perpetrators; “submissive” victims (more inhibited) and “reactive” victims (with impulsivity/irritability), as well as the perpetrator–victim (bully-victim) profile, which typically shows the poorest adjustment (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Cook et al., 2010).

## b) Developmental and transactional perspective

Roles may change across developmental stages and contexts: bullying tends to increase during preadolescence and status reorganization, and some students transition between roles (e.g., from bystander to reinforcer). A role is not only “who you are” but “what you do” under certain norms and rewards (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Salmivalli, 2010).

## 2.2. Role taxonomy: the group participation model

A widely used typology distinguishes, in addition to perpetrator and victim, several group roles:

- Primary perpetrator (initiates/directs harassment).
- Assistants (actively help the perpetrator).
- Reinforcers (laugh, encourage, provide an audience, legitimize).
- Defenders (protect or support the victim).
- Passive bystanders/outsideers (withdraw, observe without acting) (Salmivalli, 2010).

This framework is essential because bullying is sustained by social reinforcement: the “audience” turns aggression into an act of power and status (Salmivalli, 2010). Role psychology therefore includes social motivations and perceived costs of intervening (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

## 2.3. Psychological profile of victims

### *2.3.1. Socioemotional processing: fear, hypervigilance, and rejection sensitivity*

Many victims develop hypervigilance, threat anticipation, and fear of the school context, especially when victimization is chronic. These processes are associated with anxiety and internalizing symptoms (Reijntjes et al., 2010; Arseneault, 2018). Rejection sensitivity is common, increasing the tendency to interpret ambiguous cues as hostile or exclusionary, thereby reinforcing social avoidance.

### *2.3.2. Self-concept and attributions: shame, helplessness, and attributional style*

Repeated victimization can erode self-esteem and social self-concept (“I do not belong”), fostering internal attributions (“it is my fault”) and a sense of helplessness. This pattern increases depressive risk and social withdrawal (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *2.3.3. Social competence and position within the peer network*

At the group level, many victims occupy peripheral positions, with fewer alliances and less group protection. Lack of support is not only a consequence; it is also a mechanism that perpetuates the power imbalance (Salmivalli, 2010). Importantly, social difficulties may be both cause and consequence: sustained victimization reduces opportunities to practice skills, deteriorating social competence.

### *2.3.4. Victim subtypes*

a) Passive or submissive victims. Tend toward inhibition, avoidance, low assertiveness, and social anxiety. They often respond with withdrawal, which may increase perceptions of vulnerability (Olweus, 1993).

b) Reactive or provocative victims. Show irritability, impulsivity, and intense defensive responses. They may display externalizing behaviors, complicating interpretation by teachers and peers and potentially increasing conflict (Cook et al., 2010; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

c) Resilient victims. Despite victimization, they maintain relatively adaptive functioning due to social support, personal resources, and/or effective institutional responses (Arseneault, 2018).

### *2.3.5. Clinical impact as part of the profile*

For victims, the “profile” includes the imprint of victimization: anxiety, depression, somatization, and, in severe cases, symptoms compatible with post-traumatic stress (Idsoe et al., 2012; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013). These should not be confused with “pre-existing traits”; many characteristics develop as responses to bullying (Arseneault, 2018).

## 2.4. Psychological profile of perpetrators

### *2.4.1. Social motivation: dominance, status, and control*

A central component of the perpetrator profile is the pursuit of dominance or status. Bullying may function as an “instrumental” strategy to gain power, visibility, or hierarchy, especially in environments where aggression is socially reinforced (Salmivalli, 2010; Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

### *2.4.2. Proactive versus reactive aggression*

- Proactive (instrumental) aggression: planned and goal-oriented (status/resources), typically associated with greater behavioral control, less distress, and higher social calculation.
- Reactive aggression: impulsive, linked to irritability, low frustration tolerance, and hostile attribution bias. This distinction helps explain why some perpetrators appear “cold” while others appear “explosive” (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *2.4.3. Empathy and morality: moral disengagement*

Perpetration is associated with lower affective empathy and greater moral disengagement (justifying harm, blaming the victim, minimizing consequences). These mechanisms facilitate repetition of behavior without proportional guilt (Bandura, 2002; Gini et al., 2014).

### *2.4.4. “Instrumental” social competence and strategic skills*

Some perpetrators, particularly those with high status, display strategic social skills: they know when, how, and against whom to act and manage social impressions. This challenges the stereotype of the “socially inept” bully; in some contexts, aggression coexists with perceived popularity, though not necessarily with genuine acceptance (Salmivalli, 2010; Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

### *2.4.5. Traits and correlates: externalization, impulsivity, and risk behaviors*

Meta-analyses indicate associations between perpetration and externalizing problems (impulsivity, disruptive behavior), as well as a higher likelihood of later antisocial trajectories if behavior becomes chronic (Cook et al., 2010; Ttofi &

Farrington, 2011). This reflects increased risk rather than destiny, particularly in the absence of intervention.

#### *2.4.6. Perpetrator subtypes*

a) “Popular” perpetrator (high status). More proactive and strategic, with influence capacity; often operates with peer support or tolerance.

b) “Marginal” perpetrator. Lower status, more impulsive/reactive; may aggress to gain belonging or discharge frustration.

c) “Group-based” perpetrator. Relies on assistants/reinforcers; behavior depends heavily on group norms (Salmivalli, 2010; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### 2.5. Psychological profile of the perpetrator–victim

The perpetrator–victim combines victimization and perpetration and typically shows the poorest adjustment: a mix of internalizing symptoms (anxiety/depression) and externalizing symptoms (impulsivity/aggression), difficulties in emotional regulation, relational conflicts, and low social support (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Cook et al., 2010). In many cases, there is a history of early rejection or cumulative exclusion experiences that foster defensive aggressive responses.

This profile requires complex intervention: addressing the student only as a “perpetrator” ignores vulnerability; addressing only as a “victim” minimizes harm inflicted on others.

### 2.6. Psychological profiles of bystanders

#### *2.6.1. Passive bystanders (outsiders): fear, avoidance, and social calculation*

Passive bystanders often experience fear of retaliation and evaluate the social costs of intervening. Their profile is characterized by avoidance and “social self-protection.” Passivity does not imply absence of distress; it may coexist with anxiety and guilt (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

### *2.6.2. Reinforcers: pursuit of belonging and vicarious status*

Reinforcement (laughing, encouraging, recording, sharing) is socially powerful behavior. It is often linked to motivations of belonging, fear of exclusion from the dominant group, and pursuit of status “by association.” Psychologically, it may coexist with moral disengagement (“it was just a joke”) (Bandura, 2002; Salmivalli, 2010).

### *2.6.3. Assistants: active participation under leadership*

Assistants participate directly by helping the perpetrator. They often show high group conformity and dependence on a leader. Their profile is better explained by social dynamics than by stable individual traits (Salmivalli, 2010).

### *2.6.4. Defenders: empathy, moral self-efficacy, and social security*

Defenders tend to display greater empathy, sensitivity to injustice, and self-efficacy to intervene. There is also a social component: many defenders have sufficient relational security (friends, status, or teacher support) to bear the cost of defending (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Salmivalli, 2010). Promoting this role is crucial because it can interrupt the social reinforcement of bullying.

### *2.6.5. “Ambivalent” bystanders: moral dissonance and strain*

A subgroup oscillates between passivity and the desire to help. Their profile includes dissonance (“I should do something”) and moral distress. If schools do not provide safe channels for intervention, this ambivalence may lead to normalization or desensitization (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

## 2.7. Cross-cutting psychological processes that differentiate roles

### Empathy (cognitive vs. affective)

Affective empathy (feeling with others) tends to protect against aggression and promote defending; cognitive empathy (understanding others) can be used to help or to manipulate and therefore does not always protect by itself (Gini et al., 2007; Gini et al., 2014).

a) Emotional regulation and inhibitory control

Poor emotional regulation increases risk for reactive aggression and reactive victimization. Good inhibitory control supports adaptive coping and reduces conflict escalation (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

b) Moral cognitions and responsibility

Moral disengagement is a central mechanism for perpetrators and reinforcers. When it is reduced through moral education, restorative practices, and clear norms, the “psychological license” to harm diminishes (Bandura, 2002; Gini et al., 2014).

c) Status, norms, and rewards

Role differences are best explained by integrating the “social value” of bullying: when the group rewards aggression with laughter, attention, or power, reinforcers and assistants increase; when the group sanctions aggression, defenders increase and perpetration decreases (Salmivalli, 2010).

## 2.8. Profile-based implications for assessment and intervention

1. Multi-informant assessment: combine self-reports (emotions), nominations (status and role), and teacher reports (context).

2. Profile-differentiated intervention:

○ *Victims*: safety, support, social repair, coping strategies (Arseneault, 2018).

○ *Proactive perpetrators*: clear norms, consistent consequences, moral and restorative work, reduction of social rewards (Salmivalli, 2010).

○ *Reactive perpetrators/perpetrator–victims*: emotional regulation, clinical intervention when indicated, relational support, family work (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

○ *Bystanders*: intervention self-efficacy, safe strategies, defender culture, clear protocols (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013).

3. Act on the group: the goal is not only to “change the person” but to change the reward system that sustains bullying (Salmivalli, 2010).

In conclusion, the psychological profiles of participants in bullying are diverse and should be understood as dynamic configurations emerging from the interaction between individual characteristics (empathy, emotional regulation, moral cognitions), social motivations (status, belonging), and contextual conditions (classroom norms, adult response). The perpetrator role does not imply a single profile: it may be proactive and strategic or reactive and impulsive; the victim role includes subtypes and degrees of resilience; the perpetrator–victim represents a profile of maximum vulnerability; and bystanders, far from being neutral, can sustain or stop bullying depending on their moral positioning, self-efficacy, and the school climate (Salmivalli, 2010; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Understanding this architecture of roles and profiles enables the design of more precise and effective interventions, moving beyond simplistic punitive approaches and toward transforming the group system and the institutional climate.

### 3. IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING

Current research has indicated that bullying constitutes a chronic interpersonal stressor with the capacity to significantly affect students' psychological, social, and academic development, producing consequences that may persist into adolescence and adulthood (Arseneault, 2018; Copeland et al., 2013).

The analysis of bullying consequences has evolved from an approach focused almost exclusively on the victim toward a systemic understanding that considers the impact on perpetrators and bystanders, as well as the effects on school climate and the group's moral culture (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Salmivalli, 2010). This broadening is fundamental for two reasons. First, because bullying dynamics are sustained by group processes (e.g., social reinforcement, status hierarchies, implicit norms), and therefore their effects are distributed across the entire social network (Salmivalli, 2010). Second, because involvement in any role is associated with developmental risks: internalization of distress (anxiety/depression), externalization (aggression/delinquency), academic deterioration, and, in some cases, increased suicidal risk (Copeland et al., 2013; van Geel et al., 2014).

This chapter provides an in-depth theoretical review of the impact of bullying, differentiating consequences for victims, perpetrators, perpetrator–victims, and bystanders, while integrating explanatory mechanisms, moderators, and temporal trajectories (short-, medium-, and long-term). The aim is not only to list effects, but to explain how and why they occur and what they imply for prevention and intervention.

#### 3.1. Conceptual framework of impact: dimensions, temporality, and mechanisms

##### *3.1.1. Dimensions of impact*

The consequences of bullying are usually grouped into four major, interrelated domains:

1. Psychological/psychopathological (anxiety, depression, PTSD/post-traumatic stress, suicidal ideation, self-harm, somatization).
2. Social-relational (isolation, rejection, bonding difficulties, interpersonal mistrust, problems of social adjustment).

3. Academic-school (absenteeism, lower achievement, school disengagement, dropout).

4. Behavioral and health-related (substance use, risk behaviors, violence, emotional regulation problems) (Arseneault, 2018; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

These dimensions are not independent: social deterioration may precipitate depressive symptoms; anxiety may increase absenteeism; school disengagement may raise risk behaviors. Therefore, the impact of bullying should be understood as a transactional process in which consequences feed back into vulnerability (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *3.1.2. Temporality: short-, medium-, and long-term*

- Short term: immediate emotional reactions (fear, shame), somatization, concentration difficulties, school avoidance.
- Medium term: consolidation of patterns (isolation, depressive symptoms, reactive aggression, academic decline).
- Long term: more stable mental health and social trajectories (affective disorders, occupational/relational difficulties, increased risk of antisocial behavior among perpetrators) (Copeland et al., 2013; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

Persistence of impact does not mean that bullying “causes” a disorder in a simple way; rather, it may act as a powerful risk factor or precipitating event in combination with prior vulnerabilities and lack of support (Arseneault, 2018).

### *3.1.3. Main explanatory mechanisms*

a) Chronic interpersonal stress and allostatic load. Repeated victimization operates as a sustained stressor, affecting sleep, attention, emotional regulation, and stress reactivity, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression (Arseneault, 2018).

b) Cognitive and self-concept processes. Bullying may foster helplessness schemas, internal attributions (“I deserve it”), threat anticipation, and negative views of the self and the world, increasing depressive vulnerability (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

c) Social disorganization and relational capital. Exclusion reduces social support and opportunities for integration, affecting mental health and school performance (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

d) Social reinforcement and coercion learning. Among perpetrators, bullying may function as a strategy reinforced by status or control, consolidating coercive patterns associated with later antisocial behavior (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

## 3.2. Consequences for victims

### *3.2.1. Emotional impact: anxiety, depression, and persistent distress*

Evidence consistently shows that victims present higher levels of anxiety, sadness, irritability, and depressive symptoms, as well as greater perceived stress and poorer overall psychological well-being (Arseneault, 2018; Reijntjes et al., 2010). Importantly, bullying is not only associated with “symptoms” but with changes in ways of being in the world: hypervigilance, anticipation of harm, and social withdrawal (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

A robust meta-analytic finding is that victimization predicts increases over time in internalizing symptoms, even when controlling for baseline variables, supporting its role as a stressor capable of progressive psychological deterioration (Reijntjes et al., 2010).

### *3.2.2. Somatization, sleep, and physical symptoms*

Distress related to bullying is also frequently expressed through somatic symptoms: headaches, abdominal pain, nausea, fatigue, nonspecific complaints, and sleep disturbances. These symptoms should not be interpreted as “exaggeration,” but as psychophysiological manifestations of sustained stress and anxiety (Arseneault, 2018).

Sleep disruption is particularly critical because it can operate as a mediator: poorer sleep worsens emotional regulation and attention, which may aggravate the school experience and academic performance.

### *3.2.3. PTSD and traumatic conceptualizations of bullying*

In cases of severe or chronic victimization, some studies have documented symptoms compatible with post-traumatic stress: re-experiencing, avoidance, hyperarousal, and emotional numbing. Although not all victimization produces PTSD, a trauma-informed approach helps explain why certain cases show intense and persistent impact (Idsoe et al., 2012).

The clinical relevance is clear: when bullying is experienced as a repeated threat with no exit, a pattern of fear conditioned to the school context may become established, with avoidance and functional impairment.

### *3.2.4. Suicidal ideation, self-harm, and extreme risk*

The association between bullying and suicidal ideation has been widely documented. Meta-analyses suggest that victimization is related to a greater probability of suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviors and that this association may persist after controlling for relevant variables, although heterogeneity across studies exists (van Geel et al., 2014). Longitudinally, associations have also been observed between having been a victim and poorer psychiatric outcomes in adulthood (Copeland et al., 2013).

It is crucial to understand that suicidal risk is rarely “monocausal.” It typically converges with depression, hopelessness, isolation, prior abuse, or other vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, bullying may act as a trigger or amplifier of distress.

### *3.2.5. Social consequences: isolation, rejection, and deterioration of interpersonal trust*

Socially, victims may experience isolation, rejection, and a loss of belonging, with deterioration in the quality of their relationships. This reduces social support—one of the main buffers against stress—thus fostering a cycle of vulnerability (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

In the long term, this pattern may consolidate into a defensive relational style (mistrust, avoidance) and difficulties in establishing secure intimate bonds.

### *3.2.6. School impact: achievement, absenteeism, disengagement, and dropout*

Bullying affects school functioning through multiple pathways: fear, poor concentration, avoidance, deterioration of motivation, and loss of belonging. Consequently, higher absenteeism, poorer performance, and school disengagement are

observed (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). This disengagement is especially concerning because it predicts other risks: dropout, risk behaviors, and constrained educational trajectories.

### *3.2.7. Differences by type of bullying: physical, relational, and cyberbullying*

Relational bullying (exclusion, rumors, humiliation) may be particularly harmful due to its diffuse and sustained nature, affecting social status and identity. Cyberbullying adds amplification, permanence, and a sense of invasion, which may intensify emotional impact. Evidence suggests that both modalities can be associated with significant distress, varying according to intensity, exposure, and available support (Kowalski et al., 2014).

## 3.3. Consequences for perpetrators

### *3.3.1. Short-term benefits versus medium- and long-term costs*

Some literature has indicated that certain perpetrators may obtain immediate benefits: status, visibility, control. However, these benefits do not imply healthy adjustment. Over the medium and long term, bullying perpetration is associated with higher risk of antisocial behavior, adjustment problems, and relational difficulties (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Copeland et al., 2013).

That is, bullying may be “functional” in the short term within certain group hierarchies, but “costly” for socioemotional and moral development.

### *3.3.2. Externalization, substance use, and delinquency*

Longitudinal evidence has linked bullying behavior to a higher probability of later externalizing problems and risk behaviors, including violence and delinquency. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) synthesize findings that position bullying as a predictor of negative outcomes in later stages, especially when combined with other contextual risks.

This pattern suggests that, in some cases, bullying may represent an early expression of broader antisocial trajectories that require educational and, when appropriate, clinical intervention.

### *3.3.3. Moral development: moral disengagement and empathy*

Perpetrators may show patterns of moral disengagement (justifying harm, blaming the victim, minimizing consequences). Bandura (2002) explains how these mechanisms allow individuals to carry out harmful actions without experiencing proportional guilt, facilitating repetition. The persistence of such mechanisms may impoverish moral development and the quality of relationships.

### *3.3.4. Interpersonal relationships and adult adjustment*

Perpetrators may experience difficulties in bonds grounded in reciprocity, showing coercive relational styles. In addition, some longitudinal data suggest associations with poorer psychiatric and social outcomes in adulthood, although variation exists depending on perpetrator type and context (Copeland et al., 2013).

## 3.4. The highest-risk profile: perpetrator–victim (bully-victim)

A particularly relevant category, often underestimated, is the perpetrator–victim: students who are victims in some contexts and perpetrators in others. The literature suggests that this profile often shows the poorest adjustment: a combination of internalizing and externalizing symptoms, impulsivity, emotional regulation difficulties, relational conflict, and elevated risk of later problems (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

Clinically and educationally, this profile requires complex intervention: sanction or one-directional support is insufficient; approaches must include emotional regulation, social skills, harm repair, and the building of support networks.

## 3.5. Consequences for bystanders (witnesses)

### *3.5.1. Emotional distress: fear, anxiety, guilt, and helplessness*

Bystanders are not neutral. Witnessing repeated violence can generate fear (“it could happen to me”), anticipatory anxiety, and moral distress (“I did nothing”), especially when students perceive low self-efficacy to intervene or fear retaliation (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013). This distress may translate into social avoidance, classroom tension, and perceptions of insecurity.

### *3.5.2. Desensitization and normalization of violence*

When bullying becomes frequent and there is no effective institutional response, normalization may occur: students interpret violence as a “natural” part of school life. This deteriorates the group’s moral culture and fosters collective moral disengagement, reducing the likelihood of helping the victim (Salmivalli, 2010; Bandura, 2002).

### *3.5.3. Costs to school climate and sense of belonging*

Sustained bullying affects school climate. A classroom in which students witness harassment without effective intervention may become a low-trust, low-cohesion environment. This deterioration, in turn, reduces school engagement and increases avoidance behaviors (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *3.5.4. Bystander trajectories: passivity, complicity, or defending*

Salmivalli (2010) emphasizes that bystanders may adopt diverse roles (reinforcer, assistant, defender, outsider). Repetition of a role (e.g., reinforcing the perpetrator through laughter) can consolidate attitudes and social habits that normalize violence. In contrast, defending behavior may reinforce prosocial values. Therefore, the impact on bystanders is not only emotional; it is also formative in moral and civic terms.

## 3.6. Moderators of impact: why it affects some more than others

### *3.6.1. Chronicity, intensity, and polyvictimization*

Impact severity tends to increase with chronicity (prolonged harassment), intensity (severe humiliation), and polyvictimization (multiple types of aggression). Chronic victimization is associated with more persistent effects and higher risk of traumatic symptoms (Idsoe et al., 2012; Arseneault, 2018).

### *3.6.2. Social support and adult response*

Peer social support and teacher response function as buffers. When victims perceive real support, impact may be reduced. In the absence of support, hopelessness and withdrawal increase (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *3.6.3. Age and developmental stage*

The psychological meaning of bullying changes with age: in stages where belonging and social status are central (preadolescence/adolescence), exclusion may have particularly intense effects on identity and self-esteem (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

### 3.7. Implications for prevention and intervention

The consequences described require understanding bullying as a school coexistence and school mental health problem. In terms of intervention:

- Victims: immediate protection, emotional support, restoration of networks, work on self-concept, prevention of PTSD and suicidal risk when indicated (Arseneault, 2018; van Geel et al., 2014).
- Perpetrators: socioeducational intervention, emotional regulation, empathy, harm repair, work on norms and group reinforcements; assessment of comorbidity and risk behaviors (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Bandura, 2002).
- Perpetrator–victim: comprehensive approach (emotional + behavioral + family + school), avoiding purely punitive models (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).
- Bystanders: training in intervention self-efficacy, classroom norms, explicit teacher support, a defender culture, and clear anti-bullying protocols (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Salmivalli, 2010).

In summary, bullying produces profound and multifaceted consequences affecting victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, with effects that may persist beyond the school years. Victimization is associated with emotional distress, depressive and anxious symptoms, suicidal risk, social and academic deterioration, and, in severe cases, symptoms compatible with PTSD (Arseneault, 2018; Copeland et al., 2013; Idsoe et al., 2012; van Geel et al., 2014). Bullying perpetration is linked to trajectories of antisocial behavior, adjustment problems, and moral and relational difficulties (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Bandura, 2002). Bystanders, in turn, may experience emotional distress, desensitization, and normalization of violence, affecting school climate and the group's moral development (Pozzoli & Gini, 2013; Salmivalli, 2010).

Understanding these consequences from an ecological and developmental approach implies that the educational response must be sustained, comprehensive, and coherent, oriented not only to stopping episodes but to transforming group dynamics and strengthening the school's moral and institutional climate (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

## 4. BULLYING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CYBERBULLYING

### 4.1. Conceptualization: a growing phenomenon

The development of new technologies—above all the internet—has shifted from being a resource available on networked desktop computers to something we carry with us, in our hands, at all times, integrated into our mobile phone. Global interconnection and digital mediation are the defining features of today's environment, which has changed and generated new ways of working, communicating, and relating, as well as unlimited access to information, new audiovisual or multimedia fields, and countless new possibilities—many of them remarkable and positive, and others less so, depending on how they are used.

With regard to students, they constitute a generation of digital natives who have been born immersed in a world in which everything revolves around the digital environment and artificial intelligence. This provides them with a wide variety of resources through which they can experiment, discover, explore, learn, and develop their own identity.

This online ecosystem also produces greater disinhibition, encouraging less restrained behavior. If such behavior becomes aggressive language, threats, and hate speech, and if the possibility of anonymity is added, a favorable space for cyberbullying emerges (González & Prendes, 2018).

In the educational field, there has been a steady increase in cases of school harassment in the form of cyberbullying (Rennó & Engelman, 2022), in parallel with the rise of social networks and their widespread use (Becoña & Lorenzo, 2022), and this trend has intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic (Barlett et al., 2021). When the pandemic was declared—caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for COVID-19 disease (Rial, 2020)—we experienced, to varying degrees, radical changes in how we lived and related to one another. In the case of adolescents, they were removed from the school context, the space that enabled most of their significant interactions and that is crucial for their integral development.

Never in human history had there been a global closure of in-person schools (García, 2021; Malganova et al., 2021). Social distancing and lockdowns became unforeseen and disruptive elements that rapidly accelerated the prominence and mediation of digital technologies in schools and in our lives. After the pandemic, some changes remained, and the prominence of the digital sphere has become consolidated, taking a central place in our lives.

Moreover, as Avilés (2019) argues, the study of bullying is incomplete if it is not connected to one of its most recurrent manifestations: digital harassment, or cyberbullying. In essence, the social nature of face-to-face bullying behaviors and cyberbullying makes it possible to consider both as closely related phenomena rooted in the interpersonal relationships established within the school setting (García et al., 2016).

There is no doubt that one of the most common forms of interaction and communication among young people takes place in digital media, especially through WhatsApp and social networks (primarily Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat). Although the latter are officially aimed only at those over 14 years of age, many children below that age manage to participate by falsely declaring an older age; given the limited control of these platforms, parental monitoring becomes especially important. Through these media, adolescents conduct their social lives, relate to others, and, consequently, develop. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, “Most teenagers are not addicted to social media; if they are addicted to anything, they are addicted to each other” (Boyd, 2014, p. 80). Indeed, in adolescence, relational capacity is at its peak and takes on particular intensity. Life revolves around interactions with peers and the pressing need for belonging and recognition.

It can therefore be said that the internet and the technology that enables access to it are playing a key role in people’s lives, and especially in the lives of youth and adolescents (Casas et al., 2017).

Just as bullying occurs face-to-face at school, it has continued from that setting into the digital sphere, where young people spend many hours, develop socially, and where perpetrators have found an ally to amplify their harmful actions. Thus, cyberbullying can be understood as a continuum of bullying, albeit with its own defining particularities.

Cyberbullying has been defined as a phenomenon of intimidation, maltreatment, and systematic abuse of power, repeated over time and intended to cause harm, carried out by a perpetrator against a victim who has difficulty defending themselves, and conducted through digital media and devices (Zych et al., 2015). An earlier definition, which also incorporates Olweus’s traditional bullying framework, including the power imbalance, is that of Smith et al. (2008), who conceptualize it as “an intentional aggressive act carried out by an individual or a group that is repeated over time, using electronic means of contact, against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself” (p. 376).

Mora-Merchán et al. (2010), along the same lines and emphasizing the social dimension of the problem, define cyberbullying as “an aggressive and intentional act, using electronic forms of contact, carried out by an individual or group repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself” (p. 192).

Thus, cyberbullying occurs when, repeatedly, a person receives from others—through virtual means—different types of aggression aimed at undermining their self-esteem and personal dignity and damaging their social status, causing psychological victimization, emotional stress, and social rejection (Avilés, 2012).

It therefore consists of the use of digital media to carry out aggression and, as Chaves et al. (2020) note, it is easy for the perpetrator to conceal their identity by using pseudonyms (nicknames) or fictitious names, fostering impunity, while the victim experiences ongoing defenselessness because they have no way to avoid it.

It has also been described as “psychological abuse” among peers of similar age. In this respect, the difference from bullying lies in the medium through which harassment occurs, since cyberbullying uses information and communication technologies (Molina & Vecina, 2017). This definition emphasizes that for cyberbullying to be considered as such, it must occur among peers of similar age—among minors. It should also be noted that, before harassment occurs through digital media, face-to-face acts of harassment often exist (Molina & Vecina, 2017; Garaigordobil, 2018), which supports the idea that cyberbullying is an extension or continuum of bullying.

#### 4.2. Characteristics of cyberbullying

Due to its characteristics, cyberbullying is more dangerous and can have more severe consequences than traditional bullying (Avilés, 2019; Becoña & Lorenzo, 2022; Casas et al., 2017; Garaigordobil, 2018; Ovejero, 2013).

It is typified as a harmful form of violence (online), just as traditional bullying is harmful violence (offline). Both share—albeit with nuances—certain basic elements such as repetition, intentionality, and asymmetry of power. An additional particularity is that cyberbullying can be carried out at any time and from any place, using handheld mobile devices, enabling attacks 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Sandoval et al., 2021).

These shared elements have particular nuances in cyberbullying. With respect to the perpetrator’s intentionality, it is an aspect that must be examined carefully; according to Nocentini et al. (2010), the victim’s perception becomes more relevant, since the victim may experience greater impact. In addition, cyber-perpetrators’ perception of cyber-victims’ reactions to aggression tends to be less immediate (Dooley et al., 2009).

Regarding the power imbalance in cyberbullying, a greater defenselessness stands out, since the targeted individual can do little to stop the harassment or its consequences, or to block the perpetrator's access to the victim's virtual space. Another form of power imbalance appears when the perpetrator has greater technological skills or knowledge than the victim and uses this to harass—for example, by extracting passwords or personal information (Calmaestra, 2011).

With respect to repetition, this is another element that must be nuanced in cyberbullying: a single act may be sufficient, insofar as its product remains online and can be viewed many times by a varied and multiple audience, over time, resulting in generalized and ongoing humiliation (Dooley et al., 2009).

Based on this, Smith (2013) offers the following concrete description of cyberbullying characteristics:

- A certain level of technological knowledge.
- Indirect aggression, which facilitates the perpetrator's invisibility (depersonalization), sometimes under anonymity.
- Because the perpetrator cannot directly see how the victim is affected:
  - The perpetrator may morally disengage from the targeted person.
  - The perpetrator does not obtain the immediate satisfaction that can come from seeing the victim suffer.
- A larger volume of potential spectators; greater reach.
- There is no space or possibility to hide from it (the impact on the victim is overwhelming, with a sense of total isolation).

The victim cannot escape the harassment (because they repeatedly receive messages on their phone or computer), and its duration can be unlimited, remaining active on networks even indefinitely, since humiliating messages cannot always be removed.

These characteristics can be further expanded with those indicated by Barri (2018):

- It can occur at any moment and in any place.
- The perpetrator experiences a sense of impunity and becomes disinhibited, engaging in actions they would not carry out in person.
- A single action can be repeated through technological means, causing the victim to receive the effects repeatedly.
- It is clearly intentional, since specific devices are actively used for a specific purpose.

Other particularities that differentiate cyberbullying from classic bullying are described by Casas et al. (2017):

- In cyberbullying, the behaviors of those involved are substantially modified compared to traditional bullying. Participants may have different characteristics and act very differently when shifting activity from the physical space to cyberspace.
- Victims' and perpetrators' reactions are much slower compared to face-to-face bullying.
- There are differences in the perpetration of attacks, since cyberbullying does not require physical superiority as in classic bullying, nor does it require finding a place without adult supervision.
- Bystanders have a more significant role in cyberbullying due to the diffusion possibilities that digital media provide.

In short, these main characteristics imply that consequences are particularly negative for those who experience cyberbullying; the bystander's role not only expands in terms of audience but may also intensify dissemination and collaborate in the harm caused; and, in some cases, cyber-perpetrators are difficult to identify due to the anonymity that digital media may provide.

### 4.3. Classification and typology

Cyberbullying classification is usually based on two criteria: first, the concrete form in which cyberbullying materializes, and second, how the aggression develops (Mora-Merchán et al., 2010). Following the first criterion, these authors describe seven distinct categories: text messages via mobile phones; sending photos or videos via mobile devices; offensive or silent calls received on the victim's mobile; offensive, intimidating, or threatening emails; unpleasant messages or exclusions in chat rooms; harassing, intimidating, unpleasant, or insulting communications through instant messaging programs (especially WhatsApp); and defamation and mockery using websites or social networks.

On the other hand, following the criterion of the type of action performed by the perpetrator, Willard (2006) provides one of the first classification proposals of cyberbullying, describing several main types:

- Sending offensive messages to provoke, ridicule, or send unwanted pornographic material.
- Sending threatening messages and coercion.
- Spreading defamatory rumors about the victim.
- Disseminating confidential information about the victim or degrading images to third parties.
- Tricking the victim into revealing confidential information and then spreading it to third parties.
- Deliberately excluding the victim from social networks.
- Communicating with third parties while impersonating the victim in order to embarrass them.
- Heated discussions in online chats, with insults and verbal aggression.

One of the clearest classifications is provided by Kowalski et al. (2010), who identify eight types of aggression that may occur in cyberbullying:

1. Electronic insults: mutual insults through WhatsApp groups, emails, or social networks.

2. Harassment: sustained harmful communications sent to the targeted person through the most common networks used by youth (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) or through WhatsApp messages. It differs from the previous type in that it is not as episodic as an insult and occurs over a longer period, directed at a single victim by one or multiple perpetrators.

3. Denigration: denigrating communication through falsehoods about the victim, published and disseminated on social networks or a website. It may manifest as digitally altered photos portraying the victim in sexual contexts or inducing ridicule. For example, editing a photograph to make it appear that a girl is pregnant when this is not true, with the aim of harming her.

4. Impersonation: victims' accounts may be hacked and used by the perpetrator to send very negative communications to others in order to generate distress and hostility toward the victim, as well as to publish inappropriate content about the victim (fraping).

5. Outing and trickery: publicizing confidential and personal information about the victim online that has been obtained by the perpetrator.

6. Exclusion: promoting the victim's exclusion from social activities. For example, removing the victim from a class WhatsApp group. Sometimes the victim is not only ignored but also humiliated and publicly exposed with the aim of isolating them.

7. Cyberstalking: repeatedly communicating threats and harassment toward the victim.

8. Happy slapping: recording, via mobile phone, a video of physical abuse inflicted on the victim and then giving it the widest possible dissemination through the internet.

Happy slapping differs from other modalities of cyberbullying in that it requires at least two people: one or more carry out the aggressive act, and another records it. Martínez (2017) describes the following characteristic elements:

- These are actions planned by minors/adolescents.
- The aim is physical aggression.

- As a general rule, they are carried out collectively so that the perpetrator can be recorded in video form by another peer.
- Aggressions occur in recreational areas, stops, or stations of public transport.
- It is not essential to have preselected the victim, nor for the victim to be known.
- An electronic device with a camera is used to record the aggression (mobile phone, tablet, etc.).
- The objective is always to disseminate the aggressive act through social networks.

Happy slapping may also occur outside cyberbullying per se, outside the school context, in cases that have taken place in public streets against victims who are homeless, intoxicated, and/or under the effects of toxic substances or drugs (Martínez, 2017).

In addition, two further types could be added within cyberbullying, as described by Urra (2018):

- Sexting: sending sexually explicit content between mobile devices. Some understand it as a new form of social interaction through the exchange of nude photos, photos of body parts, or sexually explicit videos (Molina & Vecina, 2017). When it occurs without the person's consent, it may provoke severe anxiety and depression in the victim, as well as suicide attempts upon seeing their sexual image circulating from phone to phone and becoming an object of mockery and humiliation (Zabay & Casado, 2018).

Therefore, these materials may be used to ridicule a person and cause humiliation and mockery through manipulation of the content. When no adult is involved and it occurs between minor peers of the same age, it can be classified as cyberbullying.

Sexting is considered cyberbullying only when it is carried out between underage peers; it is excluded from this consideration if an adult participates, since "this phenomenon should exclude events or behaviors in which adults are involved" (Arruabarrena et al., 2018, p. 28). Therefore, only harmful acts occurring between underage peers are considered cyberbullying.

Finally, although for the same reason it would fall outside cyberbullying per se and fits better under the more general term cyberharassment in which an adult participates, it is important to consider it when a minor is involved:

- Grooming: it refers to actions aimed at undermining and morally affecting a minor in order to gain emotional control over them. It is especially serious when directed against minors with the aim of obtaining some sexual favor.

In this phenomenon, the actors are not of similar age, since one is an adult, who establishes a socioemotional bond, “seduces” the minor by feigning friendship, affection, and understanding to achieve a sexual purpose (Molina & Vecina, 2017). In general, the adult carries out a series of deliberate behaviors and actions to gain the minor’s trust, often in an individualized manner, and in some cases involving multiple adults. Such situations represent extreme risk for the minor, since the adult’s objective is an in-person meeting to carry out a sexual act (Zabay & Casado, 2018).

#### 4.4. Prevalence and explanatory model

An explanatory model of the cyberbullying phenomenon is proposed by Cross et al. (2015), who start from a microsystem made up of interactions between the individual, the virtual environment, and other elements of daily life. These interactions include the virtual contexts in which adolescents spend time, the contacts they establish in that environment, how they manage privacy, the content they consume, and their own behavior.

Around this microsystem, the authors propose a multilevel model of influential factors. At the base, a first level of personal influences includes sociodemographic attributes such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, and so forth, as well as variables such as moral disengagement, approval of cyberbullying, pro-bullying attitudes, and also positive factors such as problem-solving skills and empathy.

At a higher level, a second layer corresponds to family influence, where the engagement of parents in supervising online behaviors, their knowledge of the digital space, and the relationships adolescents establish there must be taken into account.

Next comes the peer group as a level of influence, which includes social norms, school climate and expectations regarding cyberbullying, and relationships with peers who have harassed others on social networks, among other aspects.

After that, an online influence level is identified, which encompasses the increasingly frequent use of technologies and digital media, growing technological dependence, self-control, and expectations regarding virtual spaces.

Finally, the community level appears as an influence variable, including transitions between educational stages, resources, and awareness of measures addressing cyberbullying. Each of these levels is interdependent with the previous one, and they interact in shaping the adolescent's online microsystem.

It is also worth noting the integrative framework on cyberbullying proposed by Kowalski et al. (2014), which they termed the General Aggression Model (GAM). This model brings together cognitive-social theoretical approaches to specific aggressive acts and emphasizes situational and personal elements of cybervictimization and online harassment, concluding that these situational and personal variables influence affect, cognition, and arousal, thereby predisposing the individual to engage in aggressive behaviors.

Violence in digital media has become a serious, globally shared problem. Establishing a clear picture of data or quantifying it is difficult for several reasons: the lack of conceptual and methodological consensus hinders access to rigorous, shared data; additionally, variability in the adoption of new technologies among students in different contexts, together with continuous technological change, makes it difficult to obtain figures that do not quickly become obsolete.

Moreover, research on the changes and increases associated with COVID-19 and the post-pandemic period remains ongoing and will soon generate initial data and conclusions; however, as normalization consolidates, continued and future research will be necessary to obtain a more faithful picture of the changing reality of the cyberbullying phenomenon.

Nevertheless, some basic indications regarding estimated prevalence are provided below, at least to highlight the importance of the problem. In the international HBSC 2021/2022 study (44 countries and regions in Europe, Central Asia, and Canada), 15% of adolescents reported having been cyberbullied at least once or twice in recent months ( $\approx 1$  in 6), with very similar figures for boys (15%) and girls (16%) (WHO-HBSC, 2024).

At the global level, UNESCO has been synthesizing international evidence indicating that cyberbullying affects approximately 1 in 10 children/young people, also emphasizing its upward trend and the need for stronger educational policies and protection frameworks (UNESCO, 2024).

In a systematic review and meta-analysis (36 studies; publications 2019–2022), a pooled prevalence of 18% was estimated for cyberbullying victimization (and 11% for perpetration) during the COVID-19 pandemic period, providing a recent global range based on quantitative synthesis (Huang et al., 2024).

In the United States, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2023 places victimization by “electronic bullying” (past 12 months) at around 16% nationally,

with somewhat higher values in some state series (for example, 18% in Kentucky) (CDCP, 2024).

In summary, in recent years there has been growth in cyberbullying figures in most countries, possibly due to the fact that there is currently greater access to technology and, consequently, greater use of smartphones (Livingstone et al., 2016). In this regard, Garaigordobil (2018) argues that this increase occurs in part because students access new technologies (internet, mobile phones, etc.) at increasingly earlier ages; because their actions in cyberspace have growing importance as a medium for leisure and socialization; because, in the absence of face-to-face contact, they perceive less harm caused and may even experience their behavior as something playful, a kind of fictional role; because the perceived anonymity sometimes creates and increases a sense of impunity; and because of the particular features of the internet itself, which facilitate the clustering of cyberaggressors and the easy diffusion of content.

At present, the volume of research on cyberbullying remains insufficient. More studies are needed to provide precise information on the severity of the phenomenon, as well as to identify the most relevant variables for the design and implementation of prevention and intervention actions. In Mexico, for example, a good starting point would be to develop research in growing and more densely populated federal entities which, although geographically close, differ in development, laws, and opportunities; it would be of interest to determine whether they differ or share similarities in cyberbullying prevalence (Muñoz-Maldonado et al., 2021).

#### 4.5. Consequences of cyberbullying

The effects of bullying in all its forms are highly significant and are a concern for the educational community due to the consequences they entail for both victims and perpetrators (Chocarro & Garaigordobil, 2019). Those harassed through traditional bullying may develop anxiety, depression, and low academic performance. Those harassed through cyberbullying may suffer the same—or even greater—moral and psychological harm, as noted above, because humiliating content remains available to a large audience over time; perpetrators frequently shield themselves behind anonymity; the victimization pattern is explicit and continuous; it cannot be easily avoided; and removing what has been posted digitally becomes almost impossible. Adolescents are often reluctant to report to adults that they are being cyberbullied due to emotional impact, feelings of guilt, fear of possible “revenge” that may escalate the situation, or concern that their internet access or mobile phone use will be restricted or prohibited. In its most severe consequences, cyberbullying can lead to violent acts and suicidal ideation that may be carried out (Garaigordobil, 2018; Ovejero, 2013).

In essence, cyberbullying produces consequences for the victim such as the following (Kowalski et al., 2014):

- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.
- Mental health problems, especially anxiety and depression.
- Decreased self-concept and self-esteem.
- Low self-control.
- Suicidal ideation.
- Deterioration of physical health.
- Increased likelihood of self-harm.
- Loneliness.
- School dropout and academic failure.
- Long-term problems of various kinds.

However, perpetrators also experience consequences, insofar as they are recipients of negative habits and learnings that will influence their current and future behavior (Garaigordobil, 2011). It can be stated that cyberbullying has significant consequences across all roles at psychosocial, emotional, and academic levels, which Garaigordobil (2018) outlines as follows:

a) Cybervictims feel insecure, lonely, unhappy or sad, helpless, and may present anxiety, irritability, depression, phobias, suicidal ideation, fear, stress, weakened self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, disrupted emotional stability, frustration and anger, sleep problems, concentration deficits that may lead to academic failure, increased likelihood of substance use (primarily alcohol and drugs), poor social adjustment, social aversion, and, in short, a wide range of extrinsic and intrinsic consequences.

b) Cyberperpetrators show underdeveloped moral development, lack of empathy, insufficiently developed emotional stability, difficulties accepting rules and norms, delinquent behaviors, problems resulting from aggressive conduct, dependence on technological media, educational dropout, increased likelihood of substance use (drugs and alcohol), emotional loneliness, a marked lack of optimism, and low levels of happiness.

c) Additionally, both cybervictims and cyberperpetrators occupy a risk space for developing problems that may continue into adulthood. Overall, studies show that cyberbullying has consequences similar to those of traditional bullying both when it

occurs and later, over the medium and long term; indeed, they indicate that in the long run the effects may be even more negative (Kowalski et al., 2010).

Finally, bystanders also experience consequences when witnessing and living through aggression toward another person; this may affect them psychosocially and can even lead to insensitivity. All those involved in aggressive acts, in any role, are to a greater or lesser extent at increased risk of psychosocial imbalance and psychopathological disorders in adolescence and adulthood compared to those not involved (Garaigordobil, 2011).

When someone bullies another person, the bystander experiences a problem of guilt and moral dissonance, because they are forced either to approve or to ignore the behavior—aggression that involves the observer not as the actor but as the one who consents, becoming part of the “law of silence” (Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). Bystanders find it easier to collaborate in aggression and promote the perpetrator’s goals than to intervene and defend the victim (Van Cleemput et al., 2014), since, as Avilés (2013) notes, they feel less called to intervene because the sense of invisibility and anonymity fosters inhibition. However, it is not beneficial for bystanders to ignore these problems as if they were unrelated to them, because it may produce learning that strips away distinctions between what is right and wrong, leading to sociomoral imbalance that harms their integral development and adult life.

#### 4.6. Specific intervention

Continuous change and growing social conflict, the impact and rise of suicides, and their effects on personal and relational attitudes have highlighted the need to place cyberbullying on the educational agenda (Dominguez et al., 2017).

We all wish there were no cases of cyberbullying. Nor would we want any type of war or violence in our societies or in our schools. We all desire schools without violence, peaceful coexistence in our societies, and a better world. Reality does not always fulfill that desire, but we must strive to achieve it or do what is possible to improve it; with respect to cyberbullying, we can prevent and intervene to avoid it, or confront it when it appears, and create foundations for positive coexistence.

It should also be noted that experience has shown the importance of considering, within the teaching–learning process, the affective-social relationships developed by students and the relationships constructed among all members of the educational community, in order to promote a positive climate of coexistence.

#### *4.6.1. Foundations of prevention and intervention*

Addressing cyberbullying is a difficult task and requires joint effort among peers, families, the school, and the social context—that is, the entire microsystem and the agents of influence referred to by Cross et al. (2015) in their explanatory model. This need for unity does not always materialize, because in some cases certain parties are not willing to collaborate as required and may even hinder the search for solutions (Avilés et al., 2011).

However, actions must be designed and implemented to prevent and combat this serious problem. As Garaigordobil (2018) indicates, an intervention proposal in cyberbullying should include:

- a) Primary prevention/intervention: general actions aimed at improving cyber-coexistence, preventing conflict, and preventing the phenomenon from emerging.
- b) Secondary intervention: when early aggressive acts are detected, to prevent consolidation through a specific program with individual and group interventions.
- c) Tertiary intervention: when acts are consolidated, to minimize harm to those involved, provide therapeutic support and protection to victims, and offer therapeutic support and control to perpetrators.

In addition, with regard to prevention and intervention processes, Ortega-Ruiz and Córdoba (2017) propose several levels of action:

- a) Awareness-raising and information about cyberbullying practices.
- b) The creation of “cyber-helper” and “cyber-mediator” figures—students who help manage conflicts on social networks and other digital channels, as well as detect potential cases of cyberbullying.
- c) Psychological support to the victim through protocols and strategies that foster digital competence, and support to the perpetrator to change behavior.

Ortega-Ruiz and Córdoba (2017) also propose the Model for Building Coexistence (MCC), in which they incorporate cyberconduct as a new vital space in students’ interpersonal relationships, which must be recognized and assumed by teachers and families. They include various ideas to contribute to students’ learning and growth in responsible digital competence, encompassing issues such as cyberbullying, and also incorporating resources for teachers to work on the promotion of values such as empathy and respect.

To achieve the intended goals, it is essential to implement a process for developing school coexistence. The MCC presents the following lines:

- a) Select a desirable coexistence framework.
- b) Identify weaknesses and strengths of the school regarding coexistence in order to intervene using the resources provided.
- c) Create a coexistence plan taking the selected framework into account.
- d) Raise awareness in the educational community, encouraging participation in the coexistence plan among all members.
- e) Allocate work and time to achieve desired results.
- f) Take into account levels of prevention and intervention.
- g) Develop a school climate that fosters a culture of coexistence by promoting participation of the entire school community.
- h) Support monitoring by the faculty of weak and strong coexistence variables and observe how they evolve.
- i) Promote teacher training to implement the necessary processes.
- j) Use the resources and means offered by educational authorities and disseminate the coexistence plan so that it may serve as an example and motivate other schools.

Next, it is worth highlighting what Becoña and Lorenzo (2022) propose regarding what can be done in school through a realistic approach to cyberbullying—also applicable to bullying—to detect and address this phenomenon:

1. Inform all students about the problem so that they know it, can detect it, and know what to do if they encounter it.
2. Detect possible cases that may exist; hence the relevance of identifying external signs that may lead us to think that someone is suffering it.
3. If cyberbullying exists and its intensity is low, it should be addressed as soon as possible so that it does not escalate.

4. Prevent its spread. The agents involved are the perpetrator, the victim, and the bystanders. If the previous steps are implemented adequately, it will be more difficult for the behavior to continue, especially if bystanders' awareness is increased, including those who tacitly consent to cyberbullying.
5. Intervene in cases where we know there is a situation of cyberbullying. Here it is necessary to act both on the victim and on the cyberperpetrator.
6. Pay special attention to people who have suffered cyberbullying. They require specific support to overcome the problem, prevent recurrence, and avoid lasting effects.
7. Have a whole-school plan that prevents, as far as possible, cyberbullying situations among students.
8. Understand the factors that facilitate cyberbullying, as well as those that protect against it. This makes it possible, on the one hand, to prevent it and, on the other, to promote prosocial and respectful attitudes toward others.
9. Maintain fluid contact among all members of the school community, including teachers, administrators, as well as families and students.
10. If possible, implement a specific cyberbullying prevention program across the entire school, involving teachers, all school staff, students, and family members.
11. Refer those affected by cyberbullying to other mental health or social resources when necessary (e.g., social services, mental health centers, justice system, etc.).
12. Ensure that the school as a whole has the objective of becoming a quality school, oriented both toward acquiring useful knowledge for future professional life and for life itself, as well as for the complex and changing world that students must face.

#### *4.6.2. Educating within social networks*

It is important to emphasize that we must educate rather than prohibit. We need to understand that social networks and the internet are powerful tools that contribute greatly, and we can work within them to foster responsible use and avoid the risks they may generate.

Educating within social networks to promote healthy, responsible, and safe use is an educational task that should be a priority, given its first-order preventive power against cyberbullying.

However, in our schools there is a lack of systematic planning within student coexistence frameworks regarding the concrete use of the internet, digital media, and social networks. The field of action concerning education for social networks is practically deserted, and there are few specific programs developed and implemented in this area.

One of the specialized and comprehensive programs available, developed by Avilés (2018), is the preventive program PRIRES (Prevention of Risks in Social Networks), designed to be applied in schools and aimed at working with students who begin and build their interpersonal relationships on social networks through mobile devices.

The program is implemented by teachers, although it also includes the participation of students (cyber-mentors) and families to collaborate in some sessions or activities (Avilés, 2014).

Among the program's lines of action, Avilés (2014) establishes the following:

- Preventive nature of the intervention: the program aims to anticipate risk situations students may face in managing their interpersonal relationships on social networks.
- Moral criterion: moral education, from a formative perspective focused on autonomous decision-making, is the ultimate aim of the program, beyond the specific situations or cases addressed.
- Cumulative and formative effect: the formative itinerary students follow through the program is reinforced by interventions of all educational agents (teachers and families) in the same direction (educational loyalty), supported by training on the processes students must face.
- Accompaniment and supervision: these are tasks of educational commitment by teachers and families during students' initiation and presence in managing relationships on social networks.
- Digital education: the program seeks to provide opportunities to enrich students' digital growth (digital image, social identity, healthy practices, virtual codes, virtual communication, etc.) through values education.

- Work contents: a psychoeducational approach addressing a catalog of relevant topics underlying risk situations on social networks and cyberbullying.

One of the program's objectives is the development of empathy. Lack of empathy is considered a key variable to explain both bullying and cyberbullying. Empathy is understood as the ability to experience and understand others' emotions (Becoña & Lorenzo, 2022). The PRIRES program considers work on empathy to be essential, referring to it as virtual empathy, which, according to Avilés (2014), must be developed by placing students in emotional perspective, helping them work from concrete situations and recognize emotional cues online, using emotional codes by activating elements of virtual communication, and managing emotions virtually (voice, emoticons, etc.).

In short, a synopsis of the PRIRES program, as presented by Avilés (2018), shows it to be an intervention proposal in educational settings that addresses the behavioral, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional processes that guide adolescents' decisions when, for example, they upload a photo or video to their social network or send a mobile message when communicating with classmates and/or friends.

It is a systematic program that proposes 57 sessions with very specific tasks or activities, aimed at strengthening the positive contributions of social networks and the internet, developing healthy relationships, and learning ways to make sound decisions.

What it offers is not technical training, but rather preventive education, which seeks to:

- Protect content affecting privacy.
- Promote care of digital identity.
- Provide guidelines and codes for communicative practice.
- Manage empathy and virtual emotions.
- Apply consequential thinking in online contexts.
- Strengthen resilience through self-regulation.
- Use constructive responses in online environments.

Finally, to conclude these lines of action, Ojeda and Del Rey (2019) argue that responses to cyberbullying share key elements in prevention and intervention, such as the importance of teacher involvement and the need to promote reflection, critical thinking, and active student participation. Nevertheless, it is currently an emerging field of study requiring further theoretical and applied research. There is a recognized

need to continue deepening the development and evaluation of general prevention and intervention programs for cyberbullying, and especially prevention programs aimed at youth at risk of participating in cyberbullying, as well as indicated interventions that demonstrate appropriateness and effectiveness. Therefore, it remains important to continue working in this area in order to advance knowledge and responses to cyberbullying, with the aim of building a society that is aware and prepared to address this problem effectively through the development of desirable coexistence and cyber-coexistence.

## 5. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON BULLYING

The first studies related to bullying among peers are relatively recent when compared with other areas that have traditionally been central to Educational Psychology (Ortega-Ruiz, 2015).

The observations of the Swedish psychiatrist Peter Paul Heinemann are commonly regarded as the starting point of broader social and educational interest in school bullying. In an article, Heinemann (1969) described this reality, which he called *mobbing* (group persecution), and placed particular emphasis on how irrational it was that acts of maltreatment—such as those he had witnessed—could be silenced or go completely unnoticed by the surrounding social environment. In another of his works, Heinemann (1972) recounts an experience: while walking through his city near a school during recess, he noticed a group of pupils in the playground. One of them was being chased by the others; during the chase, the child lost a shoe, which was left behind on a patch of dirt. Heinemann later picked it up, and this episode evoked his own school experiences, in which there was a customary tolerance of mistreatment—something he also experienced firsthand.

Heinemann's pioneering work sparked considerable interest and a subsequent increase in studies on the topic, aimed at describing the nature of the problem in Scandinavian educational settings and developing ways to address it (Ortega-Ruiz & Mora-Merchán, 2015). These early studies indeed showed that there was a reality in schools in which some students harassed their peers and the latter felt—and were—victims of such harassment.

Systematic research on the topic therefore did not begin until the early 1970s in Sweden and Norway. From the latter country emerged Dan Olweus, a psychologist and professor, who was the first researcher to investigate bullying and initiated the first empirical and systematic research program (he defined the phenomenon, studied its incidence, and created an intervention program—discussed later). Because it was a longitudinal line of inquiry, it continues to this day with successful continuity.

Studies conducted by Olweus in Scandinavia:

Cross-sectional studies:

- Nationwide study in Norway, 1983.
- Large-scale study in Sweden, 1983–1984.

Longitudinal studies:

- Intensive study in Bergen, 1983–1985.
- Study in Greater Stockholm, from 1970 to the present.

Building on these pioneering studies in bullying as an organizing framework, we now turn to more recent research in different countries and contexts. Although it is obviously not possible to address all countries worldwide, we select several key countries from different settings, offering a meaningful perspective on the shared relevance of bullying and the need to address it.

### 5.1. Recent studies in the United States

In the United States, bullying is considered a priority public health and school climate issue, supported by systematic surveillance and ongoing production of empirical evidence. Unlike other contexts where the phenomenon is included more diffusely under “school violence,” in the U.S. there is a marked tendency to define, measure, and monitor bullying using relatively standardized criteria, supported by federal agencies and national survey systems (Irwin et al., 2024).

At the definitional level, the widely accepted approach in institutional settings emphasizes three elements: unwanted aggressive behavior, a real or perceived power imbalance, and repetition (or a high likelihood of repetition). This framework is used to differentiate bullying from other conflicts or one-off aggressive incidents and guides much of the prevention, identification, and intervention strategies (StopBullying.gov, 2024).

#### *5.1.1. Main recent sources for the study of bullying in the U.S.*

a) Epidemiological surveillance in adolescents: Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), coordinated by the CDCP, is one of the most widely used sources for estimating the prevalence of bullying among upper secondary students (high school). The most recent edition available with broad national dissemination (YRBS 2023) includes specific indicators of bullying on school property and electronic bullying, alongside mental health and school safety variables, which facilitates the analysis of correlations and risk profiles (CDCP, 2024).

In updates to these results, the CDCP has noted a recent increase in the proportion of students reporting being bullied at school when comparing 2021 with 2023 (CDCP, 2024).

b) Educational indicators and school victimization: NCES and the School Crime Supplement (SCS)

Another central source comes from the National Center for Education Statistics. The NCES uses, among other inputs, the School Crime Supplement (SCS) of the National Crime Victimization Survey, which collects self-reports from students aged 12 to 18. This source makes it possible to estimate prevalence during the school year, types of bullying, the settings where it occurs (classroom, hallways, internet/text, etc.), and perceived negative effects (NCES, 2024). In addition, these results are incorporated into reference reports such as *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, jointly produced by NCES and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which synthesize national trends and indicators linked to school safety (Irwin et al., 2024).

c) Social and digital evidence: surveys on cyberbullying and online experiences

In the digital domain, population-based surveys such as those conducted by Pew Research Center have provided evidence on adolescents' experiences of cyberbullying and its most common forms (e.g., insults, rumors, receipt of unsolicited explicit images). Although these surveys are not exactly equivalent to the school-based indicators used in YRBS or SCS, they are useful for understanding the broader "ecosystem" of harassment in adolescents' digital lives (Vogels, 2022).

### *5.1.2. Bullying prevalence: recent estimates and how to interpret them*

National systems report figures that, although they vary by instrument, converge in showing that bullying continues to affect a substantial proportion of students. For example, within the NCES framework, approximately 19% of students aged 12–18 reported being bullied "at school" during the 2021–2022 school year (NCES, 2024). This estimate is particularly useful because it enables longitudinal comparisons and subgroup analyses and because it specifies settings and perceived effects associated with victimization.

In YRBS 2023, the CDC reported a recent increase in the proportion of students who indicated being bullied at school when comparing 2021 to 2023, placing the indicator within the typical order of magnitude observed in other national measurements (CDCP, 2024).

Key methodological consideration: differences between estimates often depend on (a) age and school stage (12–18 vs. high school only), (b) the time window (“during the school year” vs. “past 12 months”), and (c) item wording (e.g., “bullying on school property” vs. “at school,” including travel to/from school or digital settings) (CDCP, 2024; NCES, 2024).

Electronic bullying is conceptualized in the U.S. as an extension or specific modality of bullying: channels change, but similar social mechanisms often persist (status dynamics, public humiliation, exclusion). Federal and educational instruments include it systematically as a differentiated variable, allowing examination of co-occurrence with bullying at school (CDCP, 2024).

Within the NCES framework, among students who reported being bullied during 2021–2022, around 22% indicated that the bullying occurred online or via text (NCES, 2024). This finding is relevant because it suggests that, even when victimization is reported within a school-related frame, a meaningful portion shifts to—or is amplified through—digital channels.

Complementarily, in a Pew Research Center survey, 46% of adolescents aged 13–17 reported having experienced at least one of several cyberbullying behaviors at some point in their lives (“ever”), with online or phone name-calling being the most common (Vogels, 2022). Although this figure is not strictly comparable to annual school-based indicators, it reinforces the idea that exposure to hostile dynamics in digital spaces is highly common in adolescence.

### *5.1.3. Typologies and settings: how bullying manifests in recent evidence*

U.S. evidence typically distinguishes clearly between physical, verbal, relational bullying (exclusion, rumor-spreading, humiliation), and cyberbullying. This typological approach is important because risk profiles, adult detectability, and associated harms may differ by modality, and because certain forms—especially relational and digital—may go unnoticed by teachers if adequate detection and reporting systems are not implemented (StopBullying.gov, 2024).

In NCES data, beyond prevalence estimates, attention is paid to locations where bullying occurs. In 2021–2022, among students reporting being bullied, the most frequently cited locations included spaces within the school (e.g., classroom, hallways) and, in a smaller but still meaningful proportion, online or via text (NCES, 2024). This distribution is consistent with socioecological models that understand bullying as a dynamic “anchored” in the school peer network but expressed across multiple spaces.

#### *5.1.4. Associated factors and groups with greater vulnerability*

Research and surveillance in the U.S. frequently integrate mental health and school safety variables when studying bullying. In YRBS 2023, victimization indicators (school bullying and electronic bullying) appear alongside measures of persistent sadness, suicidal ideation, and other experiences of violence, facilitating analyses of the relationship between victimization and distress (CDCP, 2024; Young et al., 2024).

Moreover, studies published using YRBS 2023 data have shown associations between frequent social media use and a higher likelihood of reporting school bullying and electronic bullying, as well as higher likelihood of emotional distress indicators. However, these associations do not imply direct causality and require cautious interpretation (Young et al., 2024).

Available surveys often reveal differences by sex/gender and age depending on the modality of victimization. For example, Pew Research Center results show relevant differences in cyberbullying experiences by age and gender, highlighting subgroups with greater exposure to certain behaviors (Vogels, 2022). In the school context, NCES also examines variation across demographic and school subgroups, with patterns often indicating differences by grade level and contextual characteristics (NCES, 2024).

#### *5.1.5. Institutional responses, prevention, and evidence-based intervention*

In the United States, bullying prevention is supported by multilevel strategies combining school policies, promotion of classroom climate, social-emotional learning, reporting and response protocols, and coordination with families and the community. The institutional perspective emphasizes that distinguishing bullying from one-off conflicts enables more precise intervention (e.g., when there is power imbalance and repetition, sustained protective measures are required) (StopBullying.gov, 2024).

Data systems (YRBS, SCS/NCES) serve a strategic function in this context: they allow identification of trends, targeting of interventions toward more vulnerable subgroups or contexts, and evaluation of whether implemented measures are accompanied by improvements in school climate and safety (CDCP, 2024; Irwin et al., 2024).

### 5.1.6. Common limitations of recent evidence and future directions

Despite the robustness of the surveillance system, several limitations should be noted:

1. Reliance on self-report: many estimates derive from self-reports, with potential biases due to memory, social desirability, or differences in how the term “bullying” is interpreted (NCES, 2024).

2. Comparability across surveys: YRBS, SCS, and social surveys (e.g., Pew) differ in operational definitions, age ranges, time windows, and context, which makes it necessary to avoid direct comparisons of percentages as if they were equivalent (CDCP, 2024; Vogels, 2022).

3. Need for longitudinal and multi-source designs: to understand trajectories (chronic victimization, persistent perpetration, mixed profiles) and causal mechanisms (e.g., how school climate or the digital environment contributes to escalation), more longitudinal studies and triangulation of sources (teacher, peer, family reports, and school records) are needed beyond cross-sectional surveys.

## 5.2. Recent Studies on Bullying in Morocco

In the Moroccan educational context, bullying (*harcèlement scolaire*) has been addressed mainly within the broader framework of *violence en milieu scolaire* (school violence), which has enabled the phenomenon to be examined from a systemic and ecological perspective. Although for many years research specifically focused on peer bullying was limited, the last decade has seen a notable increase in empirical studies, national diagnostics, and institutional reports that have contributed to making the magnitude, characteristics, and consequences of bullying more visible in Moroccan schools (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

From a conceptual standpoint, Moroccan studies often use the term *harcèlement scolaire* to refer to repeated victimization, humiliation, social exclusion, and verbal or psychological aggression, broadly consistent with international definitions proposed by Olweus (1993) and later revisions (e.g., Smith et al., 2019). However, some publications show conceptual heterogeneity, as the criteria of repetition and power imbalance are not always explicitly operationalized; this requires cautious interpretation of prevalence estimates.

### 5.2.1. Main Recent Sources on Bullying in Morocco

#### a) National reports on school violence and bullying

One of the most influential documents is the thematic report *La violence en milieu scolaire*, produced by the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research (*Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique*, CSEFRS) in collaboration with UNICEF, based on Morocco's National Survey on School Violence (INE, 2021). This report constitutes a major source of nationally representative data and provides detailed information on prevalence, forms of violence, perpetrators, school settings, and student perceptions across both primary and secondary education (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

Importantly, the report differentiates multiple forms of school violence—including verbal aggression, relational violence, sexual harassment, physical violence, and cyber-violence—allowing identification of patterns that clearly overlap with the bullying construct described in international research.

#### b) Empirical studies on cyberbullying

Alongside national reports, research focused on cyberbullying has increased, particularly in urban areas. A relevant example is Belahcen et al. (2020), conducted with secondary students in the Rabat region, which examines cyberbullying prevalence and its association with traditional bullying using quantitative designs and multivariate modelling.

This line of work is especially valuable for understanding bullying beyond the physical boundaries of the school and for examining how risk factors span personal, family, and technological domains.

#### c) School health and adolescent well-being surveys

Complementary evidence comes from health and well-being surveys promoted by the World Health Organization, such as the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS). While these surveys do not always measure bullying with a full operational definition, they provide relevant indicators of psychological well-being, peer relationships, loneliness, suicidal ideation, and risk behaviors—variables strongly linked to victimization experiences in the broader literature (WHO, 2023).

### *5.2.2. Prevalence of Bullying in Morocco*

According to the national report, 15.2% of primary school students report having experienced bullying at school, and 2.8% report frequent bullying. The most commonly reported behaviors include insults, derogatory nicknames, repeated teasing, and social exclusion—patterns consistent with verbal and relational bullying in the international literature (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

A particularly salient finding is that among students who report bullying, approximately 34% identify elements with a sexual component, suggesting early patterns of sexualized harassment, humiliation, and power abuse.

In secondary education, reported bullying increases substantially: 29.7% of students report having experienced bullying, and 6.3% report frequent bullying. This rise may reflect multiple factors, including the increased complexity of peer relationships, consolidation of informal status hierarchies, and greater exposure to less supervised spaces in and around school (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

At this stage, experiences of public humiliation, ridicule, exclusion, and sexual harassment—particularly targeting girls—appear to intensify, aligning with international findings across diverse sociocultural settings (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

### *5.2.3. Cyberbullying and Its Relationship with Traditional Bullying*

Cyberbullying represents a growing manifestation of peer harassment in Morocco. National data already identify experiences in primary education such as offensive messages, exclusion from digital groups, and the dissemination of humiliating content via mobile phones or the internet (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

Belahcen et al. (2020) report that more than half of secondary students had been involved in cyberbullying as victims, perpetrators, or mixed profiles. One of the strongest risk factors is prior involvement in traditional bullying, supporting a continuity hypothesis whereby offline bullying and online harassment co-occur and reinforce one another.

The study also identifies greater time spent online and parental conflict as correlates, reinforcing the relevance of an ecological approach that integrates school and family contexts.

#### *5.2.4. Perpetrators and Relational Dynamics*

A notable contribution of Moroccan evidence is its description of perpetrators. In secondary education, students primarily identify other students—especially groups of boys—as responsible for bullying, including sexual harassment (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

To a lesser extent, students report perpetrators external to the school and, in a small proportion of cases, members of school staff. In primary education, similar patterns emerge with gender-related differences, suggesting that gender norms shape bullying dynamics from early ages.

#### *5.2.5. Psychosocial Consequences and Student Well-Being*

While much of the Moroccan literature prioritizes prevalence, available data support inferences regarding psychosocial consequences. School health surveys indicate that a meaningful proportion of adolescents report loneliness, lack of close friends, and psychological distress—outcomes widely associated with victimization in international research (WHO, 2023).

Consistent with global evidence, bullying is associated with heightened risk of anxiety, depressive symptoms, lower academic self-concept, and school adjustment difficulties, underscoring the need for prevention and early intervention strategies in Morocco.

#### *5.2.6. Institutional Responses and Recent Lines of Action*

In recent years Morocco has shown increasing institutional commitment to addressing bullying and cyberbullying through awareness campaigns, training programs, and coordinated actions involving educational and social agencies. These initiatives emphasize prevention, early detection, and the promotion of a safe and respectful school climate (UNICEF & CSEFRS, 2022).

However, institutional reports also highlight the need to strengthen monitoring mechanisms, improve teacher training, and develop clear response protocols for bullying cases.

From a gender perspective, it is also important to highlight the contribution of several Moroccan women scholars and activists whose work has addressed structural inequalities, gender-based violence, and educational contexts, offering valuable insights for understanding school bullying:

Aïcha Belarbi, a sociologist and diplomat, has examined the situation of girls in Morocco, with particular attention to education, gender equality, and social exclusion processes.

Malika Benradi, a legal scholar and professor of law, has focused on gender and development, analyzing social and legal dynamics that may influence phenomena such as school bullying and harassment.

Saadia Wadah, a lawyer and activist, has devoted her work to combating violence against women, including forms of violence occurring in educational settings.

#### *5.2.7. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite progress, bullying research in Morocco faces limitations, including conceptual heterogeneity, a scarcity of longitudinal studies, and a concentration of empirical work in certain urban regions. These factors constrain international comparability and limit understanding of developmental trajectories.

Future priorities include developing longitudinal designs, standardizing assessment instruments, and deepening analysis of cultural, family, and community variables shaping bullying dynamics in Moroccan schools.

### 5.3. Recent Studies on Bullying in Mexico

In Mexico, bullying remains a major public health and school coexistence challenge due to its frequency, its repeated nature, and the cumulative harm it can produce in psychological well-being, academic performance, and school persistence. Recent evidence suggests that the phenomenon is best understood as a continuum ranging from normalized “everyday” aggressions (insults, teasing, offensive nicknames, rumor spreading) to more severe forms (threats, physical violence, systematic exclusion, and sustained harassment), with an increasingly relevant digital component, especially during adolescence. This perspective is consistent with international calls to strengthen protection and prevention frameworks against school violence and harassment, including cyber harassment (UNESCO, 2024).

Two factors have intensified attention to bullying measurement and correlates in Mexico: (a) the availability of periodic national sources (e.g., ENADIS; INEGI–MOCIBA), and (b) the growth of school-based studies—particularly large-scale exercises in secondary education—documenting patterns, vulnerable groups, and psychosocial variables linked to school climate.

### 5.3.1. Recent Data Sources and What They Contribute

a) ENADIS 2022: population-based approximation to school harassment experiences

Mexico's National Survey on Discrimination (*Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación*, ENADIS 2022) provides a useful framework for examining how school harassment is embedded in a broader set of violence and discrimination experiences affecting adolescents and youth, and it offers robust methodological features (national coverage, probabilistic sampling, face-to-face interviewing) (INEGI, 2023).

Based on ENADIS 2022, it has been disseminated that among enrolled adolescents aged 12–17, a meaningful proportion report experiencing school harassment in the previous 12 months, with prominent manifestations including teasing/offensive nicknames, coercion, threats, and physical aggression (UNAM, 2024; INEGI, 2023).

Critical note: ENADIS is not designed as a strict bullying survey (i.e., it does not always operationalize repetition and power imbalance, nor does it consistently assign roles), but it does provide valuable magnitude estimates and descriptive patterns in adolescent self-reports that can inform policy priorities.

b) MEJOREDU and secondary education measurement (2022–2024; dissemination in 2024)

One of the most notable recent contributions is the dissemination of findings from a secondary-school survey reported by MEJOREDU and summarized in national media. This effort included 495 schools, 64,173 students, and staff and leadership across all Mexican states, making it one of the largest school-based approaches publicly discussed in recent years (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024).

Disseminated results emphasize that:

- In secondary education, a substantial proportion report occasional or frequent harassment.
- Among those reporting frequent harassment, verbal aggression (insults and teasing) is predominant, alongside rumors, offensive nicknames, physical aggression (hitting/pushing), and social exclusion/isolation (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024).

- Groups described as more exposed include non-heterosexual adolescents, students with disabilities, those with lower economic status, speakers of Indigenous languages, and girls (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024).

Critical note: This line of evidence is valuable because it describes not only how often bullying occurs but also *what it looks like in schools*, and it incorporates psychosocial variables (e.g., school climate, tolerance of violence, moral disengagement) that help explain persistence and guide intervention design.

#### c) INEGI–MOCIBA (2023–2024): cyber harassment as an extension of harm

Although cyber harassment (*ciberacoso*) is not synonymous with bullying (it can occur outside school contexts), it overlaps with adolescent school life and often amplifies victimization. INEGI’s Module on Cyber Harassment (*Módulo sobre Ciberacoso*, MOCIBA) indicates that roughly one-fifth of internet users aged 12 and older reported experiencing at least one cyber harassment situation in the past year, with slightly higher prevalence among females (INEGI, 2024, 2025).

Beyond prevalence, MOCIBA provides prevention-relevant information:

- Frequent modalities (e.g., contact through fake identities; offensive messages).
- Common channels (notably WhatsApp and Facebook).
- Self-reported emotional impact (anger, distrust, insecurity; and higher fear reporting among females) (INEGI, 2025).

Critical note: These findings support the need for school programs to include digital literacy, reporting pathways, and socioemotional skills specific to online environments—rather than framing cyber harassment as merely “social media issues.”

#### d) PISA 2022 and local reports: a useful comparative reference

Some local reports and human rights organizations have used PISA 2022 data for Mexico to highlight that a proportion of 15-year-old students report being bullied at least a few times per month, with variation by sex (CDHCM, 2024).

Critical note: PISA provides international comparability, but its operational definition, context, and measurement constraints require caution when extrapolating

to the entire Mexican education system; it is nonetheless useful as a benchmark for cross-country discussion.

### *5.3.2. Consistent Findings in Recent Mexican Evidence*

Recent sources converge on the predominance of:

- Verbal bullying: insults, teasing, offensive nicknames.
- Relational bullying: false rumors, social exclusion, isolation (“stopping talking,” “not relating”).
- Physical bullying: pushing/hitting or threats (less frequent but clinically relevant) (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024; UNAM, 2024).

This ordering matters because relational bullying is often less visible, easily normalized, and sustained by group dynamics (status, belonging, fear of becoming the next target), increasing the risk of chronicity.

In secondary education, recent reports emphasize higher exposure among:

- non-heterosexual students,
- students with disabilities,
- those facing economic disadvantage,
- speakers of Indigenous languages,
- and, across several indicators, girls (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024).

This aligns with an “intersectional risk” perspective: bullying concentrates where stigma, prejudice, and power asymmetries are most salient.

MOCIBA findings, showing stable prevalence around one-fifth among internet users and consistent emotional impacts, imply three key challenges for schools:

1. harassment continues beyond school hours;
2. the audience expands (virality, screenshots, public humiliation);

3. the “shutdown” of harm becomes more difficult due to the digital footprint and re-victimization (INEGI, 2024, 2025).

### *5.3.3. Methodological Contributions: How Bullying Is Being Studied in Mexico*

a) Population surveys vs. school-based studies

Mexico currently relies on two complementary strategies:

- National surveys (ENADIS, MOCIBA) providing magnitude and broad characteristics with representativeness and periodicity.
- School-based studies (including large secondary datasets) offering more detail on concrete forms, roles, and psychosocial context variables (e.g., climate, norms, tolerance of violence), which are actionable for intervention design (INEGI, 2025).

b) Meta-analyses as a baseline reference

A frequently cited reference for interpreting prevalence and highlighting methodological needs (definitions, time windows, instruments) is Vega-Cauich (2019), addressing bullying and cyberbullying in Mexican samples.

Critical note: Recent research is strengthened when it (a) makes its operational definition explicit (repetition, intent, power imbalance), (b) differentiates roles (victim, perpetrator, bystander, bully-victim), and (c) specifies the reference period (past 3 months, 12 months, lifetime).

### *5.3.4. Implications for Prevention and Intervention in Mexico*

Recent evidence suggests that effective prevention cannot rely on isolated “talks” or one-off campaigns. It must address:

- classroom group norms (no tolerance for humiliation; reinforcement of prosocial behavior),
- school climate and consistent response systems (supervision, reporting pathways),
- socioemotional competencies (empathy, self-regulation, conflict resolution),

- and digital components (privacy, safety, reporting, media literacy) consistent with MOCIBA patterns (INEGI, 2025).

Given that higher exposure concentrates in identity-, disability-, and inequality-related variables, interventions should incorporate an explicit non-discrimination and protection approach, avoiding responses that re-victimize (e.g., “ignore it,” “that’s how kids are”). International agendas likewise stress strengthening protections against verbal, physical, and psychological violence at school (UNESCO, 2024).

### 5.3.5. *Emerging Research Lines and Remaining Needs*

1. Better integration of offline and digital bullying: examining mixed trajectories (who initiates at school and migrates online; who suffers both).
2. Group-centered explanatory models: peer pressure, status, moral disengagement, and normalization of violence (variables already examined in secondary contexts) (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2024).
3. Program evaluation: expanding quasi-experimental/experimental studies with follow-up, measuring not only prevalence but also climate, well-being, and school persistence.
4. Underreporting: improving reporting and protection mechanisms, especially for relational and “invisible” bullying.

## 5.4. Recent Studies on Bullying in France

In France, bullying—commonly referred to as *harcèlement scolaire*—is recognized as a structural educational and public health problem, with strong institutional, normative, and scientific support. In recent years, the phenomenon has gained high social and political visibility, accompanied by sustained efforts to define it precisely, measure it systematically, and develop evidence-informed prevention and intervention strategies (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale, 2023).

The French conceptual framework aligns with the international definition of bullying, highlighting three core elements: repetition of aggressive behavior, power imbalance between perpetrator and victim, and intent to harm. France also places strong emphasis on verbal, relational, psychological, and digital forms of bullying,

which are typically more frequent and less visible than direct physical aggression (Debarbieux, 2016).

#### 5.4.1. Main Sources of Evidence on School Bullying in France

##### a) National surveys on school climate and victimization

The most important source of empirical data in France comes from the *enquêtes nationales de climat scolaire et de victimation* (national surveys on school climate and victimization), conducted by the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale* in collaboration with research bodies. These surveys are carried out periodically in primary school, *collège* (lower secondary education), and *lycée* (upper secondary education), and they provide prevalence estimates, typologies, and contextual information on bullying (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

They are notable for large samples, a trend-oriented perspective, and relatively standardized indicators, making them a reference point for monitoring change over time in France.

##### b) Contributions from French academic research

French scholarship has made significant contributions to the conceptualization and understanding of *harcèlement scolaire*. Authors such as Debarbieux (2016) and Blaya (2019) emphasize moving beyond reductionist interpretations of bullying as a simple “peer conflict,” highlighting instead its group-based, relational, and structural nature.

Recent work also frames bullying within a psychosocial model that incorporates school climate, implicit group norms, sense of belonging, stigmatization, and normalization of everyday violence (Blaya & Gatti, 2022).

#### 5.4.2. Prevalence of Bullying in the French Educational System

National data suggest that in primary education approximately one in ten pupils report being repeatedly bullied. The most common behaviors include insults, teasing, offensive nicknames, and social exclusion, indicating the predominance of verbal and relational bullying at this stage (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

Although physical aggression occurs at lower rates, its presence remains prevention-relevant, as it often co-occurs with other forms of psychological victimization.

In *collège*, bullying prevalence increases, with estimates indicating that around 6–7% of students experience severe bullying, while a larger proportion report occasional victimization. In *lycée*, severe bullying tends to decrease, yet relational bullying and cyberbullying persist and may prolong psychological harm over time (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

Multiple studies identify the transition from primary school to *collège* as a period of heightened vulnerability due to peer group reorganization, status competition, and reduced adult supervision in certain school spaces (Debarbieux, 2016).

#### 5.4.3. *Predominant Typologies of Bullying*

French evidence consistently identifies verbal (insults, humiliation, threats) and relational (rumors, social exclusion, isolation) bullying as the core modalities of *harcèlement scolaire*. These forms are particularly harmful because of their persistence, low visibility, and strong impact on identity and self-esteem (Blaya, 2019).

Relational bullying in particular can be socially tolerated or minimized, increasing the likelihood of chronicity and complicating early intervention.

Cyberbullying is increasingly framed in France as an extension of traditional school bullying rather than an independent phenomenon. Research indicates that, in most cases, offline and online bullying show continuity in actors, victims, and power dynamics (Blaya & Gatti, 2022). Digital environments—through relative anonymity, wide dissemination, and content permanence—amplify impact and hinder recovery, especially in adolescence.

#### 5.4.4. *Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups*

French studies identify elevated bullying risk among students perceived as “different” by peers, including those with disabilities, overweight students, students with migrant backgrounds, non-heterosexual sexual orientation, or learning difficulties (Debarbieux, 2016; Blaya, 2019).

This reinforces the view that bullying is not randomly distributed but structured around social stigma and pre-existing power asymmetries.

School climate emerges as a central explanatory variable in French research. Schools with ambiguous norms, low teacher cohesion, and limited student participation tend to show higher bullying levels, whereas climates characterized by perceived fairness, normative coherence, and active participation function as protective factors (Blaya & Gatti, 2022).

#### *5.4.5. Psychosocial Consequences of Bullying*

French research documents significant consequences of bullying for student well-being, including anxiety, depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, social isolation, and school avoidance. In more severe cases, studies report associations with suicidal ideation and early school leaving (Debarbieux, 2016).

These consequences can extend beyond schooling into adulthood, affecting longer-term psychosocial adjustment and mental health.

#### *5.4.6. Institutional Responses and Recent Educational Policies*

In recent years, France has developed a national, integrated strategy against *harcèlement scolaire*, including mandatory detection protocols, school prevention plans, and dedicated teacher training. A distinctive aspect of the French approach is the emphasis on clear institutional responsibility of the school for addressing bullying, avoiding framing the issue as primarily the victim's or family's problem (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2023).

However, research stresses that effectiveness depends heavily on coherent and sustained implementation and genuine engagement of the entire school community.

#### *5.4.7. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite a comparatively strong measurement system, French bullying research faces important challenges: the need for more longitudinal studies, stronger integration of qualitative data, and systematic evaluation of intervention effectiveness.

Future lines include deeper analysis of bystander roles, group dynamics, mechanisms of normalization of everyday violence, and the intersection of bullying, discrimination, and mental health.

### 5.5. Recent Studies on Bullying in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, bullying constitutes a persistent concern within the fields of education and public health and is addressed systematically through academic research, educational policies, and regulatory frameworks. The phenomenon is conceptualized as a specific form of peer aggression characterized by repetition, power imbalance, and the intentionality to cause harm, clearly distinguishing it from

occasional interpersonal conflicts (Smith & Brain, 2000; Department for Education, 2022).

The British approach has contributed decisively to the international conceptual development of bullying, particularly through the work of Smith and colleagues, who have emphasized its group-based and social nature, as well as the role of bystanders and the school context in either perpetuating or inhibiting bullying behaviors (Smith, 2014).

#### *5.5.1. Main Sources of Evidence on Bullying in the United Kingdom*

##### a) National studies and population-based surveys

One of the most relevant recent sources of data is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which enables the analysis of bullying experiences among 15-year-old students and allows comparisons between the United Kingdom and other European countries. These data are complemented by national studies promoted by the Department for Education (DfE), which integrate indicators of school climate, well-being, and safety within educational settings (Department for Education, 2022).

In addition, various British organizations have developed periodic surveys on bullying and child well-being, contributing to a robust empirical base that informs both research and educational practice.

##### b) Academic and longitudinal research

The United Kingdom stands out for the availability of longitudinal studies that have enabled the analysis of the evolution of bullying and its medium- and long-term consequences. Research based on national cohorts has shown that persistent victimization during childhood and adolescence is associated with emotional difficulties, mental health problems, and socioeconomic disadvantages in adulthood (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

These studies offer added value compared to cross-sectional designs, as they allow the identification of trajectories and sustained patterns of risk over time.

#### *5.5.2. Prevalence of Bullying in the British Context*

Recent studies indicate that in primary education, a significant proportion of pupils experience bullying situations, particularly in the form of insults, teasing, and

social exclusion. Estimates vary depending on the instrument used, but recurrent victimization is typically reported in around one in ten schoolchildren, with higher rates when occasional experiences are included (Department for Education, 2022).

At these ages, verbal and relational bullying emerge as the predominant modalities, whereas direct physical aggression is less frequent but more visible.

In secondary education, bullying maintains a relevant prevalence, although a progressive transformation in its forms is observed. Relational bullying, public humiliation, and cyberbullying become more prominent, while physical violence tends to decrease (Smith, 2014).

British data indicate that the transition from primary to secondary education constitutes a critical period of vulnerability, due to social reorganization, increased anonymity, and the redefinition of peer status.

#### *5.5.3. Most Frequent Types of Bullying*

Evidence from the United Kingdom consistently identifies verbal bullying (insults, threats, offensive nicknames) and relational bullying (rumor spreading, systematic exclusion, social isolation) as the most common forms of school bullying. Because these modalities leave no visible physical marks, they tend to be minimized by adults, which facilitates their chronicity (Smith & Brain, 2000).

Moreover, relational bullying is associated with a high emotional impact, affecting students' sense of belonging and self-esteem.

Cyberbullying has been widely studied in the United Kingdom as an extension of face-to-face bullying. Recent research indicates that, in most cases, digital harassment overlaps with traditional bullying, sharing victims and perpetrators and amplifying psychological harm due to mass dissemination and the persistence of online content (Livingstone et al., 2017).

#### *5.5.4. Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups*

British studies have identified a higher likelihood of victimization among students who present characteristics perceived as different or stigmatized, such as disability, learning difficulties, non-heterosexual sexual orientation, diverse gender identity, or belonging to ethnic minorities (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

This pattern reinforces the conception of bullying as a socially structured phenomenon linked to broader inequalities and power relations.

School climate emerges as one of the most consistent explanatory factors of bullying in the United Kingdom. Schools with clear rules, positive relationships between students and teachers, and effective response systems show significantly lower levels of bullying (Smith, 2014).

Research has also highlighted the role of bystanders, indicating that passivity or normalization of bullying by the peer group contributes to its maintenance.

#### *5.5.5. Psychosocial Consequences*

British evidence consistently documents the negative consequences of bullying on students' psychological well-being. Among the most frequent effects are anxiety, depressive symptoms, low self-concept, and school avoidance. In cases of persistent victimization, associations have been observed with suicidal ideation, self-harm, and mental health problems in adulthood (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

These findings have been instrumental in positioning bullying as a public health issue rather than merely a disciplinary problem.

#### *5.5.6. Institutional Responses and Educational Policies*

The United Kingdom has a clear regulatory framework requiring schools to implement specific anti-bullying policies. These policies include prevention, detection, and response protocols, as well as the promotion of a safe and respectful school environment (Department for Education, 2022).

However, research has indicated that the mere existence of formal policies does not guarantee their effectiveness; coherent implementation, teacher training, and the active involvement of students and families are key factors.

#### *5.5.7. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite the robustness of British evidence, several challenges remain, including the need to periodically update prevalence estimates, more systematically integrate digital bullying, and deepen longitudinal studies evaluating the real impact of school-based interventions.

Future research lines point toward a stronger emphasis on early prevention, strengthening school climate, and reducing inequalities that act as structural factors in bullying.

## 5.6. Recent Studies on Bullying in Italy

In Italy, bullying is recognized as a relevant problem of school coexistence, psychosocial development, and public health, with increasing attention from both academic research and educational and social policies. The phenomenon is conceptualized in line with international consensus, highlighting repetition of aggressive behaviors, power imbalance between perpetrator and victim, and intentionality to cause harm, which allows bullying to be distinguished from sporadic interpersonal conflicts (Olweus, 1993; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

Italian research has contributed a particularly rich perspective by emphasizing the relational and group-based nature of bullying, as well as the role of bystanders, implicit group norms, and the school context in legitimizing or inhibiting peer violence (Menesini, 2002; Gini, 2006).

### *5.6.1. Main Sources of Evidence on Bullying in Italy*

#### a) National studies and institutional data

In recent years, Italy has developed systems for collecting information on bullying and cyberbullying through statistical and educational bodies. The National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) has published periodic data on experiences of harassment among minors, allowing estimation of the magnitude of the phenomenon and analysis of differences by age and sex (ISTAT, 2022).

Similarly, the Italian Ministry of Education has promoted studies and observatories on school coexistence, integrating bullying indicators within a broader framework of well-being and school climate (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2022).

#### b) Contributions of Italian academic research

Italy occupies a prominent position in international bullying research due to the contributions of authors such as Menesini, Gini, and colleagues, whose work has analyzed bullying from a psychosocial and ecological perspective. These studies have examined variables such as empathy, moral disengagement, group norms, and bystander roles, offering robust explanatory models of the phenomenon (Gini et al., 2014; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

In addition, widely used assessment instruments have been developed and validated in Italy to measure involvement in bullying and cyberbullying among school populations.

### *5.6.2. Prevalence of Bullying in the Italian Educational System*

Available studies indicate that in primary education a significant proportion of students experience bullying behaviors, mainly in the form of teasing, insults, and social exclusion. Estimates of recurrent victimization are typically around one in ten pupils, with variations depending on the instrument and reference period used (ISTAT, 2022).

At these ages, verbal and relational bullying constitute the predominant forms, while direct physical aggression appears less frequently but should not be underestimated from a preventive perspective.

In secondary education, bullying prevalence remains relevant, with diversification of harassment forms. Relational bullying and cyberbullying become more prominent, while physical violence progressively decreases with age (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

The transition between primary and secondary education is identified as a critical period of vulnerability, due to changes in social structure, increased competitiveness, and the search for peer status.

### *5.6.3. Predominant Types of Bullying in Italy*

Italian evidence consistently indicates that verbal bullying (insults, threats, offensive nicknames) and relational bullying (rumor spreading, systematic exclusion, social isolation) represent the core of the phenomenon. These modalities often go unnoticed by teachers and families, which facilitates their persistence and normalization (Gini, 2006).

Furthermore, relational bullying is associated with significant psychological impact, affecting self-concept, self-esteem, and sense of school belonging.

Italy has shown increasing interest in the study of cyberbullying, considered an extension of traditional bullying. Research indicates a high overlap between both forms, with continuity in victim and perpetrator roles and intensified harm due to dissemination and permanence of digital content (Menesini et al., 2012).

Cyberbullying poses specific challenges for school intervention, as it transcends the physical boundaries of the school and complicates adult supervision.

### *5.6.4. Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups*

Italian studies have identified a higher likelihood of victimization among students who present characteristics perceived as different or stigmatized, such as disability,

learning difficulties, overweight, non-heterosexual sexual orientation, or migrant background (Gini et al., 2014).

This pattern reinforces the idea that bullying is articulated through pre-existing social inequalities and exclusion processes.

School climate and implicit peer-group norms play a central role in explaining bullying in Italy. Research has shown that school contexts with clear norms, positive relationships, and high social cohesion exhibit lower levels of bullying, whereas implicit tolerance of violence increases the likelihood of involvement (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

#### *5.6.5. Psychosocial Consequences of Bullying*

Italian literature consistently documents the negative consequences of bullying on students' psychological well-being. Among the most common effects are anxiety, depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, school adjustment problems, and school rejection (Gini et al., 2014).

In cases of chronic victimization, associations have been identified with risk behaviors, mental health problems, and difficulties in social adjustment in later developmental stages.

#### *5.6.6. Institutional Responses and Educational Policies*

In recent years, Italy has strengthened its regulatory and educational framework in response to bullying and cyberbullying, promoting prevention programs, teacher training, and intervention protocols in schools. These initiatives emphasize the institutional responsibility of schools in detecting and managing bullying, as well as the importance of collaboration with families (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2022).

Nevertheless, research highlights that the effectiveness of these measures largely depends on their coherent implementation and the genuine commitment of the educational community.

#### *5.6.7. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite significant advances, research on bullying in Italy faces important challenges, such as the need to expand longitudinal studies, integrate qualitative methodologies, and systematically evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs.

Future research directions point toward a deeper examination of the role of bystanders, early prevention, and the intersection between bullying, discrimination, and emotional well-being in diverse school contexts.

### 5.7. Recent Studies on Bullying in Japan

In Japan, bullying is known as *ijime* (いじめ) and constitutes a highly relevant educational and social problem, widely recognized by both the scientific community and educational authorities. Unlike many Western contexts, *ijime* has historically been conceptualized as a predominantly psychological, relational, and group-based form of violence, in which social exclusion, systematic humiliation, and the isolation of an individual within the group play a central role (Morita et al., 1999; Yoneyama & Naito, 2003).

From a theoretical perspective, *ijime* shares key elements with the international construct of bullying—repetition, power imbalance, and intent to harm—yet it is distinguished by its strong linkage to collectivist norms, pressure to conform, and the centrality of the homeroom class group (*gakkyū shūdan*) as the dominant social space in Japanese school life (Yoneyama, 2015).

#### 5.7.1. Main Sources of Evidence on Bullying in Japan

##### a) National statistics from the Ministry of Education (MEXT)

The primary source of empirical data on *ijime* in Japan comes from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*MEXT*), which annually publishes official statistics on detected cases of school bullying in primary school, lower secondary school (*junior high school*), and upper secondary school (*senior high school*). These statistics constitute one of the most continuous and comprehensive monitoring systems internationally (MEXT, 2023).

Unlike in many other countries, the Japanese system emphasizes institutional reporting of cases identified by schools, reflecting both an effort toward early detection and a gradual shift toward a “zero tolerance” approach to *ijime*.

##### b) Japanese academic research

Japanese scholarship has played a key role in understanding *ijime* as a culturally specific psychosocial phenomenon. Classic and contemporary studies have analyzed its

manifestations, causes, and consequences, emphasizing the role of the peer group, school culture, and implicit hierarchical relations among students (Morita et al., 1999; Yoneyama & Naito, 2003).

More recent research has incorporated comparative and international approaches, locating *ijime* within the global framework of bullying while preserving its cultural and contextual specificities (Yoneyama, 2015).

### *5.7.2. Prevalence of Ijime in the Japanese Educational System*

Official data indicate that most *ijime* cases are concentrated in primary education, where the highest detection rates are recorded. In recent reports, MEXT has reported figures exceeding 600,000 detected cases annually across the education system, with a particularly high proportion in the early grades of primary school (MEXT, 2023).

This pattern is not necessarily interpreted as reflecting greater severity at younger ages, but rather as the result of more exhaustive detection policies and a broad definition of *ijime*, encompassing subtle forms of exclusion as well as repeated psychological aggression.

In lower and upper secondary education, the number of recorded cases decreases progressively, although there is a relative increase in more complex and severe forms of *ijime*, including prolonged harassment, public humiliation, and cyber harassment. Several studies suggest that at these stages *ijime* tends to be less visible but potentially more damaging psychologically (Yoneyama, 2015).

The transition from primary to lower secondary education is identified as a critical period, associated with changes in group structure, increased academic pressure, and the redefinition of social hierarchies.

### *5.7.3. Predominant Typologies of Ijime*

The most characteristic form of bullying in Japan is relational *ijime*, which includes behaviors such as deliberate exclusion, collective silence, indirect ridicule, and the symbolic destruction of the victim's social status. These practices are often enacted by the group as a whole rather than by a clearly identifiable individual aggressor (Morita et al., 1999).

This form of *ijime* can be especially harmful due to its persistence, its invisibility to adults, and its deep impact on students' sense of belonging and social identity.

Cyber harassment has emerged in Japan as an extension of traditional *ijime*, particularly in secondary education. Research suggests substantial continuity between

face-to-face and digital harassment, with social networks and messaging applications used to amplify humiliation and victim isolation (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003).

Digital environments intensify group pressure and make psychological disengagement from harassment more difficult, increasing the risk of severe mental health outcomes.

#### *5.7.4. Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups*

One of the most salient risk factors in the Japanese context is strong pressure toward conformity and homogeneity within the class group. Students perceived as different—due to personality traits, appearance, academic performance, or family background—show a higher risk of *ijime* victimization (Morita et al., 1999).

This dynamic is reinforced by implicit norms of group cohesion that penalize deviation and discourage active defense of the victim by bystanders.

Japanese literature underscores that teacher and school responses are decisive in shaping the trajectory of *ijime*. Minimizing the problem or interpreting harassment as a “normal conflict” among students may contribute to chronicity, whereas early and explicit intervention functions as a protective factor (Yoneyama, 2015).

#### *5.7.5. Psychosocial Consequences of Ijime*

In Japan, *ijime* is associated with severe psychosocial consequences, including anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, school absenteeism, and school refusal (*furūkō*). In extreme cases, associations with suicidal ideation and completed suicide have been documented, generating intense societal and media concern (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003).

The persistence of harassment and its group-based character amplify emotional impact by continuously eroding the victim’s sense of belonging and self-esteem.

#### *5.7.6. Institutional Responses and Educational Policies*

Over the past decade, Japan has strengthened its regulatory framework against *ijime*, promoting specific laws, mandatory detection and response protocols, and an emphasis on early identification of any sign of harassment. The institutional approach insists that even “mild” forms of *ijime* must be recorded and addressed to prevent escalation (MEXT, 2023).

Nevertheless, research indicates that the effectiveness of these measures largely depends on teacher training, family involvement, and the transformation of group norms that legitimize harassment.

#### *5.7.7. Research Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite the volume of available data, research on *ijime* faces important challenges, such as reliance on institutional reporting, potential under-identification of severe cases, and the need for more longitudinal studies examining individual victimization trajectories.

Future research directions include integrating intercultural approaches, further exploring the role of bystanders, and evaluating the real-world effectiveness of interventions focused on the class group (*gakkyū shūdan*) and school climate.

### 5.8. Recent Studies on Bullying in Spain

In Spain, bullying is understood as a complex form of peer violence that significantly affects students' psychological well-being, school coexistence, and academic development. Over recent decades, Spanish research has contributed substantially to conceptual delimitation of the phenomenon, adopting a framework aligned with the international tradition that emphasizes intent to harm, repetition over time, and power imbalance between perpetrator and victim (Ortega-Ruiz, 2010; Garaigordobil, 2018).

From a psychoeducational perspective, bullying is conceptualized as a relational and group-based process sustained by status dynamics, implicit group norms, and the active or passive participation of bystanders, which helps explain its persistence and the difficulty of eradicating it when interventions do not address school climate (Ortega-Ruiz & Mora-Merchán, 2008; Álvarez-García et al., 2020).

#### *5.8.1. Main Recent Sources of Evidence in Spain*

##### a) Academic research and national studies

Recent evidence on bullying in Spain draws from a combination of academic studies, institutional reports, and large-scale surveys. Among the most relevant contributions is the national study by Díaz-Aguado et al. (2024), conducted at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, which represents one of the most extensive and

systematic empirical approaches to bullying and cyberbullying in Spanish school populations to date.

Alongside this work, multiple recent studies have examined prevalence, participant profiles, and risk and protective factors. Particularly noteworthy are studies by Garaigordobil and Machimbarrena on bullying and cyberbullying in adolescents, which have provided consistent findings regarding role overlap and emotional consequences (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2019; Garaigordobil, 2022).

In addition, other authors have developed a robust line of research focused on school climate, coexistence, and mechanisms of peer victimization, especially in early adolescence (Álvarez-García et al., 2018, 2020).

#### b) Institutional and third-sector reports

Reports produced by organizations such as *Save the Children* have played an important role in raising social awareness of bullying, providing prevalence data and analyses of psychosocial impact, particularly in relation to cyberbullying and adolescence (Save the Children, 2019).

Similarly, reports from the *Defensor del Pueblo* (Ombudsman), in collaboration with *UNICEF*, remain a structural reference for understanding the evolution of the phenomenon and institutional responses within the Spanish educational system (Defensor del Pueblo–UNICEF, 2007).

#### *5.8.2. Prevalence of Bullying in the Spanish Educational System*

Recent studies converge in showing that bullying is present from early educational stages. In primary education, estimates of repeated victimization are often around one in ten pupils, although figures vary depending on time frames and operational definitions (Garaigordobil, 2018; Save the Children, 2019).

The national study by Díaz-Aguado et al. (2024) confirms the presence of persistent bullying already in primary school and emphasizes that a substantial proportion of victimized students do not disclose their situation to school adults, which hinders early detection.

In secondary education, bullying prevalence remains significant and takes more complex forms. Recent research indicates that relational bullying and cyberbullying become more prominent in adolescence, while direct physical aggression tends to decrease (Álvarez-García et al., 2020; Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2019).

Díaz-Aguado et al. (2024) estimates the prevalence of repeated bullying at around 6% of students and highlights its strong association with indicators of emotional distress and psychological risk.

### *5.8.3. Predominant Typologies of Bullying*

Spanish literature consistently indicates that the most frequent forms of bullying are verbal bullying (insults, teasing, offensive nicknames) and relational bullying (social exclusion, rumor spreading, isolation). These modalities constitute the core of the phenomenon and have a high potential for chronicity because they are less visible to teachers (Ortega-Ruiz, 2010; Álvarez-García et al., 2018).

Relational bullying, in particular, has been identified as one of the most psychologically harmful forms, as it directly undermines students' sense of belonging and social identity.

Cyberbullying has become established in Spain as an extension of traditional school bullying. Recent studies show substantial overlap between offline bullying and cyberbullying, with shared victims and perpetrators and amplified emotional harm due to the permanence and dissemination of digital content (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2019; Garaigordobil, 2022).

Díaz-Aguado et al. (2024) reinforces this evidence by indicating that combined exposure to bullying and cyberbullying significantly increases the risk of suicidal ideation and self-harming behaviors.

### *5.8.4. Risk Factors and Vulnerable Groups*

Recent Spanish research identifies higher victimization risk among students with disabilities, learning difficulties, non-heterosexual sexual orientation, diverse gender identity, migrant background, or socioeconomic disadvantage (Save the Children, 2019; Garaigordobil, 2022).

This pattern supports the view of bullying as a phenomenon structured by social inequalities and stigmatization processes rather than as a sum of isolated individual behaviors.

School climate emerges as one of the most robust explanatory factors of bullying in Spain. Schools with clear, coherent, and shared rules, together with active teacher involvement, show lower levels of bullying (Álvarez-García et al., 2020).

Bystander passivity has been identified as a key mechanism in the perpetuation of bullying, whereas prosocial peer intervention functions as a powerful protective factor (Ortega-Ruiz & Mora-Merchán, 2008).

#### *5.8.5. Psychosocial Consequences of Bullying*

Spanish literature consistently documents negative consequences of bullying for students' mental health and school adjustment. Common effects include anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, social isolation, and academic difficulties (Garaigordobil, 2018; Garaigordobil, 2022).

The study by Díaz-Aguado et al. (2024) provides recent evidence of the association between repeated victimization and increased risk of suicidal ideation, reinforcing the need for early prevention and intervention strategies.

#### *5.8.6. Institutional Responses and Intervention Lines*

In Spain, educational policies addressing bullying are articulated through school coexistence plans (*planes de convivencia*), regional protocols (*protocolos autonómicos*), and prevention programs implemented in schools. These initiatives emphasize the institutional responsibility of schools to protect students and create safe environments (Defensor del Pueblo–UNICEF, 2007).

Recent research stresses that the effectiveness of these measures depends on systematic implementation, continuous teacher training, and active participation of students and families (Álvarez-García et al., 2020).

#### *5.8.7. Limitations and Future Perspectives*

Despite significant advances in Spanish research, major challenges remain, including methodological heterogeneity, a shortage of longitudinal studies, and the need to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs.

Future directions include deeper analysis of relational bullying, the role of bystanders, the interaction between offline and digital bullying, and the systematic integration of emotional well-being indicators within school settings.

## 6. THE ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL BULLYING

### 6.1. Foundations and instruments for data collection

All assessment is a systematic process of inquiry aimed at studying a phenomenon, fact, situation, group, or person within a specific context. In this process, we collect information through different tools and evaluate the data obtained in relation to what is being studied, generally with the purpose of understanding or generating knowledge to support decision-making or to intervene in order to change or transform a situation toward a more desirable one (Lobato, 2021).

The assessment of bullying is a key element both for scientific research and for the design of prevention and intervention programs in educational settings. At the international level, various psychometric instruments have been developed with the objective of measuring the prevalence of school bullying, identifying the roles involved, and analyzing the different typologies of aggressive behaviors (Olweus, 2013; Ortega-Ruiz et al., 2016).

The objective of assessing school bullying relates to the collection of information about maltreatment in the environment in which it occurs. This is done, on the one hand, to establish a diagnosis that helps us understand what is happening in qualitative and quantitative terms, and, on the other hand, to guide the most appropriate intervention, which in turn will be evaluated through changes in the dynamics of the processes in which the participants involved in bullying and/or cyberbullying are engaged (Avilés, 2013; Olweus, 2006; Ortega-Ruiz, 2015).

To consider detection and assessment information sufficiently meaningful, it is necessary to remember that any inquiry, in general, seeks to understand the meanings that those involved assign to the phenomena being studied. Therefore, the best way to obtain interpretations that are as rich and complete as possible is to collect and evaluate data from different perspectives in order to relate and contrast them.

This procedure is what, in generic terms, is called triangulation, and it is based on the convenience and feasibility of collecting data, analyzing, and observing the phenomenon being studied from diverse perspectives (triangulation is the technique used by geologists, surveyors, etc., to measure a geographical feature or area through cross-measurements referenced to others whose magnitudes are known).

With triangulation or diversification of sources, therefore, we refer to the contrast between data obtained from different sources. These multiple data sources may be of different kinds:

- Application of a combination of diverse methods.
- Diversity of those who generate information depending on their position, role, or ideology regarding the context and phenomenon being evaluated.
- Observation in different situations and moments.
- Contrast with external evaluators.
- Application of different theoretical frameworks.

Some themes have been included in the present list—which could be broader—that are sometimes considered aspects not belonging to triangulation. On this occasion, however, the principle that supports the convenience of using the diverse techniques in this list is the same: analyzing the phenomenon and the context studied from several and diverse perspectives or angles in order to obtain a more contrasted, complete, and rich understanding.

In addition, it is essential to keep in mind that in assessment it is crucial to seek consensus regarding what is being evaluated; triangulation helps substantially in this regard, although it does not always imply that it is necessary to arrive at a single vision. It is necessary to collect and make visible the evaluation of different viewpoints, discrepancies, and singularities.

Recognizing, respecting, and presenting diverse perspectives or visions is of full relevance, although it is also legitimate and understandable to attempt to obtain learning from the evaluation of the interactions among those diverse perspectives and between them and the information generated during the assessment.

In assessments, the fundamental strategies, at different moments, within triangulation should be theoretical and, above all, methodological, through the use of differentiated tools for data collection and evaluation. Likewise, in the assessment of bullying during intervention processes, observational techniques acquire special importance, which will be addressed later.

For any evaluative conclusion, diversification is of great importance. With it, it is safer to achieve the meaningfulness of the information collected, as well as its credibility, consistency, and confirmability. Therefore, it is essential to use diverse methods and tools, both for data collection and for examining the data.

There are different modalities and instruments for diagnosing and assessing school bullying, taking into account the different perspectives of diverse variables such as those involved, families, teachers, students, etc. For this reason, the methodological approach to bullying situations derives from two types of studies: indirect studies, through teachers' evaluations, and direct studies, based on empirical evaluations of the students who bully peers and of the effects of this behavior on those bullied, seeking to inquire into their particularities and personal and school history and the attitudinal

nature of the family framework as the most relevant indicators of this problem (Cerezo, 2009).

Authors such as Avilés (2006) indicate that the main ways to obtain data on this phenomenon must be achieved through the direct protagonists who are involved in the problem, either because they are suffering it, provoking it, or witnessing it, observing manifested behavior and inquiring into those who, while not direct actors in the phenomenon, interact continuously with the individuals who are.

The main methods and instruments that can be used to assess school bullying are as follows (Ovejero, 2013): questionnaires, sociometric techniques, interviews, and observation.

## 6.2. Questionnaires

The questionnaire is a key tool used for data collection. It is a list of predetermined questions that, in order to allow the information to be coded after administration, are answered by choosing a specific option among those provided (García et al., 2017), reflecting the respondent's way of thinking or feeling (León & Montero, 2023).

Questionnaires are included as a technique within survey research, widely used in educational and psychological fields. Their main benefit is that "they are useful for describing and predicting an educational phenomenon, but also efficient for a first approach to reality or for exploratory studies" (Torrado, 2016, p. 225).

Their main disadvantage lies in what is known as social desirability bias, since there is a risk that students may report that they help their peers more than they actually do, that aggressors may conceal their maltreating behaviors because they are socially unacceptable, or that victims, either because they refuse to accept that they have been bullied or because their perception of the bullying suffered has been influenced by variables such as self-esteem, may not report realistically the bullying to which they have been subjected (Ovejero, 2013, p. 24).

The fact that these instruments are necessary and fundamental is due to the convenience of obtaining information about real situations, at a given moment, regarding possible acts of bullying. Initial and final assessment of a psychoeducational proposal or intervention is especially relevant. Before and after implementing bullying prevention actions, it is required to provide evidence of the pre-test and post-test situation in order to evaluate the effects of that intervention (Avilés et al., 2014).

### *Some questionnaires:*

Below are brief descriptions of some internationally used questionnaires available for assessing school bullying:

#### a) Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ)

This is the most widely used instrument internationally to measure the prevalence and characteristics of traditional bullying among students. It was developed by Dan Olweus and later revised to include different types of bullying (verbal, physical, indirect/relational, cyberbullying).

Main characteristics:

- Format: Student self-report questionnaire.
- Number of items: Around 42 items in the revised version (OBVQ-R).
- Areas assessed: Victimization, perpetration, and types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, and even aspects of cyberbullying depending on the version).
- Responses: Frequency scale (e.g., never, 2–3 times a month, once a week or more).
- Use: Epidemiological research, school evaluations, and follow-up of prevention programs.

Strengths:

- Conceptually clear (defines bullying and differentiates roles).
- Validated across many countries and cultures.

#### b) European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (EBIPQ)

Instrument developed within the framework of the European Bullying Intervention Project. It assesses both victimization and aggression in bullying situations.

Main characteristics:

- Format: Self-report for adolescents.
- Dimensions: Victimization and aggression.

- Types of bullying: Includes physical, verbal, psychological, and relational behaviors.
- Application: Specifically designed for European school contexts, though also used in other countries.

Important variants:

- EBCIP-QB: a brief combined version of EBIPQ and ECIPQ (bullying and cyberbullying) with good psychometric properties for rapid screening.

#### c) European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (ECIPQ)

Complements the EBIPQ, specifically focused on cyberbullying. It allows distinguishing between aggression and victimization in digital contexts.

Main characteristics:

- Assesses experiences of harassment through technologies (messages, social networks, etc.).
- Similar structure to EBIPQ, adapted to online environments.

#### d) Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale (MPVS)

Questionnaire focused on peer victimization, designed to measure different forms of bullying experienced by a victim.

Main characteristics:

- Items: usually between 16 and 20 items (depending on version).
- Subscales: Physical victimization, verbal victimization, social/relational victimization, and attacks on property.
- Responses: generally frequency (no, once, more than once).
- Advantage: Simple, useful in research on psychological impacts of bullying.

#### e) Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ)

Instrument that assesses peer relations in school contexts, including aggression and victimization behaviors.

Main characteristics:

- Shorter than the OBVQ.
- Captures information about social dynamics, not only specific bullying acts.

### 6.3. Sociometric techniques

“The word Sociometry comes from the Latin terms *socius*: companion, social, and *metrum*: measure, from which its general meaning derives as the measure of social relationships among the members of a group” (Casanova, 2013, p. 39).

“The sociogram is an easy-to-use instrument that provides very interesting and relevant information about acceptance or rejection that students in a classroom group may experience” (Barri, 2013, p. 259), allowing identification of informal networks of communication and interpersonal attraction that coexist with formal structures (Rodríguez & Morera, 2001). Hence its great utility in revealing cases of bullying and social exclusion.

They make it possible to obtain reliable information about different behaviors based on the opinion and comparison of data from the reference group. Nominations can be made by peers and in combination, allowing exploration of the social knowledge the group has regarding peer maltreatment. Among the main advantages of these tools is that they allow clear detection of concrete and defined roles that in many cases may be very severe and require urgent and direct intervention. Therefore, they are more reliable than questionnaires for detecting both aggressors and victims of bullying, and they are also very easy to administer (Ovejero, 2013).

In short, bullying assessment is not limited to the use of self-report questionnaires, but requires complementary methodologies that allow analysis of the group’s relational dynamics, social roles, and classroom structure. In this sense, sociometric techniques occupy a central place in international research on school bullying, as they offer objective information about students’ social positions and patterns of interaction among peers.

These techniques allow identification of victims, aggressors, observers, and socially isolated students, as well as detecting processes of rejection, popularity, and negative leadership, factors closely linked to bullying (Cillessen & Bukowski, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996).

#### a) Peer sociometric nominations (Peer Nomination Technique)

Peer nominations are the most widely used technique internationally in bullying research. They consist of asking students to identify, from a class list, those classmates who meet certain behavioral or relational criteria.

In bullying contexts, specific nominations include:

- “Who bothers or intimidates other classmates?”
- “Who tends to be victims of teasing or aggression?”
- “Who helps or defends others when they are being bothered?”

This technique allows highly precise identification of the social roles involved in bullying, reducing self-report bias. Numerous studies have demonstrated its high ecological validity and usefulness for detecting cases that are not usually recognized by those involved (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Veenstra et al., 2005).

Main advantages:

- High inter-rater reliability.
- Early detection of “invisible” victims.
- Detailed analysis of the role of observers.

Limitations:

- Requires rigorous ethical consent.
- May generate discomfort if not applied properly.

#### b) Sociometric scales of acceptance and social rejection

Acceptance and rejection scales assess the degree to which a student is accepted or rejected by peers. They are usually formulated through questions such as:

- “Who do you like most to work or play with?”
- “Who do you like least to work or play with?”

From these responses, classic indicators are obtained such as:

- Social preference.
- Social impact.
- Sociometric status (popular, rejected, neglected/ignored, controversial, average).

These techniques have been widely used in longitudinal studies analyzing the relationship between social rejection and victimization, showing that rejection is one of the most consistent predictors of the risk of being bullied (Coie, Dodge, & Coppotelli, 1982; Veenstra et al., 2005).

#### c) Sociograms and graphical analysis of social networks

The sociogram is a graphical representation of social relationships within the group, based on sociometric data. It allows clear visualization of:

- Subgroups.
- Isolated students.
- Formal and informal leaders.
- Networks of support and exclusion.

In contemporary research, sociograms are frequently integrated with Social Network Analysis (SNA), a methodology increasingly used in international bullying studies. SNA makes it possible to analyze metrics such as centrality, density, or reciprocity, providing key information about the structure of bullying within the classroom (Berger et al., 2008).

#### d) Sociometric questionnaires combined with behavioral nominations

Some instruments integrate sociometric acceptance/rejection questions with specific bullying behavior nominations. This mixed approach allows direct linkage between social status and involvement in bullying.

This type of technique has proven especially useful for identifying profiles such as:

- Popular aggressors.
- Rejected victims.
- Observers with high social status.

This approach is common in intervention studies that seek to modify group dynamics, not only individual behaviors (Salmivalli, 2010).

#### e) Structured sociometric observation in the classroom

Although less used than nominations, structured sociometric observation consists of systematic recording of social interactions in natural contexts (classroom, playground). It allows identification of patterns of exclusion, dominance, and victimization that may go unnoticed in self-reports.

This technique is mainly used as a qualitative complement or in case studies, providing contextual information relevant to understanding bullying as a group phenomenon.

Sociometric techniques make it possible to:

- Overcome self-report bias.
- Analyze bullying as a group phenomenon.
- Identify power dynamics and negative leadership.
- Detect at-risk students before bullying becomes chronic.

For this reason, international literature recommends their combined use with standardized questionnaires, especially in intervention and prevention studies (Salmivalli et al., 2011).

## 6.4. Interviews

Interviews are another instrument for obtaining information. An interview is defined as a meeting or encounter between people to talk, which includes verbal and nonverbal interactions, and whose purpose and structure are generally set by the interviewer. Interviews provide a series of benefits, among which we can highlight interpersonal rapport, flexibility, the possibility of observation, the possibility of recording large amounts of information of varied types, and the possibility of assessing people who could not be examined with another type of instrument (Avilés, 2006).

The interview is an excellent means for assessing cognitive factors and is very useful for conducting functional analysis and identifying antecedents and consequences of specific interpersonal behaviors. Through interviews it is possible to

obtain very diverse information, although this will depend on different elements such as the interviewee's age or verbal ability (Monjas, 2006).

As Avilés (2006) also points out, group interviews can be conducted with the aim of gaining insight into students' perceptions of bullying, what feelings they have about that situation, what they think the school should do about it, whether the strategies used by the school achieve their goal, and whether those involved are committed to ending violence, among other aspects.

Another aspect to pay attention to is that when interviews are oriented toward minors, an essential issue is that information should be obtained from different sources. Whenever feasible, data should be collected from parents, teachers, and even other professionals.

On the other hand, it must be considered that when interviewing students, several conditions of the interview itself and of the interaction between interviewee and interviewer must be taken into account; otherwise, the truthfulness and honesty of responses may be limited. The interview must guarantee privacy. Many students, for example, choose not to have to repeat the names by which they are known at school or to communicate about what is said about them. Moreover, one of the difficulties that can be encountered in interviews is confidentiality, because sometimes the interviewer needs to use the data obtained. Therefore, transparency must be offered from the outset and an agreement should be made with students about where and with whom that information will be shared. Thus, interviewing is not always the best way to detect personal cases of bullying, since it does not guarantee the confidentiality that a questionnaire may provide (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Bullying assessment requires methodologies that allow deeper exploration of the subjective experience of those involved, the context in which bullying behaviors occur, and the relational dynamics of the peer group. Although self-report questionnaires are the most widely used tool in epidemiological studies, the international literature emphasizes that interviews are fundamental for understanding the complexity of the phenomenon, differentiating bullying from other interpersonal conflicts, and designing interventions tailored to each case (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Swearer et al., 2014).

Unlike closed standardized instruments, interviews allow detailed exploration of the aggressor's intentionality, repetition of behaviors, power imbalance, the role of bystanders, and the emotional and academic impact of bullying—core aspects in the international conceptualization of bullying (Olweus, 2013).

#### *6.4.1. Semi-structured interviews specific to bullying and victimization*

Semi-structured bullying interviews are the most commonly used format internationally when the goal is to deepen understanding of experiences of victimization, aggression, or witnessing bullying. They are based on a previously defined guide of topics, but allow flexibility to explore specific episodes and contextual nuances.

Typically, this type of interview addresses aspects such as a detailed description of bullying episodes, frequency and duration of behaviors, the spaces where they occur, direct and indirect participants, and the responses from the school and family environment. Classic and current studies have highlighted their high ecological validity and their usefulness for identifying bullying cases that are not always detected through self-reports, especially in situations of relational or covert bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Smith et al., 2012).

These interviews are widely used both in qualitative research and in applied assessment within schools and are often combined with questionnaires and sociometric techniques for a comprehensive evaluation of the phenomenon.

#### *6.4.2. Interviewing with visual supports in childhood*

In child populations, especially at early ages, assessing bullying through interviews requires methodological adaptations that ensure comprehension of the concepts involved. In this context, interviews have been developed with visual supports such as vignettes, drawings, photographs, or puppets, which facilitate identification of bullying behaviors and reduce linguistic and cognitive limitations typical of early ages.

This type of interview allows exploration of experiences of victimization, social exclusion, and rejection in a more accessible way for the child, improving the reliability of the collected information. Various studies have shown that visual supports favor identification of relational and emotional bullying, forms of bullying that children tend to describe with greater difficulty through direct verbal questions (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Monks & Smith, 2006).

#### *6.4.3. Incident-based interviews (reconstruction of the incident)*

Incident-based interviews focus on the detailed reconstruction of specific bullying episodes. Through sequential questioning, the evaluator explores what happened, how the situation started, how it evolved, who participated, and what responses occurred from bystanders and teachers.

This format is especially useful for differentiating isolated conflicts from repeated bullying situations and for identifying interaction patterns that maintain bullying. The literature highlights its usefulness in school intervention contexts, since it facilitates identification of risk spaces, dysfunctional group dynamics, and specific protection needs for the victim (Smith et al., 2004; Swearer & Espelage, 2011).

#### *6.4.4. Clinical and psychopathological interviews that include bullying as a stressor*

In research and clinical contexts where the primary focus is on the mental health of children or adolescents, bullying is often assessed through standardized clinical interviews in which it is included as part of the psychosocial history or as a relevant stressor.

Widely used diagnostic interviews, such as the *Kiddie Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia* (K-SADS), incorporate information on experiences of victimization and peer violence when assessing disorders such as depression, anxiety, or suicidal risk. Although these interviews are not specifically designed to measure bullying, numerous studies have used them to examine the relationship between school bullying and psychopathology, highlighting bullying as a significant risk factor (Copeland et al., 2013; Arseneault, 2018).

#### *6.4.5. Interviews with key informants: teachers and families*

The assessment of bullying from an ecological perspective involves collecting information from multiple informants. In this regard, interviews with teachers and families constitute a key source of complementary information.

Interviews with teachers allow for the exploration of perceptions of classroom dynamics, warning signs, intervention strategies used, and potential institutional barriers to the detection of bullying. Interviews with families, in turn, provide relevant information about behavioral, emotional, and somatic changes in the child, as well as about the quality of family–school communication. International literature recommends this triangulation of informants as an effective strategy to enhance the validity of bullying assessment (Cornell & Limber, 2015).

#### *6.4.6. Cognitive interviews in the development of bullying assessment instruments*

Cognitive interviews are primarily used in the development and validation of bullying assessment instruments. Through this procedure, researchers explore how participants understand the items, the interpretations they make, and the difficulties they encounter when responding.

Although they do not constitute a direct clinical assessment tool, these interviews have been fundamental in the development of international bullying scales, ensuring conceptual clarity and cross-cultural equivalence of the instruments (Hall, 2016). Their use is particularly relevant in processes of linguistic and cultural adaptation.

### *Final considerations*

International literature agrees that interviews represent an essential tool for the in-depth assessment of bullying, especially when combined with standardized questionnaires and sociometric techniques. Their main strength lies in their ability to capture the complexity of the phenomenon, subjective meanings, and relational dynamics that underpin school bullying. Therefore, their use is particularly recommended in intervention contexts, case assessment, and high-quality qualitative studies (Swearer et al., 2014).

## 6.5. Observation

In some cases, the best way to obtain scientific evidence is to directly observe individuals' behavior and systematically record what they are doing. In such situations, observational techniques are used (León & Montero, 2023). Accordingly, observation can be defined as “a data collection technique that allows us to record, in a methodical and systematic way, knowledge about an individual or a group of individuals” (García et al., 2017, p. 34).

Any observational process requires voluntary and focused attention on the observed phenomenon. Observation allows both the description and the verification of specific situations (Romero & Ordóñez, 2018). Through this observational technique, it is possible to construct a comprehensive picture of the setting, gaining insight into scenarios that would be difficult to capture solely through interviews or self-report measures (Simons, 2011).

Observation constitutes a fundamental tool in the assessment of bullying, particularly when the aim is to analyze bullying as a relational and contextual phenomenon manifested in real interactions among peers. Unlike self-reports and interviews, observation makes it possible to record behaviors directly in natural contexts, thereby reducing social desirability bias and providing key information about group dynamics and interaction patterns that sustain bullying behaviors (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Smith et al., 2004).

International research highlights that observation is especially useful for identifying covert forms of bullying, such as social exclusion, systematic isolation, or

microaggressions, which are often not reported by victims nor easily detected by teachers through other assessment methods (Salmivalli, 2010).

Several types of observation used in the assessment of bullying are described below.

#### *6.5.1. Naturalistic observation in school contexts*

Naturalistic observation is conducted in students' usual settings, such as classrooms, playgrounds, hallways, or school cafeterias. Its objective is to record behaviors as they occur, without direct intervention by the observer in group dynamics.

This type of observation has been widely used in international studies to identify patterns of dominance, exclusion, and victimization, as well as to analyze the social roles involved in bullying. Longitudinal research has shown that observation in unstructured settings, such as recess, is particularly effective for detecting persistent bullying behaviors and asymmetric power relationships (Pellegrini, 2001; Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Commonly observed behaviors include:

- Physical and verbal aggression.
- Teasing, threats, and humiliation.
- Social exclusion and systematic rejection.
- Bystander reactions (reinforcement, passivity, defense).
- Responses from teachers or school staff.

#### *6.5.2. Structured systematic observation*

Structured systematic observation uses previously defined protocols that specify the behaviors to be recorded, the unit of analysis, and the coding criteria. This approach allows for more objective data collection and facilitates comparisons across observers and contexts.

In the field of bullying research, these protocols typically include categories such as direct aggression, relational aggression, victimization, defending behaviors, and prosocial behaviors. International research indicates that structured observation shows good interobserver reliability when evaluators are adequately trained, making it a valid

tool for empirical studies and evaluations of intervention programs (Pepler & Craig, 1995; Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

### *6.5.3. Observational coding systems in bullying*

Various observational coding systems have been developed for the study of bullying and peer aggression. These systems make it possible to classify and quantify observed behaviors, facilitating the analysis of patterns and frequencies.

One of the most significant contributions of these systems is their ability to analyze the role of the peer group in maintaining bullying behaviors, identifying social reinforcement behaviors such as laughter, implicit support, or passivity by bystanders. Classic studies have shown that a substantial proportion of bullying episodes occur in the presence of other students, underscoring the importance of observing bullying within its social context (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Salmivalli et al., 1996).

### *6.5.4. Participant and non-participant observation*

In the assessment of bullying, a distinction is made between participant observation and non-participant observation. In participant observation, the observer or evaluator takes part in the activities of the group or context being observed. In this modality, the observer enters the scene and participates in it, while attempting to remain as unobtrusive as possible (Martínez et al., 2014), for example, when teachers record behaviors in their own classrooms.

In non-participant observation, the observer maintains an external and neutral position and is generally preferred in research contexts due to greater methodological control. Participant observation, however, is common in applied educational settings, where teachers play a key role in the early detection of bullying. Nevertheless, the literature warns about the risk of perceptual bias in participant observation and emphasizes the need for specific training (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000).

According to García et al. (2017), among the benefits of participant observation is the evaluator's close proximity to the real behaviors of individuals or groups, as it is possible to dispense entirely with participants' active collaboration in conducting the research or assessment. Its main limitation, however, lies in the fact that not all situations are observable and that the presence of the observer may generate a "reactivity problem," namely resistance to being observed.

As a key complement to observation—particularly participant observation—the field diary or field notebook is used. Historically, the field diary has been closely associated with participant observation and serves as a tool for recording the

evaluator's field notes, in which observed aspects are documented in a precise, detailed, and comprehensive manner (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). It is considered an essential instrument for systematically recording daily data on actions and activities in evaluative practice within educational settings. Its basic organizational structure consists of the narration and description of observed phenomena and events.

#### *6.5.5. Observation focused on high-risk spaces*

A relevant line of research has focused on observing high-risk spaces and moments, such as recess, school transportation, or transitions between classes. These contexts involve less adult supervision and a higher likelihood of bullying behaviors occurring.

Observation focused on these spaces makes it possible to identify critical areas within the school and to design preventive strategies based on reorganizing supervision and the use of physical space. This approach has proven useful both in assessment and in institutional intervention against bullying (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000).

#### *6.5.6. Advantages, limitations, and ethical considerations of observation in bullying*

Observation offers important advantages, such as the ability to record real behaviors, identify group dynamics, and detect forms of bullying that are not verbally reported. However, it also presents limitations, including time demands, the need for specialized training, and difficulties in capturing infrequent or highly covert episodes.

For this reason, international literature recommends the use of observation as part of a multimethod approach, combining it with questionnaires, sociometric techniques, and interviews in order to achieve a comprehensive assessment of school bullying (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Swearer et al., 2014).

Observation in bullying contexts requires special attention to ethical considerations, including the protection of confidentiality, minimizing risk to victims, and immediate intervention when dangerous situations are detected. It is also recommended to inform the educational institution and establish clear action protocols for responding to serious behaviors observed (Olweus, 2013).

## 7. CONFLICT MEDIATION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Mediation is important to consider insofar as it forms part of the preventive dimension of bullying dynamics. Before addressing mediation itself, it is advisable to pause for a basic preliminary analysis of conflict as such—an approach that provides the most significant elements and situates us at an appropriate starting point. Not infrequently, mediation is approached without sufficient knowledge of the underlying mechanisms and nature of the conflict in its most relevant aspects.

Essentially, human beings are social beings who organize themselves into different groups in order to respond to shared interests and needs within the same society. These interests and needs may come into opposition with one another, giving rise to different forms of conflict.

Human conflict can be understood as the space in which two or more individuals hold different perspectives on the same situation due to differing systems of values, beliefs, or ideologies, and confront one another in pursuit of an objective that is perceived as incompatible between the parties.

In other words, we are referring to situations inherent to human relationships which, in principle, do not necessarily have to be negative. Indeed, they may involve legitimate processes of confrontation of motives and differing viewpoints that must be managed through dialogue and the search for solutions (Yubero et al., 2022).

In the school context, conflicts have traditionally been addressed through punitive measures, primarily through punishment, without reflecting—particularly in the case of bullying—on the motivations or causes underlying aggressive behavior. It is therefore essential that, when faced with any conflict, we do not rely solely on first impressions but rather facilitate the expression of the parties involved and their respective positions.

A useful starting method is to follow the so-called Rule of the 6 Ws (in English), which allows the conflict to be explored and framed. Accordingly, the parties may be asked: *What happened? Between whom? When? Where? How? Why?*

Until relatively recently, conflict in schools was conceived as an embarrassing situation that needed to be concealed or disguised, as it was considered detrimental to the school's reputation. Today, conflicts are no longer interpreted as inherently negative, but rather as consubstantial to human nature and as opportunities for growth and learning. Consequently, students should be taught that conflict is natural and must be addressed in a constructive and peaceful manner.

Conflicts help us understand that reality is not the same for everyone, and mediation shows us that, even while remaining true to ourselves, we can reformulate our initial and individual expectations into shared, group-based expectations, and also

understand that situations can improve through collaboration between the parties involved.

In this regard, Yubero et al. (2022) point out that “the difficulty lies in failing to take advantage of the positive characteristics of confrontation in order to improve relationships between the people involved in the conflict. If conflict is not addressed properly, it may worsen and lead to aggressive behaviors” (p. 15).

### 7.1. The nature of conflict

In both everyday language and studies on mediation, it is common to associate mediation with conflict resolution. Mediation would thus be one method—among others—of resolving conflicts. Clearly, other methods exist: war, for example, is a violent way of ending a conflict. At the opposite extreme lies the nonviolent approach, within which mediation is situated.

Although mediation is often initially conceived as a nonviolent method for resolving conflict, this assumption implies, a priori, that mediation necessarily aims at resolving conflicts. Why, then, is the term *conflict resolution* so inextricably linked to mediation?

For Delpérée (1986), mediation presupposes, first and foremost, the existence of a conflictual situation. Ideas, feelings, and claims are opposed. “A breach opens up. Some will attempt to fill it, to bring viewpoints closer together, to reconcile the parties. But mediation implies a pre-existing disagreement” (p. 7).

Thus, mediation is fundamentally based on the existence of conflict. However, in order to define mediation as *conflict resolution*, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by *conflict*.

The first exercise of common sense is to distinguish between conflict and violence—to differentiate confrontation, which may promise fruitful outcomes, from violence, which consists of breaking the shrub and preventing its growth.

Attempting to eliminate conflicts at any cost amounts to attacking individual freedom, diversity, and democracy itself, since it implies exact obedience in the name of perfect order.

When blind obedience is demanded, it is usually in the name of an end presented as absolute, thereby invoking the doctrine that the end justifies the means.

Human action is, by definition, unpredictable, as it arises from individual freedom and is therefore always unexpected. Consequently, no one can anticipate its

outcome. To aim for the eradication of conflict as an objective is to constrain freedom itself.

From a psychological perspective, adulthood requires overcoming the emotional impact produced by witnessing conflict and recognizing that such conflict may lead to progress and transformation.

In a humanity without conflict—a kind of Eden where everything is bathed in excessive tenderness—individuals would remain infantilized. A child must confront parents and adults in order to become an adult.

Neutralizing conflict—that is, *de-affectivizing* it, understanding that conflict as such is neither good nor bad but neutral, and that it only becomes harmful when it finds no outlet—is therefore essential. This approach prevents us from falling back into the dangerous illusion of an idealized and nonexistent future and instead invites us to engage with present conflict and move toward a real and attainable future.

Conflict in itself is a useful reality. What is essential is to prevent its escalation and to ensure that violence does not infiltrate it. Violence is what perverts conflict, transforming legitimate adversaries into enemies who no longer seek to manage their conflict and restore balance to their relationship, but rather to eliminate the other. In such cases, resolving the conflict means allowing it to reach a new stage through means other than violence.

The term *conflict* has several meanings: combat, struggle, fight; armed confrontation; distressing or difficult situations; and problems or matters of discussion. In psychology, it refers to the coexistence of contradictory tendencies within an individual, capable of generating anguish.

In all cases, conflict refers to confrontation—whether psychological or physical—and its genesis is always related to the fact that the parties involved in a disagreement want the same thing (sometimes simultaneously) and believe they are entitled to it. Thus, in the social imaginary, conflict is perceived as something negative, producing fear, dissatisfaction, and discomfort.

A more suggestive concept is found in the Chinese word for *crisis*, which is written using two intertwined characters: one meaning *danger* and the other *opportunity*. A conflict may become either a grave or a shared treasure for those involved. In *The Art of War*, written by Sun Tzu around 500 BCE, conflict is recognized as an opportunity for change.

This is the meaning that mediation attributes to conflict: it offers the possibility of transformation and change. Constructive conflict management, as noted by Alzate (2002), strengthens interpersonal relationships, making it essential to understand how these relationships are built and which factors enable effective conflict management.

Reflection on the nature of conflict is therefore necessary if mediation is to be more than the mere application of conflict resolution techniques.

Along these lines, proper conflict management contributes to improving dialogue and strengthening personal relationships (Yubero et al., 2022).

As previously noted, mediation primarily operates in the domain of conflicts arising from human or interpersonal relationships. Mediation analyzes conflict as the outcome of interpersonal relationships and always occurs within the sphere of interactional conflicts—that is, actions taking place within relationships.

According to General Systems Theory, every system is composed of:

- Its elements,
- The relationships between them,
- The attributes of each element.

Within any system, there are relationships that attract and bind its elements together, making differences necessary for the system's continuity. Without differences, elements would merge indistinguishably, and the system would disappear. Antagonistic relationships are therefore necessary to maintain differentiation.

Antagonism is not inherently destructive, nor is it good or bad; it is one of the elements of evolution and a component of life itself. Antagonistic interactions coexist with attractive interactions in the search for a dynamic balance within the system. When this balance is disrupted, conflict arises.

From this broader perspective, the progress of any human society necessarily passes through conflict—a compulsory step toward improvement. The expression *conflict management* reflects the idea that conflict is no longer something to be eliminated, but rather a reality that can be managed well or poorly, depending on individual willingness.

Defining mediation as a means of dissolving conflicts implies viewing conflict as an enemy to be destroyed, thereby reducing mediation to something it is not. If the aim of mediation were simply to eliminate conflict between two parties at any cost, the mediator's efforts would no longer focus on protecting differences and maintaining them through agreement, but rather on erasing them in pursuit of an ideal of political correctness.

A genuine conceptualization of mediation requires a healthy conception of conflict—one that understands conflict as transition and openness, as a possible

dynamic of development, and as the capacity to generate new outcomes and new orders.

Can mediation, then, truly and fully be defined as conflict resolution? No. While mediation is commonly associated with conflict and often occurs after conflict has emerged, it can—and indeed should—also take place before conflict arises. Conflict prevention involves anticipation and creativity.

It is therefore necessary to recognize that mediation does not exist solely in conflict resolution but, more fundamentally, in conflict anticipation. This requires, on the one hand, clarity and advanced analytical capacity, and on the other, creative imagination to transform the seeds of conflict into positive outcomes.

Does mediation involve only conflict resolution and prevention? It can go even further. In non-school contexts, some mediators specialize in fostering partnerships between companies by helping them recognize mutual interests and providing the means to collaborate. This represents mediation aimed at creating a new entity, rather than preventing conflict.

Similarly, when an individual encourages two comparable and complementary associations to federate in order to enhance their effectiveness, mediation is taking place without any link to conflict prevention. In the school context, similar examples can be found—for instance, when several classroom groups are brought together through mediation to form a single school sports team.

## 7.2. Characteristics of conflicts

Once we have approached the nature and dynamics of conflict, we can move on to identifying the characteristics common to all conflicts:

- Conflict does not originate in only one party: it arises from the struggle between two or more parties that are incompatible at some point.
- Conflict unfolds as a process: it is born, grows, develops, and may either be resolved or remain in a state of standstill.
- Conflict is co-constructed by both parties: both are involved and actively participate in its development.
- The co-construction of conflict leads to another key idea: the management of conflict through the mediation process.

Another relevant aspect of conflict characteristics concerns its components. Every conflict includes a visible (public) part and a hidden part, commonly illustrated by the iceberg metaphor.

- In the visible part, we find positions and interests—also referred to as negotiable interests (Burton, 1990)—which are expressed through positions. These elements form the negotiation agenda and are ultimately reflected in the agreement. They constitute the material aspects of negotiation and respond to the questions “*what*” (positions) and “*why*” (interests).

- In the hidden part, we find non-negotiable needs, such as identity-related, ideological, or value-based elements. These respond to the question “*for what purpose*” (“*what for*”), and are not subject to negotiation.

### 7.3. Types of conflict

There is no single classification of conflicts; rather, multiple typologies exist. These classifications are useful for identifying the type of conflict we are facing. According to Moore (2012), the following types of conflict can be distinguished:

#### a) Data conflicts

Causes:

- Lack of information
- Misinformation
- Different opinions
- Different interpretations

Possible interventions:

- Agreement on which data are relevant
- Consensus on data collection methods
- Establishment of common criteria
- Consultation with external experts

## b) Interest conflicts

Causes:

- Competitive orientation
- Substantive interests
- Procedural interests
- Psychological interests

Possible interventions:

- Focus on interests rather than stated positions
- Use of objective criteria
- Integrative solutions that meet the needs of both parties

## c) Relationship conflicts

Causes:

- Intense emotions
- Misperceptions and stereotypes
- Poor communication
- Repetitive negative behavior

Possible interventions:

- Regulation of emotional expression
- Validation of feelings
- Improvement of communication
- Blocking negative behavior patterns

## d) Structural conflicts

Causes:

- Destructive behavioral patterns
- Power imbalances
- Inequitable control of resources
- Time constraints

Possible interventions:

- Definition and modification of roles
- Replacement of destructive behavior patterns

- Reallocation of control
- Modification of external pressures (e.g., time constraints)

#### e) Value conflicts

Causes:

- Different criteria regarding ideas or behavior
- Mutually exclusive valued goals
- Different lifestyles, ideologies, or religious beliefs

Possible interventions:

- Avoid defining the problem exclusively in value terms
- Allow parties to agree and disagree
- Identify a higher-level goal shared by both parties

### 7.4. The conflict cycle

All conflicts present a series of phases in their structure:

- Phase 1: Attitudes and beliefs, shaped by messages received from parents, teachers, the media, and personal experiences. These influence how individuals react when conflict arises.
- Phase 2: The conflict occurs.
- Phase 3: The response, that is, what individuals do once the conflict has emerged.

Responses within the conflict cycle may lead to escalation, stagnation, reaching a turning point, or de-escalation.

During escalation, conflict behavior intensifies, with increased expressions of anger, perceived threats, the formation of alliances, and limited communication skills.

Conflicts may reach stagnation due to four main causes:

- Failure of competitive tactics
- Exhaustion of resources

- Loss of social support
- Unacceptable costs

As noted by Alzate (2002), stagnation may represent a temporary pause in escalation, after which conflict may escalate again and reach a turning point, understood as the beginning of resolution or transformative conflict management. Alternatively, stagnation may involve regression, closely linked to loss of trust, disappointed expectations, or new perceptions. In no case does the conflict return to a previous phase; instead, it begins to transform through the parties' narratives, incorporating new perceptions.

A conflict is considered to have reached a turning point when the following appear:

- Symptoms and indicators of fatigue
- Reduced resistance to seeking solutions

During de-escalation, conflict behaviors begin to diminish and are characterized by:

- Direct but regulated emotional expression
- Reduction of threats
- Direct communication with those involved or recourse to a neutral third party
- Improved communication skills

Alzate (2002) identifies the following steps to facilitate de-escalation:

- Increased interaction
- Creation of pauses accompanied by small mutual concessions
- Generation of shared higher-level goals
- Unilateral concessions

Thus, de-escalation increasingly involves more collaborative and less competitive processes.

A key element in effective conflict management is trust, understood in a dual sense: mutual trust between the parties and trust in relation to the subject matter of the conflict. It is evident that during escalation phases, trust is reduced to a minimum and must be rebuilt in order to move toward de-escalation. Frequently, individuals react in the same way regardless of the nature of the conflict.

## 7.5. Conflict analysis and conflict management styles

To analyze a conflict, attention must be paid to its triadic structure, as described by Galtung (1996):

### People

- Parties involved
- Is there anyone who can help or interfere in resolution?
- Decision-making capacity
- Are parties grouped or allied?
- Emotions: How do you feel and how does the conflict affect you?
- Relationship: Importance of the relationship between the parties

### Issues

- Topics: matters under disagreement
- Negotiable issues
- Positions
- Interests
- Priorities: What is most concerning or urgent?

### Process

- Dynamics and evolution of the conflict, attempts at resolution, and outcomes
- Communication and channels used
- Power in the issue or in the relationship, and the basis of that power

- Interest in collaborative processes: What is the true objective regarding the conflict?

### Conflict management styles

Different conflict management styles can be identified based on two key dimensions:

- The importance attributed to the relationship
- The importance attributed to one's own interests

#### a) Competition / Confrontation

This style occurs when no importance is given to the relationship and one's own interests are fully prioritized.

Characteristics:

- Satisfaction of one's own interests at the expense of the other
- Win–lose orientation
- Greater importance given to outcomes than to relationships
- “I am right—the other is wrong”; focus solely on one's own reasons

#### b) Avoidance

This style occurs when neither the relationship nor one's own interests are considered important.

Characteristics:

- Apathy, withdrawal, or indifference
- Conflict is perceived as not worth managing
- Low concern for both outcomes and relationships
- Perceived cost is too high; withdrawal is preferred
- Denial of the problem as a form of avoidance

#### c) Accommodation

This style prioritizes the relationship above one's own interests.

Characteristics:

- High importance given to the relationship and low importance to outcomes
- The goal is to preserve the relationship at the expense of results
- Agreement is perceived as easier than disagreement

d) Compromise

This style assigns moderate importance to both the relationship and one's own interests.

Characteristics:

- Oriented toward mutual interests and negotiable relationships
- Search for a middle ground
- Partial win–partial loss
- Shared distribution of efforts

e) Collaboration

This style assigns maximum importance to both the relationship and one's own interests.

Characteristics:

- High importance given to both outcomes and relationships
- Win–win orientation
- No concern over who is right or wrong
- Search for a solution that is satisfactory for both parties

## 7.6. Foundations of Mediation

It is clear that a key issue for school coexistence is conflict management, which is precisely what mediation seeks to address. Mediation constitutes a constructive

response, necessary when the parties to a conflict do not know how to manage it on their own. It aims to reach agreements that bring the conflict to an end and prevent its reappearance in the future. With regard to bullying, mediation contributes to efforts aimed at reversing patterns of violent behavior.

Based on the points discussed above, mediation may be defined as “a formal process of peaceful conflict management in which the people involved actively participate together with an external person who accompanies them in exploring the conflict, communicating with one another, and cooperating to seek a mutually satisfactory and freely agreed-upon settlement” (Boqué, 2018, p. 18).

Following Álvarez-García (2015), the parties participate voluntarily and in person in the meeting with the mediator, who must be impartial and have no direct relationship with the conflict under consideration, nor manifest friendship or enmity with either party, nor any family ties. The parties turn to mediation because they are unable to manage the conflict by themselves; therefore, the mediator plays a key role in guiding the conflict toward a constructive outcome for all parties. “The mediator strives to be a third-party peacemaker who attempts to break the binary relationship of two adversaries who confront each other stubbornly and blindly, in order to establish another relationship that enables them to communicate through an intermediary” (Muller, 2013, p. 52).

### 7.7. Implementation, process and principles of school mediation

Mediation is a highly positive technique in schools for managing problems, especially considering that the parties must continue their relationship after the conflict (Torrego, 2017). In relation to bullying, one of the most relevant strategies is to seek allies and promote friendship and communication among students; mediation serves precisely this purpose, as it resolves conflicts between two opposing parties who voluntarily resort to a third person in order to reach an agreement in which everyone benefits (López & Sabater, 2018).

In educational contexts, mediation may take different forms according to two criteria: first, the level of formality with which the process is implemented; and second, who the protagonists are as disputants and mediators.

Regarding the level of formality, mediation may be informal or formal. In the latter case, some schools institutionalize mediation by offering an organization, regulations, and a stable, designed structure aimed at providing mediation with higher

expectations of success. In informal mediation, by contrast, encounters tend to be more spontaneous and flexible in their rules and development.

With regard to the protagonists as disputants and mediators, the following possibilities may be distinguished, following Álvarez-García (2015): a Global Model, in which there is a team of volunteer mediators from any group within the educational community (students, teachers, families, etc.); a Teacher–Student Model; Peer Mediation; a Teacher Mediator model; and External Mediation.

Taking as a reference the model proposed by Torrego (2017), the following phases of the process may be identified:

1. Preliminary phase. This involves premediation or an initial contact with the parties and an inquiry into what happened, in order to determine whether they wish to commit to the process.
2. Introduction and ground rules. The parties and the mediator begin the mediation by explaining the procedure and the basic rules that will govern it.
3. “Tell me.” A communication phase in which the parties speak with the mediator; respect and listening should prevail, the events are contextualized, and the parties’ perspectives on what occurred are presented.
4. Defining the problem. The aim is to identify the underlying positions of each party and the overlapping elements, in order to unblock the conflict.
5. Proposing solutions. The parties propose solutions to the conflict, assess the most appropriate ones, and are encouraged by the mediator.
6. The agreement. The mediator helps the parties define a clear and concrete agreement that is accepted by both.

Following Boqué (2018), the principles that characterize school mediation are:

1. Prevention. Intervention may occur even before the conflict escalates.
2. Voluntariness. No one participates out of obligation or pressure.
3. Confidentiality. The mediator commits to keeping confidential what has been discussed.
4. Free decision-making. The protagonists make decisions freely.
5. Self-determination (autocompositive). Participation cannot be delegated; it is always personal.

6. Empowerment. The parties develop competencies to take responsibility for their problems.

7. Absence of mediator power. Mediators do not judge, sanction, advise, or provide solutions.

8. Everyone wins. It is based on a win–win logic, in which the challenge is to cooperate to satisfy both parties' interests.

9. Ethics. It promotes moral development and values linked to a culture of peace.

10. Diligence. The time between the beginning and the end of mediation should be reasonably brief.

Moreover, Munné and Mac-Cragh (2006) propose that mediation may be defined through ten principles that follow a sequence. This sequence would also be the one a person should follow when dealing with conflict through mediation:

a) Internal principles/personal work:

1. Taking responsibility for one's own actions and their consequences.
2. Identifying one's desires, needs, and values; self-respect.
3. Humility in admitting that external help is often needed to solve one's difficulties.
4. The ability to learn from critical moments, embracing progress that does not always occur through an easy path.

b) Internal or external principles/interpersonal work:

5. Recognizing crises and conflicts as inherent to human beings.
6. Understanding the suffering produced by conflict.
7. Strengthening creativity grounded in reality.
8. Belief in one's own possibilities and in those of the other.
9. The need for privacy in difficult moments.

c) External principle/perspective on the other:

10. Respect for others; understanding the other's desires, needs, and values, even when they differ from one's own.

## 7.8. Mediation techniques

Within the mediation process, certain techniques may be distinguished, such as holding private meetings or excluding them. Fundamentally, mediation relies on communicative mechanisms, and its main tools are communication skills.

Based on Butts et al. (2014), the following are highlighted:

- Active listening: the way of responding to the person speaking that shows an effort to understand what is being said.
- Paraphrasing: after active listening to what each party has expressed, the mediator reformulates the content, highlighting the main messages and/or facts, acknowledging emotions, and removing negative connotations.
- Questioning: questions are asked to obtain information about the situation and about the parties' needs and interests.
- Brainstorming: aimed at stimulating personal and group creativity by promoting a joint and cooperative search for solutions.
- Role playing: this technique enables participants to simulate or interpret real-life situations. Participants play characters in an imagined situation in which they act and react based on the assumptions and beliefs they adopt. The scenario is not rehearsed in advance and the outcome is not predetermined; participants decide as they go along what will happen. Role reversal helps the parties adopt the other person's perspective and enact their role in the conflict situation.

If we focus specifically on the school context, mediation may be understood as a form of collaborative negotiation in which a third party—the mediator, often a student trained for this role—helps the parties in conflict reach an agreement or solution. Accordingly, the mediational stance seeks to promote communication in order to pursue a shared good for the parties.

Teaching mediation techniques to students as mediators offers a dual benefit for schools. On the one hand, it improves students' skills; on the other, it constitutes an autonomous process for resolving conflicts within the school, thus avoiding imposed solutions and preventing others from resolving conflicts on students' behalf.

When students develop the capacity for conflict resolution, they can transfer and apply these techniques to other contexts, such as the family, thereby becoming a peaceful relational strategy across multiple domains.

## 7.9. Types, conditions, and stages of school mediation

The incorporation of mediation in a school must be adapted to the school's conditions and possibilities. There is no single way to develop and implement mediation; however, its purpose is shared across approaches. According to Prada and López (2008), the following types of mediation may be implemented in schools:

- Spontaneous mediation: a student who witnesses a conflict offers to mediate at that moment.
- External mediation: when cases cannot be solved within the school, an external person is sought to resolve them.
- Institutionalized mediation: those who have had a conflict voluntarily turn to the school's Mediation Service. They may choose the mediator who will accompany them throughout the process. In this case, the mediator must be trained.
- Adult-led mediation: parents, teachers, and school staff receive training in school mediation in order to address conflicts that arise in the educational setting.
- Peer mediation: students are trained to resolve conflicts peacefully through mediation.
- Co-mediation: schools are advised to appoint two different mediators to address conflicts. In such cases, mediators are often one teacher and one student, or a teacher and a family member, etc.

Although different types of mediation may be implemented in schools, adapted to the real characteristics of each educational context, mediation inherently involves the following conditions:

- It is a peaceful system.
- It is voluntary.
- It is confidential.
- It is a systematic strategy.
- It fosters collaboration and communication between people.
- Through mediation, mediators facilitate dialogue between the parties.
- It seeks transformation.

- It is a process for the entire educational community.
- Solutions must be generated by the protagonists involved in the conflict.

Based on the model proposed by Floyer (1993), the stages of mediation—also applicable to the school context—may be organized into several phases:

Stage 1: Preparation. Designing the mediation strategy.

The mediator organizes how the process will be conducted.

Stage 2: Meeting of the parties in conflict at the negotiating table.

The mediator welcomes both parties equally and invites them to sit on opposite sides, with the mediator positioned in the center. A circular seating arrangement is recommended.

Stage 3: “Devil’s advocate” (mediator intervention).

The words used in the opening statement are important, and the mediator should address the necessary points with a confident and firm voice.

Key points include:

- Welcoming the parties and thanking them for being present.
- Communicating that the purpose of mediation is to help both parties reach a clearer understanding of the situation in dispute and of how the other party experiences it.
- Ensuring the parties understand that mediation is voluntary and that they are free to discontinue at any moment.
- Clarifying that any agreement reached depends solely on the shared will of both parties and will have the scope they decide.
- Advising the parties to seek legal counsel before, during, and after mediation.
- Stating that the mediator is impartial.
- Indicating that the mediator may terminate the mediation at any time without providing an explanation.

Stage 4: Venting. Facilitating communication.

In this part of the process, the mediator must use communication techniques so that the parties are able to communicate and listen to each other. Establishing clear communication is essential in mediation.

The mediator must continuously monitor the condition and quality of the dialogue established between the parties, as well as the mediator's own communication with them.

Stage 5: From chaos to order. Creating the climate.

At this stage, the mediator helps the parties move from chaos to order and contain negative emotions. The mediator should create harmony through a combination of verbal and nonverbal cues. However, in order to do so, the mediator must know how to influence the parties' behavior and must be able to recognize their behavioral patterns.

Stage 6: Identifying interests and needs.

The focus should always be on needs and interests, not on the respective positions, because needs and interests are the driving source of motivation behind each position: they reflect what the parties are ultimately trying to obtain.

Stage 7: Generating ideas to solve problems and overcoming barriers.

The mediator should focus on the process, while the parties provide creativity. The mediator must train and guide the parties so that they responsibly acknowledge their role in the dispute and find their own answers and solutions. Although this requirement is not always fully met, it is important because parties show greater commitment when they themselves have generated the ideas.

Stage 8: Implementing ideas. Developing the right proposal.

At this stage, ideas or possible solutions must be transformed into realistic and acceptable proposals. For this to happen, both parties must benefit, not only one. Therefore, the best-conceived solutions are those that satisfy both parties' interests and allow a mutually convenient agreement to be reached more quickly.

Stage 9: Putting it in writing. Formalizing the agreement.

The mediator should write the agreement on the disputed issues and request that the parties sign the document. If what has been agreed upon is sufficiently sound, it will remain in effect until it can be formally implemented.

#### 7.10. Peer mediation: student helpers

Conflict mediation and peer support in schools contribute to the management of school coexistence, since both functions are tools to regulate, transform, or manage conflicts from a peace-based perspective (Torrego et al., 2021). Peer mediation is the model most commonly used in the prevention of school bullying. Peer mediation consists of the help that peers provide in conflict situations, and students are prepared—starting at a certain age—to use their interpersonal capacities to support more vulnerable classmates. Students themselves usually select the student helpers, and families must approve their child’s participation as a helper.

In this regard, as Torrego (2018) notes, peer support systems are “a component of the support network established in the educational center, a network configured and organized within the school environment as a system responsible for protection and for the promotion and improvement of relationships” (p. 19).

The objective of implementing a student helper strategy is to reduce the number of aggressors, bystanders, and passive followers in conflict situations, and to reduce and prevent bullying that may occur in the school. Studies show (Galindo & Sanahuja, 2021; Villanueva et al., 2013) that peer mediation increases the number of students involved in bullying prevention. These students defend and protect their peers in conflict situations, generating multiple benefits for student mediators in particular and for the educational community in general (García-Raga et al., 2016).

In addition to reducing and preventing bullying, peer mediation also:

- Promotes understanding, collaboration, and the search for solutions in interpersonal problems.
- Reduces the use of punitive measures.
- Improves everyone’s sense of safety.
- Encourages student participation.
- Strengthens students’ values.

## 7.11. Emotional aspects and techniques in mediation

Understanding emotional functioning is essential for conflict management. Emotions are impulses that drive us to act—automatic response programs shaped by evolution. Emotions activate multiple systems in the body, cascading neurobiological responses oriented toward action and aimed at regulating vital functions. Brain areas responsible for emotional activity are activated before those responsible for conscious thought. When passions arise, the emotional mind overwhelms the rational mind.

Emotions are psychological processes that operate to restore balance in the face of threat. They serve self-protective and self-regulatory functions. In this sense, emotions are multidimensional and are characterized by:

- Cognitive level: what I perceive and how I interpret what I am feeling.
- Physiological level: the biological changes I experience.
- Behavioral level: where the emotion directs my behavior.
- Motor or expressive level: the bodily signals through which the emotion is expressed (general movements, posture, gestures, tone of voice, facial expression).

In conflict situations, there is a perception of threat; neurobiological systems prepared for action are triggered; bodily expression changes; and reasoning processes are altered.

Within the mediation process, emotions are especially valued. Conflicts affect everyone emotionally. We need others to understand how we feel and how the situation affects us, even when we adopt defenses to prevent that experience from surfacing.

It is essential for emotional “engineering” to be activated from the very first encounter in order to generate trust between the parties. The mediator gains credibility by creating a physical and emotional environment in which each participant feels safe and calm, which, in turn, increases willingness to engage in the process. In addition, the mediator must be able to grasp how the parties in conflict feel and present themselves, under conditions in which communication is inadequate and emotional tension is high. When a conflict is the starting point, the negative emotional level is very high; people tend to focus on the past, on the negative, and on what seems impossible.

Therefore, the mediator must help reduce emotional intensity and create effective communication channels in order to take the first steps toward overcoming the conflict. It is crucial that, throughout the process, attention is paid to emotional experience and expression so that, as needed, one of the components of emotion can be modified, leading to a shift from hostile or irrational thoughts to effective and positive communication. This, in turn, may change the perception of the conflict and consequently change behavior.

### *7.11.1. Emotional techniques*

#### a) Empathic listening

Interpersonal conflict is one of the basic forms of social life; to manage it, well-developed capacities for social communication and empathy are required, as well as problem-solving skills. Incorporating these competencies involves strengthening the ability to interact not only in society, but in life in general (Rozenblum de Horowitz, 2008).

Empathy is the capacity to connect emotionally with another person and grasp what they are feeling and how what they are experiencing affects them; it involves providing verbal and nonverbal signs that we have received their message, that we have “put ourselves in their shoes.”

This phenomenon is grounded in self-awareness; the more open we are to knowing and listening to our own emotions, the easier it becomes to understand others’ feelings. Knowing one’s own emotions is fundamental in order to change personal aspects that hinder relationships with others.

Although empathy is important in any type of conflict, it may be even more crucial when incompatible needs are at stake, because it can help parties move beyond self-interest and adopt particularly collaborative attitudes. It is also a skill that mediators should cultivate, since a full understanding of any conflict and the planning of activities to regulate it require understanding the parties’ feelings and offering opportunities for emotional regulation.

Empathic listening, therefore, reduces reactivity to messages that make us uncomfortable or that we do not share, because the aim is to understand them better so that, when the time comes, we can intervene more appropriately. The keys to empathic listening are: connecting with one’s own feelings, recognizing others’ legitimate needs, and giving and receiving compassion (Boqué, 2020).

The mediator must have emotional awareness and therefore:

- Perceive feelings and emotions accurately.
- Know their own thoughts and physical and behavioral reactions, and how these are interrelated.
- Quickly identify their emotional response and the mechanisms that work best for self-regulation.
- Mastering the above helps prevent the mediator from absorbing the tension transmitted by the parties and supports calm intervention.

When we emotionally understand another person—when we take in what is happening—mediation can achieve:

- The mediator becomes a trusted and significant person for the interlocutor, and thus the party in conflict opens channels for interaction and cooperative communication.
- The person feels valued because they feel listened to and understood.
- Self-esteem increases.
- There is greater willingness to listen and seek alternatives in conflict situations.
- Negative emotions cool down.
- Attacks and defenses are reduced.
- Throughout the mediation process, the mediator must build and develop empathy using the following tools:
  - Preparing one's attention to observe all behavioral indicators: body posture, facial expression, muscle tone, verbal tone and rhythm, and verbal expression.
  - Maintaining an open body posture and eye contact oriented toward the person.
  - Using affirmative and warm verbal expression.
  - Demonstrating that one has listened through paraphrasing. Examples: *“Do you mean you felt pressured?”* *“So you are saying you had to leave your home.”*

- Using expressions that show one has understood feelings. Examples: *“I understand,” “You are going through a very hard time,” “I can see how this affects you.”*

#### b) Arrangement of space and participants

Care must be taken to ensure that the physical setting in which the mediation session will take place is facilitative and welcoming and guarantees privacy, eliminating the coldness produced by large distances or physical barriers that may come between participants. Distance should be optimal.

Social distance for conversational interaction is considered to be approximately one meter. This is the usual distance in mediation. Less than sixty centimeters would be considered intimate distance. Attention should be paid to the distance the parties keep between each other and with the mediator: the lower the trust or the greater the insecurity, the more distance tends to increase beyond what is considered typical.

The arrangement of participants should ensure equality of conditions: an equilateral triangle when the mediator and two parties are present; a square, pentagon, and so on when more participants are involved.

#### c) Use of a flip chart

A flip chart is a vertical whiteboard placed on a tripod, on which paper pads are attached to record the development of the session: ideas, feelings, proposals, and agreements expressed. It is useful to have markers in various colors.

This type of board achieves the following in mediation:

- Holds each participant accountable for their participation.
- Gives protagonism to participants.
- Makes visible the relationship between perceptions, emotions, and behaviors.
- Places everyone on an equal footing.
- Values group work.
- Allows each participant to feel heard.
- Serves as the session’s memory.

The flip chart can be used live during the session with the parties present, or afterwards to summarize the previous session. It should be placed in a position that facilitates the mediator's task.

#### d) Framing

Once the parties have agreed to participate in mediation, it is time to define operating rules and create an emotional climate that facilitates intervention.

It is important to clearly state participation time and the intervention method, along with the rules that must be followed so that all participants are respected and a climate of neutrality and impartiality is maintained.

It is not possible to determine in advance how long the process will last. With respect to session duration, each mediator has an optimal time; nevertheless, it is common to work for approximately two hours.

If private meetings are held with one party, timing should be clarified so that the other party is included and knows what to expect, ensuring equal conditions.

#### e) Legitimization

Legitimization is the process through which all parties participating in mediation are recognized as capable of influencing the change being pursued.

For Díez and Tapia (1999), legitimization is a key process for fostering a collaborative attitude between the parties and requires a sequence: legitimization by the mediator of the parties in conflict, individual legitimization by each party, mutual legitimization between them, and the legitimization that the parties grant to the mediator.

#### f) Managing anger, frustration, and negative emotions

This involves using coping and "cooling-down" techniques for intense negative emotions in order to prepare the mind and body so that attack and defense do not dominate interaction. Instead, attention should focus on the descriptive expression of needs and demands, active listening, agreement proposals, and the application of effective and positive communication competencies.

The first line of coping must be carried out by the mediator, who must remain aware of the importance of staying calm in the face of attacks and not becoming absorbed by the tension they generate.

The mediator must apply emotional self-control techniques so that verbal expression and bodily response are coherent. Verbal expression should be characterized by a calm rhythm, affirmative yet warm intonation, and expressive language free of negative connotations. This response enables the mediator to establish initial boundaries that begin to reduce the parties' emotional intensity.

The second line of coping consists of maintaining emotional and verbal competencies so that the parties' emotional response cools and gives way to conscious and rational expression that enables agreements.

There are many recommendations and guides for anger management. Impulsive and irascible individuals must understand that they can control their own actions. To facilitate this task, they are sometimes encouraged to anticipate and identify the facts, situations, comments, or attitudes of the other party that foster hostility, in order to apply breathing control strategies, relaxation, or immediate cooling techniques as soon as they perceive the onset of those triggers. Reflection on the negative consequences of a destructive reaction for the process is also recommended, particularly when the objective is to realign goals.

The desire to attack the other party increases conflict more than it reduces it. To better understand the detrimental impact of anger on regulation processes, the use of specific strategies is recommended. For example, with the "fishbowl technique," the angry party imagines the situation from the outside, like a fish in its bowl, and reflects on both positions in order to plan a solution that does not damage the relationship. If the "going to the balcony technique" is used, in order to take distance and gain perspective, the person should step away, assess the situation, consider why it is happening, and what they might propose upon returning so that conflict does not escalate and the relationship is not further harmed. Therefore, it is important to:

- Recognize that we are becoming aggressive by listening to bodily sensations.
- Become aware that we are going to do something to avoid losing control.
- Notice the thoughts that trigger the first discharge of anger.

Within cognitive techniques for coping with anger, self-instructions should be highlighted:

- They are phrases we say internally, formulated positively within a realistic framework.
- They reinforce prior attitudes of safety and confidence.
- They are task-oriented.

- They aim to modify negative emotions that may arise during action.
- They strengthen skills for coping with the situation and achieving success.

According to Costa and López (1991), when dealing with irritated individuals it is advisable to:

- Acknowledge the person's irritation and show that you understand them.
- Listen carefully.
- Before speaking, wait until the person has expressed their irritation.
- Maintain a calm tone of voice and lower volume.
- Empathize with the irritated person without necessarily agreeing, once hostility has decreased.
- Help the person cope by reframing their thinking.

The intervention sequence when dealing with anger would be:

- The mediator activates self-control.
- Listen.
- Empathize.
- Provide reinforcement.
- Express feelings.
- Make requests using "I-messages."

When individuals prepared for confrontation begin an interview with emotional tension and the mediator is able to recognize some positive aspects they possess, they are often surprised and become more open to the new context that has been created (Suarez, 2008).

#### 7.12. The contribution of school mediation

The inclusion of mediation entails a cultural shift within the school and toward an integral education of the person, emphasizing coexistence as a model based more on responsibility and reparation than on punishment (Álvarez-García, 2015). This requires rethinking the teaching role and education itself. Introducing mediation into

teaching practice promotes changes in personal attitudes toward the various conflict dynamics that commonly arise, grounded in an ethics of communication and dialogue. It enables the systematic establishment of values education linked to the peaceful management of conflicts, including:

- Participation
- Respect
- Solidarity
- Cooperation

The contribution of mediation to the educational field may be defined as follows:

- Dialogic communication
- Creative and critical reflection
- Self-esteem
- Self-understanding and empathy
- Respect for diversity
- Autonomy
- Skills to identify, understand, and analyze conflict situations
- The capacity to change reality
- Restorative practice

Restorative practices acquire vital importance, and their central premise is that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make desirable changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than doing things to them or for them (Boqué, 2020).

In this regard, after implementing mediation from a restorative perspective, it is possible to prevent and reduce violence in student relationships, while also empowering students with autonomy and competencies to resolve conflicts, as well as with the social and personal skills that life will increasingly demand in the future.

## 8. KEY PRINCIPLES OF INTERVENTION

### 8.1. Whole-school intervention

It is well established that in order to stop this type of violent behavior, it is necessary for all members of the educational community to become involved (Yubero et al., 2022). Therefore, intervention and preventive action against school bullying in educational institutions must place special emphasis on the whole-school dimension, with the involvement and participation of the entire educational community, insofar as “school coexistence constitutes a dimension that shapes participation” (Monge & Torrego, 2021, p. 24). Action is needed in relation to:

- The framework of rules and norms, including a disposition to resolve conflicts through mediation and the involvement of all educational agents in the design and implementation of such norms.

The transgression of rules by students is one of teachers’ greatest concerns regarding school coexistence (Rodríguez & Ruiz, 2019) and has an impact on the quality of students’ learning (Kapa & Gimbert, 2018).

To help prevent this, it is necessary to develop norms democratically, generating a shared commitment to improving coexistence. Following Arribas and Torrego (2006), democratic rule-making provides the following benefits:

- Members of the school community become a central system that creates a shared sense of responsibilities, roles, and interests.
- Diversity is conceived as an opportunity that enriches coexistence.
- Participation fosters the development of autonomous morality, collaboration, and commitment to shared goals.
- Shared rule-making constitutes a genuine exercise in democratic participation and citizenship education, as well as a systematic opportunity to participate in school organizational activities.
- Coexistence norms are a final product whose process of elaboration is continuous and experiential.
- The curriculum, which should incorporate affective–social dimensions and not only the instructional dimension.

Coexistence requires the development of competencies for democratic living together, which necessarily implies knowing how to participate, cooperate, be

responsible, be tolerant, possess social competencies, be supportive, and learn to manage interpersonal conflicts peacefully (García-Raga & López, 2011).

- Methodology and assessment, promoting cooperative learning, understood—following Johnson and Johnson (2016)—as learning situations in which students’ goals are closely linked, such that each student can achieve their goals if and only if others also achieve theirs. This is a strategy that strengthens affective bonds among students and between teachers and students, while respecting attention to diversity. Regarding assessment, it is important that it be oriented toward improving teaching–learning processes and toward the participation and involvement of the entire educational community.
- Improving school climate, working on welcoming practices for students, families, and teachers, as well as attention to diversity and inclusion, respecting students’ individuality, interests, motivations, and learning pace.
- The community and social framework. The school is not an entity isolated from its social context; rather, it is directly interconnected with and bidirectionally influenced by it. Therefore, the social environment and the relationship with the broader educational community are of vital importance.

## 8.2. Targeted Intervention Strategies

Direct intervention with students is also of significant importance, insofar as it fosters socio-affective development and helps establish interpersonal relationships based on respect, communication, and dialogue. However, in cases where bullying has already occurred by the time intervention begins, it is important that the behavior does not go unaddressed and that the aggressor assumes responsibility for the harm caused (Yubero et al., 2022).

There are pioneering programs such as the Pikas Method, implemented once bullying has already taken place (Fernández, 1999). However, what is particularly needed are programs that are preventive, rather than those that merely propose how to intervene once the damage has been done. Programs are required that genuinely promote the development of social skills and emotional education, enabling students to develop a positive self-concept and knowledge of others through mutual respect,

and that are built around prosocial values, offering students the opportunity to see diversity as something unique and special (Lacárce, 2014).

From this point onward, when actions or activities addressing bullying are developed, they are carried out under the “umbrella” of a program. A distinction is often made—perhaps somewhat artificially—between so-called intervention programs (to respond to bullying behaviors already present, remedial in nature) and prevention programs (to anticipate and avoid their occurrence in the future). In this regard, we may understand an intervention program as one that may also be oriented toward prevention—or, indeed, is a prevention program not itself an intervention? In other words, programs are implemented through concrete interventions, activities, actions, or procedures following a plan. In addition, certain interventions may be designed to address bullying dynamics that have already been detected; therefore, although the approach may be preventive to some extent, the nature of many interventions is mixed, aimed at addressing all identified needs: eradicating bullying dynamics and/or strengthening classroom coexistence to prevent them in the future.

To develop prevention and/or response programs, it is important to understand the intrinsic functioning of each school and the particular characteristics of its student body, and to work on different fronts where the protagonists interact (Merayo, 2013).

Conflicts arising in the school setting require a detailed analysis of the characteristics and the living ecosystem of each school, which entails taking into account values, the social framework, the educational goals pursued, organizational aspects, and the particularities of the protagonists involved, among other factors. In short, if the aim is to address bullying with the goal of progressively reducing its negative consequences until it is completely eliminated from school life, it is essential to consider the idiosyncrasy discussed above. Along these lines, any prevention effort should begin from the following premise: the commitment and support of all protagonists within the educational community is required. In this regard, Ware (1986) notes that it would be ideal to foster functional groups of citizens capable of acting as active and responsible agents of their own progress, using as means: joint inquiry into local problems, planning and implementation of agreed-upon solutions by themselves, and voluntary coordination with other groups and with official authorities in order to achieve community well-being.

Although the above must be kept in mind, a good way to address the reality of bullying is to develop an anti-bullying program involving all members of the school community. Nevertheless, the work in this book will focus on outlining and framing the general phases or stages that should guide a future program or project of this kind, through the implementation of activities or actions:

- Initial assessment: This phase precedes any prevention effort regarding bullying. The reality of each school provides basic information upon which any initiative to combat school violence must be built. It enables a basic identification of needs that must be addressed.

Analyzing each school separately is a necessary prerequisite before setting objectives, seeking resources, planning strategies, or using techniques; it is part of the unavoidable debate that must be initiated in the educational community and should lead to appropriate decision-making. This stage aims for everyone who composes and in some way belongs to the educational institution to become aware of the existence of the bullying phenomenon, while also assessing its level of incidence in order to take appropriate measures.

Within this diagnostic stage, the following steps are included: identifying needs by delimiting the problem, establishing priorities, providing a thorough rationale and situating the program, reviewing the literature, and finally, clearly anticipating who the program will be implemented with and what resources will be required.

- Planning: This consists of establishing the guiding procedure for implementing the program. It involves developing an intervention plan that asks: *What should be done in a school where bullying occurs?* It requires specifying the objectives and action strategies that will help solve the problem, determining *who* will carry them out, and *how* follow-up and monitoring will be conducted.
- Implementation/execution: This phase involves applying the project, paying attention to its development, follow-up, and control.
- Evaluation: This stage should answer the question: *What have we achieved?* Broadly speaking, it consists of comparing what was intended through the program or intervention (objectives) with what was actually achieved after its implementation.

### *8.2.1. Desirable objectives*

The two main objectives pursued through the implementation of programs are: first, to eliminate or, at least, minimize the harm derived from bullying actions within the school setting after an initial diagnosis; and second, to prevent the emergence of future problems associated with bullying dynamics and to raise awareness of this issue.

Interventions should aim first to address what Olweus calls “direct bullying,” that is, “relatively open attacks on another student and may include words, gestures, facial

expressions, and physical contact.” Subsequently, they should also address the reduction and prevention of what this author terms “indirect bullying,” referring to students who, even without suffering direct intimidation, “are lonely and isolated and do not constitute the target of open attacks by other students” (Olweus, 2006, p. 85).

From the needs identified in the initial diagnosis, the following specific objectives may be derived, which—given their explicit intention of promoting peaceful and respectful coexistence—should be considered as goals of any action:

- Recognize conflicts as a natural part of life, but one that must be resolved through nonviolent means.
- Learn to communicate based on two key premises: respect for others and dialogue.
- Transform a negative and violent context into a new one that fosters a peaceful climate and dialogue.
- Promote a fair, peaceful, and cohesive social environment.
- Learn to present oneself as one is, sharing emotions and feelings, fostering self-affirmation and valuing others.
- Refrain from participating in acts of mistreatment and systematically reject them whenever they arise or are observed.

Broadly speaking, intervention programs aim to create a positive school climate, establishing channels for peaceful coexistence in which harassment and intimidation give way to dialogue and understanding. This would lead to:

Greater feelings of safety at school for victims, greater self-confidence, and the sense of being liked by at least one or two peers and being accepted by them. For aggressors, functioning better would entail fewer aggressive reactions to the environment in which they operate, and asserting themselves in a more socially acceptable way. Essentially, this means mitigating aggressors’ negative and hostile reactions while strengthening the positive aspects of their behavior. (Olweus, 2006, p. 86)

### *8.2.2. Scope of application, resources, and timeline*

In this section, three specific aspects will be addressed: (a) the audience or target group to whom the activities are directed, (b) the resources required, and (c) the duration considered appropriate for their implementation and development.

### *Participants*

By *participants* we mean the set of people at whom the activities are directed. It is necessary to specify the school years to which the program will be applied and to consider students' ages or developmental stage.

Clearly, although actions and activities should be flexible rather than rigid, before implementing them it is advisable to pay attention to the particular characteristics of the specific school institution in which they will be carried out. As already noted, it is not possible to successfully implement an improvement action without taking into account the distinctive features of the members of each educational community as a whole. In some cases, this may require modifying certain actions included in the proposed activities in order to adapt them to the school's particular culture.

### *Resources*

With regard to resources, a distinction is made between material resources and human resources. The former refer primarily to the school's facilities where the actions or activities will be implemented, as well as to the instruments, materials, and tools needed for their delivery. Such resources, if required, are clearly specified in the proposed sessions and/or activities.

Human resources refer to the people required to implement the activities. In this case, a coordinator or facilitator would be needed. In general, to implement activities of this kind, it is advisable to have, on the one hand, an education professional (for example, from educational guidance services or an external agent) who would act as the school's technical expert and be responsible for presenting the activities to the school and coordinating them—if implementation is decided—together with the other members of the educational community. On the other hand, and as the central axis, the main protagonists would be the students, teachers, families, and the rest of the social agents who make up the educational community.

Students in schools are not merely an audience to whom activities are applied; rather, they are considered active agents—objects and, at the same time, subjects of their own transformation. They will carry out the activities while also having the flexibility to adapt them and introduce new ones as they analyze the specific reality surrounding them, together with the rest of the personnel involved in the transformation and improvement of their educational context.

## *Timeline*

For the implementation of activities, it is necessary and essential to organize the timing of each activity. This should be considered flexibly according to each context or specific group. Depending on each school's availability, a selection will be made of the activities considered most significant and best aligned with the needs detected. Activities of this nature are commonly implemented in approximately three to six sessions in everyday school practice, usually during tutorial periods, although programs can be implemented more thoroughly.

### 8.3. Design and Development of an Intervention Program

Following the previous framing of the general phases that should guide a program, these are specified through a set of interrelated activities and a coherent plan to support them, with the aim of achieving specific goals and objectives.

Every program entails a series of activities with a defined duration. Programs combine the use of different human, material, and/or technical resources. Any program must achieve certain results, in accordance with the objectives established in its design and conceptualization.

The basic components of a program are:

- A set of activities and actions to be undertaken.
- Actions that are not spontaneous, but rather ordered and planned.
- The combined use of different types of resources.
- Orientation toward achieving a previously established objective or outcome.
- Implementation within a specific time and space.
- Justification based on the existence of a problem situation that is intended to be modified.
- Drafting a program offers the following advantages:
- It specifies and organizes actions, allowing work to be carried out in an orderly manner.
- It provides a reference for follow-up and for monitoring and evaluating results.

- It facilitates participation: on the one hand, because it helps communicate, discuss, and agree on what is to be done; and on the other, because it allows the incorporation of partial contributions from many people.

To develop an intervention program, the following basic outline may be used:

- Rationale or justification. This section presents the criteria and reasons that justify conducting the program. It explains the program's foundations, how it emerged, the needs it addresses, and the reasons motivating it. In short, it involves identifying and analyzing the problem the program intends to solve.
- General and specific objectives. This involves indicating what the program seeks to achieve, or what effects are intended through its implementation. A well-formulated set of main and specific objectives is the guarantee of a sound project, since they provide coherence to the set of activities comprising the program, as well as to resources, materials, time, and so on. The general objective is the program's central purpose and there may be one or several general objectives. Specific objectives, in turn, are the steps required to achieve or consolidate the general objective.
- Activities. All activities must be linked to a specific objective and, therefore, to a general objective. The implementation of any program presupposes the specification of a set of activities and entails the completion of concrete tasks.
- Methodology. The methodology to be used in the development of a program is typically defined as:
  - Dynamic and adaptable, allowing adjustments at each moment to the specific characteristics of each individual.
  - Active, based on personal observation and one's own experience.
  - Reflective, using reflection and analysis as elements that strengthen knowledge and constructive criticism.
  - Creative, enabling the expression of diverse potentials.
  - Participatory, consistently fostering participation in the proposed actions and activities.

- Target group. It is necessary to describe and identify precisely the participants to whom the program is directed. In this case, in addition to students, teachers, families, and social agents should be taken into account.
- Setting. This refers to the physical context in which the program will take place. It is essential that it provide the necessary conditions for the individual or group to feel comfortable. For this, all the elements and resources to be used must be available.
- Timeline. As noted previously, one of the essential aspects of program design is determining the duration of each activity, as well as the overall duration of the program. It must be realistic and operational.
- Evaluation and follow-up. Evaluation is part of the intervention itself and should be carried out in a formative (ongoing) manner, providing feedback and reorienting each action throughout the sessions. This should occur through reflection and group discussion, commenting on difficulties and the contributions generated. Evaluation indicators (instruments that allow verification of progress toward the proposed objectives) will include the extent to which intervention objectives are met, the degree of involvement and participation, and the improvement proposals generated.
- Conclusions and results.

## 9. EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

As a result of the growing awareness generated by research on bullying, interventions began to be promoted with the aim of eradicating violent behaviors and improving the school environment and coexistence.

The prevention and intervention of bullying have evolved from approaches focused exclusively on the individual toward comprehensive, ecological, and evidence-based models that conceptualize bullying as a social and group phenomenon. At the international level, various programs have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the prevalence of bullying, improving school climate, and strengthening individual and collective protective factors (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Gaffney et al., 2019).

These programs are typically structured across multiple levels of intervention, including the classroom, the school as an institution, the family, and, in some cases, the wider community.

The most relevant programs worldwide are described in depth below, with attention to their theoretical foundations, components, and empirical evidence.

### 9.1. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is one of the pioneering and most influential programs in the prevention of school bullying at the international level. It was developed by Dan Olweus in Norway beginning in the 1980s, following a series of adolescent suicides linked to bullying situations that prompted a large-scale national intervention. Since then, the OBPP has become a reference model, laying the conceptual and methodological foundations for numerous subsequent anti-bullying programs (Olweus et al., 2007; Olweus & Limber, 2010).

The program is grounded in an ecological and multilevel conception of bullying, understanding school bullying as a relational phenomenon that must be addressed simultaneously at different levels: the school, the classroom, the peer group, the family, and the individual. Unlike approaches focused exclusively on punishment, the OBPP prioritizes prevention, early intervention, and the modification of school climate by promoting clear and consistent anti-bullying norms.

### *9.1.1. Theoretical foundations of the OBPP*

The OBPP is based on Olweus's theoretical and empirical work on bullying, which defines school bullying as intentional, repeated aggressive behavior based on a power imbalance. From this framework, the program emphasizes the importance of disrupting the power imbalance that sustains victimization by increasing protection for victims and reducing opportunities for reinforcement of aggressors (Olweus, 1993).

In addition, the OBPP incorporates principles from social control theory and social learning theory, highlighting the role of adults—particularly teachers—in norm regulation, active supervision, and the transmission of clear messages rejecting bullying. Consistency in adult responses is considered a key element in weakening bullying dynamics and fostering a safe school climate (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

### *9.1.2. Components and levels of intervention of the OBPP*

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is structured across four interrelated and complementary levels of intervention:

1. School-level intervention. This includes systematic assessment of bullying through questionnaires, the creation of an anti-bullying committee, the development of clear school policies, teacher training, and improved supervision in high-risk areas (playgrounds, hallways, cafeterias).

2. Classroom-level intervention. This focuses on establishing clear anti-bullying rules, holding regular classroom meetings to discuss coexistence, and implementing activities aimed at strengthening peer relationships and promoting prosocial group norms.

3. Individual-level intervention. This involves specific interventions with victims and aggressors, as well as with their families, aimed at stopping bullying, protecting victims, and modifying aggressive behavior. These interventions are based on direct communication, ongoing monitoring, and adult support.

4. Community and family level. This level promotes family involvement and broader educational community engagement in bullying prevention, reinforcing consistency between school and family messages.

This multilevel structure enables a comprehensive intervention that addresses both individual and contextual factors sustaining school bullying.

### *9.1.3. OBPP as a bullying prevention strategy*

From a preventive perspective, the OBPP functions primarily as a primary and secondary prevention strategy. In terms of primary prevention, it contributes to creating a school climate characterized by clear norms, active supervision, and positive relationships. In secondary prevention, it facilitates early detection and systematic intervention in emerging cases of bullying, preventing their chronicity (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

One of the distinctive elements of the OBPP is its emphasis on adult responsibility, recognizing that the active and consistent involvement of teachers and the school institution is essential for reducing implicit tolerance of bullying. This approach has had a decisive influence on the design of anti-bullying educational policies in numerous countries.

### *9.1.4. Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the OBPP*

The effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been supported by multiple empirical evaluations. Longitudinal studies and large-scale assessments have shown significant reductions in bullying and victimization rates, as well as improvements in school climate, perceived safety, and students' attitudes toward coexistence (Olweus et al., 2007; Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses place the OBPP among anti-bullying programs with consistent effects, particularly when implemented with high fidelity and strong institutional support. However, effect sizes tend to be moderate, underscoring the need for rigorous and sustained implementation (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Gaffney et al., 2021).

### *9.1.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

Beyond reducing bullying, the OBPP contributes to improving the quality of relationships between students and teachers, strengthening classroom group cohesion, and increasing perceptions of safety within the school environment. These positive effects have an indirect impact on students' emotional well-being and academic performance (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

The program has also played a fundamental role in social and educational awareness of bullying, providing a solid conceptual framework that has guided research and professional practice for decades.

### *9.1.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Despite its historical relevance and empirical foundation, the implementation of the OBPP requires a high level of institutional commitment, continuous teacher training, and systematic monitoring of actions. The literature indicates that program outcomes depend largely on implementation fidelity and consistency in adult responses (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

Moreover, some authors highlight the convenience of complementing the OBPP with interventions more strongly focused on peer group processes and the development of socioemotional competencies, particularly in contemporary educational contexts characterized by increased relational complexity.

## 9.2. KiVa Anti-Bullying Program

The KiVa Anti-Bullying Program is one of the most widely recognized and empirically supported bullying prevention programs at the international level. It was developed in Finland by a research team led by Christina Salmivalli and colleagues at the University of Turku, with support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. The program is based on a group-based and ecological conception of bullying, understanding that bullying behavior is largely maintained by peer group dynamics and the roles played by bystanders (Salmivalli, 2010; Kärnä et al., 2011).

Unlike models focused exclusively on the victim or the aggressor, KiVa emphasizes modifying group social norms, reducing the social reinforcement received by aggressors, and promoting active supportive behaviors toward victims. This approach has positioned KiVa as an international benchmark in educational policies for bullying prevention.

### *9.2.1. Theoretical foundations of the KiVa program*

KiVa is grounded in socioecological models and peer influence theories, which conceptualize bullying as a relational phenomenon sustained by processes of status, power, and social approval. Research by Salmivalli and colleagues has shown that group reactions—particularly those of bystanders—are decisive for the continuation or cessation of school bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 2010).

The program also incorporates principles of social learning and socioemotional education, promoting the development of empathy, perspective-taking, and collective

responsibility. From this perspective, bullying is not addressed merely as an individual deviant behavior, but as a group dynamic that can be transformed through systematic educational interventions.

### *9.2.2. Components and structure of the KiVa Anti-Bullying Program*

KiVa has a comprehensive and multilevel structure composed of universal and selective actions:

1. Universal actions (primary prevention). Directed at all students, these include a structured curriculum with lessons adapted to different age groups, focusing on recognizing bullying, developing empathy, analyzing group roles, and fostering behaviors that defend victims. These lessons are supported by interactive materials, guided discussions, and digital resources.

2. Selective actions (secondary prevention). Activated when specific bullying cases are detected, these include structured interventions with the victim and the aggressor, as well as with the peer group, aimed at stopping bullying behavior and restoring more balanced social relationships.

3. Teacher and school involvement. The program includes specific teacher training and the creation of KiVa teams within schools, responsible for coordinating actions, monitoring cases, and ensuring institutional coherence.

4. Use of technological resources. KiVa incorporates digital tools, such as educational games and online questionnaires, which facilitate student engagement and continuous assessment of school climate.

### *9.2.3. KiVa as a bullying prevention strategy*

From a preventive perspective, KiVa operates primarily as a primary prevention strategy, modifying group social norms and reducing implicit tolerance of bullying. At the same time, its protocols for responding to identified cases enable effective secondary prevention, avoiding the chronicity of victimization (Kärnä et al., 2011).

One of the program's most innovative elements is its emphasis on the active role of bystanders, who are trained to intervene safely and supportively. Evidence shows that when bystanders stop reinforcing aggressors and support victims, the likelihood of bullying continuation decreases significantly (Salmivalli, 2010).

#### *9.2.4. Empirical evidence on program effectiveness*

KiVa is among the anti-bullying programs with the strongest empirical support. Randomized controlled trials and longitudinal studies have demonstrated significant reductions in bullying and victimization prevalence, as well as improvements in students' psychological well-being and school climate (Kärnä et al., 2011; Kärnä et al., 2013).

Meta-analyses and systematic reviews place KiVa among the most effective programs internationally, with effect sizes above the average compared to other school-based interventions (Gaffney et al., 2021). These effects are sustained when the program is implemented with fidelity and institutional support.

#### *9.2.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

In addition to reducing school bullying, KiVa contributes to the development of socioemotional competencies such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, and social responsibility. It also strengthens students' sense of belonging and perceptions of safety within the school environment—key factors for students' emotional and academic adjustment (Salmivalli, 2010).

The program also empowers teachers by providing clear, evidence-based tools for bullying prevention and management, fostering a coherent school culture committed to positive coexistence.

#### *9.2.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Despite its strong empirical foundation, KiVa implementation requires careful adaptation to the sociocultural context and sustained institutional commitment. Implementation fidelity, teacher training, and leadership team involvement are critical factors for its effectiveness (Kärnä et al., 2013).

Moreover, although KiVa has shown high effectiveness in European contexts, its transfer to other educational systems requires curricular and organizational adjustments that respect local student and school characteristics.

### 9.3. Second Step Program

The Second Step Program is a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program developed by the Committee for Children and widely implemented internationally, especially in the United States, Europe, and Australia. Although it was not designed exclusively as an anti-bullying program, scientific evidence shows that its systematic implementation is associated with significant reductions in aggressive behavior, peer violence, and school bullying, as well as with sustained improvements in school climate and students' socioemotional adjustment (Espelage et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017).

The program is based on the premise that bullying prevention requires the early and continuous development of socioemotional competencies such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, perspective-taking, and peaceful conflict resolution. From this perspective, Second Step is positioned as a universal, preventive, and well-being–promoting intervention, aligned with primary prevention models and ecological approaches to school coexistence.

#### *9.3.1. Theoretical foundations of the Second Step Program*

The Second Step Program draws on theoretical frameworks from developmental psychology, social learning, and socioemotional education, integrating evidence linking deficits in emotional and social competencies to a higher likelihood of involvement in aggressive behaviors and victimization (Durlak et al., 2011).

One of the program's central assumptions is that bullying can be effectively reduced when students learn to recognize and regulate their emotions, accurately interpret others' intentions, and respond nonviolently to conflict situations. This approach is consistent with models that emphasize the role of impulsivity, low empathy, and hostile attribution biases in the development of aggressive behavior (Espelage et al., 2015).

In addition, the program incorporates a bystander-oriented perspective, fostering social responsibility and prosocial peer intervention in bullying situations, in line with group-based models of bullying (Salmivalli, 2010).

#### *9.3.2. Components and structure of the program*

The Second Step Program offers a sequenced curriculum adapted to different educational stages, from early childhood education through secondary school. Its main components include:

1. A structured SEL curriculum, organized into progressive lessons addressing empathy, emotional management, self-control, responsible decision-making, and interpersonal relationship skills.
2. Training in aggression and violence prevention, which teaches specific strategies to manage anger, resolve conflicts, and reject bullying behaviors.
3. Bullying and relational aggression prevention, through specific activities that help students identify bullying situations, support victims, and seek adult help effectively.
4. Teacher and whole-school involvement, ensuring coherence between classroom lessons and school-wide coexistence norms.
5. Family participation, through complementary materials that reinforce at home the competencies developed in the classroom.

This structure allows the program to act transversally on both students and the school context, promoting the generalization of socioemotional learning to everyday school life.

### *9.3.3. Second Step as a bullying prevention strategy*

From a preventive standpoint, the Second Step Program is mainly oriented toward primary prevention, by reducing individual risk factors such as impulsivity, low empathy, or difficulties in emotional regulation. However, it also includes elements of secondary prevention, by facilitating the early identification of problematic behaviors and intervention with students who present greater socioemotional difficulties.

The explicit teaching of skills such as cognitive and affective empathy, emotional self-regulation, and peaceful conflict resolution contributes to reducing the likelihood of violence escalation and weakening the relational dynamics that sustain bullying (Durlak et al., 2011; Espelage et al., 2015).

### *9.3.4. Empirical evidence on program effectiveness*

The effectiveness of the Second Step Program has been supported by numerous experimental and quasi-experimental studies, as well as meta-analyses. Longitudinal research has shown significant reductions in aggressive behavior, behavioral problems,

and victimization, along with improvements in empathy, self-control, and students' social competence (Espelage et al., 2015).

Meta-analyses of SEL programs indicate that interventions such as Second Step produce sustained positive effects on prosocial behavior and reductions in antisocial behavior, including bullying (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). These effects are stronger when the program is implemented with fidelity and integrated within a broader school-wide policy on coexistence.

#### *9.3.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

Beyond its impact on bullying prevention, the Second Step Program contributes to students' comprehensive development, improving emotional adjustment, interpersonal relationships, and academic performance. Evidence suggests that strengthening socioemotional competencies is associated with greater psychological well-being and more positive long-term developmental trajectories (Taylor et al., 2017).

The program is particularly relevant for students in contexts of social vulnerability, where deficits in socioemotional skills may amplify the risk of involvement in peer violence dynamics.

#### *9.3.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Among the main considerations for implementing the Second Step Program is the need for systematic and sustained delivery of the curriculum, as well as adequate teacher training. The literature indicates that the strongest effects are achieved when the program is coherently integrated into school culture and complemented by other institutional strategies for bullying prevention (Espelage et al., 2015; Gaffney et al., 2021).

Although the program has a solid empirical base, its effectiveness depends largely on implementation fidelity and leadership support, underscoring the importance of sustained institutional commitment.

### 9.4. Steps to Respect

Steps to Respect is a structured bullying prevention program developed in the United States by the Committee for Children, widely recognized for its curricular,

preventive, and evidence-based approach. The program focuses on the systematic teaching of socioemotional skills, clear anti-bullying norms, and early intervention strategies, with the goal of reducing bullying prevalence and improving school climate (Frey et al., 2005).

Unlike broader models of institutional intervention, Steps to Respect places special emphasis on explicit student education, integrating preventive content into the school curriculum and providing concrete tools for students to identify, reject, and cope with bullying situations adaptively.

#### *9.4.1. Theoretical foundations of the Steps to Respect program*

The program is grounded in principles from developmental psychology, social learning, and socioemotional education, based on the assumption that bullying can be prevented through the early acquisition of social, emotional, and cognitive skills that foster coexistence and mutual respect (Bandura, 1986; Frey et al., 2005).

One conceptual pillar of Steps to Respect is the clarification of social norms and behavioral expectations regarding bullying. The program aims to reduce the normative ambiguity that often surrounds bullying by teaching students that such behaviors are unacceptable and that prosocial alternatives exist to address interpersonal conflicts (Olweus, 1993).

The program also incorporates a bystander-role approach, recognizing that peer passivity or implicit reinforcement contributes to the persistence of bullying. In this sense, Steps to Respect actively promotes defending behaviors and support for victims, aligning with group-based models of bullying (Salmivalli, 2010).

#### *9.4.2. Components and structure of the program*

Steps to Respect is organized into several interrelated components that work complementarily:

1. A structured student curriculum, consisting of sequenced lessons primarily designed for elementary education. Lessons address topics such as recognizing bullying, empathy, assertiveness, emotional management, conflict resolution, and help-seeking.
2. Training for teachers and school staff, aimed at ensuring coherent and consistent responses to bullying situations and reinforcing institutional anti-bullying norms.

3. Clear school policies and procedures, establishing response protocols for bullying and reinforcing shared responsibility within the school.

4. Family involvement, through informational materials and communication strategies that reinforce preventive messages at home.

This combination of curricular and institutional components allows the program to act on both students and the school context, increasing its preventive effectiveness (Frey et al., 2005).

#### *9.4.3. Steps to Respect as a bullying prevention strategy*

From a preventive perspective, Steps to Respect is primarily oriented toward primary prevention, intervening before bullying behaviors become consolidated. However, it also includes elements of secondary prevention, by facilitating early detection and rapid intervention in emerging bullying situations.

One of the program's most relevant contributions is the explicit teaching of coping strategies for potential victims, such as assertive communication, seeking adult support, and using peer support networks. These strategies help reduce perceived helplessness and limit the chronicity of victimization (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

#### *9.4.4. Empirical evidence on program effectiveness*

The effectiveness of Steps to Respect has been evaluated through experimental and quasi-experimental studies. Findings indicate significant reductions in bullying behaviors, as well as improvements in students' attitudes toward bullying and their perceptions of school safety (Frey et al., 2005).

Evaluations also show increases in bystander intervention behaviors, reinforcing the importance of this role in disrupting bullying dynamics. These findings are consistent with international literature emphasizing the centrality of the peer group in bullying prevention (Salmivalli, 2010; Gaffney et al., 2021).

#### *9.4.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

Beyond reducing bullying, Steps to Respect contributes to developing key socioemotional competencies such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, and peaceful conflict resolution. These competencies not only support school coexistence but are also associated with better emotional and social adjustment in the medium and long term (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

The program is particularly suitable for early educational stages, where preventive intervention may have longer-lasting effects and reduce the likelihood of persistent victimization or aggression trajectories.

#### *9.4.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Among the program's main limitations is the need for faithful and systematic implementation of the curriculum, as well as adequate teacher training. Evidence indicates that program effects are stronger when coherence exists between delivered lessons, school norms, and staff responses to bullying (Frey et al., 2005).

In addition, Steps to Respect may be more effective when integrated into a comprehensive school-wide plan for coexistence and complemented with other programs or institutional intervention frameworks.

### 9.5. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an internationally adopted preventive and promotive intervention framework, initially developed in the United States, aimed at improving school climate, reducing problem behaviors, and promoting prosocial conduct through a systematic, data-driven, and evidence-based approach. Although PBIS was not designed exclusively as an anti-bullying program, research has shown that its implementation is associated with significant decreases in school violence and peer harassment behaviors, making it an effective strategy for bullying prevention (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2002).

PBIS is grounded in an ecological, preventive, and multilevel perspective, understanding that problem behaviors—including bullying—result from the interaction between individual, social, and contextual variables. From this standpoint, bullying is not addressed solely through sanctions, but rather through the explicit teaching, reinforcement, and generalization of socially appropriate behaviors, thereby creating structured, predictable, and safe school environments.

#### *9.5.1. Theoretical foundations of the PBIS model*

The PBIS model integrates contributions from behavioral psychology, educational psychology, and public health, relying particularly on the principles of applied behavior analysis and social learning. One of its central assumptions is that behavior can be modified effectively when the environment provides clear

expectations, consistent reinforcement, and supports aligned with students' needs (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

PBIS is also aligned with primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention models, prioritizing early action and the reduction of risk factors before problem behaviors become chronic. This approach is especially relevant to bullying, a phenomenon that tends to persist when peer-group and school-wide social norms do not clearly delegitimize it (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

### *9.5.2. PBIS multilevel structure*

PBIS is organized into a three-tier system of support designed to respond to the diversity of students' needs:

1. Tier 1 (universal prevention). Targeted at all students and the school as a whole. It includes explicit definition of behavioral expectations, systematic instruction in prosocial behaviors, positive reinforcement, and the creation of a positive school climate. At this level, clear anti-bullying norms are established and respect, inclusion, and positive coexistence are actively promoted.

2. Tier 2 (selective prevention). Focused on students who display at-risk behaviors or difficulties in social adjustment. It includes additional supports such as social skills programs, mentoring, behavioral monitoring, and specific reinforcement strategies. In the bullying domain, this tier is crucial for preventing escalation of aggressive behaviors and protecting students vulnerable to victimization.

3. Tier 3 (intensive intervention). Designed for a small group of students with persistent or high-intensity problem behaviors. It is based on functional behavioral assessments and individualized intervention plans. In relation to bullying, this tier enables targeted work with persistent aggressors or with victims experiencing severe emotional impact.

This tiered structure supports proportionate and tailored responses, optimizes school resources, and avoids generalized punitive interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

### *9.5.3. PBIS as a bullying prevention strategy*

From the perspective of school bullying, PBIS functions primarily as a primary and secondary prevention strategy, by modifying the school context and the social norms that may facilitate bullying. The explicit teaching of prosocial behaviors, together with systematic reinforcement of respectful conduct, reduces the likelihood that aggressive behaviors will be socially reinforced (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

PBIS also helps reduce normative ambiguity, one of the contextual factors associated with implicit tolerance of bullying. When students perceive that behavioral expectations are clear, coherent, and shared by all teachers, the legitimization of violence decreases, and the likelihood of intervention by bystanders and adults increases.

### *9.5.4. Empirical evidence on PBIS effectiveness*

Numerous studies have documented the effectiveness of PBIS in improving school climate and reducing problem behaviors. Longitudinal research has shown significant decreases in aggressive behaviors, disciplinary problems, and victimization, as well as improvements in students' perceptions of safety and adult support (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2010).

With specific regard to bullying, schools that implement PBIS with high fidelity show lower rates of bullying and disruptive behavior, as well as greater consistency in institutional responses to such situations. These effects are strengthened when PBIS is combined with specific anti-bullying programs, acting as an organizational foundation that enhances their impact (Gaffney et al., 2021).

### *9.5.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

Beyond bullying prevention, PBIS promotes the development of a structured and predictable educational environment, which is particularly beneficial for students with self-regulation difficulties, neurodevelopmental disorders, or special educational needs. The clarity of rules and reinforcement contributes to reducing school-related stress and improving students' emotional and behavioral adjustment.

In addition, the PBIS model promotes a data-based culture of continuous improvement, facilitating informed decision-making and systematic evaluation of interventions implemented within the school.

### *9.5.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Despite evidence supporting its effectiveness, PBIS implementation requires sustained institutional commitment, teacher training, and long-term coherent application. The literature indicates that program outcomes depend largely on implementation fidelity and leadership from the school management team (Horner et al., 2010).

Furthermore, PBIS should not be considered a stand-alone solution to bullying, but rather an organizational framework that is particularly effective when integrated into a comprehensive school-wide coexistence plan and complemented with peer-focused, targeted bullying interventions.

## 9.6. Friendly Schools Program

The Friendly Schools Program (FSP) is a comprehensive bullying prevention program developed in Australia and internationally recognized for its multilevel, systemic, and evidence-based approach. Initially designed by Cross and colleagues, the program is grounded in the idea that effective bullying prevention requires simultaneous intervention with students, teachers, families, and the school organization, promoting an institutional culture of positive coexistence and zero tolerance toward peer violence (Cross et al., 2011).

FSP is situated within ecological developmental models that conceptualize bullying as a relational and contextual phenomenon sustained by social norms, group dynamics, and institutional practices. From this perspective, the program does not merely seek to modify individual behaviors; rather, it aims to transform school climate and the implicit norms that may legitimize or render bullying invisible (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

### *9.6.1. Theoretical foundations of the Friendly Schools Program*

The Friendly Schools Program integrates contributions from social psychology, educational psychology, and public health, combining principles from social learning, social norms theory, and socioemotional education. One of its conceptual pillars is the consideration of the peer group as a key agent in either perpetuating or interrupting bullying, consistent with Salmivalli's (2010) proposals.

The program is also supported by evidence highlighting the school's role as a protective context, underscoring the importance of clear policies, committed educational leadership, and coherent teaching practices in reducing school violence (Cross et al., 2011; Gaffney et al., 2021).

### *9.6.2. Program components and structure*

The Friendly Schools Program is characterized by its comprehensive and flexible structure, adapted to different educational stages, primarily primary and secondary education. Its main components include:

1. School-level intervention, including the development of clear anti-bullying policies, response protocols, teacher training, and strengthened school leadership.
2. A student-focused curriculum, aimed at developing socioemotional skills, empathy, conflict resolution, assertive communication, and prosocial behavior. These activities are integrated into the regular curriculum and adapted to students' developmental level.
3. Active family involvement, through informational materials, workshops, and communication strategies that reinforce coherence between school and home contexts.
4. Peer group participation, promoting defending behaviors, peer support, and active rejection of bullying conduct.

This multilevel structure allows simultaneous action on key risk and protective factors associated with bullying, increasing the likelihood of sustained change over time (Cross et al., 2011).

### *9.6.3. The Friendly Schools Program as a prevention strategy*

Within a preventive framework, the Friendly Schools Program is primarily oriented toward primary prevention, promoting a positive school climate that reduces the emergence of bullying behaviors. However, it also incorporates elements of secondary prevention, improving early detection and institutional responses to existing bullying situations.

One of the program's most notable features is its emphasis on changing social norms. By fostering active support and defending roles among students, the FSP

reduces bystander passivity and weakens the group dynamics that sustain bullying, consistent with peer-focused intervention models (Salmivalli, 2010).

#### *9.6.4. Empirical evidence and program effectiveness*

The effectiveness of the Friendly Schools Program has been evaluated through longitudinal studies and randomized controlled trials, showing significant reductions in bullying and victimization prevalence, as well as improvements in school climate and students' attitudes toward coexistence (Cross et al., 2012).

Findings indicate particularly notable decreases in relational and verbal forms of bullying, along with increased prosocial behaviors and defending actions by bystanders. Improvements have also been observed in perceived teacher support and in the clarity of school norms regarding bullying (Gaffney et al., 2021).

From a public health perspective, the Friendly Schools Program has proven to be a cost-effective and sustainable intervention, with effects maintained in the medium term when the program is implemented with fidelity and institutional support (Cross et al., 2011).

#### *9.6.5. Additional psychoeducational benefits*

Beyond reducing bullying, the Friendly Schools Program contributes to students' holistic development by strengthening key socioemotional competencies such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, and peaceful conflict resolution. It also promotes stronger classroom cohesion and a greater sense of school belonging—factors associated with better academic and emotional adjustment (Espelage & Swearer, 2010).

The program also supports teacher empowerment by providing clear tools for bullying prevention and management, reducing perceptions of institutional helplessness in the face of this phenomenon.

#### *9.6.6. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Despite the strong evidence supporting its effectiveness, implementing the Friendly Schools Program requires active and sustained school engagement, as well as appropriate teacher training. The literature indicates that the best results are achieved when the program is integrated within a comprehensive coexistence policy rather than implemented as an isolated or one-off intervention (Gaffney et al., 2021).

Cultural adaptation is also a key aspect for transferring the program to other educational contexts, making it necessary to adjust materials and strategies to the sociocultural characteristics of students and families.

### 9.7. TEI Program (Peer Tutoring)

The TEI Program (Tutoría Entre Iguales; Peer Tutoring) is one of the most consolidated and widely implemented bullying prevention initiatives in the Spanish educational context, with a growing international projection. It is grounded in empirical evidence indicating that positive peer relationships constitute one of the most powerful protective factors against victimization, social isolation, and bullying dynamics (Salmivalli, 2010; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

The program adopts an ecological and systemic approach, understanding bullying as a group-based phenomenon sustained by relational dynamics within the classroom and the school as a whole, rather than exclusively as an individual problem of either the perpetrator or the victim. From this perspective, TEI promotes students' active involvement as agents of prevention and early detection of bullying, strengthening collective responsibility and a culture of mutual care (García-Longoria & Serrano, 2019).

#### *9.7.1. Theoretical foundations of the TEI Program*

The TEI Program draws on several complementary theoretical frameworks. First, it incorporates contributions from developmental and attachment psychology by fostering stable bonds of trust, emotional support, and security between students of different ages or grade levels. These relationships enhance students' sense of belonging and reduce vulnerability associated with social isolation, one of the most consistent predictors of bullying victimization (Olweus, 1993; Zych et al., 2019).

Second, the program is informed by peer-support models and social learning theory, which highlight the importance of behavioral modeling and peer-group influence in the regulation of social norms. Peer tutors function as prosocial role models, promoting helping behaviors, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution, thereby contributing to the modification of implicit norms that tolerate or legitimize bullying (Bandura, 1986; Salmivalli, 2010).

Finally, TEI aligns with school coexistence and emotional education models by prioritizing the development of socioemotional competencies, assertive

communication, and positive management of interpersonal relationships within the school (Bisquerra & Pérez-González, 2012).

### *9.7.2. Structure and implementation of the TEI Program*

The TEI Program is based on the structured assignment of tutors and tutees, typically older students who accompany younger peers or those in situations of greater vulnerability. This accompaniment is planned, supervised, and sustained throughout the school year.

Tutors receive prior specific training focused on active listening skills, empathy, detection of distress signals, conflict resolution, and appropriate referral of information to teachers or guidance teams when needed. This training is essential to ensure that peer tutoring is not merely informal support, but becomes an effective and safe preventive tool (García-Longoria & Serrano, 2019).

The program is implemented transversally across the school, involving the leadership team, teachers, guidance services, and students. This institutional involvement strengthens coherence of actions and reinforces a message of zero tolerance toward bullying.

### *9.7.3. The TEI Program as a prevention strategy*

From a preventive standpoint, the TEI Program functions mainly as a primary and secondary prevention strategy. In primary prevention, it helps create a positive school climate based on mutual support, inclusion, and cooperation, reducing the likelihood that bullying behaviors will emerge. In secondary prevention, it facilitates early detection of incipient victimization situations, enabling intervention before bullying becomes chronic (García-Longoria & Serrano, 2019).

One of TEI's central elements is the reduction of social isolation, considered one of the most consistent risk factors for bullying. The tutor figure provides tutees with an accessible and close reference, reducing feelings of helplessness and facilitating help-seeking—an especially relevant aspect in early ages and among students with greater difficulties in social integration (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

### *9.7.4. Empirical evidence and effects of the TEI Program*

Available evidence on the TEI Program indicates positive effects across multiple dimensions of school functioning. Various studies and evaluations report significant

improvements in school climate, sense of belonging, and perceived social support among participating students (García-Longoria & Serrano, 2019).

Decreases have also been observed in the frequency of bullying and victimization behaviors, along with increased student awareness of bullying situations and greater helping and defending behaviors toward victims. These findings are consistent with international literature emphasizing the key role of bystanders and peer support networks in disrupting bullying dynamics (Salmivalli, 2010).

From a psychoeducational perspective, TEI also contributes to the development of socioemotional competencies among tutors, such as empathy, social responsibility, and self-efficacy, generating bidirectional benefits that go beyond bullying prevention and support students' holistic development (Bisquerra & Pérez-González, 2012).

#### *9.7.5. Limitations and implementation considerations*

Despite its benefits, TEI implementation requires certain conditions to ensure effectiveness. These include adequate training for teachers and student tutors, ongoing program supervision, and integration of TEI within a comprehensive school coexistence plan. Evidence suggests that programs based solely on isolated or symbolic actions have limited effects, whereas those embedded within a broader institutional strategy demonstrate greater impact and sustainability (Gaffney et al., 2021).

In this sense, the TEI Program should not be understood as a stand-alone intervention, but rather as one component within a comprehensive approach to bullying prevention, complementary to other educational, normative, and psychoeducational strategies.

## REFERENCES

- Álvarez-García, D. (2015). La mediación escolar como propuesta de intervención compartida. En F. Cerezo (Coord.), *La violencia en las relaciones entre escolares* (pp. 143–167). Horsori.
- Álvarez-García, D., Núñez, J. C., González-Castro, P., Rodríguez, C., & Cerezo, R. (2018). The influence of family and school variables on bullying behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1–12.
- Álvarez-García, D., García, T., & Núñez, J. C. (2020). Predictors of school bullying perpetration in adolescence. *Journal of School Violence, 19*(4), 479–493.
- Alzate, R. (2002). *Análisis y resolución de conflictos: Una perspectiva psicológica*. UPV.
- Arribas, J. M., & Torrego, J. C. (2006). El modelo integrado. Fundamentos, estructuras y su despliegue en la vida de los centros. En J. C. Torrego (Coord.), *Modelo integrado de la mejora de la convivencia: Estrategias de mediación y tratamiento de conflictos* (pp. 27–68). Graó.
- Arruabarrena, A., Zalduegi, A., & Flores, J. (2018). Violencia y acoso escolar. Bullying, cyberbullying y ciberconvivencia. En F. González & J. Escudero (Eds.), *El acoso escolar, bullying y cyberbullying* (pp. 27–42). Tirant Humanidades.
- Arseneault, L. (2018). Annual research review: The persistent and pervasive impact of being bullied in childhood and adolescence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 59*(4), 405–421.
- Atlas, R. S., & Pepler, D. J. (1998). Observations of bullying in the classroom. *Journal of Educational Research, 92*, 86–99.
- Avilés, J. M. (2006). *Bullying: el maltrato entre compañeros. Agresores, víctimas y testigos en la escuela*. Amarú.
- Avilés, J. M. (2012). Prevención del maltrato entre iguales a través de la educación moral. *Revista de Investigación en Psicología, 15*(1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.15381/rinvp.v15i1.2564>

- Avilés, J. M. (2013). Análisis psicosocial del ciberbullying: Claves para una educación moral. *Papeles del Psicólogo*, 34(1), 65–73.
- Avilés, J. M. (2014). Programa educativo PRIRES: Programa de prevención de riesgos en las redes sociales. *Revista de Investigación en Psicología*, 17(2), 13–23.
- Avilés, J. M. (2018). *Educación en las redes sociales: Programa preventivo PRIRES*. Desclée de Brouwer.
- Avilés, J. M. (2019). *Convivir sin bullying*. Narcea.
- Avilés, J. M., Irurtia, M. J., García-López, L. J., & Caballo, V. E. (2011). El maltrato entre iguales: Bullying. *Psicología Conductual*, 19(1), 57–90.
- Avilés, J. M., Bisquerra, R., Collell, J., Escudé, C., & Ortega, R. (2014). Instrumentos de evaluación. En R. Bisquerra (Ed.), *Prevención del acoso escolar con Educación Emocional* (pp. 63–96). Desclée de Brouwer.
- Baldry, A., & Farrington, D. P. (2005). Protective factors as moderators of risk factors in adolescence bullying. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, 8(3), 263–284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-005-5866-5>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (2002). Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 51(2), 269–290. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00092>
- Barlett, C. P., Simmers, M. M., Roth, B., & Gentile, D. (2021). Comparing cyberbullying prevalence and process before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 161(4), 408–418.
- Barri, F. (2013). *Acoso escolar o bullying: guía imprescindible de prevención e intervención*. Altaria.
- Barri, F. (2018). *SOS bullying: Prevenir el acoso escolar y mejorar la convivencia* (3.ª ed.). Wolters Kluwer España.
- Becoña, E., & Lorenzo, M. C. (2022). *Bullying y ciberbullying*. Pirámide.

- Belahcen, A., El Khoumsi, M., & Chaqsare, S. (2020). *Cyberbullying in Rabat area Morocco: A middle school student survey*. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 10(3), 72–84.
- Benbenishty, R., & Astor, R. A. (2005). *School violence in context: Culture, neighborhood, family, school, and gender*. Oxford University Press.
- Benner, A. D., Wang, Y., Shen, Y., Boyle, A. E., Polk, R., & Cheng, Y. P. (2018). *Racial/ethnic discrimination and well-being during adolescence: A meta-analytic review*. *American Psychologist*, 73(7), 855–883. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000204>
- Benton, D. (1992). Hormones and human aggression. In K. Björkqvist & P. Niemelä (Eds.), *Of mice and women: Aspects of female aggression* (pp. 37–48). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-102590-8.50009-X>
- Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we have learned*. WestEd.
- Berger, C., Karimpour, R., & Rodkin, P. C. (2008). Bullies and victims at school: Perspectives and strategies for primary prevention. In T. W. Miller (Ed.), *School violence and primary prevention* (pp. 295–322). Springer Science + Business Media. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-77119-9\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-77119-9_15)
- Bisquerra, R., & Pérez-González, J. C. (2012). Las competencias emocionales. *Educación XX1*, 15(1), 61–82. <https://doi.org/10.5944/educxx1.15.1.141>
- Blaya, C. (2019). *Violences et harcèlement en milieu scolaire*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Blaya, C., & Gatti, U. (2022). Cyberviolence among youth: Global perspectives and local contexts. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 4(2), 85–98.
- Boqué, M. C. (2018). *La mediación va a la escuela*. Narcea.
- Boqué, M. C. (2020). *Prácticas restaurativas para la prevención y gestión de los conflictos*. Narcea.
- Boyd, D. M. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.

- Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *12*(3), 133–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709334798>
- Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., Debnam, K. J., & Johnson, S. L. (2014). *Measuring school climate in high schools: A focus on safety, engagement, and the environment*. *Journal of School Health*, *84*(9), 593–604. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12186>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Burton, J. (1990). *Conflict resolution and prevention*. St. Martin's Press.
- Butts, T., Munduate, L., Barón, M., & Medina, F. J. (2014). Intervenciones en mediación. En L. Munduate & F.J. Medina (Eds.), *Gestión del Conflicto, Negociación y Mediación* (pp. 230–247). Pirámide.
- Calmaestra, J. (2011). *Cyberbullying: prevalencia y características de un nuevo tipo de bullying indirecto*. Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba.
- Casas, J. A., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Rodríguez, A. J. (2017). Redes sociales y riesgo del ciberacoso: Más allá de la escuela. En A.J. Rodríguez & R. Ortega-Ruiz (Eds.), *Acoso escolar, ciberacoso y discriminación* (pp. 58–67). Los libros de la Catarata.
- Casanova, M.A. (2013). *La Sociometría en el aula* (2.<sup>a</sup> ed.). La Muralla.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS): Data summary & trends report, 2013–2023*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Cerezo, F. (2009). *La violencia en las aulas. Análisis y Propuestas de Intervención* (2.<sup>a</sup> ed.). Pirámide.
- Cillessen, A. H. N., & Bukowski, W. M. (2000). Stability of sociometric categories. In G. J. Haselager & W. M. Bukowski (Eds.), *Recent advances in the measurement of acceptance and rejection in the peer system* (pp. 77–102). Jossey-Bass.

- Chaves, A., Morales, M., & Villalobos, M. (2020). Ciberbullying desde la perspectiva del estudiante: “lo que vivimos, vemos y hacemos”. *Revista electrónica educare*, *24(1)*, 1-29. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15359/ree.24-1.3>.
- Chocarro, E., & Garaigordobil, M. (2019). Bullying y cyberbullying: diferencias de sexo en víctimas, agresores y observadores. *Pensamiento Psicológico*, *17(2)*, 2665-3281. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javerianacali.PPSI17-2.bcds>
- Clemente, M. (2016). *Violencia y Medios de Comunicación*. EOS.
- Coie, J. D., Dodge, K. A., & Coppotelli, H. (1982). Dimensions and types of social status: A cross-age perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, *18(4)*, 557–570. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.18.4.557>
- Coie, J. D., Watt, N. F., West, S. G., Hawkins, J. D., Asarnow, J. R., Markman, H. J., Ramey, S. L., Shure, M. B., & Long, B. (1993). *The science of prevention: A conceptual framework and some directions for a national research program*. *American Psychologist*, *48(10)*, 1013–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.48.10.1013>
- Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Ciudad de México. (2024). *Opiniones de infancias y adolescencias de primarias y secundarias sobre violencia entre pares (Informe)*.
- Copeland, W. E., Wolke, D., Angold, A., & Costello, E. J. (2013). Adult psychiatric outcomes of bullying and being bullied by peers in childhood and adolescence. *JAMA Psychiatry*, *70(4)*, 419–426.
- Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., & Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *25(2)*, 65–83.
- Cornell, D. G., & Bandyopadhyay, S. (2010). The assessment of bullying. En S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective* (pp. 265–276). Routledge.
- Cornell, D. G., & Limber, S. P. (2015). *Law and policy on the concept of bullying at school*. *American Psychologist*, *70(4)*, 333–343. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038558>

- Costa, M., & López, E. (1991). *Manual para el educador social*. Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales.
- Craig, W., & Pepler, D. (1997). Observations of bullying and victimization in the school yard. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 13*(2), 41–60.
- Craig, W. M., Pepler, D. J., & Atlas, R. (2000). Observations of bullying in the playground. *Journal of School Psychology, 38*, 447–472.
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1995). *Relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment*. *Child Development, 66*(3), 710–722. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1131945>
- Cross, D., Monks, H., Hall, M., Shaw, T., Pintabona, Y., Erceg, E., Hamilton, G., & Lester, L. (2011). Three-year results of the Friendly Schools whole-of-school intervention on children’s bullying behaviour. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*(1), 105–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920903420024>
- Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. (2012). *Friendly Schools intervention: Impact on students’ bullying behaviour*. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*(1), 58–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.01.020>
- Cross, D., Barnes, A., Papageorgiou, A., Hadwen, K., Hearn, L., & Lester, L. (2015). A social–ecological framework for understanding and reducing cyberbullying behaviours. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 23*, 109–117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.05.016>
- De la Villa, M., & Ovejero, A. (2013). Actitudes ante la problemática bullying: diferencias intergénero. En A. Ovejero, P. Smith, & S. Yubero (Eds.), *El acoso escolar y su prevención. Perspectivas internacionales* (pp. 75–90). Biblioteca Nueva.
- Debarbieux, E. (2016). *Violence à l’école: Un défi mondial*. Armand Colin.
- Defensor del Pueblo-UNICEF. (2007). *Violencia escolar: El maltrato entre iguales en la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*. Defensor del Pueblo.
- Department for Education. (2022). *Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies*. UK Government.

- Delpérée, F. (1986): Administration et *mediation*, *Administration publique*, 11.
- Díaz-Aguado, M. J., Martínez, M. R., Falcón, L., & Alvarino, M. (2024). *Acoso escolar y ciberacoso en España en la infancia y en la adolescencia*. Pirámide.
- Díez, F., & Tapia, G. (1999). *Herramientas para trabajar en mediación*. Paidós.
- Domínguez J., Vázquez, E., & Núñez, S. (2017). Cyberbullying escolar: incidencia del teléfono móvil e internet en adolescentes. *Relieve*, 23(2), art. 3. <http://doi.org/10.7203/relieve.23.2.8485>
- Dooley, J., Pyzalski, J., & Cross D. (2009). Cyberbullying versus face to- face bullying: A theoretical and conceptual review. *Journal of Psychology*, 217(4), 182–188. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0044-3409.217.4.182>
- Duncan, R. (1999). Peer and sibling aggression: An investigation of intra- and extra-familial bullying. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14(8), 871–886. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088626099014008005>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Elipe, P. (2019). Acoso LGBTQ+fóbico. En V. Sánchez (coord.), *Prevención de la violencia interpersonal en la infancia y la adolescencia* (pp. 117–140). Pirámide.
- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2010). A social-ecological model for bullying prevention and intervention. En S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of bullying in schools* (pp. 61–72). Routledge.
- Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2015). The impact of a middle school program to reduce aggression, victimization, and sexual violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 56(2), S79–S86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.07.011>
- Espelage, D., & Hong, J. (2019). Children Who Bully or Are Bullied. In T. H. Ollendick, S. W. White, & B. A. White (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Fatum, B., & Hoyle, S. (1996). *Teaching children to manage conflict*. Longman.
- Feijoo, R. (2018). *Bullying por misoginia y homofobia*. Vidam.
- Felson, R. B., Liska, A. E., South, S. J., & McNulty, T. L. (1994). *The subculture of violence and delinquency: Individual vs. school context effects*. *Social Forces*, 73(1), 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/73.1.155>
- Fernández, I. (1999). *Prevención de la violencia y resolución de conflictos: el clima escolar como factor de calidad*. Narcea.
- Floyer, A. (1997). *Cómo utilizar la mediación para resolver conflictos en las organizaciones*. Paidós.
- Frey, K. S., Hirschstein, M. K., Snell, J. L., Edstrom, L. V. S., MacKenzie, E. P., & Broderick, C. J. (2005). Reducing playground bullying and supporting beliefs: An experimental trial of the Steps to Respect program. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(3), 479–490. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.3.479>
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2019). Evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 45, 134–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.001>
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2021). *What works in anti-bullying programs? Analysis of effective intervention components*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 85, 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2020.12.002>
- Galindo, E. I., & Sanahuja, A. (2021). Implantación de un proyecto de mediación entre iguales: hacia una mejora de la convivencia en el contexto educativo. *Márgenes, Revista de Educación de la Universidad de Málaga*, 2 (1), 130-147 <https://doi.org/10.24310/mgnmar.v2i1.8459>
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221631>
- Garaigordobil, M. (2011). Prevalencia y consecuencias del cyberbullying (Prevalence and consequences of cyberbullying: A review). *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 11 (2), 233-254.

- Garaigordobil, M. (2018). *Bullying y cyberbullying: estrategias de evaluación, prevención e intervención*. UOC.
- Garaigordobil, M. (2022). Cyberbullying in adolescents and youth: Prevalence and psychological impact. *Psychology in the Schools, 59*(9), 1756–1772.
- Garaigordobil, M., & Martínez-Valderrey, V. (2014). Efectos del programa antibullying Cyberprogram 2.0. *Psicothema, 26*(2), 199–206.
- Garaigordobil, M., & Machimbarrena, J. M. (2019). Victimization and perpetration of bullying and cyberbullying: Connections with emotional and behavioral problems. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 65*(3), 382–388.
- García, L. (2021). COVID-19 y educación a distancia digital: preconfinamiento, confinamiento y posconfinamiento. *RIED. Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia, 24* (1), 8-25. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.24.1.28080>
- García, C.M., Romera, E.M., & Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2016). Relaciones entre el bullying y el cyberbullying: prevalencia y co-ocurrencia. *Pensamiento Psicológico, 14* (1), 49-61. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javerianacali.PPSI14-1.rbcp>
- García, D., Quintanal, J., & Sánchez, J.C. (2017). Registro y análisis de la información. En Quintanal, J. & García, B (Eds.), *Fundamentos básicos de metodología de investigación educativa* (pp. 31–71). CCS.
- García-Longoria, M. P., & Serrano, A. (2019). *Mediación escolar: fundamentos y prácticas*. Narcea.
- García-Raga, L., Chiva, I., Moral, A., & Ramos, G. (2016). Fortalezas y debilidades de la mediación escolar desde la perspectiva del alumnado de educación secundaria. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria, (28)*, 203-215. [https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI\\_2016.28.15](https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2016.28.15)
- García-Raga, L., & López, R. (2011). Convivir en la escuela. Una propuesta para su aprendizaje por competencias *Revista de Educación, 356*, 531-555. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2011-356-050>
- Giménez-Dasí, M., & Quintanilla, L. (2018). *Desarrollo emocional en los primeros años de vida: Debates actuales y retos futuros*. Pirámide.

- Gini, G. (2006). Social cognition and moral cognition in bullying: What's wrong? *Aggressive Behavior*, 32(6), 528–539.
- Gini, G., Albiero, P., Benelli, B., & Altoè, G. (2007). Does empathy predict adolescents' bullying and defending behavior? *Aggressive Behavior*, 33(5), 467–476.
- Gini, G., & Pozzoli, T. (2013). *Bullied children and psychosomatic problems: A meta-analysis*. *Pediatrics*, 132(4), 720–729. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-0614>
- Gini, G., Pozzoli, T., & Hymel, S. (2014). *Moral disengagement among children and youth: A meta-analytic review of links to aggressive behavior*. *Aggressive Behavior*, 40(1), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21502>
- González, V., & Prendes, M.P. (2018). Ciberacosadores: un estudio cuantitativo con estudiantes de secundaria. *Pixel-Bit. Revista De Medios Y Educación*, 53, 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2018.i53.09>
- Hall, W. J. (2016). Initial development and validation of the BullyHARM: A measure of bullying harassment and aggression. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(10), 987–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21957>
- Hebron, J., & Humphrey, N. (2014). *Exposure to bullying among students with autism spectrum conditions: A multi-informant analysis of risk and protective factors*. *Autism*, 18(6), 618–630. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361313495965>
- Heinemann, P. P. (1969). Apartheid. *Liberal Debatt*, 2.
- Heinemann, P. P. (1972). *Mobbing-Gruppvåld bland barn och vuxna*. Natur och Kultur.
- Hemphill, S. A., Tollit, M., & Herrenkohl, T. I. (2014). Protective factors for children exposed to bullying. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19(4), 321–332. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2014.04.004>
- Hymel, S., & Swearer, S. M. (2015). Four decades of research on school bullying. *American Psychologist*, 70(4), 293–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038928>

- Idsoe, T., Dyregrov, A., & Idsoe, E. C. (2012). *Bullying and PTSD symptoms. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40*(6), 901–911. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-012-9620-0>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2021). *Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación*. INEGI.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2023). *Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación (ENADIS) 2022*. INEGI.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2024). *Módulo sobre Ciberacoso (MOCIBA) 2023*. INEGI.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (2025). *Módulo sobre Ciberacoso (MOCIBA) 2024*. INEGI.
- Irwin, V., Wang, K., Cui, J., & Thompson, A. (2024). *Report on indicators of school crime and safety: 2023* (NCES 2024–145/NCJ 309126). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, & Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. (2022). *Il bullismo in Italia: Comportamenti offensivi e violenti tra i giovani*. Governo d'Italia.
- Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. (2016). *La evaluación en el Aprendizaje Cooperativo: Cómo mejorar la evaluación individual a través del grupo*. Sm.
- Junger, M. (1990). Intergroup bullying and racial harassment in the Netherlands. *Sociology and social research: an international journal, 74*(2), 65-72.
- Juvonen, J., & Graham, S. (2014). *Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. Annual Review of Psychology, 65*, 159–185. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115030>
- Kapa, R., & Gimbert, B. (2018). Job satisfaction, school rule enforcement, and teacher victimization. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 29*(1), 150–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2017.1395747>

- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T. D., Poskiparta, E., Kaljonen, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2011). A large-scale evaluation of the KiVa antibullying program: Grades 4–6. *Child Development, 82*(1), 311–330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01557.x>
- Kärnä, A., Voeten, M., Little, T. D., Alanen, E., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2013). *Effectiveness of the KiVa antibullying program: Grades 1–3 and 7–9. Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(2), 535–551. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030417>
- Kowalski, R., Agatston, P. & Limber, S. (2010). *Cyberbullying. El acoso escolar en la era digital*. Desclée de Brouwer.
- Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2014). Bullying in the digital age. *Psychological Bulletin, 140*(4), 1073–1137.
- Lacárcel, L. E. (2014). *La inteligencia emocional como medio para paliar el acoso escolar*. Citius Junior Empresa.
- León, O., & Montero, I. (2023). *Métodos de investigación en psicología y educación* (6.<sup>a</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Lereya, S. T., Samara, M., & Wolke, D. (2013). *Parenting behavior and the risk of becoming a victim and a bully/victim: A meta-analysis study. Child Abuse & Neglect, 37*(12), 1091–1108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.03.001>
- Livingstone, S., Stoilova, M., & Kelly, A. (2016). Cyberbullying: Incidence, trends and consequences. En S. Livingstone, M. Stoilova, & A. Kelly (Eds.), *Ending the torment: Tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace* (pp. 115–120). United Nations Publications.
- Livingstone, S., Stoilova, M., & Kelly, A. (2017). *The benefits and harms of children's digital connectivity*. London School of Economics.
- Lobato, F. J. (2021). Cuve3 como herramienta TIC para la evaluación del bullying. En S. Alonso, J. M. Trujillo, A. J. Moreno, & C. Rodríguez (Eds.), *Investigación educativa en tiempos de pandemia* (pp. 470–478). Dykinson.
- Lobato, F. J. (2023). *Claves del acoso escolar*. Manual Moderno.

- López, L., & Sabater, C. (2018). *Acoso escolar. Definición, características, causas-consecuencias, familia como agente clave y prevención-intervención ecológica*. Pirámide.
- Malganova, I. G., Dokhkilgova, D. M., & Saralinova, D. S. (2021). The transformation of the education system during and post COVID-19. *Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional*, 25 (1), 589-599. <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v25iesp.1.14999>
- Martínez, J.A. (2017). *Acoso escolar: bullying y cyberbullying*. Bosch editor.
- Martínez, R. Castellanos, M.A., & Chacón, J.C (2014). *Métodos de Investigación en Psicología*. EOS Universitaria.
- Menesini, E. (2002). *Bullismo: Le relazioni tra pari in età evolutiva*. Giunti.
- Menesini, E., Nocentini, A., & Calussi, P. (2012). The measurement of cyberbullying: Dimensional structure and relative item severity. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(3), 1–7.
- Menesini, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2017). *Bullying in schools: The state of knowledge and effective interventions*. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 22(sup1), 240–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2017.1279740>
- Merayo, M. (2013). *Acoso Escolar. Guía para padres y madres*. CEAPA.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (2023). *Results of the annual survey on bullying in schools*. Government of Japan.
- Ministère de l'Éducation nationale. (2023). *Le climat scolaire et la prévention du harcèlement*. Gouvernement de la France.
- Ministero dell'Istruzione. (2022). *Linee di orientamento per la prevenzione e il contrasto del bullismo e del cyberbullismo*. **Governo d'Italia**.
- Modecki, K. L., Minchin, J., Harbaugh, A. G., Guerra, N. G., & Runions, K. C. (2014). Bullying prevalence across contexts. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4), 1073–1137.

- Molina, J.A., & Vecina, P. (2017). *Bullying, cyberbullying y sexting. ¿Cómo actuar ante una situación de acoso?* (2.ª ed.) Pirámide.
- Monge, C., & Torrego, J. C. (Eds.). (2021). *Inclusión y convivencia en los centros educativos: experiencias y propuestas*. Síntesis
- Monjas, M.I. (2006). *La timidez en la infancia y en la adolescencia* (1.ª ed. 2.ª reimp.) Pirámide.
- Monks, C. P., & Smith, P. K. (2006). Definitions of ‘bullying’: Age differences in understanding of the term, and the role of experience. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 24(4), 801–821. <https://doi.org/10.1348/026151005X82352>
- Moore, C. (2012). *El Proceso de mediación*. Granica.
- Mora-Merchán J., Ortega-Ruiz, R., Calmaestra J., & Smith P. K. (2010). El uso violento de la tecnología: el cyberbullying. En R. Ortega-Ruiz (coord.), *Agresividad injustificada, bullying y violencia escolar* (pp. 189–209). Alianza Editorial.
- Mora-Merchán, J. A., & Nacimiento, L. (2019). Ciberacoso y adolescencia. En *Cyberbullying y violencia escolar* (pp. 189–209). Alianza.
- Morita, Y., Soeda, H., Soeda, K., & Taki, M. (1999). *Ijime: Bullying in Japanese schools*. Minerva Shobo.
- Munné, M., & Mac-Cragh, P. (2006). *Los 10 principios de la cultura de mediación*. Graó.
- Muñoz-Maldonado, S. Piña, V., Durán, X., & Rosales, C. (2021). Comparación de ciberacoso y autoeficacia en redes sociales: Ciudad de México y Estado de México. *Psychological Writings*, 14(1), 11–19. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24310/epsiescpsi.v14i1.12688>
- Muller, J.M. (2013). *La Noviolència a l'educació*. Institut Català Internacional per la Pau.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *Student bullying (Condition of Education indicator)*. U.S. Department of Education.

- Nocentini, A., Calmaestra, J., Schultze-Krumbholz, A., Scheithauer, H., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Menesini, E. (2010). Cyberbullying: Labels, behaviors and definition in three European countries. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, *20*(02), 129–142. <https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.20.2.129>
- O'Donnell, J., Hawkins, J. D., & Abbott, R. D. (1995). Predicting serious delinquency and substance use among aggressive boys. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *63*(4), 529–537. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.63.4.529>
- Olweus, D. (1983). *Low school achievement and aggressive behaviour in adolescent boys*. Wiley.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Blackwell.
- Olweus, D. (2006). *Conductas de acoso y amenaza entre escolares* (3.<sup>a</sup> ed.). Morata.
- Olweus, D. (2012). Cyberbullying: An overrated phenomenon? *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *9*(5), 520–538.
- Olweus, D. (2013). School bullying: Development and some important challenges. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *9*, 751–780. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-050212-185516>
- Olweus, D., Limber, S. P., Flerx, V., Mullin, N., Riese, J., & Snyder, M. (2007). *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Schoolwide Guide*. Hazelden.
- Olweus, D., & Limber, S. P. (2010). Bullying in school: Evaluation and dissemination of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *80*(1), 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01015.x>
- Ortega-Ruiz, R. (1997). El proyecto Sevilla anti-violencia escolar. Un modelo de intervención preventiva contra los malos tratos entre iguales. *Revista de Educación*, *313*, 143-158.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2008). *Malos tratos entre escolares: de la investigación a la intervención*. Secretaría General Técnica.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2010). *Agresividad injustificada, bullying y violencia escolar*. Alianza.

- Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2015). *Convivencia y ciberconvivencia. Un modelo educativo para la prevención del acoso y el ciberacoso escolar*. Machado Libros.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R. & Córdoba, F. (2017). El Modelo Construir la Convivencia para prevenir el acoso y el ciberacoso escolar. *Innovación educativa*, 27, 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.15304/ie.27.4287>
- Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Mora-Merchán, J. A. (2000). Violencia escolar: Mitos y realidades. *Revista de Educación*, 322, 131–150.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Mora-Merchán, J. A. (2008). Las redes de iguales y el fenómeno del acoso escolar. *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, 13(2), 87–102.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Mora-Merchán, J. A. (2015). El estudio de la violencia en los centros educativos. En R. Ortega-Ruiz (coord.), *Convivencia y ciberconvivencia. Un modelo educativo para la prevención del acoso y el ciberacoso escolar* (pp. 59–82). Antonio Machado Libros.
- Ortega-Ruiz, R., Del Rey, R., & Casas, J. A. (2016). *Evaluar el bullying y el cyberbullying: Validación española del EBIP-Q y del ECIP-Q*. *Psicología Educativa*, 22(1), 71–79
- Ovejero, A. (2013). El acoso escolar: cuatro décadas de investigación internacional. En A. Ovejero, P.K. Smith y S. Yubero (coords). *El acoso escolar y su prevención. Perspectivas internacionales* (pp. 11–56). Biblioteca Nueva.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2022). *Resultados del Programa para la Evaluación Internacional de los Estudiantes (PISA)*.
- Pellegrini, A. D. (2001). Sampling instances of victimization in schools. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 360–366.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Bartini, M. (2000). A longitudinal study of bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 216–224.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Long, J. D. (2002). A longitudinal study of bullying. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 939–951.
- Pepler, D. J., & Craig, W. M. (1995). A peek behind the fence. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 27, 469–483.

- Piñuel, I., & Oñate, A., (2007). *Informe Cisneros X: Violencia y acoso escolar en alumnos de Primaria, ESO y Bachiller*. Instituto de Innovación educativa y Desarrollo directivo.
- Platero, R., & Gómez, E. (2008). *Herramientas para combatir el bullying homofóbico*. Talasa.
- Prada, J., & López, A. (2008). La mediación como estrategia de resolución de conflictos en el ámbito escolar. *Documentación social*, 148, 99-116.
- Reijntjes, A., Kamphuis, J. H., Prinzie, P., & Telch, M. J. (2010). *Peer victimization and internalizing problems in children: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(4), 244–252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.07.009>
- Rennó, R.A. & Engelman, M.F. (2022). Representações sociais invadidas e maculadas por cyberbullying. *Revista Bioética*. 30-1. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1983-80422022301520EN>
- Rial, V. (2020). Uniformidad y divergencia: COVID 19 Pandemia del siglo XXI. *Revista Uruguaya de Antropología y Etnografía*, 5(1), 65-73. <https://doi.org/10.29112/ruae.v5.n1.5>
- Rigby, K. (1996). The contribution of bullying at school and low self-esteem to acts of delinquency among Australian teenagers. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 27(4), 609-612. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(96\)00105-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(96)00105-5)
- Rigby, K. (2002). *New perspectives on bullying*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Rivers, I. (2013). El bullying homofóbico. En A. Ovejero, P.K. Smith y S. Yubero (coords). *El acoso escolar y su prevención. Perspectivas internacionales* (pp. 131–143). Biblioteca Nueva.
- Rodríguez, A., & Morera, D. (2001). *El Sociograma. Estudio de las relaciones informales en las organizaciones*. Pirámide.
- Rodríguez, J.M., & Ruiz, J. (2019). El clima social en centros educativos: percepción del profesorado de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria de la Comunidad de Madrid. *Revista de Investigación Educativa*, 37(1), 231-250. <http://doi.org/10.6018/rie.37.1.320541>

- Rodríguez, M.L., & Sánchez, V. (2019). La violencia en la pareja adolescente. En V. Sánchez (coord.), *Prevención de la violencia interpersonal en la infancia y la adolescencia* (pp. 99–116). Pirámide.
- Romero, S.J. & Ordóñez, X.G. (2018). *Métodos, diseños y técnicas de investigación psicológico y educativa*. CEF.
- Rose, C. A., Simpson, C. G., & Moss, A. (2015). The bullying dynamic: Prevalence of involvement among a large-scale sample of middle and high school youth with and without disabilities. *Psychology in the Schools, 52*(5), 515–531. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21840>
- Rose, C. A., & Gage, N. A. (2017). Exploring the Involvement of Bullying Among Students With Disabilities Over Time. *Exceptional Children, 83*(3), 298-314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402916667587>
- Rozenblum de Horowitz, S. (2008). *Mediación en la escuela. Resolución de conflictos en el ámbito educativo adolescente* (2.ª ed.). Aique.
- Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*(2), 112–120.
- Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior, 22*(1), 1–15. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-2337\(1996\)22:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-T](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1996)22:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-T)
- Salmivalli, C., Voeten, M., Poskiparta, E., & Lagerspetz, K. (2011). *Bystanders matter: Associations between reinforcing, defending, and the frequency of bullying behavior in classrooms. Aggressive Behavior, 37*(3), 215–227. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20386>
- Sánchez, V. (coord.). (2019). *Prevención de la violencia interpersonal en la infancia y la adolescencia*. Pirámide.
- Sánchez-Jiménez, A. (2024). *Uno de cada diez alumnos de secundaria dice haber sido acosado: Mejoredu. La Jornada*.

- Sandoval, J., Luna, A. C. A., & De Gante, A. (2021). Estrategias de afrontamiento del ciberacoso desde la perspectiva de la víctima en adolescentes mexicanos de secundaria y bachillerato. *IE Revista De Investigación Educativa De La REDIECH*, 12, e1104. [https://doi.org/10.33010/ie\\_rie\\_rediech.v12i0.1104](https://doi.org/10.33010/ie_rie_rediech.v12i0.1104)
- Save the Children. (2019). *Violencia viral: El acoso escolar en la era digital*. Save the Children España.
- Sentenac, M., Arnaud, C., Gavin, A., Molcho, M., Gabhainn, S. N., & Godeau, E. (2012). *Peer victimization among school-aged children with chronic conditions. Epidemiology Reviews*, 34, 120–138. <https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxr024>
- Simons, H. (2011). *El estudio de casos. Teoría y práctica*. Morata.
- Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., & Hasebrink, U. (2020). *EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries*. EU Kids Online.
- Smith, P.K. (2013). Cyberbullying y ciberagresión. En A. Ovejero, K. Smith & S. Yubero (Eds.), *El Acoso escolar y su prevención: perspectivas internacionales* (pp. 173–189). Biblioteca Nueva.
- Smith, P. K. (2014). *Understanding school bullying: Its nature and prevention strategies*. Sage.
- Smith, P. K., & Sharp, S. (1994): *School Bullying. Insights and Perspectives*. Routledge.
- Smith, P. K., & Brain, P. (2000). Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26(1), 1–9. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-2337\(2000\)26:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-7](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(2000)26:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-7)
- Smith, P. K., Pepler, D., & Rigby, K. (2004). *Bullying: Effective intervention. School Psychology International*, 25(4), 441–456.
- Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49, 376–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01846.x>

- Smith, P. K., del Barrio, C., & Tokunaga, R. (2012) Definitions of Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Useful Are the Terms? In S. Bauman, J. Walker y D. Cross (Eds) *Principles of Cyberbullying Research. Definitions, measures and methodology* (pp.26–40). Routledge.
- Smith, P. K., Görzig, A., & Robinson, S. (2019). Cyberbullying in schools: Cross-cultural issues. In G. W. Giumetti & R. M. Kowalski (Eds.), *Cyberbullying in schools, workplaces, and romantic relationships: The many lenses and perspectives of electronic mistreatment* (pp. 49–68). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315110554-4>
- StopBullying.gov. (2024). *Facts about bullying*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.
- Suares, M. (2008). *Mediación. Conducción de disputas, comunicación y técnicas*. Paidós.
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy, 24*(1–2), 23–50. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J019v24n01\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J019v24n01_03)
- Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2011). Expanding the social-ecological framework of bullying. En D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (pp. 3–12). Routledge.
- Swearer, S. M., Hymel, S., & Espelage, D. L. (2014). Bullying and the peer group. *Theory Into Practice, 53*, 291–298.
- Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R.C. (1996). *Introducción a los métodos cualitativos de investigación* (3ra. Ed.). Paidós.
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development, 88*(4), 1156–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>
- Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2009). What works in preventing bullying: Effective elements of anti-bullying programmes. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 1*(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17596599200900003>

- Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7(1), 27–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9109-1>
- Torrado, J. (2016). Estudios de encuesta. En R. Bisquerra (Ed.), *Metodología de la investigación educativa* (5.ª ed., pp. 223–249). La Muralla.
- Torrego, J. C. (2017). *Mediación de conflictos en instituciones educativas: manual para la formación de mediadores* (8.ª ed.). Narcea.
- Torrego, J. C. (2018). *La ayuda entre iguales para mejorar la convivencia escolar: manual para la formación de alumnos ayudantes* (2.ª ed.). Narcea.
- Torrego, J. C., Montalvo, D., & Herrero, R. (2021). La mediación y la ayuda entre iguales en la formación inicial del profesorado en la universidad. En J. C. Torrego & C. Monge (Eds.), *Inclusión y convivencia en los centros educativos: Experiencias y propuestas* (pp. 43–68). Síntesis.
- Twyman, K. A., Saylor, C. F., Saia, D., Macias, M. M., Taylor, L. A., & Spratt, E. (2010). *Bullying and ostracism experiences in children with special health care needs*. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 31(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0b013e3181c828c8>
- Universidad Autónoma Nacional de México. (2024). *Somos responsables de construir una sociedad libre de violencia. Boletín; datos referidos a ENADIS 2022*. UNAM.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2023). *Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying*. UNESCO.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2024). *Violencia y acoso escolar: la UNESCO reclama una mejor protección de los estudiantes*. UNESCO.
- United Nations Children’s Fund & Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique. (2022). *La violence en milieu scolaire*.
- Urra, J. (2018). *La huella del silencio: estrategias de prevención y afrontamiento del acoso escolar*. Morata.

- Van Cleemput, K., Vandebosch, H., & Pabian, S. (2014). Personal Characteristics and Contextual Factors That Determine “Helping”, “Joining In,” and “Doing Nothing” When Witnessing Cyberbullying. *Aggressive Behaviour, 40*, 383-396. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21534>
- Van Geel, M., Vedder, P., & Tanilon, J. (2014). *Relationship between peer victimization, cyberbullying, and suicide in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. JAMA Pediatrics, 168*(5), 435–442. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4143>
- Vega-Cauich, J. I. (2019). Prevalencia del bullying en México: un meta-análisis del bullying tradicional y cyberbullying. *Diversitas, 15*(1), 111-127. <https://doi.org/10.15332/22563067.4020>.
- Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Oldehinkel, A. J., De Winter, A. F., Verhulst, F. C., & Ormel, J. (2005). *Bullying and victimization in elementary schools: A comparison of bullies, victims, bully/victims, and uninvolved preadolescents. Developmental Psychology, 41*(4), 672–682. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.4.672>
- Villanueva, L., Usó, I., & Adrián, J.E. (2013). Los programas de mediación entre iguales: una herramienta eficaz para la convivencia escolar. *Apuntes de Psicología, 31*, 165-171.
- Vogels, E. A. (2022). *Teens and cyberbullying 2022*. Pew Research Center.
- Volk, A. A., Dane, A. V., & Marini, Z. A. (2014). What is bullying? *Aggressive Behavior, 40*, 327–338.
- Wallace, T.M. (2012). Locus of Control as a Contributing Factor in the Relation Between Self- Perception and Adolescent Agression. En *Aggressive Behavior*, volume 38, 213-221. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21419>
- Wang, J., Iannotti, R. J., & Nansel, T. R. (2009). School bullying among adolescents in the United States: Physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 45*(4), 368-375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.03.021>
- Wang, E. A., Hong, C. S., Shavit, S., Kessel, E. R., Sanders, R., & Kushel, M. B. (2013). *Wang et al. respond. American Journal of Public Health, 103*(6), 746–752. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301363>

- Ware, C. (1986). *Estudio de la Comunidad: Cómo averiguar recursos, cómo organizar esfuerzos*. Humanitas.
- Willard, N. (2006). *An educator's guide to cyberbullying and cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social aggression, threats, and distress*. Research Press.
- World Health Organization. (2023). *Global school-based student health survey: Morocco country report*.
- World Health Organization. (2024). *A focus on adolescent peer violence and bullying in Europe, central Asia and Canada: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children international report from the 2021/2022 survey (Vol. 2)*. WHO Regional Office for Europe.
- Wolke, D., & Lereya, S. T. (2015). Long-term effects of bullying. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 100(9), 879–885. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2014-306667>
- Yoneyama, S. (2015). *The Japanese experience of bullying*. London: Routledge.
- Yoneyama, S., & Naito, A. (2003). Problems with the paradigm: The school as a factor in understanding bullying (with special reference to Japan). *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(3), 315–330.
- Young, E., et al. (2024). *Youth risk behavior survey, United States, 2023. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Supplements*, 73(Suppl 4).
- Yubero, S., Larrañaga, E., & Navarro, R. (2015). El conflicto de rol de género masculino y su vinculación con el acoso escolar (bullying). *Feminismo/s*, 25, 89-110.
- Yubero, S., Larrañaga, E., Navarro, R., & Sánchez, S. (2022). *Lectura y acoso escolar*. Narcea.
- Zabay, M., & Casado, A. (2018). *Todos contra el bullying*. Alienta.
- Zych, I., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Del Rey, R. (2015). Scientific research on bullying and cyberbullying: Where have we been and where are we going? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 24, 188–198.

- Zych, I., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Marín-López, I. (2016). Cyberbullying: A systematic review of research, its methodology and assessment instruments. *Psicología Educativa*, *22*(1), 5–18.
- Zych, I., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Protective and risk factors for bullying. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *45*, 4–19.
- Zych, I., Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., Ribeaud, D. & Eisner, M. P. (2020). A longitudinal study on stability and transitions among bullying roles. *Child Development*, *91*(2), 527-545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13195>

Bullying is one of the most persistent and harmful problems in contemporary educational contexts, with profound consequences for students' psychological, social, and academic well-being. This book provides a rigorous and up-to-date analysis of school bullying from a psychoeducational perspective, integrating international scientific evidence with an ecological and group-based approach.

The volume addresses the conceptual foundations of bullying, its typology, prevalence, and risk and protective factors, as well as the psychological profile of the different roles involved—victims, perpetrators, bully-victims, and bystanders—and the differential impact that bullying has on each of them. Particular attention is paid to the emotional, behavioral, and academic consequences of bullying, including its manifestation in digital environments through cyberbullying.

In addition, the book includes a review of recent international research, a section devoted to the assessment of bullying through different instruments and techniques, and the development of evidence-based mediation, intervention, and prevention strategies. The work is complemented by practical proposals aimed at improving school coexistence and promoting positive school climates.

Aimed at professionals in Psychology and Education, teachers, school counselors, and researchers, this book is presented as a reference manual for university training and psychoeducational intervention.



# THE IMPACT OF BULLYING