

The prevention of bullying and school harassment

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ABSTRACT

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Bullying and school harassments are serious situations that children can experience at any point of their developing process. Their involvement in said situations can be derived from or bring them to a decline on their psychological well-being, and thus have severe implications in both their academic as well as social life. Children's mental health should be seriously considered by the school settings, where children spend most of their time.

This study explores the different implications of mental health in bullying and school harassment situations. Teacher's opinions regarding bullying prevention have been studied, in order to better understand how to prevent violent situations in primary school-aged children. This study focuses on the context of Catalonia.

Through a qualitative study, an online questionnaire was designed and administrated to Catalan primary school teachers regarding the current situation of bullying and bullying prevention, 19 teachers answered the questionnaire. The answers were analysed through a content analysis, by finding codes that describe and group their different experiences. Their answers show that the current bullying prevention methodologies are not enough in terms of effectivity, implementation, and human resources.

This study concludes that there is work to do in the field of bullying prevention and promotion of mental health in primary school children. It was also found that there is scope for a new prevention methodology based on a psychomotor approach.

Keywords: Bullying prevention, Psychomotor interventions, Mental wellbeing, School harassment, School wellbeing

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1 INTRODUCTION

The situations of physical and psychological violence that many children suffer at school is a growing problem. Violence brings more violence. According to the UNESCO report (2019), 25% of school children across Europe report suffering from bullying. In North America the statistics are higher, with 31.7% of children having experienced school harassment. UNESCO also reports that in general, 32% of the children population in the world go through an episode of bullying in a three-month period, and 19.4% experience it more than once in consecutive days.

Children who suffer bullying and school harassment, are more likely to experience psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, or substance abuse later in life (Cunningham et al., 2010; Dake et al., 2003b; Molcho et al., 2009; Moosai, 2014; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). Bullying can also lead to aggression against peers (Boulton, 1997; Dake et al., 2003a), early dropping out from school or juvenile criminality (Boulton, 1997) as well as poor school performance and academic results (Dake et al., 2003b).

It has been observed that often children who perpetrate bullying and violence against peers, are children who lack social skills and/or present diminished mental health in one way or another (Dake et al., 2003b; Moosai, 2014; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). Thus, children who are part of a minority within the classroom or the school, such as sexual orientation, religion, country of origin or religion, are at a greater risk of being involved in bullying or harassment situations (Bradshaw et al., 2013).

The worst outcome in bullying cases is when it ends with the deaths of a child. In the past years, a few cases regarding suicides and suicide attempts due to bullying have been appearing in the Catalan media (Salvador, 2023; Redacció, 2023a). These cases plus the frustration presented on the media by Catalan teachers who claim to feel alone on the topic of school harassment (TV3, 2023), gave space for the consideration of the need for this research.

1.1 Literature review

Mental health. The World Health Organization (2022) describes mental health as a state of mental wellbeing, in which people can cope with the psychological difficulties that life brings. It is crucial for the full development of a person (World Health Organization: WHO, 2022). Thus, in bullying prevention, the role of mental health is key.

When children are in good mental health, their engagement in the classroom as well as their behaviour is favoured (Wignall, 2021). In her study, Wignall (2021), mentions that lack of mental health is a serious problem around the world. In the United Kingdom for example, the National Health Service (NHS) have published that one in nine children showed decreased mental health (NHS Digital, 2020).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) describes depression as a mental illness with severe affections on the emotions of the patient. The most known symptoms are sadness and the loss of interest for activities that the person used to enjoy. Less known symptoms are disfunction of the social skills and strong irritability.

Depression is one of the most common mental health disorder in the general population, and yet it is a common misconception to assume that children cannot suffer from it (Carnevale, 2012). As Carnevale (2012) points out, these symptoms can affect school life and lead to bullying behaviours or victimization. Depression often leads to a lack of physical health and physical activity. Which at the same time leads to a decline of social engagement creating a vicious circle. Studies have noticed the positive impacts that body expression activities bring to both mental and bodily health (Duran et al., 2019; Kim & Suh, 2016; Mas et al., 2018; Probst, 2010).

The Anxiety disorders follow an unnatural pattern of fears, specific or general depending on the disorder as specified in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Preventing the person from going on in their life, affecting concentration and social skills, and resulting in poor relationships and

school performance. In children, irritability is often observed as a result of their excessive worries and negative thoughts (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Hysing et al. (2021) point out that poor mental health is observed in both victims as well as perpetrators in bullying situations, this is also supported by other authors (Dake et al., 2003b; Moosai, 2014; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). Hysing et al. (2021) describe the expression of poor mental health as internalization (such as anxiety and depression disorders), and disruptive and externalized problems (such as anger management issues and aggressivity).

Bullying and school violence. The concept of bullying, coined by Dan Olweus in 1993, is described as an act of violence, in any shape, which has the intention to harm in any way the person who is being targeted. It is also an act that is repeated across time and is perpetuated through some kind of power imbalance. (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Boulton, 1997; Moosai, 2014; Pellejero, 2021; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023)

Moosai (2014) mentions that bullying is a social construct that children develop by observing interactions around them. Their social surroundings are key for both the development of pro and antisocial skills (Barrett et al., 2016; Moosai, 2014).

Becoming the target of school harassment can cause not only psychological, but also physical damage in young pupils, such as aggressions and fights (Dake et al., 2003a; Dake et al., 2003b; Jiang et al. 2022; Kevra, 2020). Due to the emotional implications, victims of bullying are more likely to have their social abilities disrupted, willing to avoid social interactions, this can also lead to ignore the situation other peers are suffering (Jiang et al., 2022).

Boulton et al. (2002) mention it is likely that bullying situations emotionally affect both bullies and victims. Thus, it is important to raise awareness regarding the outcomes of bullying in all children and give them the key to prevent it from arising around them (Boulton et al., 2002). The role of the spectators is key to stop bullying (Carrera et al., 2024; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023)

Prevention and intervention. The Cambridge dictionary states that prevention is the act of stopping something from happening (Prevention, 2024). This study understands prevention as those methodologies that aim to stop bullying before it arises. Intervention is described as the action of becoming involved in a demanding situation in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse (Intervention, 2024). Intervention programs are those used once bullying has already appeared. Schools often use such methodologies to solve coexistence problems between students. On the contrary, prevention methodologies can be used to avoid or minimize the appearing of said situations. Bullying prevention is effective when it reduces the bullying rates (Kevra, 2020).

Most of the used programs in school are based in intervention as well as prevention altogether. The KiVa program is one of the most used anti-bullying programmes in schools around the world (Kevra, 2020; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). It is based on the role of bystanders, who are encouraged to act when observing a bullying situation. Another well used methodology is the Peer mentoring (Baucà et al., 2016; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). It provides students with a reference figure in another student, often older, who has the role to help with problems occurring during school hours.

Studies in bullying prevention and intervention emphasize the need for the whole school to be involved in the bullying prevention, early intervention (Boulton, 1997; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Dake et al., 2003b; Kevra, 2020; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023), and an appropriate teacher training in both the program used in the school and the de-escalation of violence between students (Boulton, 1997; Kevra, 2020; Moosai, 2014; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). Another important aspect of a successful bullying prevention methodology is that families are involved (Carrera et al., 2024; Cunningham et al., 2010; Dake et al., 2003b).

School climate. Promoting coexistence in the school grounds is a challenge for teachers and schools (Vidal et al., 2016). Coexistence is described as living together at the same time or in the same place (Coexistence, 2024). A

good coexistence and tolerance of others helps improve the school atmosphere (Carrera et al., 2024; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Vidal et al., 2016).

How students perceive the school environment is related to their engagement with the academics and social associations within the school grounds (Carrera et al., 2024; Cerda et al., 2019; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Vidal et al., 2016). A positive coexistence is related to a better socio-emotional and academic development of the students (Carrera et al., 2024; Cerda et al., 2019; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009). A negative perception of the school environment means a lower social engagement with school and peers which can lead to episodes of violence and lower students' self-esteem (Cerda et al., 2019; Moosai, 2014). Tolerating the existence of individuals who are different to the majority is key to prevent discrimination in school (Carrera et al., 2024; Moosai, 2014).

Psychomotricity. Psychomotricity refers to a holistic concept based on an overall vision of the person, considering the relation between mind (psyche) and the bodily motion (motricity) (Mas et al., 2018; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Probst, 2010). Psychomotor activity is considered to enhance the relationship between the psychological, social, and physical domains, and the relationship of these with the environment. At the same time, these improve their influence on the development of the child through bodily activity (Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Mas et al., 2018; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Segura-Martínez et al., 2021).

Psychomotor interventions are used across European countries (Boerhout et al., 2013; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Probst, 2010); however, it is a topic difficult to find in research conducted in English (Probst, 2010). Psychomotor interventions are often used in early childhood education and early years of primary education to help children develop their cognitive as well as social skills and allow a better adjustment in school and life (Mas & Castellà, 2016; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022).

Besides the school context, psychomotor interventions are also used as an extra tool in psychotherapies (Probst, 2010). Through the use of body oriented and person-centred activities (Boerhout et al., 2013; Mas et al., 2018; Probst,

2010), psychomotor interventions can help people with low self-esteem perceive themselves more positively (Kim & Suh, 2016).

The cooperation activities help the participants to better improve the understanding and tolerance of one another (Boerhout et al., 2013; Kim & Suh, 2016). The wide range of lead activities can help the participants better understand their own emotions and boundaries and how to communicate these (Boerhout et al., 2013; Probst, 2010).

Psychomotor methodologies focus on different experiences of the body through the free interaction with the environment, as well as the meaning that each individual gives to them (Boerhout et al., 2013; Mas et al., 2018; Probst, 2010). Extra attention is paid to the regulation of the experienced emotions, such as tolerance to frustration and anger management in a safe environment (Boerhout et al., 2013; Probst, 2010). Thus, in a school basis, psychomotor interventions could help children better understand their emotions, and communicate them. Such as how different feelings are triggered, and how to put limits to themselves and others based on their experimental interactions in a safe environment. How to deescalate their own aggression and better tolerate frustration. (Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Kim & Suh, 2016; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Ponce et al., 2012; Probst, 2010)

1.2 Importance of this research

This research studies the current situation of bullying prevention in Catalan schools, a topic that has not been researched as much as it should (Francesc et al., 2021). Furthermore, it provides with a wider idea of what teachers consider as needed in a good prevention plan.

The literature review introduces the idea of psychomotor interventions, providing scope for a new holistic prevention methodology that could help improve the situation of bullying and bullying prevention. Primary school teachers provide with their opinion on the possibility of these interventions. This research is important because according to literature, teachers around the world seem unsatisfied with the current prevention methodologies. This research could bring options for new and improved methodologies to prevent school harassment and improve children's mental-wellbeing, at the same time their relationship with the school life could be benefited, strengthening their academic and social performance.

1.3 Bullying Prevention in Catalan Schools

36% of children in Catalan schools are victims of bullying and school harassment (Francesc et al., 2021). A study conducted by Save The Children (Calmaestra et al., 2016), situates Catalonia within the 5 autonomous communities in Spain with more cases of bullying.

Worldwide studies are important to have a general image of the situation. However, bullying is a social construct that children learn from their environments and their everyday interactions. It needs addressing from the socio-cultural point of view of the school (Barrett et al., 2016; Francesc et al., 2021; Moosai, 2014).

The Catalan Government establishes that education is a right of all people, and it must be guaranteed for all individuals (Catalan Government, 2009). It is also stated that all members of the educational community have the right and duty to a good coexistence (Catalan Government, 2009). In 2019, the Catalan Government presented a general protocol aiming to prevent and early

intervene in bullying cases (Catalan Government, 2019). Most of the measures presented in this protocol, are based on mediation between those implied (Pellejero, 2022; Protocol, 2019).

Protocols based on mediation have limitations (Pellejero, 2022). Certain offenses are considered too grave to be resolved through a mediation (Document, 2009), discrimination is an example. Mediation can only be used a limited amount of times per year with the same children (Document, 2009; Pellejero, 2022).

These protocols that the Government facilitates are necessary tools to provide with immediate action potential bullying cases, and teachers view them as a guide to take control of the situation (Pellejero, 2022). However, these are not preventive methodologies, but early interventions. Bullying prevention should be part of the curriculum and it should include education in diversity (Francesc et al., 2021; Pellejero, 2022).

1.4 Aim of the Study and Research Questions

Many children suffer from school violence. Their mental health and social relations, as well as the mental health of those around them, is affected by these situations.

The aim of the present study is to understand the current issues in bullying prevention and school harassment within Catalan school settings. And, to explore the possible proposal of a new prevention methodology based on the psychomotor interventions' methodology, which as afore mentioned, can be used in multiple domains of the human body, interactions, and development.

Thus, the research questions of this study are:

- 1. What is the current situation of bullying in Catalan schools?
- 2. What is the current situation of bullying prevention in Catalan schools?
- 3. Could psychomotor interventions become a methodology for the promotion of mental well-being and prevention of bullying?

2 RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Context

This study understands bullying as a social behaviour that derives from cultural situations. The focus is set on the bullying situation in Catalan schools, from teachers' point of view. The goal of this research was to understand what is working in terms of bullying prevention, and what is not. It was also the aim of the researcher to understand why it is not working and to propose a methodology that would cover what is not working.

The opinions on different aspects of bullying prevention and school programs that primary school teachers in Catalonia hold, have been examined. The aim was to collect as detailed data as possible. It was important for the researcher to have as small connection as possible with the participants, to guarantee their honesty with the study.

2.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire was answered by 19 participants. The required characteristics to take part in the study were: Have experience as a primary school teacher in Catalonia; To understand the Catalan language, which is the language of the questionnaire, as well as the language of the school curriculum.

For this research, it was important that the participants provided with their honest thoughts on the topic under study. Surveys and questionnaires are often used to create statistics (Jansen, 2010; Mills et al., 2005), nevertheless, questionnaires are also a well-used tool to collect experiences and thoughts that the participants have regarding a particular topic (Jansen, 2010; Mills et al., 2005; Wernicke & Talmy, 2017).

The research questions in this research aim to answer what is going on regarding bullying in Catalan schools. At first these were broader and unrefined, at this point a first literature review started. From this first review, the research questions that better addressed the issue were selected.

The conditions for the participants of the study were decided at this point. As per the third question, it was a personal choice to propose psychomotor interventions as a bullying prevention methodology, a psychologist's hypothesis, or curiosity. For the sake of this study, it was important that teachers provided with their experiences in bullying prevention (Hammersley, 2013; William, 2024).

An online questionnaire addressing the main areas of interest regarding the current situation of bullying prevention in Catalan schools was created. The first page is an acknowledgement letter, stating the aim of the research and why their participation is important. There is also a paragraph that specifies the qualitative character of the research, inviting teachers to provide with their honest opinion. The researcher's contact details are also provided and visible, should any doubt regarding the research arouse.

For the better comprehension and to facilitate the expression of personal thoughts and opinions, the questionnaire was written in Catalan. Understanding that people express their thoughts better in their mother tongue, answers in Spanish were also accepted.

The questionnaire is composed of 21 questions separated in three blocks depending on which research question is aimed. Nine of the questions are closed questions, six of these are followed by an open-ended question encouraging participants to provide more insight in their answer, based on their personal experiences. The three closed questions are considered to not need further explanation, for example the age range (1st and 2nd grades, 3rd and 4th grades, or 5th and 6th grades) in which teachers have worked for the longest time.

There are two completely open questions, aimed to collect comments and opinions arousing from the topic of the questionnaire, item 5 and item 21. The ten questions remaining are open-ended inquiries aimed to collect teachers' thoughts on bullying prevention methodologies, good practices, and psychomotor interventions.

The questionnaire was created with Google forms and administrated online by the means of email and other message apps such as WhatsApp. The first participants were invited by the researcher from personal acquaintance, based on their profession. From here, they were asked to share the questionnaire with their colleagues who would be interested in participating.

The questionnaire was first opened and shared at the beginning of November 2023 and locked at the end of March 2024. However, the times in which the researcher actively looked for respondents was between November 2023 and February 2024.

2.3 Data Analysis

For this study, a qualitative approach to data analysis has been chosen. Qualitative analysis allows the researcher to develop explanations and interpretations on the results from the investigation. It is also a rather flexible methodological approach in terms of analysis as well as design (Hammersley, 2013; Jackson et al., 2007; Ramalho et al., 2015).

Qualitative research allows the participants to provide with insight in their experiences beyond being a number in a statistical study, allowing the researcher to understand the phenomena in detail (Hammersley, 2013; Jackson et al., 2007). The research process starts with the researcher coming up with a set of questions regarding an existing issue (Hammersley, 2013; Jackson et al., 2007; Ramalho et al., 2015), the researcher polishes these questions until obtaining the research questions (Mills et al., 2005).

The data in this study has been analysed following the Content analysis methodology. Content analysis allows the interpretation of written or transcribed information, it is a flexible methodology that adapts to the needs of the research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Jansen, 2010). In Content analysis, the idea is that the data collected from different participants is identified and classified into categories under different topics that describe the phenomena (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Jackson et al., 2007; Jansen, 2010).

First, answers describing the situation of bullying prevention in Catalan schools were displayed in a table. Among the answers, patterns on the answers

were searched and identified. Each pattern was defined with a broader category, all the answers fitting in each theme were classified using a colour code. This was repeated for each question.

The next step was to classify the answers regarding experiences with bullying in the classroom and whether a prevention program could have helped avoided them and why. This table was aimed at answering both research questions 1 and 2. Answers were analysed by the researcher over and over, eventually main points were extracted from each statement and classified under two themes, answers describing whether the participant thinks prevention is important and useful or whether it is not; and what should be involved in a good prevention program.

The third step was about the second research question, to observe which activities are used in class in order to prevent bullying. First all answers were analysed, and similar activities were identified under a name summing up the nature of the activity. With this table, it was easier to see the common activities that teachers put into practice across the country.

The following step was aimed at understanding the needs of teachers, what do they think is not present enough in their classrooms but would be important to prevent bullying situations. To create this table, the answers were translated into English, and transcribed, similar needs were coloured and later on a category that better described all the words under a same colour was chosen. Finally, on a table, an X was put per participant under each category they had mentioned.

The last step was aimed at understanding the knowledge on psychomotor interventions that teachers have, their answers regarding the possibility of psychomotor intervention being used as a bullying prevention methodology were transcript next to their knowledge, and the researcher conducted an interpretation of their answers. Patterns were identified whether their answers were positive or negative, also taking into consideration their knowledge.

2.4 Ethical Solutions

At first, a consent form was elaborated (Taquette & Da Matta Souza, 2022) following the guidelines of the University. The idea was to only send the questionnaire once the consent form had been signed. However, given that in Catalonia it is usually not required a consent form for Master research thesis, many possible participants found it to be too bothersome and didn't accept to participate or even send it to their colleagues. Eventually, a solution was found, by adding a consent acknowledge letter on the same questionnaire, providing with the same information regarding the participants rights and what was involved in their participation in the study. The participant's email as well as name were asked as a way of signature.

Once an answer came through, all the answers to the questionnaire were translated and transcribed to an Excel document. The name of the participants was never checked nor used in any way. They were directly referred to Participant X. Since their answers were translated, the use of any sentence in this paper could not mean the identification of the person, for translation is a subjective process in which the translator chooses the words that in their opinion better fit the original (Eide & Kahn, 2008; Shiyab, 2023; Taquette & Da Matta Souza, 2022).

Since this was an online administrated questionnaire, there was no relationship between the participants and the researcher. The data was deleted from Google forms as soon as it had been analysed. No third party had access to either the answers on google forms or the transcription (Taquette & Da Matta Souza, 2022).

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Bullying in Catalan Schools

Below are presented the statistics regarding the presence of bullying in Catalan schools according to teacher responses. Figure 1 shows that over half of the participants reported having had bullying cases in their classroom. A smaller yet worrying 16% of the teachers reported being unsure whether they had observed bullying in their classroom. Figure 2 describes the grades in which teachers have observed more bullying behaviours in comparison to which grades they had worked for the longest. All nineteen teachers reported the last stage of primary school as the grades where more bullying behaviours have been observed.

Figure 1
Reports on having observed bullying in the classroom

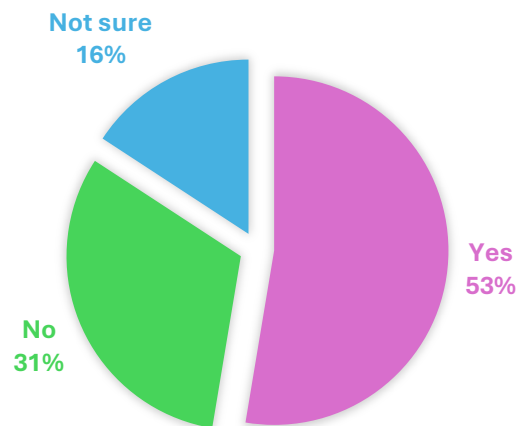
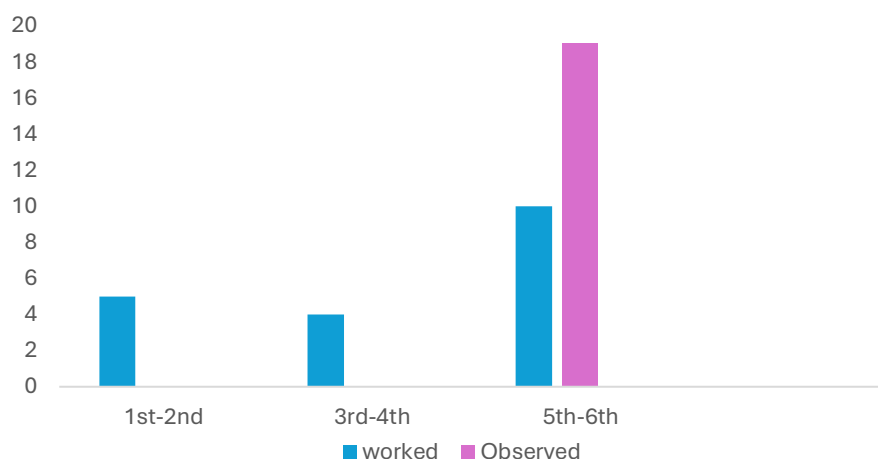


Figure 2

Grades in which bullying has been observed the most compared to grades worked for longest



Bullying behaviours

The item four of the questionnaire addresses the kind of bullying behaviours that have been observed and identified as harassment. The data suggests that those behaviours related to peer isolation are the most common among students, with ten teachers having reported observing them.

The second most common form of harassment involves those behaviours related to verbal actions such as insulting, bad mouthing and mocking, all reported by five teachers. Actions involving physical aggressions and psychological persecution of the target were both reported by four teachers. Discrimination based on hobbies, identity or physical attributes were reported by three participants. Also reported by three teachers were some sort of unpleasant messages such as anonymous notes or emails. The least common reported behaviour is the damage of personal property.

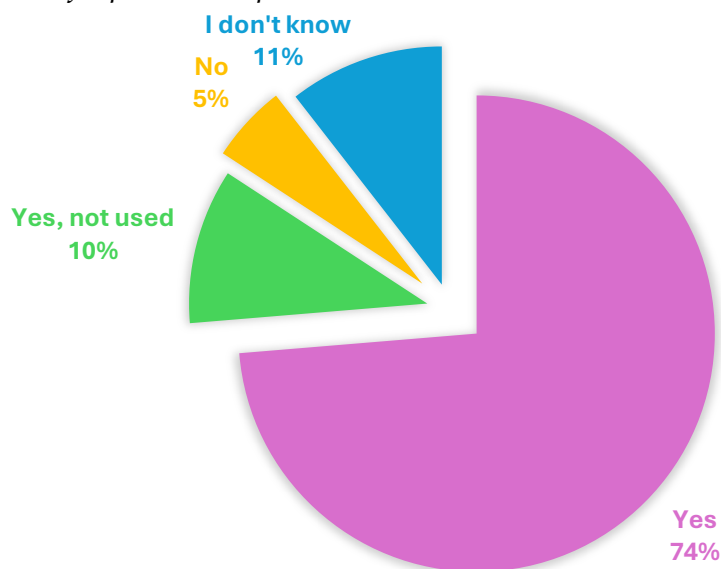
3.2 Bullying Prevention

Figure 3 shows that 16 teachers reported that there is an existing prevention protocol, and yet two of them reported that it is not in use. Two teachers

reported that they do not know whether such protocol exists, and one teacher reported that there is no such protocol in their school.

Figure 3

Existence of a prevention protocol in school



Item seven asked teachers which bullying prevention methodologies they had worked with. Those who reported not having one or being unaware of them reported using other protocols, such as T17, who stated that in their school they have an intervention protocol, or T2 who claimed that in their school, specialists have conducted workshops to help them detect possible bullying cases.

There were 16 teachers who reported having a bullying prevention protocol in their schools. When asked about said methodologies, the results seemed different. T18 reported “In our centre we have a counsellor who helps us treat these cases”. The presence of a specialist within the centre is a much-needed resource, however, it is not a prevention protocol on its own. T10 also reported that there is indeed a bullying prevention protocol in their school, but said protocol is based on mediation, which is an intervention methodology. This is also the case for T4 who reported using a protocol to identify bullying.

After the analysis, 12 teachers confirmed that they can count on bullying prevention methodologies. Most of them used the one designed by the Catalan government. Other programs such as “Stop Bullying” and “Restorative circles”

came up. Two teachers mentioned “The one that we have at the school”, it is unclear if it refers to a protocol designed by the school. Two teachers reported never having worked with any kind of bullying prevention methodology.

Regarding the efficacy of the existing bullying prevention, the opinion that most teachers agreed on is that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the prevention methodologies as well as how to implement these. Six teachers reported that the efficacy of these methodologies depends on the knowledge that they have. Five teachers reported that the current prevention methodologies are not effective, however, T9 reported that these are very useful. T1 provides more insight, agreeing with T6 that there is good design, however this is all for nothing when the implementation is not done.

It is also acknowledged by four teachers that there is a lack of coordination between the centre and the families. T11 claimed that bullying sometimes starts at home, and T8 said that depending on the family, there might not be an activation of the protocol. There are two teachers who recognized that bullying prevention methodologies help raise awareness among children of the consequences of their behaviours.

The opinions regarding the sufficiency of these existing protocols are presented next. There were three options for the answers, however no teacher considered that the existing prevention protocols are enough. Eight teachers reported that the protocols are somehow enough, among these, T1 remarked the good design, but a lack of application. T3 said that they can be a good tool for the teacher. On the downside, two teachers said that there is a lack of cooperation among the school community and three teachers claimed that these protocols are not applied enough.

On the other hand, 11 teachers reported that the existing protocols are not enough. Three teachers blamed it on the lack of resources, and again three teachers said that the protocols are not applied. Two teachers claimed that often, schools focus too much on intervention and punishment of bullying cases and not enough on the prevention.

Whether teachers feel that bullying prevention is an important aspect to consider and provide in educational centres, is a major part of this research. 11 teachers agreed that the aim should be a good prevention so intervention and harassment could be avoided or minimized. For example, T2 reported "Intervention should be avoided by preventing", T5 said "if there is good prevention, intervention won't be needed". T6 and T16 understand the need for prevention to avoid harmful situations. Six teachers stated that prevention should be the first step. T1 said "First step should always be prevention" and T12 claimed "If prevention fails, intervention will be key". T11 criticized the lack of implementation of prevention methodologies, and T18 claimed the educational importance of bullying prevention and raising awareness of bullying consequences. All teachers agree on the importance of prevention. Most teachers also understand the difference between intervention and prevention protocols and why are the latter more important in first instance.

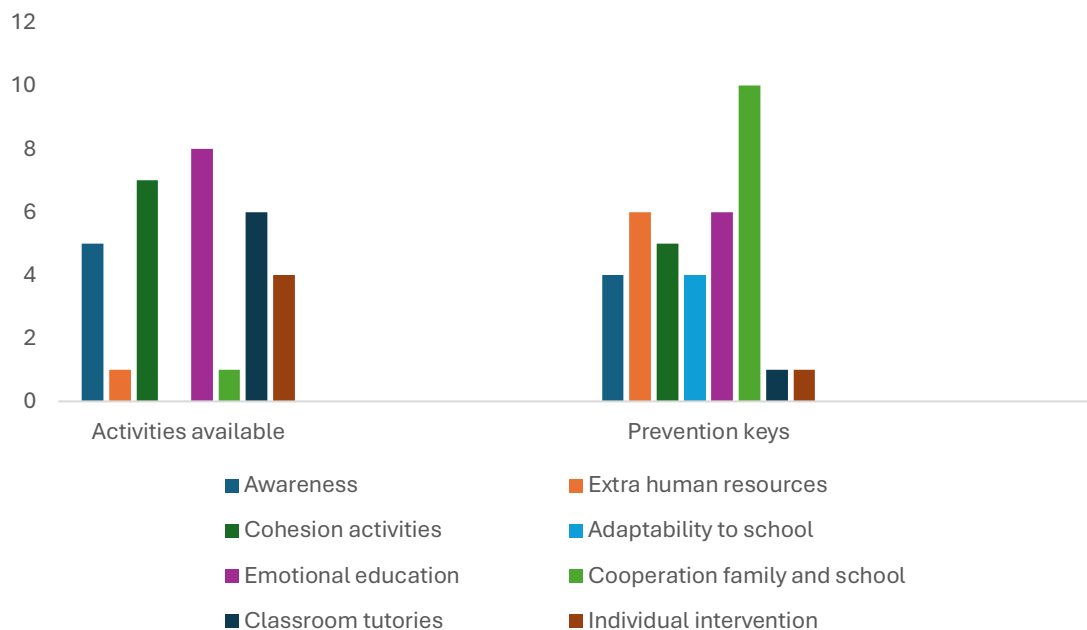
Teachers were asked whether a good prevention could have avoided the bullying cases they had observed. Four teachers reported that it would have been avoided, T1 and T8 emphasized the need for prevention to start from the first school year. Six teachers answered that the observed cases could have been pretty much avoided with good prevention, among them, T6 and T17 reported that there is a lack of cooperation from families, on the same line, T2 mentioned the importance of whole school community being on the same page. Seven teachers answered that the observed cases would have been somehow avoided with prevention. T11, T12, and T18 focused on the family implication not being enough.

There were two teachers who answered that nothing would have changed with prevention. T15 answered that the observed cases were not prolonged in time, so prevention would not have avoided them. T4 answered that prevention would not have changed anything due to a lack of resources and implementation. From T4's answer can be deduced that teachers feel alone on the fight against bullying. Other teachers also mentioned the need for constant improvement and emotional education to prevent bullying.

Figure 4 shows those actions that schools take to prevent bullying compared to what teachers report that is needed. Cooperation within the school personnel and with families should be key to prevent bullying, only one teacher reported this being portrayed in their school. Teachers also reported the need for more human resources including more training, and specialists within the school, only one teacher reported having specialists. Cohesion activities, raising awareness, and emotional education are reported as key to a good prevention as well as already in use. A few teachers demand a prevention protocol that is adaptable to the school needs and not based on bureaucracy. Classroom and individual interventions are reported as used tools, only one teacher reported them as key for bullying prevention.

Figure 4

Bullying prevention resources available in the school compared to what should be available



3.3 Psychomotor interventions

This study analysed the knowledge of primary school teachers regarding psychomotor interventions. The answers showed that among those four teachers who claimed to have knowledge and training, two had a positive opinion regarding the use of said methodologies in preventing bullying. T18

claimed that bullying and psychomotricity are not related to one another, so the opinion was negative. T11 reported having specific training in only one use of psychomotor interventions, thus they claimed to be unsure whether it could be used as a bullying preventing methodology.

Among the five teachers who claimed to have some knowledge, three had a positive opinion on the use of psychomotricity, recognizing the use of bodily experiences and group cohesion activities. There were two teachers who reported being unsure due to their lack of training. Ten teachers claimed only having heard about psychomotor interventions. Among them, two claimed to be interested in the use of said methodologies to prevent bullying, and one reported being aware of the connection between the body movement and the mind. A majority of teachers claimed being unsure due to not having enough knowledge on the topic.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the current situation of bullying and bullying prevention in Catalan schools. As well as to explore the possible use of psychomotor interventions as framework for the bullying prevention and the promotion of mental well-being in the students.

The results of this study suggest that Catalan primary school teachers do not think of the current bullying prevention methodologies as enough. They feel there is a lack of training in prevention and early intervention, and more human resources are needed. It can also be deduced that teachers feel alone on the fight against bullying, specially from the lack of cooperation with families and institutions. The need for more cohesion activities, emotional education and structured protocols that can be adapted to the specific needs of each school, give scope for the use of psychomotor interventions as a framework for a prevention methodology.

More than half of the teachers who took part on the questionnaire reported having had bullying cases in their classroom. These results are in line with other studies suggesting that primary education is the stage where bullying occurs the most (Dake et al., 2003b; Francesc et al., 2021; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023). According to the findings of this study, severe bullying behaviours appear in the latest stage of primary education, however, teachers report that many cases come from earlier grades. This study, along with other studies (Dake et al., 2003b; Francesc et al., 2021; Moosai, 2014) suggest that activities aimed at bullying prevention, should be implemented as part of the school curriculum from the first grade.

According to the findings of this study, peer isolation has been reported as the most used shape of bullying behaviour. Overall, actions that result in a victimization of the targeted children are wildly used. Children who isolate their peers often do it because they see something different in them (Dake et al., 2003a; Moosai, 2014). Only telling children about the consequences of their actions is not effective to stop these behaviours (Barrett et al., 2016; Dake et al.,

2003b). As teacher report, there is a need for a more hands-on approach in which children can embrace the differences between their peers and how these can benefit the group (Boulton, 1997; Dake et al., 2003a; Kevra, 2020).

Bullying has several emotional and physical consequences in children, especially in young children who don't know how to communicate what they are feeling (Cunningham et al., 2010; Francesc et al., 2021). Despite all the implications, institutions seem to not take the situation as seriously as they should.

The results show that teachers don't think of the existing protocols as enough. Some of the comments involve a well-designed protocol that remains unknown outside of the offices, the school community is not aware of it. A protocol designed in bureaucracy, that does not contemplate the actual needs of each school and child. Other studies suggest that the current bullying prevention is disappointing (Cunningham et al., 2010; Guitart, 2023), needs to be improved in all aspects (Carrera et al., 2024; Cunningham et al., 2010; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023), and involve the whole school community as well as the families (Carrera et al., 2024; Kevra, 2020; Moosai, 2014; Pellejero, 2022; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023; Vidal et al., 2016).

The lack of awareness should be solved by increasing the training that teachers receive regarding bullying and bullying prevention. Participants in this study as well as other studies (Boulton, 1997; Carrera et al., 2024; Dake et al., 2003a; Kartal & Bilgin, 2009; Kevra, 2020; Moosai, 2014; Sainz & Martín-Moya, 2023), agree that further training in bullying and bullying prevention is something of interest to them, and in some cases, much needed.

Most of teachers agreed that prevention should be the first step. The goal of bullying prevention should be avoiding the behaviours that could turn into bullying (Carrera et al., 2024; Pellejero, 2022). Teachers understand their own limitations and highlight the need for more human resources, specifically in the shape of specialists such as psychologists, educational psychologists, and social workers among others.

When asked about psychomotor interventions, only one teacher claimed to have knowledge and despite so, failed to see any relation between psychomotricity and bullying or mental health. Along this study, connections have been presented between one and the other. Psychomotor interventions are used as an extra tool in psychological therapies when tackling disorders that involve aggressivity or low-self-esteem (Boerhout et al., 2013; Kim & Suh, 2016; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022). Psychomotor interventions are a holistic approach that can be adapted to the specific needs of the group class as well as each child individually (Mas et al., 2018; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022). Most of the participants answered positively regarding the possibility of psychomotricity being used as a prevention methodology.

Studies suggest that programs based on psychomotor interventions, can help children improve their cognitive (Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022) as well as socio-emotional skills (Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Kim & Suh, 2016; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Probst, 2010). Through the body action, and focusing on the emotional aspects of the movement, children can learn a wide range of skills to help them better control their emotions and the actions related to these (Boerhout et al., 2013; Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Probst, 2010). Psychomotricity has been found to be beneficial for the mental wellbeing (Bräuninger & Rösli, 2023; Moschos & Pollatou, 2022; Probst, 2010).

Overall, Catalan schools seem to be making efforts to prevent bullying from happening, sometimes from an early intervention approach. Despite these efforts, teachers feel that these are not enough. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the existence and the implementation of these programs. As well as a lack of cooperation from the families and institutions.

Based on the results of this research, a well-designed and easy to apply prevention program, as well as more human resources, would help prevent bullying situations. However, in order for this to work, families should have a strong cooperation with the school, it cannot all be left on the hands of the teachers, and education must follow the same line inside and outside the school.

Given the research done previously in the Catalan context, this thesis provides with new ideas on the bullying prevention scope. Previous studies have shown separately the links between bullying and mental health, and mental health and psychomotor interventions. This study is one of a kind for linking Bullying prevention and psychomotor interventions. Regarding the bullying and bullying prevention situation in Catalonia, this study has helped confirming previous studies.

Based on the research findings, if well designed and the appropriate training was given to the teachers, a psychomotricity-based prevention implementation, could be beneficial for the children's mental health and help prevent bullying or violence situations.

4.1 Evaluation of the study

The aim of the study was to understand the current situation of bullying and bullying prevention in Catalan schools. As well as to consider the possible use of psychomotor interventions as a bullying prevention methodology.

Both the research part as well as the practical questionnaire have helped achieve the purpose of this study. With the limitations that only 19 participants have in generalizing the results, the teachers provided with insight in line with participants in other studies, meaning that the situation might be quite general, not only in the Catalan context. As for the possibility of using psychomotor interventions, there is no closed conclusion. However, the positive opinions that teachers provided with, as well as other studies, make us think that there is an open door for the use of them.

This study has been limited by the timeframe as well as the economic resources. Therefore, it could only provide with the idea of using psychomotor interventions, not with the actual implementation. There is also the limitation that only teacher's opinions were considered. For ethical reasons, students' voices were not part of the study.

This study used an online questionnaire, the separation between the researcher and the participants, made it difficult for clarifications to be made. Sometimes, the lack of interaction made it difficult to obtain extra information

regarding certain topics. This being a qualitative study, the results might be biased by the researcher's opinions. In order to avoid subjective interpretations, when translated, a dictionary was used in order to have as accurate as possible translations.

4.2 Future Research

For a future research, a wider research, coming from an institution with power, should be made regarding such an important topic as bullying is. Teachers should be encouraged to give as much insight as possible in order to optimize the design of a future prevention methodology.

Children are the protagonist of bullying, what happens inside of it. Their voices should be heard before proposing any curriculum-based idea, whether it is based on psychomotor interventions or not.

This research strongly suggests designing and proposing a curriculum-based methodology that uses psychomotor interventions, and for it to be tested in actual schools. Using mixed methodologies to better understand the results as well as the insight from the participants. The voices of the children will be key.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire presented to the teachers

Q1: In which grades have you worked for the longest?

Q2: Do you think that along your career there has been a bullying case in your classroom?

Q3: In which age range have you observed the most behaviours that could be identified as bullying?

Q4: Which observed behaviours would you describe as bullying or harassment?

Q5: Feel free to add any comments on the topic

Q6: Does the school centre have any kind of bullying prevention protocol?

Q7: What kind of bullying prevention methodologies have you worked with?

Q8: As an education professional working with school children, which opinion do you have regarding the efficacy of the existing bullying prevention protocols?

Q9: Do you consider bullying prevention as important as intervention?

Q10: Could you offer more depth?

Q11: Do you think that the existing bullying prevention protocols are enough?

Q12: Could you offer more depth?

Q13: Do you think that the bullying cases that you have observed, could have been avoided with a good prevention protocol?

Q14: Could you offer more depth?

Q15: Which bullying prevention activities do you usually portray in the classroom?

Q16: As an education professional, what do you think are the keys to a good bullying prevention protocol?

Q17: What do you know regarding psychomotor interventions?

Q18: Do you have knowledge and/or training in psychomotor interventions?

Q19: Do you think psychomotricity could be a good tool to prevent bullying and school harassment?

Q20: Could you offer more depth?

Q21: Feel free to leave any other comment/idea/thought regarding any of the topics of this questionnaire.