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Understanding School Bullying: Insights from Practitioners and Families in Türkiye

MERVE DUMAN

Supervisor: PhD.Helena Belchior Rocha

Assistant Professor ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon

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ABSTRACT

Although school bullying is a widely studied issue in academic research, it still retains a significant place in the lives of children and, consequently, in society. Türkiye, on the other hand, is among the countries with the highest rates of this bullying issue. In this regard, this research aimed to address school bullying from a social work perspective by exploring the perceptions and experiences of school practitioners (teachers and school counselors), social workers, and families regarding the bullying concept, their anti-bullying intervention strategies, and challenges they face while addressing the interventions in Türkiye. This research utilized a qualitative research design to gather information encompassing the detailed experiences of multiple practitioners and parents via semistructured interviews. The thesis' methodology section also included a document analysis on bullying in Türkiye for comparison with the interview results. Results showed that although perceptions of bullying vary among participant groups, the most frequently perceived risk of bullying by participants is family-related factors. Meanwhile, three intervention strategies that have stood out the most are individual consultation, family involvement, and disciplinary sanction-based strategies. The challenges encountered range from the normalization of bullying to a lack of resources. Also, the results of the documentation analysis and interviews highlight both a policy-practice gap and a scarcity of disciplinary sanction-based practices. Theoretical frameworks underlined that there is a need for a holistic, multilevel, transdisciplinary approach to solve this problem in Türkiye. The implications of this study extend for all actors involved in the ecological environment of bullying, including future research and policies.

Keywords: School Bullying, Perception Regarding Bullying, Anti-Bullying Intervention, Intervention Challenges, Social Work.

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INTRODUCTION

School bullying is a serious social issue impacting children and adolescents all over the world (Hong & Espelage, 2012), and many studies on the prevalence of bullying in schools still demonstrate its significant global presence. According to the meta-analysis of Arian et al. (2025), one-sixth of children and adolescents are bully-victims, and one-fourth are perpetrators and bully-victims. Additionally, studies providing worldwide data also underline the same problem: the Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children Study (HBSC) 2022 sample, for instance, reports that 11% of adolescents experience bullying at school. While these rates remain low in some countries, they remain consistently high in others. Türkiye is among the countries with the highest rates in Europe and the surrounding region. Also, recent studies show similar bullying prevalence in Türkiye (Arslan et al., 2012; Kartal & Bilgin, 2012; Kılınç, 2023; Yekdeş, D., et al., 2025). Numerous nations, worldwide institutions, and organisations are endeavouring to formulate effective intervention and preventative measures against bullying while highlighting the significance of this issue within society. UNESCO, one of these, declared the first Thursday of November each year as the International Day Against Violence and Bullying in Schools in 2019. School bullying was highlighted as a global issue that requires serious attention, and countries were called upon to take concrete action to address it. In this context, it is anticipated that a holistic and multistakeholder approach is needed to reduce bullying and make schools more inclusive and safer (Notanan L. and Bobayi A., 2025).

Meanwhile, bullying has been the subject of many researchers since the first studies were conducted in the '70s. These studies cover various areas, including the predictors of bullying, the perception of bullying, intervention, and the challenges encountered in intervention. While related determinants are generally examined from an ecological systems perspective, it has been emphasized that family and school factors are among the most important determinants of bullying (Qiu, T et al., 2024). In the aspect of successful intervention, it was found that the presence of a range of intervention components (e.g., school-wide approach, anti-bullying policies, classroom rules, parent outreach, informal peer involvement, and working with victims) was effective in terms of the outcomes of school bullying practices (Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. 2021). There have been significant developments in the literature on bullying in different fields, such as education, psychology, and sociology, especially over the last 20 years. Even though the social work discipline has accumulated studies on bullying in some countries, there is still a great need for research that

includes this discipline's perspective. Furthermore, the countries that do the most research on this subject are the USA, China, Australia, England, Sweden, Italy, and Taiwan (Seyran, F., & Gürhan, N., 2021). In countries such as Türkiye, where bullying rates are quite high, the development of this literature is of paramount importance, considering its contribution to practice. However, there is limited literature in Türkiye in the aspect of qualitative research (Kaya et al. 2025) that would provide a deep insight into the bullying phenomenon, especially a holistic approach covering bullying perceptions, intervention strategies, and challenges encountered in its implementation in social work literature. Furthermore, given that there has been no significant decrease in bullying rates in Turkish schools in recent years, it is extremely important to update research on practical interventions and existing obstacles. Providing readers of this thesis with pinpoint sources offers clues about the origins of the school bullying problem.

This thesis's theoretical framework was developed in interaction with this holistic framework, drawing on social discipline literature. Firstly, this thesis examines perceptions of bullying, anti-bullying interventions, and implementation challenges by using Eco-Social Model by Rocha (2016) to move beyond the individual level of school bullying and highlight the importance of its socio-environmental impact. The model also addresses school bullying from a human rights perspective while emphasising cultural sensitivity in the evaluation of school bullying perception and interventions (Rocha 2016). At the same time, the transdisciplinary approach, reflecting the spirit of this thesis, examines the multidisciplinary nature of school bullying intervention through the lens of a lack of shared awareness and collaboration. The thesis framework shows that the model and approach used in this thesis are interrelated and even complementary.

This research is of great importance both in terms of its contribution to the literature of Türkiye, especially in the field of social work, and in terms of its potential to provide insights into practice and, as a result, contribute to the development of intervention strategies against school bullying. Furthermore, the analysis of documents concerning school bullying examined in this thesis is offering a framework for understanding how school bullying is addressed at the macro level within the ecosystems while also being a source for comparison with results of interviews. The findings demonstrate the magnitude of the difference between policies and practices.

In line with the thesis' multi-actor structure and the aim of obtaining detailed information about practical experiences, a qualitative research design was used. Participants were selected as social workers to provide a social work perspective; school practitioners (school

counselors and teachers) due to their role in observing and reporting school bullying and their function as first responders; and families due to their undeniable role in bullying cases. In addition to the perspectives and experiences of intervention partners within the school, the perspectives and experiences of social workers (Walker, 2003) and families (Smith P. K., 2016) are also significant factors in a child's ecosystem regarding school bullying and their different approaches to solving this problem. Sampling was conducted using primarily the purposive method. The criterion of working in official institutions and state schools was introduced to reflect the reality in Türkiye, where, according to National Education Statistics 2025, 15,366,143 out of approximately 18 million students attend state schools, and the participant universe was formed accordingly. In the analysis section, thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews, while content analysis was used for document analysis. The results were compared in light of the literature. The results were examined within the context of the theoretical framework in the discussion section.

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows: Chapter I, Literature Review, consists of school bullying definitions, predictors of bullying, impacts of school bullying, existing literature regarding school bullying perception, anti-bullying intervention strategies, challenges in the implementation of anti-bullying intervention strategies, and conceptual tools with social work perspectives, which are the Eco-social model and transdisciplinary approach. Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology, which is a qualitative and data analysis process. Chapter 3 presents the results of interviews with teachers, school counselors, social workers, and families while discussing the findings with existing literature and documents (policies and official documents). Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes by summarizing the key results and providing recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Conceptualizing School Bullying

1. Definitions and Forms of School Bullying

The Scandinavian region can be called the first place where the phenomenon of bullying was studied. Norwegian scientist Heinemann (1973) was one of the first scientists to contribute to the literature on the phenomenon of bullying when he defined the Norwegian word “mobbing” as group violence against an individual. Another Norwegian scientist Olweus, who is considered the first scientist to conduct extensive research on bullying, defined bullying as the physical or verbal attack of a stronger child on a weaker child (Olweus, 1973a, 1978). Olweus later developed this definition and defined bullying as "A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. It was further specified that in there bullying is a certain imbalance of power or strength. The student who is exposed to negative actions has differently defending himself or himself" (Olweus, 1993, p. 8-9 and p. 48). This definition includes three important distinguishing features of bullying: aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions; a pattern of behavior repeated over time and an imbalance of power or strength (Olweus, 1993). This clearly shows that bullying follows a distinct pattern from other aggressive behaviors.

Other researchers also began to contribute to this field after Olweus's intriguing work in this area. For example, Greene (2000) claims that there are five bullying features that a majority of researchers have agreed upon. Three of these five features correspond to those in Olweus' definition. In addition, the fourth one is "the victim does not provoke bullying behavior by using or physical aggression" and the fifth one is "bullying can occur in familiar social groups." (Greene, 2000).

On the other hand, Anthony Wolk and two of his colleagues, who argued that a new and updated definition of bullying was needed, defined bullying as “aggressive goal-directed behavior that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance” (Volk et al.,

2014). They emphasized the importance of three elements (goal-directedness, power imbalance, and harm) in this definition and claimed that bullying should be measured by taking these elements into account for successful early interventions (Volk et al., 2014). In another recent research, bullying is defined as a distinct but complex type of interpersonal aggressiveness that manifests itself in a variety of ways, serves various purposes, and results in various patterns of relationships (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). This definition highlights that bullying can occur in many ways and at many times, thus providing a clue that bullying can be observed even in environments where it is least likely to occur.

UNESCO, also, defines bullying as an unwanted aggressive behavior that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power or strength. However, at the International Conference on School Bullying held in November 2020, a recommendation on preventing and addressing school bullying and cyberbullying was published by the Scientific Committee and a new definition was launched here: "School bullying is in-person and online behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional or social harm to targeted students. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system. School bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults" (UNESCO, 2020). The new definition of bullying emphasizes a broader understanding that recognizes more than just repeated aggression and power imbalance. The main differences from older definitions are: a) Recognizing that bullying involves power imbalances within a network of relationships and that it occurs in a variety of social and institutional contexts; b) Emphasizing the absence of effective care and positive responses as a characteristic of bullying; c) Emphasizing relational aspects, emotional, social and physical harm, and considering both offline and online (cyberbullying) environments; d) Explicitly acknowledging emotional, social and physical harm, including the impact of the scope and prevalence of cyberbullying; e) Emphasizing that bullying and cyberbullying involve power imbalances within social networks and relational structures and f) Understanding the repetition in terms of ongoing fear, threats, or online sharing even when a single incident causes lasting harm (UNESCO, 2020). This detailed definition might make a big difference both in understanding bullying and in its impact on the preventive or intervention strategies to be implemented. It was necessary to create a new, more comprehensive definition that covers areas the old narrow definition could not address to develop more effective intervention and prevention strategies (UNESCO, 2020).

In the context of school bullying, bullying that occurs among students in a school setting is called "school bullying" (Gökler 2009), and this thesis addresses this issue regarding this definition.

1.1. Actors of Bullying

To further clarify the terms within these definitions, it is also helpful to define all actors who are part of bullying. Firstly, a bully can be defined as someone or a group who intentionally carries out an act of bullying by exploiting the power imbalance (Pişkin, M., 2002). On the other hand, a victim is defined as someone who is repeatedly subjected to aggressive behavior, known as bullying, and unable to defend themselves because of being in a position of power imbalance (physical or social) (Olweus, 1993). Bystanders are defined as individuals who do not actively participate in the bullying incident but are considered to be a part of it by witnessing it. However, the bystander's definition has transformed from a passive role into an active participant in the “social architecture” of bullying (Twemlow, S., Fonagy, P., & Sacco, F., 2004).

More than four decades of research on bullying have revealed that it is a complicated and difficult concept to define. Changing lifestyles and conditions over time also have an impact on the definitions and forms of bullying. Therefore, it is important to update its definition in terms of the way to be followed in the intervention on bullying.

1.2. Types Of Bullying

Many definitions of bullying offer clues about its forms. While the definition of bullying varies, it's impossible to say there are a fixed number of forms; however, there are some commonly observed forms of bullying in schools. Research sometimes focuses specifically on certain forms of bullying and their intervention. Some forms of bullying are more easily observable and therefore easier to prove, while others may be more difficult or time-consuming to detect and intervene in.

One of the most common and easily detectable forms of bullying is physical bullying, also referred to as direct bullying. In this case, the bully comes into direct physical contact with the person he/she is bullying and causes physical harm to him/her such as hitting, pushing or kicking (Espelage, & Sweare, 2003). Verbal bullying is another direct bullying that is done only verbally without any physical contact, such as name-calling, teasing, using belittling expressions, etc. (Espelage, & Sweare, 2003). These two types of bullying have been found to be the most common types of bullying in many studies (Çankaya İ, 2011; Gürhan, N., 2017; Roberts, 2017; Pişkin, 2010, 176). Relational bullying is defined as a type of indirect

bullying in which bullying transforms into actions intended to harm relationships (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). This type of behavior often manifests as manipulating the social group that person is in to ensure that that person is excluded from the group, keeping secrets, spreading gossip/rumors, and humiliation in social settings (Griffin, R. S., & Gross, A. M. 2004).

While all the types mentioned above are defined as traditional bullying, there is another type of bullying that falls outside of this definition. *Cyberbullying* is one of the most common types of bullying due to the advancement of technology and children's easy access to electronic devices, especially phones and the internet. There are many studies on the definition of cyberbullying. In their study comparing traditional and cyberbullying, Patchin and Hinduja define cyberbullying as an action that is done intentionally and repeatedly via electronic devices and aims to harm the person (Patchin, W. J., and Hinduja, S., 2006). Furthermore, traditional and cyberbullying are intertwined because everything that is said and experienced at school can be discussed outside of school in the cyber environment; conversely, anything that happens outside of school hours in the cyber environment can be discussed when children come to school (Patchin, W. J., and Hinduja, S., 2006). Shortly, bullying, even when it occurs online, is often linked to social relationships at school (Williams & Guerra, 2007). In their 2015 research on overlapping types of bullying, Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Lindstrom Johnson found that cyberbullying can escalate into physical bullying or violence. Besides, this study indicated considerable overlap across various forms of bullying, revealing that adolescents subjected to numerous types of bullying faced the greatest risk of socio-emotional issues (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Lindstrom Johnson, 2015).

As explained above, some forms of bullying that affect life within or in the school environment can be direct or indirect. The way for school practitioners, social workers working with children, and families to recognize these forms depends on how they define bullying and whether they are knowledgeable about them. This thesis attempts to reveal the perspectives participants possess regarding the definition and forms of bullying. Before delving into studies on these perceptions, it is important to highlight the extent to which bullying impacts people's lives, as this underscores the seriousness of the bullying problem.

2. Impacts Of School Bullying on Children's Well-Being

The main purpose of examining the effects of school bullying is to once again underline the importance of addressing it and to raise awareness about its seriousness. The impact of

school bullying is not limited to the victim; it also negatively affects the bully and the bystander. Since these actors are members of society, bullying negatively impacts the well-being of society as a whole. Furthermore, bullying does not only have negative effects during the time in which the event occurs but also in the later life of actors involved in bullying incidents. For example, a study presented that psychiatric disorders such as risk of depression, panic disorder, agoraphobia (only in women), suicidal tendencies (only in men), and generalized anxiety in both bullies and victims of bullying are present in childhood and persist into young adulthood (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). Below are the results of various studies on the short-term and long-term effects on children.

The impact of school bullying on a child can extend to many areas, including physical, mental, and social aspects. The interplay of these can lead to a chain reaction of problems across all dimensions. For example, longitudinal studies have shown that individuals who were involved in bullying as children or adolescents are at risk of developing mental problems soon after or in adulthood (Arseneault et al. 2008; Schneider et al. 2011; Sigurdson et al. 2015; Silberg et al. 2016; Takizawa et al. 2014). A study conducted in Türkiye highlights similar findings, stating that children who are bullied experience intense negative emotions such as anxiety, internalized anger, helplessness, worthlessness, and loneliness (Atik and Kemer, 2008). Furthermore, peer bullying, high internalization symptoms, and low self-esteem have been found to be interrelated, with the latter partly influencing internalization symptoms through self-esteem (Mullan, V. M. R. et al., 2023). As a behavioral problem outcome, there is a significant link between childhood bullying and the risk of violent behavior and drug use in adolescence (Kim, M. j. 2011; Ttofi et al. 2016). Additionally, a correlation has been found between individuals who were bullies in childhood and those who carry a gun in adulthood (Valdebenito et al. 2017).

In addition, the physical harms associated with bullying are not limited to small injuries, and even death has been revealed. Relationships have been identified between an individual who has been a party to a bullying incident (whether the victim, the bully or the bystander) developing or having suicidal thoughts (Holt, M. K., et al., 2016; Koyanagi et al., 2019). Moreover, bullying has been associated with increased behavioral self-blame (e.g., "I should have been more careful" or "it's my fault, and I can't change it") in middle school students who are bullied (Schacter & Juvonen, 2015).

While education plays an important role in a child's fight against bullying, unfortunately bullying has a negative impact on children's academic success (Oliveira et al., 2018) and is also shown to be one of the most relevant reasons for school dropouts (Ripamonti, 2017;

Nikolaou, 2021). Similarly, the Fry et al. (2018) meta-analysis revealed that individuals who were bullied in childhood later experience problems such as dropping out of school and absenteeism.

In light of all these findings, it is impossible to deny that bullying constitutes a human rights violation. Bullying poses a risk to the right to life, the right to education and the right to well-being, which are the most fundamental human rights and are included in sustainable development goals. It inflicts wounds on people's lives that are difficult to heal. The problems experienced by these individuals negatively affect other people and systems, extending beyond just the individual's harm. Therefore, intervention in bullying, especially early intervention, must be taken very seriously and continuously improved in light of changing circumstances.

3. Literature on Risk Factors that Lead To School Bullying

The way to address bullying begins with understanding the underlying causes. That's why many researchers have studied the factors that contribute to bullying incidents. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a child's behavior is influenced by both their personal character and their environment. Therefore, both of these may also influence bullying behaviors. For example, Chu et al. (2023) found that adolescents exposed to more risk factors, such as family and school risk factors, had a higher rate of involvement in bullying at later times. The studies in the literature are examined below, and the factors are grouped with the ecological understanding.

3.1. Individual Factors

Individual factors can be psychological characteristics, behavioral tendencies, social skills, and academic-related factors. For instance, according to the research by Jolliffe & Farrington (2011), impulsive personality specifically shows predictive characteristics that lead to becoming a bully. Furthermore, bullies are often found to have low empathy skills (Cook et al., 2010b). A systematic study shows similar results, indicating that psychological traits such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, sensation seeking, aggressiveness, and absence of empathy create the potential for becoming a bully (Alvarez-Garcia et al., 2015). Also, academic-related factors are important too because they don't act as an effect of bullying only but also as risk factors. While poor academic performance is a risk factor for becoming a bully (Eyuboglu, D. et al., 2025), academic pressure can also create a risk of a child becoming part of the bullying group (Moon et al., 2016).

Another study relates to how the bully perceives certain characteristics of the victim. This study in Türkiye suggests that a child who is bullied becomes the primary target because the

bully believes that the child, who often has insecurities and low self-esteem, will be unable to protect themselves (Şirvanlı-Özen, D., 2006). Another study has shown that depression can be not only a result but also a cause, as children exhibiting depressive traits experience problems in peer relationships (Kochel et al., 2012). In this context, another issue is how a child's physical appearance can make them a target for bullying. A study conducted in Türkiye on risk factors for bullying found that thin or overweight body perception was significantly associated with bullying (Eyupoglu et al; 2025).

Another individual risk factor that is considered in literature is age. For example, the risk of being bullied is highest during transitional periods (Orpinas & Harne, 2006).

The literature also identifies gender as an individual determining factor. According to a study in Türkiye, boys were more likely to be both victims and perpetrators, particularly in areas of physical and verbal aggression and property damage, while girls were more likely to experience isolation and, to a lesser extent, verbal aggression (Gürsoy, F et al., 2024). This finding means that the situations where this gender variable makes one of the most significant differences are the types of bullying. On the other hand, a study examining the relationship between internalization and externalization problems experienced in the fall semester of fifth grade and bullying; found no significant difference between genders in these relationships (Clark, K. N et al., 2022). Also, another study offers a different perspective on the relationship between bullying and gender. According to this study, aggression is related not so much to individual gender influence but rather to inter-gender relations and stereotypical gender discrimination (Faris & Felmlee, 2011). In schools where intergender interactions are rare, intergender friendships create status differences that amplify the consequences of network centrism (Faris & Felmlee, 2011).

When examining individual determinants, it is very difficult to ignore race, ethnicity, or nationality-based risk determinants. According to Fink, E., et al. (2018), ethnic origin is among the factors that predict bullying behavior along with a child's gender, poverty status, special education needs. Similar studies are being conducted in Türkiye as well, because Türkiye has a considerable refugee and migrant population. For example, Songür and Ongur (2020), in their qualitative research investigating the problems experienced by Syrian students in education in Türkiye, revealed that one of the main problems is bullying-exclusion and otherization. It's clear that ethnicity-bullying-related topics is not only present in specific bullying literature but also in many areas such as immigration and refugee issues. On the other hand, there are also some studies in the literature that show that bullying among adolescents does not differ significantly according to race or ethnicity (eg. Hepburn,

Azrael, Molnar, and Miller, 2012). Nevertheless, literature generally sees ethnicity and race as factors that need to be considered while conceptualizing school bullying.

According to Shetgiri et al. (2013), better economic resources can also help parents engage in more positive parenting behaviors (e.g., warmth, cognitive stimulation, involvement), which in turn leads to children adopting better coping strategies and thus reducing their risk of bullying or becoming victims in addition to emotional support. Meanwhile, a study conducted in Türkiye found that there was no significant difference in the level of bullying among students based on their socioeconomic status (Öztürk, N., Kutlu, M., & Atli, A. 2015). Finally, a study examining the socioeconomic and educational status of families showed that children from low-income families exhibited more bullying behavior (Çetin, E., 2026). This is further evidence that low socioeconomic conditions and parental education levels are also risk factors.

Lastly but not least, having recently been involved in bullying is also one of the determining factors in the likelihood of becoming a victim (Eyuboglu, D. et al., 2025). This means that children can sometimes take on other roles in bullying, and even experiencing bullying once can put a child at risk of becoming a victim.

3.2. Relational Factors

Relational factors refer to the risks that arise from the relationships children form with the people around them. According to a recent study, three of the highest risk factors in predicting a student's risk of being bullied are teacher–student relationship, peer relationship, and family cohesion, all of which are related to the relational connections the student forms (Qiu T et al., 2024). One of the most important of these relationships is the one with family because a poor parent-child relationship increases a child's risk of being bullied (Stevens et al., 2002). Unfortunately, a child who experiences violence at home has a higher risk rate of becoming a victim of bullying at school (McCloskey & Lichter, 2003). Furthermore, adverse familial behaviors increase the likelihood of becoming a bully/victim, and it's not just harmful negative behavior, but a lack of parental support is associated with a high risk of bullying involvement (Lereya et al., 2013; Moon et al., 2016). An intriguing finding is, lastly, those from extended families are at greater risk of bullying (Eyüpoğlu D et al 2025., and Han Yekdeş D et al 2025). While studies don't fully explain the reasons for this outcome, it's possible that families in large families have difficulty spending enough time with their children.

According to Bayar and Uçanok (2012), adolescents observe their behavior and the behavior of their peers in social interactions and shape their behavior accordingly. Here, in the

bullying context, the child's relationship with their peers becomes an important factor because negative peer influences are associated with bullying (Espelage D. L et al., 2000; Bayraktar F. 2012). Looking at the influence of peer relationships from another perspective, one could also consider the impact of whether or not such a relationship exists in the first place. For example, lack of closeness to friends and low social companionship are strongly correlated with being a victim of bullying, both traditional and cyber-based (Navarro, R et al., 2015). Furthermore, low social activities with peers also are risk factors for victimization in boys (Zych, I., Farrington, D. P., Llorent, V. J., & et al., 2021). Another point highlighted in the context of friendships is the relationship between peer status and bullying among adolescents. One significant reason that can lead to bullying is the desire to gain status, as aggression is not limited to socially excluded individuals; instead, it increases with rising peer status until one reaches the top of the social hierarchy (Faris & Felmlee, 2011). Since bullying is an action that stems from human interaction, whether online or offline, the influence of social relationships on creating bullying is not surprising.

The relationship between school practitioners and children (students) is another dimension worth examining because they are one of the adults who need to intervene in the bullying cases at school. The deterioration of the relationship between teacher and student and the resulting harm negatively impacts each other (Forsberg, C. et al., 2024). There are similar findings indicating that negative teacher-student relationships can increase the risk of problematic aggression (De Laet et al. 2015; Rudasill et al. 2010). In the literature, studies have leaned more towards the protective factors of this relationship than the risk factor aspect. In this sense, it's said that positive teacher-student relationships are less associated with bullying (e.g., Bae et al., 2019; ten Bokkel et al., 2023).

3.3. School-Level Factors

School-level factors play a critical role in the occurrence, spread, and continuation of bullying. The school's environment even has an impact on cyber aggression (Bayar and Uçanok, 2012). Unlike individual reasons, more systemic factors such as the organization's culture and rules can create ample space for bullying. Under this factor, school climate is cited as one of the most important factors in influencing involvement in bullying incidents in most studies (e.g., Williams and Guerra, 2011; Aldridge, J. et al., 2018). For example, an improved school climate is associated with lower rates of bullying. It means that a positive school climate acts as a protective factor (Konishi, C et al., 2017; Hultin, H et al., 2021), while a poor school climate creates a risk for bullying (Konishi et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, the systematic review by Azeredo et al. (2015) investigated contextual-level risk factors for school bullying in observational studies and found that schools lacking anti-bullying norms, with inadequate teacher support, and poor classroom management had a higher risk of bullying. The study draws conclusions about the risks of a lack of rules or policies, particularly regarding school bullying, within schools. Furthermore, students who witness delinquent or disruptive behavior in the school environment, have positive relationships with being victims of bullying or being involved in bullying incidents in various forms (Dorio et al., 2020)**.** Therefore, a negative overall climate at school can perpetuate bullying**.**

Another noteworthy topic in the literature is the impact of schools' socioeconomic status on bullying**.** According to a study, a positive correlation was found between school deprivation and a child's individual deprivation, but interestingly, it revealed that deprived schools negatively affected children who did not come from a deprived background in terms of bullying (Fink, E., et al., 2018). In short, while a child who is individually deprived is at risk due to their own deprivation, a child who is not deprived is at risk due to the negative environment of the school. In the context of school physical features, Bowes, L., et al. (2009) claimed that school size also increases the risk of bullying. Over time, some studies have supported these claims, while others have shown that school or class size has no effect on the occurrence of bullying (Garandeau, C. F., et al., 2019; Cavicchiolo, E. et al., 2025).

3.4. Cultural Factors

Cultural factors are important contextual influences associated with bullying behavior. In this sense, bullying cannot be studied independently from the culture of the country and society being studied, because perceptions, values, and attitudes towards bullying are in mutual interaction with culture (Scheithauer et al., 2016). Normative beliefs about bullying act as one of the determining factors in whether the rate of bullying increases or decreases (Williams and Guerra, 2011). A study conducted in Türkiye concluded that honor holds a significant place in the lives of Turkish adolescents and that they associate bullying with honor when explaining it (Celik et al., 2023). This study also gives us an idea of what values are accepted culturally among adolescent people in Türkiye. Also, here again, the risk of gender may come to the fore within the cultural environment. Cosma A. et al. (2022) found that gender inequality at the country level is associated with adolescents' involvement in bullying and gender-based stereotypes in bullying. This underscores the relationship between gender roles in the country's culture and bullying.

3.5. Community-Environmental Factors

The current literature suggests that social disadvantage and societal attitudes towards violence can all affect the prevalence of bullying. Firstly, it was shown that the neighborhood in which a child lives can influence bullying, and the variables in this regard were identified as relationships with neighbors (Bowes, L. et al., 2009) and neighborhood safety (Espelage D. L et al., 2000). In their 2019 study, Han and colleagues examined bullying among adolescents in South Korea and its neighborhood-related determinants. Their findings showed that children living in disadvantaged neighborhoods (neighborhoods with a higher number of households receiving public assistance, a higher rate of unmarried couples, more reported bullying incidents, and lower levels of social activity) were more likely to be targets or perpetrators of bullying compared to their peers in affluent communities (Han et al., 2019). In Türkiye, a study examining the impact of the school environment concluded that not only violence within the school but also violence in the school's surroundings increases the risk of becoming a victim of bullying (Öztürk, N et al,. 2015). These studies underlined that the units affecting children are not limited to school, individual, and family settings but also include the neighborhoods and communities in which they live.

Conclusion of this part

Literature shows that being a bully or a victim doesn't stem solely from individual problems. A systematic analysis conducted in Türkiye supports this view, highlighting that the common findings of 7 studies are age, economic, family, and cultural factors (Kılıç, S. 2023). Conversely, the fact that children who always or usually complete their homework, whose parents talk to them, and who know most or all of their friends are at a lower risk of bullying is evidence that risk factors can also become protective factors (Shetgiri et al., 2013). Additionally, all of the factors mentioned above may pose obstacles for professionals during the intervention process. Therefore, these factors mentioned above should be taken into account when designing intervention programs (Sahin-Ilkorkor & Brubaker, 2025). In this context, when it comes to the challenges section of the thesis, the researcher mainly wanted to draw attention to the obstacles that some of the factors mentioned here would create in the intervention process.

B. Perceptions Regarding School Bullying

The decision, method, and duration of intervention in bullying cases can be influenced by many factors. One of these is the perception of bullying. Many studies have examined the perceptions of individuals who are in some way involved in the formation or intervention of bullying. Consequently, it has been emphasized that how school bullying is understood is crucial to the success of intervention (Maunder, R. E et al., 2010). Definitions regarding the

bullying concept, however, do not become standardized among individuals. Besides varying from person to person, differences also exist among practitioners and families. This variation may occur because personal experiences and cultural expectations influence perceptions. This study, however, focused more on examining practitioners' and families' perceptions based on their definitions of bullying and its triggering factors and effects.

Firstly, school staff, especially teachers, are among the groups most frequently included in research on bullying in the literature (eg. Bell & Willis, 2016; Espelage et al., 2014). These studies also focus on their perceptions and attitudes towards bullying. For example, in their research examining teachers' perceptions of compassion and bullying, Aydemir and his colleagues revealed that teachers define bullying as a concept encompassing types such as psychological and physical violence, exposure to ill-treatment, and other forms of abuse involving an imbalance of power towards the individual (Aydemir, F., Göçen, A. & Yıldırım, İ., 2021). This study shows that teachers' definition of bullying includes some elements accepted in the literature. These findings may, in turn, provide a clue about their awareness of the bullying phenomenon. Another study indicates that the majority of reasons for bullying stem from family issues according to teachers (Sağır E. & Keskin B., 2023). Teachers may perceive families as the principal agents accountable for both the origins and resolutions of bullying when intervening (Kennedy, Tom D et al., 2012). In a study conducted about school counselors' perceptions in Türkiye, school counselors primarily defined the concept of bullying as power relations, negative behaviors, being attacked, and oppressing the other person (Bayar, A., & Balcı, M., 2023). The same study listed negative parental attitudes and the need to belong to a group as reasons for bullying occurrence. In short, the lietarature says educators generally perceive bullying as an undesirable behavior, emphasizing the power dynamic and put attention to family-related risk factors

Research on social workers' perspectives or perceptions of bullying is notably scarce. A study in Sweden indicates that social workers generally link the risk factors for bullying to students' individual difficulties, social relationships, and contextual factors (Beckman, L., & Hagquist, C., 2016). Similarly, the research specifically in Türkiye that reveals social workers' perceptions of school bullying is very rare. In this sense, this research will make a significant contribution to the literature in Türkiye.

Meanwhile, Sawyer et al. (2011) highlight the importance of understanding parents' perceptions and conceptualizations in bullying research and intervention efforts, arguing that parents' understanding of bullying influences their recognition of bullying incidents and

subsequent interventions. Similarly, Shea, M et al. (2016) suggest that parents' attitudes and beliefs about bullying can influence their intervention strategies, which in turn can affect their children's propensity to and involvement in bullying.

In their 2020 study, Muthanna Samara et al. highlighted the scarcity of research in the literature on practitioners' perceptions of bullying and underlined the impact of these perceptions on the success of anti-bullying intervention programs. In this sense, although studies have been accumulating in Türkiye as well, the majority are teacher-focused, and in the remaining studies, the diversity of practitioners within the studies is not very high. Furthermore, the diversity of practitioners and family involvement can show readers whether or not there is a pattern of differences between participant groups in this study. While the above highlights that perception of bullying can influence bullying intervention, the aim of this research is not to prove a relationship between bullying perception and intervention. Instead, it focuses on identifying interveners' perceptions of school bullying phenomena.

C. Anti-School Bullying Interventions: Types and Classification Framework

While it is generally proven that intervention programs for bullying reduce both reported victimization and instances of bullying (Gaffney, Ttofi, & Farrington, 2019a), the effectiveness of different intervention types varies (George P., et al., 2024). School bullying has been a phenomenon studied for years in many parts of the world, and therefore numerous types have been considered to address this problem. While this part of the literature review does not cover all of these types, it will present several of the most studied ones in the literature. These types also complement each other; the same intervention can fall into more than one category. For example, combinations such as “universal preventative intervention” are meaningful within this framework. Furthermore, a brief framework for specific intervention strategies will be presented. Lastly, the roles of practitioners and families in this complex intervention equation will be examined in the last part because planning and optimizing bullying prevention requires considering the experiences and roles of relevant professionals (Beckman, L., & Hagquist, C. 2016).

1. Universal vs Targeted Approaches

Firstly, universal interventions generally work to improve the whole school climate. It also consists of prevention efforts involving all children, regardless of whether they have been directly involved in bullying. Thus, by using universal prevention approaches, a series of

activities can be created that benefit all individuals in the given environment (e.g., school). That's why many studies say that schools should adopt and implement universal policies or programs to prevent bullying (Kennedy, Tom D., et al., 2012; Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P., 2019). On the other hand, Lund et al. (2012) stated that standard school-based programs, or a kind of universal programs, may not address the contexual problems and needs of schools regarding bullying because these programs may remain too general. The most common criticism of universal interventions is their tendency to overlook local, contextual, and cultural influences and variables. However, considering the factors that influence bullying, it becomes necessary to include these factors as well, and therefore schools may need to adapt at least these universal interventions to their own circumstances.

Targeted interventions can be described as an adult intervening in specific cases of bullying that arise (Laninga-Wijnen, L. et al., 2025; Salmivalli, 2023). However, this does not mean that these interventions are the reactions adults give in daily life; rather, it involves addressing specific cases and trying to stop or prevent bullying, such as an adult having constructive conversations with students (Salmivalli et al., 2025). Beyond universal interventions, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding targeted interventions; studies generally focus on preventive interventions (Laninga-Wijnen, L. et al., 2025). On the other hand, it has been noted that the effectiveness of targeted interventions may vary depending on age because such interventions are not as effective in adolescence compared to childhood (Johander et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, programs such as KiVa offer both universal elements (e.g., student-led lessons; playground supervision) and targeted intervention elements (e.g., targeted intervention guidelines for teachers) to the school where it will be implemented (Laninga-Wijnen, L., 2025). Similarly, other studies have suggested that developing intervention programs that take into account both universal and uniquely targeted strategies could be beneficial (Guo et al., 2021).

2. Preventative vs Reactive Types

Preventive and reactive intervention approaches differ from each other in their aims, methods, and, most importantly, the timing of the intervention. Preventive, or proactive, intervention aims to prevent bullying incidents before they occur. Meanwhile, reactive intervention is defined as the type of intervention that takes place after bullying has occurred.

Prevention programs generally focus on developing social-emotional skills or improving the school climate in general. In this sense, prevention programs can address multiple levels, such as student level, classroom level, school level, and family level. Many prevention programs specifically have been developed. Some of the most prominent and universally applicable programs include the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), the KiVa Anti-Bullying Program, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs, and the Viennese Social Competence (ViSC). Also, preventative approaches aim for long-term-based interventions. Even if it doesn't specifically address bullying, initiatives that improve the school climate also fall under the category of preventing bullying (Espelage, 2018). Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P., (2019b), in their meta-analysis of intervention programs, including KIVA, OBPP, and VISC, revealed that these programs have a significant impact on preventing bullying. Although the success rate is higher in some countries, the success of prevention-based bullying interventions is undeniable.

Reactive methods generally involve interventions to stop bullying in bullying situations (Rigby, K., 2021). Including such things as counseling, informal warning, disciplinary warnings, and mediation or conflict resolution are some of these. For example, in a study investigating interventions related to bullying of integrated students in Türkiye, it was observed that teachers resorted to warning the bullying student in response to the bullying incidents (Cincioğlu, Ş., & Kurt, Ö., 2024).

The main reason for examining these two types in this study is to better understand how interventions in practice aimed at reducing bullying at the educational and social levels in Türkiye are planned. As seen above, although the literature gives more attention to preventive interventions, practitioners still actively use reactive ones in real life settings.

3. Discipline/Sanction-Based vs Restorative Types of Intervention

The literature frequently debates about these two approaches together, and there are differing opinions regarding their effects. To begin with, the definition of discipline-based methods can be described as directly applying punitive and legal sanctions to the child exhibiting the behavior. This method is related to the zero-tolerance approach. The zero-tolerance approach argues that bullying can be resolved by punishing the bully with disciplinary measures, and that punishment should be reapplied if the behavior recurs (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Typical strategies involve changing the

child's class, suspending them from school, and expelling them from school. It was emphasized that serious meetings with bullying students, reporting to the school administration, and disciplinary actions such as loss of privileges were effective intervention methods (Thompson & Smith, 2009). Conversely, there are other views on the effectiveness of this approach. For example**,** this approach, which is described as a method of punishment, is not considered a successful one but is harmful even for children's and youth's mental health and academic life, according to Ashworth et al. (2008). Also, Bradshaw (2015) indicated that cases of bullying frequently go unreported, suggesting that zero-tolerance policies may contribute to this phenomenon. In their research examining the relationship between teacher-student relations, an important factor within the school context, Kovacevic Lepojevic, M., et al. (2024) found that teachers' punitive disciplinary practices lead them to take on negative roles, and this model contributes to an increase in bullying. Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) assessed this approach concerning low-income and ethnic/racial minority groups and do not endorse exclusionary punishment due to its excessive application among these populations. On the other hand, a meta and systematic analysis of school anti-bullying programs identified some effective elements, including high levels of playground supervision, consistent disciplinary methods, and classroom management strategies (Farrington and Ttofi 2011). The debates that arise here may be about how long-term the success of discipline-based interventions, even if they are successful in the short term, will last. For example, it has been shown that direct sanctions are more effective in cases of short-term victimization in middle school (Garandeau et al., 2014).

Meanwhile, the restorative approach takes a contrasting approach to the discipline-based approach. Restorative practices can improve school climate, discipline, and positive conflict management by aiming to prevent suspensions, expulsions, conflicts, and misbehavior (such as bullying) and by fostering positive relationships and the development of social and emotional skills among peers and between students and teachers (Lodi, E et al., 2021) Developed in 1999 by the International Institute for Restorative Practices, these practices encompass 11 core elements that focus on the micro-meso level and include several components such as social-emotional activities or training as conferences (Acosta et al., 2019). In their 2019 study evaluating restorative practices interventions, Acosta et al. implemented these 11 types of restorative practices in 13 middle schools. Although the interventions did not show major changes in the schools where they were implemented, they suggested that restorative practices may be effective in improving positive behaviors and

reducing bullying, as changes were observed in school climate, peer attachment, and social skills and a decrease in cyberbullying. Furthermore, Gaffney et al., (2021) research revealed that "non-punitive discipline strategies," such as empathy, have the opposite effect rather than providing benefits. Although there has been a shift towards a restorative approach rather than disciplinary measures recently, the literature still contains mixed results regarding its effectiveness (Gregory, A., Huang, F. L., & Ward-Seidel, A. R., 2024; Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). Weber and Vereenooghe found similar mixed results in 17 studies they reviewed, noting that most cases had designs that lacked hands and parts, leading to limitations in concluding causality and generalizability. Therefore, they stated that there is an urgent need in the literature for research with robust study designs, such as randomized controlled trials (Weber, C., & Vereenooghe, L., 2020).

An approach that includes both condemnatory and empathetic messages is shown to be the 'best option' most likely to lead teachers to intend to stop bullying (Johander, E et al., 2022). This shows that some disciplinary-based studies and restorative studies, although they have opposing views, can complement each other in some cases and bring success in bullying intervention. Furthermore, the effectiveness of disciplinary and restorative interventions can vary from country to country. A 2024 study by Yang, C, and colleagues found that some positive intervention practices implemented in America increased bullying while decreasing it in China; however, studies on social-emotional learning showed the opposite: a decrease in bullying in America, while in some cases it was associated with bullying in China. Although punitive measures are associated with an increase in bullying in both countries, it was found that frequently applied punitive measures did not have a negative impact in China (Yang, C et al., 2024). This has highlighted the significance of the socio-cultural context in addressing bullying interventions.

4. Intervention Strategies

This section reviews intervention strategies at the ecological level. The current literature emphasizes that bullying cannot be studied at a single level and therefore argues for the necessity of intervention at the individual, family, classroom, and school levels. Therefore, the intervention strategies discussed in this section are organized according to ecological levels, highlighting both the target contexts and the ecological system at which they operate.

This provides a more detailed perspective on bullying intervention strategies while also establishing a structural framework for understanding the areas these interventions impact.

4.1 Student-Level Interventions (Micro)

Interventions at this level aim to develop the child's individual skills. These extend to psychological and social areas. Children empowered here can protect themselves and react when bullies attack them.

Here, improving social-emotional skills is crucial for a child to protect themselves when they face bullying situations. Therefore, social-emotional learning programs hold significant relevance in the literature in this matter. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an intervention approach that involves teaching skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship management (CASEL, 2015). Methods used in social emotional learning include various things such as role-playing, group discussions, and focus groups (Baldry and Farrington, 2004). Also, many programs specifically based on social-emotional learning have been developed, aiming to provide interventions that will improve children's individual skills. The best known of these is the Second Step program. This program, developed by Espelage, D. L et al. (2013, 2015), aims to reduce bullying, including homophobic bullying and sexual violence. Also, Joronen, K., Häkämies, A., & Astedt-Kurki, P. (2011) aimed to enhance children's socio-emotional learning through drama and reported that the intervention resulted in increased awareness of bullying among children. One study found that peer support reduces the overall impact of bullying, and the author suggested that supporting social skills is crucial for fostering these friendships (Brendgen, M. & Poulin, F, 2018). Here, developing social skills serves as a fundamental empowerment tool to utilize other intervention strategies against bullying. Also, self-esteem can make a difference in saying stop to bullying or even in not being seen as a target in the first place. That's why many programs include strategies for improving self-esteem in their curriculum (Mullan, V. M. R et al., 2023). Wolfer R, Scheithauer H. (2014), who tested the effectiveness of the fairplayer.manual bullying prevention program from a social network perspective, found that this program, one of the rare studies that affects both individual skills and social mechanisms, is effective in preventing bullying from occurring. Empathy, which should be one of the most important skills a child possesses, is also a frequently cited intervention in addressing the problem of bullying. Also called an empathy-building approach, this intervention strategy relies on the bully child understanding

the victim child and involving them in finding a solution (Robinson and Maines, 2008). While James and Collins (2015) highlighted that empathy training is an effective strategy in reducing bullying, a study in Türkiye also showed that training on bullying contributes to developing empathy, thus strengthening the child's social interaction in the face of bullying (Balcı & Ayhan, 2007). Here, it can be seen that training on bullying and training on empathy positively influence each other in the context of school bullying.

In addition to SEL intervention strategies, another individual intervention strategy is counseling and individual support. Such individual support makes the child psychologically stronger against bullying. (Yiğit & Seferoğlu, 2017). In addition, emotional control training is considered an effective strategy for anti-bullying programs (Lee S, 2015).

Another student-level strategy is peer mediation, which actively utilizes peers. A peer model implemented in Italy has led to a decrease in cyberbullying, particularly among males (Menesini, E., Nocentini, A., & Palladino, B. E., 2012). Therefore, the researchers stated that peer education can play a significant active role in terms of bringing about change. Another noteworthy detail here is the peer counseling training intervention, because those who receive peer counseling training have been observed to have increased knowledge and skills regarding bullying and peer counseling (Purbasafir & Fasikhah, 2024). However, the literature also presents conflicting findings regarding peer intervention. For example, according to Gaffney, Tofi, and Farrington (2019a), interventions involving peer strategies have increased rather than decreased bullying. The literature generally shows varying results regarding the use of peer mediation strategies, and many studies indicate that further research on this topic is needed in the future.

4.2 Family Involvement in Bullying Intervention (Meso)

Family-based interventions are those that practitioners particularly use in practice, considering the impact of family risk factors on bullying. This section focuses on how practitioners in schools or other institutions intervene by involving families, rather than on the interventions themselves. Many researchers support the active role of families in the bullying process. Families should move beyond simply being invited to school and given information in bullying situations. In the literature, the most frequently used strategy to empower families in this regard is providing them with education.

4.3 School-Level Interventions (Meso Level)

Since schools are the primary site of bullying in this research, interventions at the school level play a significant role in the child's ecological system. School-level interventions generally encompass schoolwide anti-bullying policies, school-based anti-bullying programs, formal disciplinary practices at the school, school safety (Konishi, C et al., 2017), and reporting mechanisms and services such as guidance offered at the school. Lee, S., (2015) school policies should include an anti-school program on their agenda because it has been stated that schools that have such a program in their policies show significant differences compared to those that do not. In short, a school with an anti-bullying policy and program can take more comprehensive steps against bullying. School programs, however, need to have a theoretical basis that is appropriate to the essence of bullying (Hawley & Williford, 2015). Also, it was found that teachers in schools with anti-bullying policies or programs were less likely to dismiss bullying incidents and more likely to collaborate with other adults to intervene in the bullying (Bauman et al., 2008). School anti-bullying programs, unlike only aim to stop bullies and sympathize with victims, should also involve other actors such as bullies, teachers, and families and strive to create a positive environment among them. (Meland et al., 2010)

It is also necessary to give examples of studies conducted here aimed at improving the school climate. It has been suggested that social activities can also reduce bullying behaviors by strengthening bonds among students (James and Colling 2015). A study on physical activity and bullying shows that regular participation in physical activity can reduce the likelihood of being bullied (both for the bully and the bully) and mitigate negative psychosocial consequences (McCoy, S. M., & Rupp, K. 2014). Therefore, any activities offered to children at school, such as sports, arts, and music, can be considered an intervention strategy. Furthermore, school-provided options can make a significant difference; otherwise, the cost of such activities outside of school could reduce participation among children.

According to a study conducted in Türkiye, students (33.8%) and parents (45.3%) stated that bullying most frequently occurs in the classroom (Kartal, H., & Bilgin, A., 2008). This evidence indicates that intervention is needed not only at the school level but also in the classroom. Thonberg et al. (2022), where they were examining bullying from multiple

dimensions, found that classroom climate was associated with a lower likelihood of being a bully /victim or a victim. Therefore, any intervention at the classroom level can be very successful in reducing and preventing bullying. Some of those strategies to reduce bullying in this context are establishing and enforcing classroom rules (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008), classroom activities aimed at raising awareness, conflict resolution exercises, and classroom management skills. Similarly, research conducted in Türkiye shows that teachers attach importance to establishing and enforcing classroom rules (Cebeci, Z et al., 2024). Also, Wang and his colleagues (2021) point out that an authoritative classroom climate will reduce bullying. This refers to a classroom climate where classrooms have clear rules and sanctions but also do so in a positive, supportive environment.

5. Practitioners and Families' Responses to School Bullying

Research examining teachers, school counselors, social workers, and families shows that they assume different roles in bullying intervention, thus revealing various responses to school bullying within educational and family contexts. Below, a literature review for each group is presented in this regard

5.1 Social Work Responses to School Bullying and the Role of Social Workers

Social workers address bullying cases in light of human and child rights, often taking into account the socio-ecological environment in which the child lives. In this context, school social work is the most prominent unit in the field of social work that focuses on bullying. Studies on the relationship between school social work and bullying have been conducted in the literature for a very long time. For example, it was noted that school social work could be effective in preventing bullying and that it even improved the school climate and teacher morale (Bagley, C., & Pritchard, C., 1998). Also, an increase in the number of school social workers has been observed to reduce bullying, absenteeism, theft, and drug use (Vreeman, R. C., & Carroll, A. E., 2007). In his 2018 literature review on social work intervention in bullying, Masilo D. mentioned the following strategies or methods: casework; group work—socialization group, support groups, educational group; and community work (Masilo, D. T., 2018). These methods, which touch upon multiple areas, reveal just how comprehensive and in-depth social work is.

In addition, the support of social workers is beneficial in raising awareness among parents and teachers and in finding ways to intervene (Mishna, 2004:243). Also, social workers play an organizer role in intervention processes. While interventions within the school-family-society triangle are recommended to be carried out by social workers, the importance of increasing professional diversity in this regard in Turkish schools is emphasized (Kılıç Ceyhan, E., and Özbesler, C., 2021). In this sense, attention is drawn once again to the necessity of school social work in Türkiye. Social work professionals can work on bullying cases in other institutions where they are employed (public sector, NGOs, communities, etc.) if the cases reach them. They intervene in bullying situations in a third-party capacity, specifically when the school or parents cannot control the situation. Although the literature emphasizes the importance of social workers in bullying cases, they are largely excluded, particularly in the prevention and intervention aspects of bullying. (Karatas and Ozgur 2020). It is evident that the social work intervention developed and implemented in Türkiye to prevent peer bullying yields effective results (Tokuroğlu, 2023), and numerous pilot studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of school social work in reducing bullying. However, as mentioned above, these applications remained pilot programs.

Also, the topic of bullying is addressed within the context of issues such as migration, child protection, child abuse, and children and families in the Turkish literature (Doğan, A. 2025). The effectiveness of social work-based interventions like these has once again highlighted the importance of school social work in addressing bullying.

5.2. Teachers' Role in School Bullying Intervention

Teachers are among the closest observers to a child within the child's ecosystem. In the case of school bullying, teachers are often the first in-school practitioners to witness bullying incidents or the first people students seek help from for an intervention (Wachs et al., 2019). This puts them in one of the most important positions for intervening in bullying, at least for the initial intervention.

In the Turkish context, the circular aimed at preventing violence in schools clearly defines the duties and responsibilities of teachers (MEB, 2009), making them active actors in this process (Maden H et al., 2025). As a part of their intervention, teachers communicate and collaborate with other practitioners in the school, such as the school psychologist and guidance counselor (Sağır, E. & Keskin, B., 2023) or school administrators (Çınkır, Ş. &

Karaman-Kepenekci, Y., 2003). In another study, besides talking about bullying and informing the family, other strategies listed include establishing empathy, making the bully apologize, implementing activities, seeking expert advice, applying punitive strategies to the bully, giving a formal warning, and seeking compensation for the damage (Barik, E. & Yurtal, F., 2023). Furthermore, one of the best strategies teachers can use is to encourage bystander intervention (Yurdakal, İ. H. & Soyuçok, 2016). In addition, one study indicated that, besides directly intervening in bullying, teachers' efforts to reduce social status inequalities in the classroom also decreased the rate of being a victim of bullying (Serdiouk et al., 2015). This means that any intervention teachers implement against potential bullying risks in the classroom can make a difference in preventing bullying. In this sense, the role of teachers is very diverse. A study in Türkiye draws attention to this issue, emphasizing the importance of teachers being closely involved with children, being knowledgeable about them, and preparing activities where children can express themselves in ways other than bullying (Çınkır & Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2003). On the other hand, while it is known that teacher-provided psychological support for bullying is an effective intervention strategy, this exceptional study concluded that it did not have such an effect (Chen Z et al., 2025). Because, unlike school guidance counselors, the teaching profession is not mainly based on psychological guidance. On the other hand, Morgan-Lopez et al. (2020) study concluded that practitioner-delivered programs are better than anti-bullying programs where teachers are in the role of program practitioners. This issue can be discussed in terms of how practitioners of these programs are more knowledgeable about bullying than teachers or simply the differences in the training they have received on this subject.

In short, looking at the literature in Türkiye, teachers' interventions remain at the individual level. Initially, strategies such as speaking directly with the bullying parties, issuing warnings, and informing the family are applied.

5.3. School Psychological and Guidance Counselors' Role in School Bullying Intervention

In Türkiye, school counseling is carried out under the school psychological counseling and guidance services according to the regulations of the Ministry of National Education. In this sense, individuals who graduate from psychological counseling and guidance departments can work as school psychological counselors or its well-known name, guidance teachers in schools. Psychological counseling and guidance services are defined as being divided into three areas according to developmental areas: social-emotional, academic, and career development (Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education, 2020). School guidance

counselors, who have responsibilities in schools according to these areas, play a central role in solving problems such as bullying. Furthermore, one study highlighted the crucial role school counselors play in bullying interventions by drawing attention to their expertise in areas such as student mental health, peer relationships, and trauma-focused practices. (O'Brien et al., 2024).

School psychology and guidance counselors apply techniques such as time-based activities and psychoeducational studies to establish healthy communication in the context of peer bullying, peer mediation in the context of psychological support, and classroom guidance activities (Benli E. and Özdemir A, 2024). Another study into the intervention strategies of guidance counselors in bullying intervention presented that guidance counselors tend to work with victims and bullies in combating verbal-relational bullying, establish discipline, and seek support from other adults (Power-Elliott, M., & Harris, G. E., 2012).

5.4. Family's Response to School Bullying

Studies have shown that parents play a significant role in the socio-ecological network of influences on bullying (Harcourt, S., Jasperse, M., & Green, V. A. 2014). Also, in Turkish culture, the family forms the foundation of society, and welfare system policies have been structured around a family-centered model (Akkan, 2018). Such evidence makes families one of the key actors in intervening in incidents like bullying in Türkiye. The literature here generally focuses on the risks or protective factors created by families in relation to bullying. However, this section focuses not on that, but on the types of bullying strategies employed by families. A study conducted in Türkiye revealed that families intervene in bullying by first talking to their children about it to understand the details of the situation and then trying to solve the problem by communicating with teachers and administrators (Cincioğlu, 2023). Similarly, Ordu (2023) and Aksoy (2019) also stated that parents chose to communicate with teachers and were able to positively influence their children's behavior and prevent bullying. Studies outside of Türkiye also show similar results. For example, according to the study by Lindstrom Johnson, S et al (2019), families' bullying intervention strategies consist of only talking (72%), contacting school (23%), and handling it themselves (5%), respectively.

Concluding Section 4

As seen above, interventions against bullying involve multiple individuals, particularly within the context of school mechanisms. This multi-actor nature of the intervention in bullying, and the roles of these actors, brings the situation down to how these actors work together. Therefore, this research also does not disregard information on how cooperation takes place during the intervention process.

5.5 Collaboration in School Bullying Intervention

From an ecological perspective, the intervention of bullying is multifaceted and therefore involves many actors, making collaboration of paramount importance**.** According to a study conducted in Türkiye, teachers stated that the first resource they turn to in dealing with bullying is school psychological counseling and guidance services (Çarkıt and Bacanlı, 2020). This study demonstrates the vitality of communication, at least among practitioners. In this referral process, the guidance counselor can contact the teacher again to gather information. According to Kenny et al (2023), communication, shared goals, and respect between practitioners are the most important components for successful collaboration. This may indicate that practitioners need to have good social, communication, and professional skills when it comes to collaboration

In their study, Karikari et al. (2020) suggest that establishing a more open dialogue system among stakeholders when combating bullying will ensure inclusivity. Therefore, considering this collaboration solely within the school equation is inconsistent with the multifaceted nature of bullying, as discussed in the preceding chapters. In this context, many studies in the literature focus on the involvement of families in the intervention process, and according to this research, family involvement is an indispensable element of bullying interventions (e.g., Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Van Niejenhuis et al., 2020). In this context of collaboration regarding family, the focus is more on elements such as a shared understanding and open communication channels.

The role of external partners in bullying intervention is also crucial. In addition to collaboration among teachers themselves and with families, teachers' collaboration with external partners can increase the success of interventions (Aalst et al., 2024). Here, external partners can be NGOs, communities, or social services. In the case of Türkiye, social services are currently considered external partners in this equation. Therefore, social workers employed in social service centers or other official institutions can establish contact with the partner at school or the families after a bullying incident is reported. However, what is noteworthy here is at what stage these reports are made. While there are no examples in the literature of how this occurs specifically in the case of bullying, a general threat to the child's safety may lead to a report. Although collaborations with other communities like NGOs are not well studied in literature, some foundations are carrying out anti-bullying projects and implementing them in cooperation with schools. For example, Community Volunteers

Foundation (TOG) organized peer bullying awareness trainings nationwide through its "Get Rid of Bullying" project in Türkiye.

D. Challenges in Addressing School Bullying

Although there are various interventions at different levels, practitioners and families may also face numerous obstacles when addressing them. Also, these challenges are not independent of each other; they frequently occur together and trigger each other.

1. Systemic and Institutional Barriers to Addressing Bullying

Systemic and institutional challenges can encompass a wide range of issues. Schools or larger organizations and their structure often link to these challenges. The most significant potential challenge here might stem from whether or not school policy exists. School policies provide a framework for intervening in bullying within the school. Thanks to having a framework, interventions are implemented in a more planned manner. The absence of this framework can lead to interventions being implemented based on spontaneous cases rather than a coherent, planned approach. In Türkiye, these policies consist of guidelines and documents published by the ministry (e.g., guidelines for preventing violence in schools). However, many studies indicate that school staff most frequently mention a lack of policies or the incorrect implementation of existing policies. These studies call for nationwide anti-bullying policies in Türkiye and emphasize the lack of comprehensive anti-bullying programs within schools. It has been observed that the implemented programs did not continue after the pilot applications.

The failure of students to report bullying (Kartal and Bilgin, 2008) is another challenge that hinders bullying intervention. This situation could be related to the child, or alternatively, it could stem from the child not having adequate reporting mechanisms at school. Whether or not a school has safe report mechanisms in place will make a big difference in detecting bullying, because bullying may not always be in situations where professionals or family members can observe it. Also, one of the several reasons that have emerged in the literature for why a child might not report bullying is fear of retaliation or futility (Holt et al., 2008). An important point here is that when intervening in bullying incidents, the intervention should be planned with the protection of the victim in mind.

Furthermore, a lack of knowledge about bullying among practitioners and families is a significant risk factor. In this sense, a lack of training can also manifest as a deficiency in intervention practices. The leading indicators of the effectiveness of bullying intervention

programs are teacher training (30.9%) and the need to raise awareness about the bullying phenomenon (26.11%) (Salgado et al., 2014). Related to these findings, teacher identification issues come up (Bradshaw et al., 2018)**.** A teacher's inability to detect bullying may stem from various reasons, including a lack of knowledge regarding bullying (Yoon, J.S., 2004). If teachers receive training, their awareness of bullying will improve (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Numerous researchers point to a lack of trained personnel specifically in the area of bullying (e.g., Furlong, vd., 2003).

Here, the resource problem emerges as another major obstacle under this heading. These resources can encompass all kinds of materials used in bullying. Additionally, a lack of time, staff, and training are other contributing factors. For example, Rigby (2020) noted that teachers may struggle to balance their academic responsibilities with social emotional monitoring. This means that while teachers primarily focus on teaching, they may not have time for anything else. These academic responsibilities that take up teachers' time can lead to bullying going unnoticed in some cases. A similar situation has been observed among school psychologists. They often take on too much responsibility in multiple schools or are overloaded with administrative duties, which limits their participation in certain events (Bocanegra et al., 2017). In Türkiye, the situation also raises the possibility that they will face the same workload. Buna bağlı olarak da personel yeterliliğinden bahsetmek gerekir. Türkiyede okullarda her öğretmen ya da okul danışanı başına kaç çocuk düşmektedir?

2. Culture-Related Challenges

Culturally, the most common characteristic challenge is that bullying is seen as a normal part of growing up (Clarke et al. 2004). Sawyer et al. (2011), in their study on family perspectives, reached a similar conclusion, revealing that parents see that bullying is a normal stage of growing up. Furthermore, other studies have shown that families tend to normalize verbal and relational bullying compared to physical bullying (e.g., Mishna et al. 2006 and 2008). Türkiye'de buna benzer bir tablo ortaya çıkıyor. Bu normalleştirmeler onu ne kadar sadece ailesel olarak görünse de pratisyenlerden de bunu yapabilir. Ayrıca bu normalleştirme mizah yoluyla da yapılabilir. Another challenge is that Turkish culture might normalize certain behaviors by attributing them to a specific gender. For example, aggressive behavior and displays of power exhibited by men can be seen as part of masculinity. In contrast, girls often normalize behaviors that could be considered verbal bullying, such as gossiping or spreading rumors.

3. Gaps in Coordination and Collaboration Among Key Actors

The literature has highlighted the importance of multi-actor collaboration in bullying intervention. This collaboration takes many forms in practice, as seen in section 5.5. However, gaps in this collaboration can create significant obstacles to the successful implementation of intervention. These gaps can exist between practitioners or between practitioners and families. For example, according to school counselors in a study conducted in Türkiye, the biggest challenge to the implementation of intervention strategies was the lack of support from families. (Cankseven Önder F et al., 2016) According to a study conducted in Türkiye, other stakeholders view the resolution of bullying cases as the responsibility of school counselors (Benli, E., & Özdemir, A., 2024). This view is entirely contrary to the nature of multi-actor collaboration, which is considered necessary for resolving bullying in the literature. Although this study is qualitative and does not cover all schools of Turkey, it indicates a significant obstacle to collaboration in addressing bullying. The same study highlighted the need for family inclusion, yielding findings on the necessity of providing psychoeducation to families and developing a shared understanding within the school regarding bullying (Benli, E., & Özdemir, A., 2024). This leads to the conclusion that there are serious shortcomings in cooperation regarding bullying intervention in schools in Türkiye.

Schools without this explicit and concrete support from the principal were observed to struggle and often stalled in implementation until it was clear to staff that school leadership was committed (Pearce et al., 2022). Common challenges included engaging with parents and the wider community and building staff capacity to effectively implement school-level changes (Pearce et al., 2022).

E. Conceptual Tools: Social Work Perspectives

The theoretical tools for this research were selected based on the literature's findings regarding the ecological nature of bullying and the need for a multi-actor approach. The most important consideration was ensuring these tools reflected the interpretation of the social work discipline. Consequently, the eco-social model and the transdisciplinary approach were chosen to facilitate a discussion of the findings within a broader framework.

1. The Eco-Social Model and its Integration into School Bullying Contexts

In studies on factors causing or associated with bullying in the literature, eco-social-based theories and models are the most commonly used (Moon, S. et al., 2016; Espelage, D. L., & De La Rue, L. 2011; Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, 2003; Espelage D, L. 2014). Also, a critical analysis focusing on North America has revealed that the most effective anti-bullying

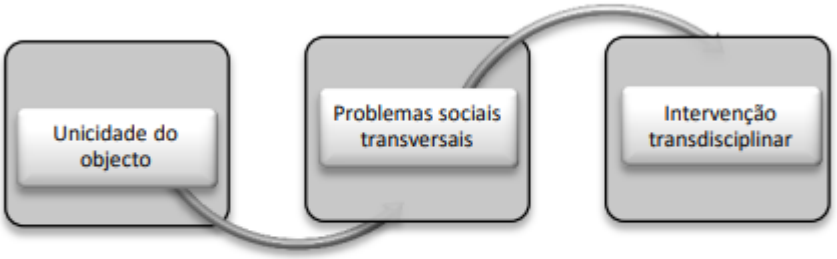
programs for elementary schools are based on a socio-ecological theoretical framework (Rawlings, J. R., & Stoddard, S. A., 2019). This also shows that an ecosocial perspective is given a great deal of consideration in interventions against bullying. Therefore, the socio-ecological approach is one of the most effective ways to understand bullying, bullying intervention, and challenges. Although the existing literature on bullying offers a framework that can be used for this thesis in a socio-ecological sense, it is crucial for the social work discipline to define its identity regarding the issue of bullying and to develop new approaches to solving the problem (Dominiquez de la Rosa and Millian-Franco, M., 2021). Therefore, this thesis applied the Eco-Social model to the phenomenon of bullying. The Eco-Social Model, as articulated by Rocha (2016), offers a comprehensive framework that bridges ecological systems thinking with social justice and sustainability principles. The model emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals, institutions, and environments, advocating for interventions that are not only systemic but also ethically grounded and contextually responsive.

In the context of school bullying, the Eco-Social Model provides a valuable lens to understand and address the phenomenon beyond individual behaviors. This model, which incorporates the main features of ecological systems theory, provides a crucial area for examining bullying in terms of the values brought forth by the discipline of social work. In this sense, it situates bullying within a broader socio-ecological matrix, recognizing that such behaviors are shaped by interactions across multiple levels: individual, relational, institutional, cultural, and environmental (Rocha, 2016).

Applying this model to bullying interventions involves several dimensions. Holistic diagnosis comes first because bullying is not merely a behavioral issue but a symptom of broader systemic dysfunctions (Rocha, 2018). The Eco-Social Model encourages practitioners to assess the school climate, power dynamics, cultural norms, and institutional policies that may enable or suppress bullying. Secondly, multi-level engagement is another dimension, considering that an effective intervention requires coordinated action across all ecological levels. This approach includes the micro-level, empowering students through empathy training, peer support, and restorative practices; the meso-level, by strengthening collaboration among teachers, parents, and school staff; the exo-level, through the engagement of community organizations, child protection services, and local authorities; and the macro-level, advocating for inclusive educational policies and anti-bullying legislation. The model also promotes interventions that are inclusive, participatory, and sustainable,

calling for the recognition of children's rights, the inclusion of marginalized voices, and the co-construction of safe school environments.

Also, the Eco-Social Model promotes transdisciplinary approaches by integrating knowledge from social work, education, psychology, and public policy. This approach nurtures innovative, context-sensitive solutions rooted in both theory and practice.



Fonte: Elaboração própria

*Unicidade do objecto: Unity of the object

*Problemas socials transversals: Cross-cutting social problems

*Intervençao transdiciplinar: Transdisciplinary intervention

Source: Rocha, 2016, p. 323

Another crucial aspect of the model is that it balances cultural and universal rights in intervention. It supports culturally responsive interventions that respect local values while upholding universal human rights (Rocha, 2016).

As a result, by embedding the Eco-Social Model into school bullying interventions, social workers and educators can move beyond reactive strategies and toward transformative practices that promote well-being, equity, and resilience within school communities.

2. Transdisciplinary Approach

The transdisciplinary approach marks a paradigm shift in our understanding of and response to complex social issues such as school bullying. Unlike multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary models, which integrate knowledge across disciplines while maintaining distinct boundaries, the transdisciplinary approach breaks down disciplinary barriers to enable stakeholders, including practitioners, families, and communities, to co-create knowledge (Choi and Pak 2006, 351).

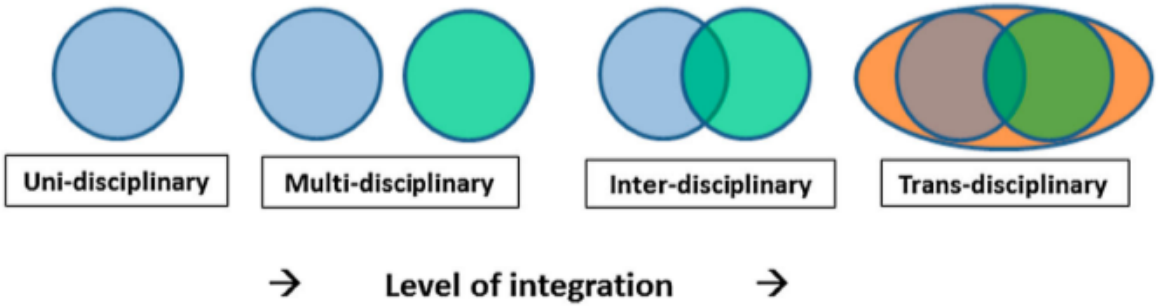


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the disciplinary continuum.

Source: Marini & Volk (2017, p.101).

Leavy (2011) also argues that issues like bullying have multiple dimensions, and therefore their solutions require multiple disciplines to come together and share their expertise on the subject. A transdisciplinary approach to school bullying provides comprehensiveness in addressing it. It encourages the development of 'new' perspectives that lead to the design of interventions that target the various dimensions of bullying simultaneously (Marini & Volk, 2017)

Co-production of knowledge, with solutions not imposed from above but co-created with those directly affected students, parents, teachers, and social workers. For example, anti-bullying policies or school-based intervention programs for schools can be developed by drawing conclusions from a pool of information shared by families, school practitioners, and social service providers. This participatory ethos ensures that interventions remain contextually relevant and ethically grounded.

Integration of diverse epistemologies is an approach that values different ways of knowing, including experiential, professional, and academic knowledge. For example, a teacher's classroom experience and observations, a school counsellor's consultations, a parent's cultural perspective, and a social worker's systemic analysis are all considered valid and necessary for understanding bullying dynamics.

Also, one of the most important features of transdisciplinarity is that it focuses on real-world problem-solving. Transdisciplinary research is problem-driven, rather than being driven by a particular discipline (Marini & Volk, 2017). That's why the problem of school bullying is not explored through statistics from databases but through the lived experiences of practitioners and families in Türkiye in this thesis. Practitioners here are encouraged to reflect on their

positionality, biases, and institutional constraints. In this sense, how they perceive the phenomenon of bullying is also of great importance.

The transdisciplinary approach promotes sustainable and socially just interventions aligned with the Eco-Social Model. It recognises bullying as a violation of children's rights and seeks to transform school environments into inclusive, safe, and empowering spaces.

With the adoption of a transdisciplinary approach, this study not only enriches the academic discourse on school bullying but also contributes to the development of innovative, collaborative, and context-sensitive intervention strategies. This underscores the importance of breaking down disciplinary boundaries to foster collective action and systemic change in educational settings. Unlike multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary models, which integrate knowledge across disciplines while maintaining distinct boundaries, the transdisciplinary approach transcends disciplinary silos to co-create knowledge with all the intervenients, including practitioners, families, and communities.

CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

A. Qualitative Research Design

A qualitative approach was used in the design of this study because of its ability to thoroughly capture participants' perceptions, experiences, and contextual meanings. Qualitative research not only provides an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences but also offers a better opportunity to understand socially complex problems in their own right (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

B. Problem Statement, Research Objective and Questions

Problem Statement

School bullying is one of the main problems that remains widespread in Türkiye. Research results such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2018–2022: 28%, 29%, and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) 2023: 27% proving this high prevalence. Contrary to popular belief, school bullying is not an issue limited to between two people, groups, or just inside the school. School bullying is a social

problem that involves many actors and requires consideration of the complex relationships between the individual and various system levels (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Karikari et al., 2020). Therefore, a comprehensive and multilevel approach, which is a main feature of the social work discipline, is required when conducting research. The situation opens up a wide area for examining studies on school bullying in Türkiye. Despite this vast open space, Türkiye still has a gap in its school bullying literature, especially in the social work field. Although resources like social work resources are important in bullying prevention and intervention, few studies examine the anti-bullying practices that social workers in social work services are currently implementing (Dominiquez de la Rosa and Millian-Franco, M., 2021). It cannot be ignored that a similar situation exists in Türkiye. Of the studies conducted in the context of school social work between 2016 and 2024, only 10 focused on bullying (violence), and none of these included social work professionals as participants (Obuz, A. T., 2025; Önkol, H. & Kıroğlu, M., 2025). There is a substantial void in the literature in putting perspectives of families, educators, and social workers together. Most of them focus on school practitioners or practitioners plus families (Kaya et al., 2025; Tekin, 2006). In the methodological aspect, quantitative studies still constitute the majority of research on bullying (Celik et al., 2023). Particularly, there is limited qualitative research that examines how different actors perceive bullying, what intervention strategies are currently used, and what implementation challenges are encountered in practice.

As a result, this research aims to draw attention to this problem by contributing to the lack of literature on school bullying in Türkiye from a social work perspective. It also aimed to provide insights into what is being done in practice and how challenges are being faced because, instead of showing how practitioners, such as school practitioners, actually respond to bullying, most studies have included answers to hypothetical questions (Gizzarelli, E., Burns, S., & Francis, J., 2023).

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to understand school bullying in Türkiye from the perspective of practitioners and families and to investigate their perceptions of bullying, interventions, and the challenges encountered in these interventions.

Research Objective

This research sought to explore the perceptions of practitioners and families in Türkiye regarding school bullying and to analyze anti-bullying intervention strategies and challenges from the practitioners' and families' perspectives.

Research Questions

1. How do practitioners and families in Türkiye perceive school bullying?
2. How do practitioners and families intervene in school bullying in Türkiye?
3. What challenges do practitioners and families face when addressing school bullying in Türkiye?

C. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the literature on social work and practical levels regarding school bullying. It, through a social work study lens, will contribute to the body of social work research in Türkiye. This also assist in emphasising the shortage of school social workers in Türkiye.

From the perspective of the practical level, analysing practical challenges and examining collaboration in intervention will reveal practical gaps and needs. In this sense, this study's use of the Eco-Social Model (2016) and a transdisciplinary approach as tools will enable the generation of well-founded discussions on solutions to school bullying.

At the policy level, the research allows us to identify systemic inadequacies and give contextually relevant recommendations. As a result, the study not only helps to improve children's well-being and educational rights, but it also highlights the possible role of social work in creating future educational and child protection regulations.

D. Sampling and Participants

The study uses purposive sampling to recruit participants who have relevant experience or roles related to school bullying in Türkiye. These include teachers, psychological and guidance counsellors in school, social workers who work with children in school-related contexts, and parents. Teachers are at the forefront of bullying incidents and therefore possess a high potential for observation, information, and intervention. This makes the teaching group one of the most important components of the participant universe for this thesis. Psychological and guidance counsellors, also known as school counsellors, are chosen as a participant group because this group is the professional group that deals with crisis situations such as bullying in schools. Although dedicated school social workers are absent in the educational systems of Türkiye, this research includes social workers who engage with children and families in school-related bullying cases to capture a comprehensive perspective. Family group participants are defined as parents or caregivers responsible for the child's care. A person who recognizes this situation and fits the description voluntarily participated in the research as a participant under the family group. The inclusion of multiple actors aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of bullying perceptions, intervention

strategies and implementation challenges from different perspectives. Although dedicated school social workers are absent in the educational systems of Türkiye, this research includes social workers who engage with children and families in school-related bullying cases to capture a comprehensive perspective. Although this thesis does not focus on a specific age group, an age limitation has been established while reviewing the literature and in implementation, given the vastness of the bullying literature. The age range during middle school is a critical period because children experience a transitional period, and it also encompasses the onset of puberty. It has been shown that bullying reaches its peak between the ages of 11 and 14 (Esla & Rees, 2001).

Participant criteria were:

- Practitioners must have handled at least one bullying case.
- The child of the participant from the family group must have been a victim of bullying before.
- School practitioners must work in public schools.
- Social workers must worked with children in public sector or NGOs

Other than that, there were no criteria regarding a person's race, place of residence, age, or educational status for participating in the research. According to these criteria, online interviews were conducted with 20 participants. The goal of interviewing five people from each participant group was important for achieving saturation. On the other hand, the small number of participants does not affect the main logic of qualitative studies (Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H., 2006).

Table 1: Informations Regarding Participants' Background

Participant Code	Participant Group	Age	Education Level	Years of Work Experience
F1	Family (A mother)	38	University	x
F2	Family (A mother)	33	High School	x
F3	Family (A mother)	35	High School	x
F4	Family (A mother)	35	Middle School	x
F5	Family (A mother)	32	High school dropout	x
T1	Teacher (	32	University	9

Participant Code	Participant Group	Age	Education Level	Years of Work Experience
T2	Teacher	37	University	9
T3	Teacher	48	University	22
T4	Teacher	37	University	14
T5	School Counselor	39	University	17
SC1	School Counselor	31	University	9
SC2	School Counselor	36	University	14
SC3	School Counselor	43	University	15
SC4	School Counselor	30	University	2
SC5	School Counselor	47	University	24
SW1	Social Worker	28	University	2.5
SW2	Social Worker	36	University	10
SW3	Social Worker	30	University	7
SW4	Social Worker	32	University	8

As shown in the table, participants come from diverse backgrounds, ages, and genders. However, all participants in the family group are mothers. The father or someone with another title (grandfather or grandmother) responsible for the child's care did not respond to the participant call.

E. Data Collection Tool

1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were utilised as the primary qualitative data collection method in this study. Separate interview guides were developed and tailored for different professional groups involved in the research , including school staff (teachers and school counsellors) and social workers, as well as families. The interviews sought to elicit the perceptions, experiences, and intervention strategies of various professionals working or worked with school bullying cases, such as teachers, school counsellors, and social workers. The interview guides with open-ended questions were created to maintain uniformity while also allowing participants to comment on their findings and contextualise their responses. This strategy allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data reflecting the realities and challenges of implementing school-based bullying intervention strategies in Türkiye. On the other hand,

all interviews were conducted online via Zoom because all participants live in Türkiye, but the researcher was in Portugal. The length of the interviews varied between 15 minutes and 1 hour. Participants discussed their perceptions of, interventions against, and the challenges they faced in addressing the sensitive issue of bullying. These discussions, which included detailed experiences, also featured their expectations for the future regarding solutions to school bullying.

2. Document Analysis

Document analysis was used as a supplementary data gathering strategy to increase the depth and validity of the research findings. Relevant policy documents, national guidelines, intervention program materials and institutional reports about school bullying prevention and intervention were thoroughly reviewed. The chosen documents are 5395 Sayılı Çocuk Koruma Kanunu (2005) ve 2828 Sayılı Sosyal Hizmetler Kanunu (1983) (No. 5395 Child Protection Law and No. 2828 Social Services Law); under the Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği (Regulation on Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services): Okullarda Şiddetin Önlenmesi Hakkında Genelge (Circular on the Prevention of Violence in Schools); Eğitim Ortamlarında Şiddetin Önlenmesi ve Azaltılması Hakkında Genelge (Circular on the Prevention and Reduction of Violence in Educational Environments); Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği (Regulation on Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services); and Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Ortaöğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği (Ministry of National Education Secondary Education Institutions Regulation). This analysis offered essential contextual information about the frameworks, objectives, and practical uses of bullying intervention programs in both countries' school systems, allowing for triangulation with interview data.

F. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis and Content Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was used as data analysis in this study because thematic analysis offers a flexible framework for understanding complex social phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study set out to gain in-depth knowledge about school bullying. Thematic analysis also creates conditions that will enable the acquisition of both superficial and in-depth information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because the participants were from various different professions and would answer open-ended questions based on their own experiences, this research focused on finding common themes in these answers. Furthermore, this analysis had both a holistic and a comparative approach. After the interviews were conducted in Turkish, the transcripts were also uploaded to MAXQDA in Turkish. This approach was taken to avoid losing some contextual meaning during coding. Initially, all

interview transcripts were reviewed and coded together to identify common themes. The frequency of these themes was considered generally. Then, each participant group was analyzed separately to clearly understand each group's unique perspectives and experiences. Later, the transcripts were translated into English when the results were being processed.

Furthermore, the bullying-related key policy papers, intervention program guidelines, official reports, and laws of Türkiye were examined using Bengtsson's (2016) content analysis model for the document analysis. Findings were categorized based on thematic significance and comparing document content to interview data to accomplish data triangulation and increase the trustworthiness of the study's conclusions.

G. Ethical Considerations

This study properly follows human-participant research ethics guidelines. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. All participants, including teachers, school counsellors, social workers, and families, were provided with a detailed informed consent form. This form outlines the aim of the study, the nature of participation, how the data will be used, and the participants' ability to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all identifying information was removed from the interview transcripts. Participants were given pseudonyms, and data were securely stored in password-protected digital files available only to the researcher. The direct quotes used in the research have been anonymised to protect the participants' identities.

Given the delicate nature of the subject (particularly for parents or practitioners involved in bullying-related situations), the interviews were conducted with respect and empathy, and participants were given the option of refusing to answer any questions that they found distressing or upsetting.

In addition, this research also utilized artificial intelligence tools, which are now widely used in research. The primary tool used was Mendeley, which was employed for rapid referencing, reviewing sources on a single platform, and taking notes. Consensus, Perplexity, and Claude were used to increase the variety of sources and find articles. Furthermore, in addition to Perplexity and Claude, ChatGPT was used to gather ideas for preparing the thesis outline and organizing the codes in Maxqda.

Throughout the research process, all ethical standards were followed to ensure the participants' dignity, rights, and well-being.

H. Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable insights into participants' perceptions, intervention strategies, and implementation challenges regarding school bullying in Türkiye, it has certain limitations.

Due to time and accessibility constraints, the study was conducted using a qualitative design and a small number of participants. As a result, the findings may not apply to all schools or regions in either country. The goal, however, was not to generalize but to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in addressing school bullying.

Also, the lack of officially employed school social workers in Türkiye hampered the participation of this professional group. Although efforts were made to engage social workers with relevant experience in school-related bullying situations, the lack of a clearly institutionalised school social work system limited the scope of study from that particular angle.

Also, due to the diverse portfolio of participants and the extensive scope of the study, various different results were obtained. This led to some difficulties in creating the codes and themes.

One of the last, but one of the most important, limitations of this study concerns Latvia, another country that was present at the beginning of the study. Given that Latvia has one of the highest rates of bullying in Europe, and due to the significant gap in its literature on bullying, the researcher aimed to present perspectives from both Türkiye and Latvia. Unfortunately, due to difficulties in finding participants, it was decided to remove the Latvian perspective from the thesis. The difficulty in finding participants stemmed from both the thesis seeking participants for more than three different groups and the fact that the criteria sought resulted in a narrow participant universe.

Despite these limitations, the study adds significant qualitative value to the literature on school bullying and social work practice in Turkish national contexts, highlighting topics for future research and policy development.

CHAPTER III
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will present the results obtained from the analysis of the interviews. Firstly, using the thematic analysis method, this analysis sought to answer the three main questions of the research: 1) How do practitioners and families in Türkiye perceive school bullying?, 2) How do practitioners and families intervene in school bullying? 3) What implementation challenges do practitioners and families face when addressing school bullying? Due to the large scope of the responses received, 5 main themes and 15 sub-themes emerged. Also under the contextual and environmental challenges subtheme, a new subcode emerged, which is earthquake-related challenges.

While presenting these themes, discussions will be held under the same theme. Also, official documents and policies that were examined for comparison with the results of the meeting are also indicated where appropriate.

Theme 1: Perception Of Bullying

Participants and families play significant roles in the issue of bullying; the impact of these roles extends from the onset of bullying to intervention. Therefore, understanding how they perceive bullying is of paramount importance. This theme examines participants' definitions of bullying and their perceptions of its causes and effects and reveals how these findings align with existing literature. Based on this, two sub-themes emerged: 1) definition of school bullying and 2) perceived risk factors and perceived impacts of bullying.

1.1 Definition Of School Bullying

Participants attempted to define bullying in many different ways. However, some common answers also emerged. The most prominent of these common answers was mentioning power imbalances and the establishment of dominance. Following these, it was emphasized that the bullying is a form of deliberately harmful violence and unwanted behaviors. Another point was that they frequently provided examples of different forms of bullying when describing it. SC4 states that *"*I would define bullying as one person within the same peer group trying to assert dominance over another, whether physically, psychologically, or verbally." The participant also emphasized that all forms of bullying, whether psychological or verbal, are still forms of bullying. These answers reflect some characteristics of Olweus's widely accepted definition in the literature, which are aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions and an imbalance of power or strength (Olweus, 1993). However, the repetitive characteristic, a key feature of Olweus's definition, appeared only in the answers of two school counselors. Exact quotation of one of those fellows: "If it's recurring, I first try to understand the reason behind it. If there's a victim or a perpetrator involved, then I think, "This is a victim, and it's shaped accordingly." It needs to be repetitive; that's my criterion." (SC5). It is also stated here that the roles in bullying cases are assessed before intervention.

Also, the point that families also focused on most was unwanted, harmful behavior. Stives, K. L., May, D. C., & Bethel, C. L. (2023) similarly found that while most parenting definitions include intent to harm, they fail to address the power imbalance regarding repetition. These results show that families did not give answers that differed significantly from those given by educators or social workers.

1.2 Perception Regarding Risk Factors and Impacts of School Bullying

This sub-theme explores how participants perceive the underlying causes and impacts of bullying. These were then coded as two separate sub-codes and compared with literature.

1.2.1 Risk Factors

Firstly, the risk factors were identified as relational, environmental, society-related, social media, and interrelated/systemic, respectively. However, the most striking aspect of the study is that almost all participants reported that family-related factors played a significant role in the emergence of bullying. Some participants attribute the emergence of bullying to unbecoming behavior within the family, violence against the child at home, or lack of parental involvement with the child. Çarkıt and Bacanlı (2020) reached a similar result in their study focusing on Türkiye by stating that the most important reason for the bullying is family-related factors.

When an analysis was conducted specifically for families, it was observed that half of the families again referred to family-related problems, while a few family participants also stated that the child's personal character (lack of self-confidence, inability to defend themselves) would pose a risk. Although new studies on this topic haven't found related similarities, according to Hodges & Perry (1999), low self-esteem makes it difficult to react to bullying, while at the same time, these reactions may encourage the bully to continue the bullying.

Furthermore, a social worker participant pointed out that the causes are not actually independent of each other: “It's a process that begins with the family and progresses through society. Because after the family, the child's first contact begins with society, with their immediate environment” (SW1). In fact, bullying cannot be explained by a single cause because the individual child, their family, peer group, school, community, and culture and their interaction shape bullying behaviors (Espelage, 2004)

1.2.2 Perceived Impacts Of Bullying

Meanwhile, participants assessed the impacts of bullying from the perspective of both the bully and the victim. One of the most prominent perceived effects on a bully is the continuation of problematic behaviors (bullying and violence). SW2 explains how this situation can escalate to a level of criminality in the future as follows: “Conversely, bully children, seeing the other person's distress and feeling that they can defeat them, intensify their bullying each time. This behavior leads to them becoming much more prone to violence as they get older, even to the point of aggression and murder” (SW2). A study investigating the effects of peer bullying in later life also yielded similar results, particularly regarding the risk of bullies engaging in criminal activities (Klomek, A. B., Sourander, A., & Elonheimo, H., 2015). In addition, participants believe that a bully may experience academic problems,

school dropout, and the normalization of bullying. The literature frequently highlights academic problems and dropping out of school as impacts (e.g., Beilmann, M., 2017; Whitted and Dupper, 2005). This normalization could even lead to a complete lack of concern for continuing the existing behavior, and it could cause even greater risks.

From the victim's perspective, the most common effect is social isolation/peer withdrawal. A large-scale study among adolescents examined the relationship between social withdrawal and social anxiety and the role of peer victimization. As a result, adolescents tend to withdraw more when they experience significant problems with their peers and feel social anxiety, but it was found that this withdrawal can also lead to even greater peer problems (Barzeva, S. A et al., 2020).

Other significant effects perceived by participants include academic problems and low self-esteem. Similarly, the literature frequently identifies low self-esteem as one of the effects of bullying. Choi, B., & Park, S. (2025), in their research on whether self-esteem is a predictor or a consequence, revealed that low self-esteem is a consequence experienced after bullying.

Discussion of Theme 1

While participants generally gave answers similar to those in the literature when defining bullying, it is noteworthy that only 2 out of 19 participants emphasized the repetitive aspect in their definition of bullying. The importance of knowing these elements lies in their ability to help distinguish bullying from other forms of violence. O'Brien et al. (2024) point out the lack of consensus on what bullying actually is, stating that the absence of a shared understanding of bullying within schools negatively impacts the development and implementation of bullying prevention programs and teachers' ability to combat bullying.

On the other hand, a study highlighted the significant impact of perceptions on bullying intervention, concluding that if the approach to bullying and bullying intervention changes at the school and societal level, those who wish to intervene in bullying situations will do so even if they don't want to or feel the need to, because they are aware of the societal norms surrounding it (Liu L et al., 2024).

Theme 2: Intervention Strategies

The second theme addresses the findings derived from the responses to the second research question: How do practitioners and families intervene in school bullying in Türkiye? In this context, a general analysis was first conducted by analyzing the responses of all participants together. As a result, 6 sub-themes emerged. Then, notable differences between the groups were highlighted.

2.1 Student-Level Intervention Strategies

This sub-theme covers one-on-one interventions with children and is examined in two sub-codes.

2.1.1 Individual Meetings or Consultation

Initial interventions against bullying typically involve educators and families conducting individual interviews with the victim or the bully. Participants reported that in some cases, these interviews focused on fully understanding the situation. Generally, psychological and social support was provided to the victim, while efforts were made to raise awareness among the bullies regarding the behavior. Participants also noted that these individual interviews often involved warnings to the bully and explaining that their behavior was wrong. Through counseling provided to the child, the aim is to encourage the bully to stop their bullying behavior and to make the victim feel safer.

The first thing the families did here was also to have one-on-one interviews with their children. Participants stated that they tried to get detailed information from their children here and tried to support them psychologically and socially. Bir katılımcı ise bu birebir görüşme ve sağladığı danışmanlık sayesinde okulla iletişime geçmeden de çocuğunu zorbalığa karşı güçlendirdiğini açıklamıştır. A bunu şöyle açıklamaktadır:

Social workers, however, differentiate themselves here through the interventions they apply within their professional field. Although individual interviews are conducted, these individual interviews consist of measures taken. Participants discussed the protective measures stipulated in the Child Protection Law to which they are subject. Examples of protective measures given include educational measures and counseling measures. Here, we see a legal, law-based intervention in addition to administrative intervention. From a document analysis side, it is seen that the social workers' responses are consistent with what is included in the child protection law and (Çocuk Koruma Kanunu, 2005; Sosyal Hizmetler Kanunu, 1983)

In the social work participant group, one participant mentioned implementing preventive interventions, in contrast to the responses of other social workers. As Theme 3 will explain in more detail, social workers, acting as external partners, often receive referrals to cases after bullying has occurred. SW2 said that, “Actually, I am currently the head of the Children's Safety Unit. The purpose of this unit is this: every year, we receive a list of high-risk schools from the district education office, categorized from first to fourth risk. These fourth-risk schools are visited, and we speak with the guidance counselors…” She then mentioned that children, usually from economically disadvantaged families, are monitored for a minimum of

nine months to ensure they are not exposed to any abuse and that this monitoring continues until the risks are eliminated. The most important feature here is that the reporting and monitoring of risks is done over a long period, not in a short time.

2.1.2 Empathy Development

Another attention-grabbing strategy cited by the participants was intervention regarding developing empathy skills. SC4 describes the empathy training she conducts as follows: "First, I help them understand each other. This means understanding each other... seeing this as a joke. Generally, in our school, the bully tells the victim that I'm joking but I always try to explain to the students, 'Is what's a joke for you also a joke for the other person?' You need to look at that. If you're happy and having fun while the other person is upset and crying, then it wasn't a joke." However, it seems that here, empathy training mainly involves verbal conversations with children; there isn't a fully planned, structured empathy training program. Meanwhile, literature support uses empathy development as a strategy against bullying. For example, Palade, T., and Pascal, E. (2023) found that their 5-day intensive empathy training was particularly effective in reducing verbal bullying among children and that this effect was long-lasting.

Between informing family and disciplinary intervention strategies, it has emerged that a method called a "behavioral contract" was used as a transitional strategy. According to T1, “For example, I won't do this again. I won't do that again. A contract is made in a language the student understands and is put in the file. The child is told that if they exhibit the same behavior again, their parent will be called. And when they do, we call their parent." This contract encourages students to take responsibility and, in this sense, is a strategy for developing their individual skills.

2.2 Family-Based Intervention

Reactive interventions are strategies taken and implemented to stop bullying after it's identified. In this sense, disciplinary strategies can also fall into this category. However, according to the participants' responses, the strategies they directly applied were primarily individual meetings/consultations, followed by informing the family about the issue. The role of families was seen as an integral part by all participants. Therefore, they emphasized the importance of involving the family in bullying intervention. Their strategies generally included one-on-one meetings with families, providing training to families, and conducting home visits.

2.3 Institutional Disciplinary Interventions.

While some studies in the literature suggest that disciplinary-based approaches can harm children both emotionally and physically, other studies argue the opposite, suggesting that such an approach is very effective in resolving bullying because it establishes specific rules against bullying incidents in schools. For example, Burger et al., in their 2022 research, stated that disciplinary intervention, when conducted in a supportive environment, is among the most effective intervention strategies. This research focuses less on which methods are more effective and more on which method is currently used to intervene in bullying in Türkiye, with the disciplinary methods leading the way. These interventions at school include classroom changes, school changes, suspension from school, and finally expulsion from school. The method of implementation is proceed through the school's disciplinary committee, also known as the behavior assessment committee. However, participants described expulsion as the final stage in a layered approach: “We have a behavior evaluation board in our school policy. If, after a verbal warning, the behavior is repeated, we issue a written warning. There are several reprimand clauses. There are also school transfer clauses. Let's say the behavior is persistent; then we activate these" (PS1). The verbal warnings she's referring to here are given during one-on-one meetings or individual consultation, which is one of the most frequently mentioned intervention strategies after discipline. This evidence actually shows that there isn't a strict zero-tolerance policy at the schools, because these disciplinary actions are not the first intervention strategies used. In fact, developing a "Zero Tolerance Policy" against bullies is often cited as one of the most ineffective strategies in the literature (Cankseven Önder F et al., 2016). On the other hand, literature frequently discusses restorative interventions that could be used instead. It is even argued that the use of restorative practice could reduce the use of exclusionary methods (Augustine et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the disciplinary measures implemented as mentioned above are in accordance with the Ministry of National Education Secondary Education Institutions' Regulation. Examples include preliminary warnings given to students and subsequent school transfer or expulsion decisions implemented as a result of the board meeting (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2023).

2.4 Cultural Sensitivity (cross-cutting)

Cultural factors were found to be twofold, both in the occurrence of bullying and in the intervention, due to the risks they create. Cultural factors can serve as facilitators in the implementation of interventions, according to one response from this research. SW4, while explaining how he takes into consideration the cultural or local values during the

intervention, mentioned a community source: “So, I have a case where a child (girl), simply because of certain characteristics, was bullied by a boy, and the father threatened to take the child out of school. Therefore, considering the cultural structure of the region, there are tribal structures within the families here. We discussed the situation with the parent and then spoke with the elder of their neighborhood, the tribal leader, explaining that the child hadn't committed any crime and that the legal case stemmed entirely from victimization. Afterward, the tribal leader called the father over and offered advice and support to ensure the child went to school. Therefore, considering local and cultural dynamics when intervening can yield positive results. (SW4). This quotation describes how the tribal community mentality, which still persists in a particular region of Türkiye, is used in interventions. Holt, M. K. et al., (2013) discussed how community-based bullying prevention efforts might influence factors outside the educators' sphere of influence and related to bullying and advocated for deeper research into this topic.

2.5 Perceived Role of School Social Work in Bullying Intervention

This section contains answers to questions regarding the role of school social work as an intervention mechanism in combating bullying. Most participants stated that, apart from social workers, they had no knowledge of what school social work was. They then asked questions about what school social work is exactly. The researcher provided definitions that would give them a basic idea. As a result, all participants except one stated that a social work practice within the school could be useful in solving problems such as bullying. These results are consistent with the following studies in the literature. On the other hand, that one participant, by drawing attention to the gap between policy and practice, stated the following: “Frankly, speaking specifically about our country, I don't think the existence of such things would be very significant because we talk about many things or do them on paper, but in real life, our only goal is to prevent problems that bother everyone or some people. To that end, we cover up, ignore, or suppress certain things. Therefore, their existence wouldn't change much, honestly, speaking for myself” (T4). However, literature, particularly studies focusing on Türkiye, underlines the importance and necessity of school social work. These responses indicate that the knowledge gap regarding what school social work is must be addressed in Türkiye (Kayadibi, B., 2025).

2.6. Collaboration in Intervening in Bullying

One study indicates that greater dialogue and transparency between teachers and school administrators are needed to ensure collaborative efforts address the widespread problem of bullying in schools (Kennedy, Tom D., et al., 2012). Although how participants collaborated

was not a research question, this collaboration was included in the study due to the multi-actor nature of the interventions. The participants' responses regarding collaboration divided into 3 dimensions: among school practitioners, collaboration between families and schools, and finally, collaboration between families and schools with external partners.

2.6.1 Practitioners' Collaboration

School staff may make the first observations of school bullying and act as first responders. However, because their roles and responsibilities differ, they may still need each other during the intervention. In parallel with this context, one of the participants stated the following: “If it's beyond our control and something we can't do, or perhaps we don't have an opinion on the matter, or we might be inadequate in that regard, then we go to whoever we can contact at a higher level, whoever we can get help from, and usually, in the first instance, this is the school counselor" (T4). Meanwhile, teachers generally stated that they collaborated with guidance counselors by providing information and guidance. Another finding is that, when necessary, participation in meetings with the family is possible upon the request of both the teacher and the school guidance counselor. SC4 also explains that collaboration between school counselors is not just informal: "In our school, especially as school counselors, I hold monthly meetings with my colleagues to discuss the problems our students face in the classroom and how we can address them to get feedback. What should we do? What kinds of activities should we organize? This is how collaboration between teachers works in our school." It is crucial to note the presence of planned and comprehensive school-wide preventative strategies.

2.6.2 Family Collaboration

This section will present the results of families' responses regarding how they collaborated with practitioners or other partners in bullying intervention. Offrey, L. D., & Rinaldi, C. M. (2017) found in their study with both students and parents that help-seeking strategies were the most frequently used strategy. In this case, schools and their staff are among the first places families will turn to. This situation reveals a need for cooperation and collaboration.

Families generally reported having no problem initially contacting schools. A study by Stives, K. L. et al. (2023) found a similar finding, stating that parents are eager to approach school staff when their children are victims of bullying. However, it is important to note that in both studies, all participants were relatives of the victim, and this may be one of the factors causing them to have difficulty approaching school staff regarding bullying. They typically discussed bullying cases via telephone or in person at school. While most families provided more detailed information about their collaboration with the school, they indicated they had

no knowledge of collaborating with or seeking help from another institution or organization outside of the school. During the intervention, they generally spoke most frequently with the classroom teacher and, if necessary, the school counselor. It is not surprising that families cooperate more closely with the classroom teacher on this issue, as classroom teachers and families are in constant communication throughout the education period, even on issues other than bullying. However, school guidance counselors do not have the responsibility of taking charge of a class or regularly attending lessons.

2.6.3 External Partners

External partners are described as including NGOs, communities, or municipalities and the Ministry of Family Social Services in the literature. Therefore, social workers as practitioners also fall into this category. In the participants' responses, the Ministry of Youth and Sports was mentioned alongside the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

School practitioners generally stated that collaboration with external partners is not very frequent unless necessary, but they also noted that they can collaborate with the Ministry of Family and Social Services. This collaboration usually involves reporting the situation or providing information during the investigation process if an investigation is being conducted regarding the child. One participant highlighted the legal conditions of reporting to social workers: If the situation escalates to physical abuse, leaving more visible marks on the child's body, and the parents do not accept it, they intervene immediately. We are obligated to report this (SC5). While the experiences of collaboration here didn't entirely rely on bullying, this answer leaves the door open for reporting bullying to social services if they reach this point of seriousness.

Also, social workers have indicated that referrals can be made to other social workers or other professionals such as psychiatrists because the institutions and departments where the participants worked assigned tasks in different areas

Theoretical Discussion of the Theme 2

Many studies in the literature indicate that multi-layered and comprehensive studies are among the best ways to intervene in and prevent bullying. (Bradshaw, 2015; Ttof & Farrington, 2011). However**,** the results show that interventions are mostly carried out at the individual level. The policies within the school only consist of guidelines issued by the disciplinary committee or the Ministry of National Education. From the Eco-social model perspective, interventions can generally remain at the micro- and meso levels. Although the Eco-social model emphasizes multi-level and holistic intervention, unfortunately, there is a significant gap, particularly in macro-level interventions. According to a study conducted in

Türkiye, the top three strategies cited as most effective by participants were school-wide practices supporting positive behavior, school policies for preventing and intervening in bullying, and establishing formal reporting procedures (Cankseven Önder F et al., 2016). Here too, it has been seen that effective strategies do not remain at just one level.

As stated by school staff, the process involves, in order: interviewing/meeting with the student, working with the school counselor, and communicating with families. Following this process, formal interventions are implemented in accordance with the decision of the school disciplinary board. In short, an intervention is carried out sequentially at the individual or school level. During this process, different school staff members are involved at certain points. The collaborative intervention production envisioned by transdisciplinary approaches for effective intervention is not seen here. Generally, collaborations are at the initiative of the school staff or family when deemed necessary or required.

Also, the participants mentioned the cultural responsiveness of the interventions. In this sense, the eco-social model advocates that intervention strategies or programs should take into account cultural dimensions. These may include minorities or local cultural values.

The participants' responses reflected the spirit of preventive interventions, as they indicated they implemented diverse strategies touching upon many areas. The first of these emerged as individual and group guidance sessions conducted in partnership between teachers and school counselors. According to Leavy (2011), multiple disciplines need to come together and combine their expertise to find a solution to bullying. Regarding this research, school staff and social workers as external partners should have come together to create a common knowledge and understanding in the planning and implementation phases of bullying intervention.

Theme 3: Challenges In Addressing School Bullying

The findings support the idea that the challenges encountered in bullying intervention can stem from multiple sources, particularly contextual and cultural factors, as reflected by the ecosocial model. In practice, these systemic and cultural challenges often intertwine. Below, the findings are categorized into 5 subteams.

3.1 Systemic and Institutional Challenges

3.1.1 Ignorance and Knowledge Deficits

According to the participants' responses, one of the most common challenges they encountered was practitioners' and families' ignorance of bullying situations. In this context, they also mention that they think that this ignorance is done intentionally by some people. Also T4 responds that "Some people don't want to see the problems, or they don't consider

these problems serious and choose to ignore them" Here, the first answer refers to the school administration, and this implies that it's not just teachers and school counselors who have an influence on intervening in bullying, but all school staff, including administrators. Regarding families, T1 responds as following: “I apologize for saying this because they have children at every stage of their lives, but unfortunately, they don't care about their children." This participant implies that families neglecting their children is related to the number of children the family has. This finding is debated in the literature.

3.1.2 Resource and Structural Limitations

This section was developed based on the interview question answers regarding the resources available to participants. Participants' responses included staff shortage, materials, crowded classrooms, training duration, workload, limited guidance sessions, and lack of support. A study discussing the elements necessary for effectively preventing bullying points to the need for effective measures such as instructional design, school policies, and sustainable professional development. (Uğraş, S., et al 2025)

When teachers talk about a lack of training, they aren't actually saying there's no training at all. They're simply saying that in-service training or family training seminars need to be diversified or their content changed. Similarly, another study in Türkiye underlines the need to develop guidelines for the widespread implementation of region-focused, systematic, and practice-based in-service training programs aimed at improving educators' holistic knowledge and practical skills regarding peer bullying Taneri, P. O., & Özbek, Ö. Y. (2026) .

3.3 Gaps in Collaboration

This section presents the sub-codes encountered by participants during their collaboration, namely parental resistance, low participation of families, and lack of collaboration between school and social services/NGOs.

Van Niejenhuis et al. (2020) highlight the importance of the collaboration between the parent and the school in bullying prevention. However, the results of this research reveal that, far from preventing bullying, there is an incredible resistance from families when it comes to intervening. All those exhibiting this resistance are the families of the bullying children. In this sense, practitioners state that they have difficulty getting families to accept the bullying because of the barriers they have created. The most frequently used phrase in this resistance, according to practitioners, is "My child wouldn't do such a thing." Similarly, participating families also state that they hear this response most often from the families of the children who bully their children.

Another obstacle that emerged from the participants' responses was the lack of cooperation among other agencies, referred to as external partners. UNESCO's Global Status Report on School Violence and Bullying (2017) also highlights that insufficient coordination between education and other sector ministries, such as health and social services is a significant challenge hindering effective anti-bullying initiatives worldwide.

In short, this study indicates that there are deficients in collaboration in anti-bullying intervention. A study supporting this, Kaya et al. (2025), also stated that participants experienced shortcomings in establishing a consistent communication network between school administration, teachers, and parents. This shows that this collaboration problem still persists. However, while interdisciplinary approaches have transcended interdisciplinary boundaries and brought a new perspective to bullying intervention in recent years, in reality, it seems that Turkish education and social systems are lagging far behind.

3.3 Cultural and Normative Challenges

Culturally, the most common characteristic challenge is that bullying is seen as a normal part of growing up (Clarke et al. 2004; Sawyer et al. 2011, p. 1797). The responses revealed that participants frequently mentioned the normalization of bullying. This normalization is often completed by families, particularly the family of the bully, as a challenge. SW2 explains it this way: “The family doesn’t accept that their child is bullying, that their child is doing it, because they say, ‘That’s just how we are; this isn’t bullying; this is our way of communicating.’ So, I need to give the family basic training to explain to them that this is a problem, to help them accept it.” This means that the social worker can only intervene after addressing this normalization within the family. This is one of the biggest obstacles slowing down the fight against bullying. Another response that emerged from a cultural challenge was the related to the intervention approach of families. Participant T1 gave the following example: “They say, ‘Teacher, you can beat them.’ I say, ‘How dare I? That’s impossible. I can’t accept it.’ Then they say, ‘Then you don’t know how to educate.’ Some parents have this mentality that if we can’t beat them, we can’t educate them. They try to teach us how to do our job. That happens, but unfortunately, 70% of the parents in my environment believe that education can only be achieved through beating.” Here, the teacher is referring to the fact that in these families, punishment, such as corporal punishment, is considered normal in disciplining children.

3.4 Contextual and Environmental Challenges

Earthquake-related barriers emerge here as a new sub-code under a sub-theme. Within the context of the researched region, the major earthquake that struck Türkiye in 2023 affected some cities. Because the research wasn't conducted with a specific region in mind, earthquake-related barriers also emerged as a new sub-code in the results. Essentially, earthquake-related barriers relate to resource constraints in schools and neighborhoods, and the resulting disruptions to daily life. Among the problems related to this earthquake are the inadequate facilities, also mentioned in subtheme 4.2. Some participants also mentioned this deficiency here because they linked it to the fact that the school is in the earthquake zone. Participant T1 response regarding this issue is, "As for resources, our school's equipment is already very limited. For example, when we give a seminar, we don't even have a proper interactive whiteboard because we're a container school. Yes, we explain things to the students verbally, but if we had interactive whiteboards and example videos that we could show them, the students would actually retain the information concretely." Also, school counselors also shared the difficulties they experienced due to the school being container as follows: “Now, where I work, there's no school counseling office; I use the teachers' room. Not having my own physical space obviously negatively impacts individual counseling with students. I either use the assistant principal's office or wait in the teachers' room for the teachers to go to class. This limits me” (SC2).

Another finding is that social and sports activities in the city are limited due to the earthquake. In this sense, guiding children towards social activities and sports strategies becomes unusable.

Here, there is a partnership between environmental barriers, meaning the environment in which the child or the school is located. According to the participants' responses, the situation in the neighborhood where the child lives makes intervention more difficult by influencing the child and family not to cooperate in the intervention or by normalizing the bullying incidents.

Socio-economic situations of families and school culture/demographic structure are other interventions that participants reported encountering during the intervention.

Theoretical Discussion of Theme 4

The effects and interventions of bullying occur in many areas and at many levels, and consequently, the challenges that arise in these processes manifest themselves at various levels. As observed, obstacles, especially those that arise systematically, form an interconnected chain of barriers. Similarly, the eco-social model draws attention to the structural diversity of these challenges.

Theme 4: Gaps in Macro Level

This theme was developed both from the answers given to the third research question, the challenges, and from comparing the document analysis with the participants' responses. The gaps between policy and practice were evaluated under three sub-themes.

4.1 Legislative and Policy Gaps

The bullying, as a form of violence, inflicts on human life, ranging from life-threatening risks to relationship problems and academic life. In this sense...

Research in the literature also reflects the lack of policy regarding bullying, as evidenced by the findings in the documents. For example, although the issue of bullying and intervention is included in guidance programs, it has been noted that there is no such program specifically based on bullying implemented in Türkiye (Doğan Ş, 2022). Interventions against this should also be provided through legal or policy channels. Document analysis revealed no law directly addressing bullying. On the other hand, guidelines and circulars on bullying address the issue within the framework of violence prevention (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2011). Based on the participants' answers, a significant lack of deterrent sanctions has been highlighted. Although disciplinary boards exist in schools (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2023), participants state that these measures are insufficient. Here are some responses from participants: “The biggest challenge is about the power of deterrence. For example, a child behaves in a way that really bothers a friend and does it repeatedly, but we don't have many punishment methods that will directly prevent, stop, or elicit a reaction from the other person regarding this behavior.” (T4) and “There's no deterrent penal system either; we can't impose any sanctions on the child as an authority figure. The worst thing we do is change schools” (SC).

Similarly, Şen and Doğan (2021) noted that the latest educational forms prevented physical punishment and harsh disciplinary practices in schools. This is consistent with the perception that the penal system is inadequate. Here, some contradictions with the literature emerge because while the literature states that such punitive interventions are not very effective and may even be harmful (Ashworth et al., 2008), participants find the punitive measures effective and complain about their shortcomings.

4.2 Policy-Practice Gap

Participants' responses indicate the lack of practical implementation of the proposals included in the policies. Although the participants' responses revealed a lack of policy, they also indicated that existing policies were not being effectively implemented. “Actually, on paper, there are many sanctions, but unfortunately, they are never applied in real life. As I

said earlier, unfortunately, many of the behaviors of children, especially those who bully, go unpunished" (T4).

4.3 Recommendations and Needs

To delve deeper into what is needed in Türkiye, participants were asked about their recommendations and needs regarding interventions against bullying. The answers given here generally focused on addressing the shortcomings they mentioned in the challenges. Thus, the content of this sub-theme was formed. Two key findings were training specifically for families and the provision of social, sports, and arts activities for children. The literature presents studies that support this view. According to James and Colling (2015), participants listed the following as solutions for school bullying: guidance and awareness-raising, collaboration with parents, encouraging social activities, addressing student problems, effective communication, empathy, peer mediation, self-esteem development, conscious use of social media, avoiding discriminatory language, family education, vocational training, etc. Another study that parallels the importance of social activities claims that social activities can reduce bullying by strengthening bonds between friends (Bayar, A., & Sürmelioğlu, M., 2026).

Theoretical Discussion of Theme 4

The findings in this study indicate a gap and need for macro-level interventions in Türkiye. This macro level, an integral part of the holistic approach put forth by the Eco-Social model, encompasses nationwide anti-bullying policies, laws, and programs. In this sense, an intervention lacking resources and a framework operates without them. The Eco-Social model is compatible with the multifaceted content of programs like Kiva and Olweus, but also draws attention to the universal nature of these programs. It encourages the development of policies and interventions that both protect the child's fundamental rights and are prepared within a framework of cultural values to ensure local resonance.

Furthermore, this supports the idea that policies and programs should not be imposed from above, but rather developed collaboratively through the collaboration of multiple actors, the pooling of information, and the resulting joint preparation.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research was designed to offer a social work perspective on the problem of school bullying in Türkiye. The questions asked to achieve the overall aim of the study were about practitioners' and families' perceptions of bullying, intervention strategies, and the obstacles they encountered in intervention. The study ensured that the research made multiple voices visible. As a result, very comprehensive and debatable findings emerged. Participants generally emphasized power imbalances and undesirable behaviors in their definition of bullying. They linked the most fundamental problems they observed in the occurrence of bullying to the family. Therefore, one of the points they most strongly emphasized in developing interventions against bullying was providing education to families. They also suggested that this education should include training for practitioners and children, incorporating it into the intervention or system, not just families.

The research also revealed important findings regarding the overall structure of the school and the education system. The needs and recommendations identified in terms of school curriculum, physical environment, and professional staff indicate that education in Türkiye needs some reforms. These results were also clearly demonstrated in the document analyses that were conducted.

In the context of Türkiye, several actors have developed multifaceted proposals**.** Firstly, the education system in Türkiye needs some systemic changes and innovations. One example of such an initiative could be the development of an inclusive curriculum aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge about bullying. Additionally, this effort involves establishing national-level anti-bullying school policies. Another suggestion is to reorganize the school component within a holistic framework. In this sense, it is important to move the implementation of social work in schools from the pilot level to the national level, as supported by the participants and the literature.

In addition, professional development training programs should include mandatory and up-to-date sections on bullying for practitioners. These professional trainings and curricula providing bullying prevention/intervention education should be disseminated nationwide to raise awareness about school bullying in society and to prevent the normalization of these behaviors. Social work activism can play a significant role in this area, and collaborations with foundations can be established to develop various campaigns and content.

All these results demonstrate again that bullying cannot be addressed from a single perspective. The impact of ecosocial variables must be considered. Therefore, the ecosocial model, which is the cornerstone of this research, offering a detailed framework for understanding both interventions and the obstacles to implementing them. While highlighting interventions at the micro, meso, exo, and macro levels, it also draws attention to inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and the restructuring of schools within the framework of fundamental human rights directives (Rocha, 2016). Transdisciplinary, as an integral part of the eco-social model, emphasizes the contribution of all voices in addressing bullying. It argues that interventions created by each discipline or group mutually reinforcing each other are more effective and necessary. Applying these two frameworks to bullying has enabled the social work discipline to address bullying as a social problem and, within this framework, to propose broader solutions that touch upon all aspects of the issue. It is clear that peer bullying and victimization are social behaviors that reinforce inequalities (Çetin, E., 2025). Therefore, it is one of the most important areas that social studies disciplines should work on. Social work can prevent these inequalities from spreading throughout society by actively participating at both micro and macro levels.

Future Research

Firstly, the creation of an anti-bullying program, highlighted in the recommendations section, opens up an important area for future studies. The social work discipline needs to increase its research on bullying intervention by grounding it in a theoretical framework. Future studies could concentrate on developing and piloting an anti-bullying program using a model like the Eco-Social Model, rather than focusing on proving the necessity of school social work. Furthermore, it could provide resources for policymakers by focusing on more specific areas of difficulty in bullying interventions. Also, future studies could explore the relationship between the perception of bullying and intervention, particularly involving children. Lastly, since this study focused on middle school, the age groups could be diversified, and the focus could be on early intervention. Synthesizing research and evidence on the successful implementation of school-wide interventions and program structures will enhance the evidentiary basis of anti-bullying efforts (George P. et al., 2024).

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

This study is being conducted under the title "Understanding School Bullying: Insights from Practitioners and Families in Türkiye" underway at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, funded by ERASMUS MUNDUS – ESWOCHY European Joint Masters in Social Work with Children and Youth. The study aims to understand school bullying in Türkiye from the perspectives of practitioners and families by investigating their perceptions of bullying, anti- bullying interventions, and the challenges encountered in these interventions.

The study is carried out by the researcher Merve Duman who can be contacted through email: merveduman547@gmail.com in case of any questions or should you wish to share comments. Your participation in this highly valuable study, which will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of science, consists of answering questions during a semi-structured interview expected to last between 30 and 40 minutes. There are no expected significant risks associated to participation in the study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary: you can choose to participate or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can stop your participation at any time without having to provide any justification. In addition to being voluntary, your participation is also anonymous and confidential. The data are intended merely for statistical processing and no answer will be analyzed or reported individually. You will never be asked to identify yourself at any time during the study.

In view of this information, please indicate if you accept participating in the study:

I ACCEPT ☐ I DO NOT ACCEPT ☐

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature:

_____

_

APPENDIX B



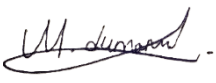


Submitted to the Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Social Work with Child and Youth:

- Has not been submitted to any other Institute/University/College
- Contains proper references and citations for other scholarly work
- Contains proper citation and references from my own prior scholarly work
- Has listed all citations in a list of references.

I am aware that violation of this code of conduct is regarded as an attempt to plagiarize and will result in a failing grade in the programme.

Date (dd/mm/yyyy): 29.05.2026

Signature: 

Name (in block letters): MERVE DUMAN









APPENDIX C





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INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Greetings

Participant's Background

How old are you?

How many years have you been working in this profession?

What type of organization do you work for?

Part 1

1. What do you think bullying is? Can you define it?
2. Based on your observations or experiences, what are the most common types of bullying?
3. What do you think are the main factors that can lead to bullying?
4. What do you think are the potential effects of bullying on children? (In the short term and in the long term?)
5. How do bullying cases usually reach you? Who refers them?

Part 2

6. Can you explain what intervention strategies you use or recommend for children who are bullied?
7. How effective do you think these interventions are? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

8. How do you measure whether your intervention was successful?
9. What resources do you have at your organization to develop and implement intervention strategies?

   Follow-up Question: Do you think these resources are sufficient?

10. Do you receive regular training on intervening in bullying, or have you ever received training before?
11. Do you take local cultural values into account when carrying out your intervention? Would you share an experience you've had?

    Additional Question: Have you experienced any conflict between children's universal rights (such as equality and security) and these values? If so, how did you balance them?

12. How do you collaborate with teachers and other professionals, such as school psychologists and guidance counselors, when dealing with these bullying cases?
13. How does the Ministry of Family and Social Services coordinate with psychologists, NGOs, or community organizations regarding bullying?
14. Given the lack of school social work programs in state schools in Türkiye, what role do you think social work could play in preventing and responding to school bullying?
15. What is the role of families in your efforts to intervene in bullying?
16. How does communication and collaboration with families take place in bullying cases? Can you give an example?
17. Do cultural norms or family expectations influence how families react in the bullying cases you cover?

Part 3

18. What challenges do you encounter in implementing bullying intervention strategies?
19. How do organizational or systemic barriers or resource limitations (e.g., time, training, materials) affect your ability to intervene effectively?
20. Are there any gaps in communication or collaboration between social services, schools, and families that make your job more difficult?
21. What do you think is missing from the current education or social welfare system in Türkiye when it comes to addressing bullying?

Part 4

22. What changes would you like to see in Turkish schools to better intervene and prevent bullying?
23. What kind of support or training do you think is needed specifically regarding bullying?

APPENDIX D





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INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

FOR TEACHERS

Greetings

Participant's Background:

How old are you?
What is your area of expertise in education?
Do you have a class where you are the class teacher?
How many years have you been working in this profession?

Part 1

1. What do you think bullying is? Can you define it?
2. What signs do you look for when identifying bullying?

   Follow-up Question: What makes it difficult to identify these signs in a school environment?

3. Based on your observations or experiences, what are the most common types of bullying?
4. What do you think are the main factors that can lead to bullying?
5. What do you think are the potential effects of bullying on children? (In the short term and in the long term?)

Part 2

6. What intervention strategies do you use or recommend in cases of bullying? Can you explain them?

Follow up Question: How effective do you think these interventions are? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

7. Do you take local and cultural values into account when carrying out your interventions? Would you share an experience you've had?

Follow Up Question: Have you experienced any conflicts between children's universal rights (such as equality and safety) and local cultural values? If so, how did you balance them?

8. Does your school have an official anti-bullying policy or program? If so, how is it implemented?
9. Do you receive regular training on bullying prevention or intervention, or have you ever received any training before?
10. Do you have other resources for developing and implementing intervention strategies at your school?

    Additional Question: Do you think these resources are sufficient?

11. How do you collaborate with other professionals, such as school guidance counselors and social workers, to address cases?

Follow-up Question: At what stage in bullying cases do you contact other professionals?

Part 3

12. What is the role of families in your efforts to intervene in bullying?
13. How does communication and collaboration with families take place in bullying cases? Can you give an example?
14. Do cultural norms or family expectations influence how families react to the bullying cases you cover?

Part 4

15. What challenges do you encounter when implementing bullying intervention strategies?

16. How do organizational or systemic barriers or resource limitations (e.g., time, training, and materials) affect your ability to intervene effectively?
17. Are there any gaps in communication or collaboration between social services, schools, and families that make your job more difficult?

Part 5

18. What changes would you like to see in Turkish schools to better prevent bullying?
19. What kind of support or training do you think is needed specifically regarding bullying?
20. While some countries in the world have school social services, our country (Türkiye) does not have such a service in schools. What are your thoughts on school social services in Türkiye, especially regarding bullying and the role of social work in this matter?

APPENDIX E





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INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

FOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Greeting

Participant's Background

How old are you?

How many years have you been working in this profession?

Part 1

1. What do you think bullying is? Can you define it?
2. What signs do you look for when identifying bullying?

   Additional Question: Are there any factors that make detection difficult in a school environment, and if so, what are they?

3. Based on your observations or experiences, what are the most common types of bullying?
4. What do you think are the main factors that can lead to bullying?
5. What effects do you think bullying can have on children (and all parties involved)? (In the short term and in the long term?)

Part 2

6. What intervention strategies do you use or recommend in cases of bullying? Can you explain?

Additional question: How effective do you think these interventions are? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

7. Do you take local and cultural values into account when carrying out your interventions? Would you share an experience you've had?

   Additional Question: Have you encountered any conflicts between children's universal rights (such as equality and security) and local and cultural values? If so, how did you balance them?

8. Does your school have an official anti-bullying policy or program? If so, how is it implemented?
9. Do you receive regular training on bullying prevention, or have you ever received training before?
10. Do you have other resources for developing and implementing intervention strategies at your school?

    Additional Question: Do you think these resources are sufficient?

11. How do you collaborate with other professionals, such as teachers and social workers, to address these bullying cases?

Additional Question: At what stage would you contact social workers in cases of bullying?

12. What role do you think families play in your efforts to intervene in bullying?
13. How does communication and collaboration with families take place in bullying cases? Can you give an example?
14. Do cultural norms or family expectations influence how families react in the bullying cases you cover?

Part 3

15. What challenges do you encounter when implementing bullying intervention strategies?
16. How do organizational or systemic barriers or resource limitations (e.g., time, training, materials) affect your ability to intervene effectively?
17. Are there any gaps in communication or collaboration between social services, schools, and families that make your job more difficult?

Part 4

18. What changes would you like to see implemented to better prevent and address bullying in Turkish schools?
19. What kind of support or training do you think is needed specifically regarding bullying?
20. While some countries in the world have school social services, our country (Türkiye) does not have such a service in schools. What are your thoughts on school social services in Türkiye, especially regarding bullying and the role of social work in this matter?

APPENDIX F





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INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

FOR FAMILIES

Greetings
Participants' Background:

How old are you?

How old is your child?

What is your educational background?

Part 1

1. What do you think bullying is? Can you define it?
2. Based on your observations or experiences, what are the most common types of bullying?
3. What do you think are the main factors that lead to bullying?
4. What do you think are the potential effects of bullying on children? (In the short term and in the long term?)
5. Can you describe the first time you noticed your child was being bullied?

   Follow-up Question: How did your child describe the bullying to you? Or did you notice it yourself?

6. How has this situation affected your family emotionally and your daily life?
7. Have you ever been afraid of negative consequences for your child?

Part 2

8. How did you intervene when you learned that your child was being bullied?
9. Do you think your intervention was effective? If so, why?

   Follow-up question: Were there any weaknesses in your intervention? If so, what were they?

10. How is your communication with the school regarding this issue (bullying)? Can you give an example?
11. Has the school organized any information sessions, meetings, or programs related to bullying?
12. Do you think you received support from school in dealing with bullying issues?
13. How effective do you think the school's bullying intervention and prevention policies are?
14. Are there other resources outside of school that can provide support? For example: social services and community services?

    Additional Question: What are your thoughts on collaboration between these resources or institutions in combating bullying?

Part 3

15. What challenges did you encounter in the process of intervening in bullying incidents?
16. Was there anything that made it difficult to report the bullying incident to the school?
17. What changes would you like to see implemented to better prevent and address bullying in Turkish schools?

Part 4

18. What kind of support or training do you think is needed specifically regarding bullying?
19. While some countries in the world have school social services, our country (Turkey) does not have such a service in schools. What are your thoughts on school social services in Türkiye, especially regarding bullying, and the role of social work in this matter