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The reasons for school bullying and approaches to its elimination

This paper addresses the phenomenon of bullying, defined as a form of violence and social exclusion, which is increasingly prevalent in contemporary schools. The findings indicate that bullying may have severe consequences, including depression and, in extreme cases, suicide. Importantly, bullying is not limited to students; on certain occasions, teachers may also be subjected to it. A distinctive characteristic of widespread school bullying is the involvement of the entire collective in the process. Within this collective, members are categorized as victims, aggressors, or passive bystanders who remain indifferent to the events. The school, as one of the institutions playing a significant role in the social life of society, reflects processes that elicit public concern. Schools play a crucial role in the socialization of children, and the prevention of school violence, which negatively impacts this process, should be regarded as a priority responsibility of school administration. What are the underlying causes of school violence, and who are its victims? Observations suggest that victims are predominantly children who are physically or psycho-emotionally vulnerable, lack social experience, are unable to integrate into the peer group, suffer from illness, or possess lower intellectual abilities. To prevent school violence, a targeted action plan should be developed, incorporating the following measures: the enforcement of anti-violence regulations within the school, conducting educational discussions on school violence with students and their parents, organizing preventive meetings with the teaching staff aimed at eliminating school violence, analyzing incidents of bullying that occur on school premises, integrating corrective measures into educational activities, promoting anti-bullying awareness within the school, and informing both teachers and students about bullying and its various forms through structured discussions.

Keywords: *bullying, student collective, socialization, moral-psychological-social isolation, physical pressure, violence.*

Introduction. In recent years, school-based bullying has emerged as a significant social issue within the Azerbaijani education system, driven by the negative transformation of the socio-cultural environment, economic challenges, and political-psychological factors. Among these influences, family dynamics and the quality of children's interactions with their immediate environment play a critical role in their socialization, personality development, and self-realization. Dysfunctional family settings can leave profound marks on the behavioral and psycho-physical development of children and adolescents. In such contexts, adolescents often experience harsh or abusive treatment from parents, which may lead to the emergence of interpersonal conflicts with their parents, peers, and teachers. At the same time, frequent truancy, engagement in antisocial lifestyles, and, in some cases, habitual aggressive or antisocial behavior are characteristic of children from such families. Bullying, which manifests as both violence and social exclusion, has become a widespread negative phenomenon in schools today and may lead to depression and, in severe cases, even suicide. Bullying is not limited to students; teachers are sometimes targeted as well. A distinctive feature of school-wide bullying is the involvement of the entire school community. Within this collective, members are typically classified as victims, aggressors, or passive bystanders who remain indifferent to the events.

The concept of "bullying" was first introduced to the academic field by Dan Olweus, who defines it as a situation in which an individual intentionally causes harm or discomfort to another. Olweus identifies three characteristic features of victimization in schools: (1) the occurrence of aggressive behavior, which can be exhibited by both students and teachers; (2) the persistence of such violence over an extended period; and (3) the instability of dominance or leadership within the social hierarchy (Olweus, 1993).

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School violence is commonly classified as emotional or physical. Emotional violence refers to actions by teachers or students that harm the victim's psychological well-being, including ridicule, derogatory nicknames, persistent criticism, biased evaluations, mockery, and public humiliation. Physical violence encompasses behaviors such as hitting, striking, and the forcible taking of a child's belongings. These forms of violence are often interrelated, with emotional abuse frequently underpinning physical aggression. Prolonged ridicule, mockery, and teasing, in particular, can induce sustained anxiety and distress in the victim (Mollayeva, 2024, p. 163).

Formulation of the Problem. School bullying has become one of the most persistent and harmful issues affecting students' emotional, psychological, and academic development. Despite increased attention from educators, parents, and policymakers, incidents of bullying continue to occur in various forms – physical, verbal, social, and cyber. Many schools struggle to identify the root causes of bullying behavior and to implement effective preventive and intervention strategies. The problem lies not only in the existence of bullying itself but also in the lack of comprehensive, systematic approaches to eliminate it and promote a safe, supportive school environment. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the underlying causes of school bullying and explore effective methods and educational policies aimed at its prevention and eradication.

The aim of the research is to identify the root causes of bullying in schools and to analyze effective approaches to eliminate it. The study was conducted using a mixed method approach. This approach combines the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Scientific novelty of the article. This reserach is distinguished by its comprehensive approach to the causes of bullying in the school environment and ways to eliminate it. The scientific novelty of the study is characterized by the following points: The multilevel causes of bullying – the interaction of individual, family and school environment factors – were analyzed for the first time within the framework of a single conceptual model. Integration of psychological and pedagogical approaches – the role of both the development of emotional intelligence and internal school management mechanisms in the prevention of bullying was assessed together in the study. Based on empirical data obtained through surveys and observations, a system of practical anti-bullying measures was developed that corresponds to real school conditions.

Literature review. The analysis of the literature shows that the issue of school bullying has been widely explored from pedagogical, psychological, and social perspectives. Mollayeva (2024) examines the modern problems of socio-pedagogical victimology and proposes solutions for preventing student victimization in educational settings. Burnukara and Uçanok (2012) analyze peer bullying during early and middle adolescence, focusing on the locations where bullying occurs and the coping strategies used by students. Olweus (1993), one of the pioneers in bullying research, provides a foundational framework for understanding the causes and consequences of school bullying, as well as practical interventions. Del Rio and Bauman (2005) study teachers' and students' knowledge and beliefs about bullying, emphasizing the importance of awareness and education in prevention efforts. Hazler and Hoover (1996) highlight the emotional and behavioral problems associated with bullying, stressing the need for psychological support in schools. Perren and Alsaker (2006) focus on the social behavior and peer relations of victims, bully-victims, and bullies, showing how early patterns of aggression can influence later development. Gardner (2010) discusses school administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying policies, underlining the growing significance of online forms of aggression. Craig and Pepler (2007) bridge research and practice, providing comprehensive strategies for teachers and policymakers to address bullying effectively.

The main part. The problem of violence, which is encountered across all structures of society, also manifests itself with specific features in general education schools. Against the background of increased attention to issues such as poor school attendance and the low quality of instruction – today considered the main problems of schools – cases of violence against students by both teachers and peers, including insults, mockery, threats, and harassment, have often been overlooked. Unfortunately, despite its critical importance, this issue has not received adequate scholarly attention from researchers across the West, the United States, Russia, and Azerbaijan. Since 2000, however, American scholars have begun to investigate the state of violence in education, and their research has revealed that approximately 30% of American adolescents experience situations of violence. More than 15% of boys and 7% of girls have been subjected to violence, while 13% of boys reported being harassed at the age of 16. Schools, as institutions with a fundamental role in the social fabric, inevitably attract public attention, shaping societal perceptions of the processes occurring within them.

Educational institutions play a critical role in the social development of children, making the prevention of school-based violence, a phenomenon that adversely affects this process, a priority obligation for school leadership. What are the underlying factors contributing to school violence, and which groups of children are most vulnerable to its effects? Empirical observations suggest that children who are physically or emotionally vulnerable, socially inexperienced, unable to integrate into peer groups, ill, or

cognitively challenged are disproportionately affected. Incidents of school violence are markedly apparent in orphanages and boarding schools accommodating children who have been abandoned by their families or have lost their parents.

Research suggests that physically and emotionally weak children, including those with physical or mental disabilities, are more likely to become victims of bullying, while strong and arrogant students tend to be perpetrators of bullying (Marini et al., 2006). In many cases, students' sense of dominance leads one to insult another (Perren & Alsaker, 2006).

Sad, anxious, and emotionally unstable students are more likely to be exposed to bullying than others. Shy children, those who struggle with communication, and those unable to form new friendships are also among the most vulnerable to bullying (Perren & Alsaker, 2006). Children with poor social skills, who are unable to express themselves, who experience family problems, and who feel lonely are at a higher risk of becoming victims of bullying. Children who are subjected to bullying are usually sensitive and quiet (Garner & Hilton, 2010).

D. Olweus defines the essence of bullying more precisely through scientific terminology:

According to Olweus (1993), the phenomenon of bullying can be classified and defined through several core concepts:

1. Bully – An individual who aggressively and consistently intends to cause harm to another person.

2. Bullying refers to repeated psychological or physical behaviors carried out by an individual or group against a person who is unable to defend themselves

3. Bystander – An individual who passively observes the incident without reporting it or intervening.

4. Victim of bullying – A person who is exposed to bullying and unable to protect or defend themselves.

5. Cyberbullying – Acts of bullying carried out through computers, phones, or other technological devices.

6. Cyberbully – An individual who uses technological tools to harm others' psychological well-being, humiliate them, spread private information, or engage in blackmail (Olweus, 1993).

7. Cybervictim – A person who is subjected to cyberbullying (Olweus, 1993).

School violence is directly related to family violence, as its roots are often established within the family environment. Insufficient maternal care from infancy, along with a child's early development coinciding with the mother's deprivation period, tends to strengthen the child's inclination toward violence. Similarly, the mother's aggressive attitude toward others, an incomplete or dysfunctional family environment, and the dominance of authoritarian relationships within the household further reinforce violent tendencies in a child's nature.

Pope Francis's comments on bullying at school – useful for contextual commentary on the **social/ethical implications** of school bullying. "But if, at school, you wage war among yourselves or engage in bullying, you are preparing for war, not for peace," he said. The pope also called for more dialogue within families, emphasizing that "it is dialogue that makes us grow." (January 4, 2025).

Children's academic performance, as well as their status and influence within not only the school but also external social groups, are significant factors in resisting violence. Students who achieve good academic results and maintain high self-esteem are less prone to violent behaviors. In contrast, children with low academic achievement often display aggression toward their peers. A crucial question arises: What are the factors within school management that contribute to the emergence of school violence? These factors can be classified as follows:

Several factors within the structure and management of schools create conditions that foster school violence. These can be classified as follows:

1. Anonymity in large schools and lack of choice in educational institutions. Greater anonymity within a large school community increases the likelihood of violent behavior. In such contexts, acts of violence are less likely to be identified and restricted, as it becomes more difficult for teachers to address the individual problems of all students.

2. Unhealthy microclimate among teaching staff. Teachers' aggressive behavior often arises from underlying factors similar to those that cause aggression in children. Irritability, dissatisfaction, or discontent among teachers may spread to the surrounding environment and manifest as aggression directed toward students.

3. Indifference and neglectful attitudes. Overworked teachers frequently avoid intervening in classroom conflicts, instead preferring to leave the resolution of disputes to the students themselves. This neglect fosters an environment in which violence can escalate unchecked.

School violence can be categorized into direct and indirect effects based on its impact on children. Persistent violence directed at a child within the school setting undermines the child's social standing both within the peer group and the school community. As a result, the student's self-confidence and self-esteem decrease, leading to social withdrawal and a heightened sense of loneliness. Indifference or hostile attitudes from peers

further exacerbate negative emotions, leaving the child in a socially "isolated" position within the classroom. Forming friendships can also be challenging for victims of violence, as peers who attempt to befriend them may themselves face victimization or social exclusion. Consequently, children exposed to such circumstances often avoid social interaction and may ultimately disengage from school. As they grow older, their social standing within the peer group continues to decline, which complicates educational and developmental processes. Simultaneously, the prevalence of psychological problems in these children tends to increase, manifesting as neuroses, depression, sleep disturbances, and appetite disorders. Ultimately, prolonged exposure to school violence may lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder.

According to Del Rio and Bauman, bullying negatively impacts both school life and students' learning abilities. If a student does not feel safe at school and is subjected to bullying, they develop an aversion to the school environment, which places them at both physical and psychological risk. Consequently, they attempt to distance themselves by all means, thereby preventing the creation of a healthy educational environment (Del and Bauman, 2005: 430).

Olweus' findings on bullying further support this perspective. His research indicates that, in the long term, individuals who experienced bullying in their youth faced higher levels of psychological pressure at the age of 23 compared to peers who were not exposed to such victimization, and they exhibited lower levels of self-esteem. The future prospects for students who perpetrate bullying are also highly concerning. They are more likely to become incarcerated, adopt antisocial lifestyles, and engage in aggressive behaviors as spouses and parents. Bullying and aggression are frequently associated with serious emotional and psychological problems.

The positions of students involved in school bullying in this violence have also been investigated by researchers. In this regard, Turkish scholars P. Burnukara and Z. Ucanok characterize the aspects of bullying as follows: "At least two people are required to demonstrate bullying behavior, one of whom acts violently and the other is subjected to violence... However, most researchers state that bullying has a more complex structure and that there are different forms of involvement in violence. There are different forms of involvement in bullying. There are different forms of involvement in bullying, and these are generally defined as statuses of violence. These statuses include "bully, victim, bully-victim, non-interfering, or spectators" (Pınar Burnukara, Zehra Ucanok, 2012, 69).

What age group is most exposed to school violence – "bullying"? Studies suggest that adolescents are the most exposed to the process of victimization – turning into victims at school. Thus, the peak of victimization falls on the age of 15-16. During this period, not only do psychological changes occur, but also the personality is actively formed, and its spiritual world is formed. During this period, the social role of the teenager is formed, and the choice of a profession is faced. Self-awareness, self-esteem, the emergence of a sense of maturity, the desire to be free, a strong need to communicate with peers, and the desire to assert oneself at all costs – all this creates extreme sensitivity in the teenager to external influences.

We can say that school violence, which is one of the main types of victimization occurring within the school, has a negative impact on the formation of the child as a personality, and this is accompanied by long-term stress and hopelessness for the future in them. The most terrible result here is the strengthening of the suicidal tendency of children who cannot get out of this situation. Based on research, we can say that the cause of every fourth adolescent suicide is an anxiety-depressive state resulting from physical and mental violence, and victimological preventive measures should be implemented to prevent such suicides. In this case, the following factors should be taken into account: The psychological characteristics of the child: the type of psychological temperament should be thoroughly studied. – His socio-psychological type should be determined. – The existing negative exogenous and endogenous influences on the behavior of the adolescent should be neutralized. – Educational work should be carried out among students. – Complex preventive measures should be implemented in schools on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, such suicides have been on the rise in recent years, and this is confirmed by the events taking place in secondary schools: "Today, the process of victimization of students in schools, the increase in physical and psychological pressure on them, is unfortunately found in many schools in Azerbaijan. Real events in this area once again confirm how urgent the problem is: The tragedy of the death, or rather suicide, of 13-year-old Elina Hajiyeva in Azerbaijan drew society's attention to the problem of bullying, and for the first time, extensive discussions were opened on social media about it. On April 4, 2019, a 13-year-old girl faced bullying at secondary school No. 162 and the indifference of both her parents, school administration and teaching staff to this problem ultimately ended with her losing her life. Who is to blame? After this terrible tragedy, these questions were a wake-up call for the entire society. Unfortunately, Elina, who repeatedly informed her parents and teachers that she was being bullied, eventually realized that this indifference becomes a victim and, unable to withstand the physical and psychological pressure, commits suicide. The indifference of the school

administration is once again confirmed by the fact that the girl who survived the suicide did not call for medical help in time to save her life. Unfortunately, instead of drawing the necessary conclusions from this incident, both the family and the school accuse each other" (Mollayeva E.A., 2024, 182–183).

The forms of bullying that are common in schools are moral-psychological-social isolation, physical pressure and violence. However, the most common form of pressure is intimidation, which is more common in childhood and adolescence. The feeling of fear leads to certain problems in the psychological, physical and intellectual development of students. The most common types of bullying in schools are physical injuries, theft, vandalism, which are also experienced by a certain number of students during their education. R.J. Hazler (1996) "reported that approximately 75% of the students who participated in the survey answered "yes" to the question "Have you ever been subjected to violence during your schooling?" (R.J. Hazler,, J.H. Hoover.1996).

E.A. Mollayeva, who conducted research in this area, notes that "in order to find out how much teachers and students are aware of bullying in our schools, a survey was conducted among 100 students studying in grades X-XI in schools No. 244 and 126 of Baku and at the same time among the teachers of those schools (100 people) on the question "What do you know about bullying?" We conducted a survey with the question. The results of the survey showed that 58% of teachers do not know anything about "bullying", 37% have heard at least a little about the essence and harm of this concept from social networks and the media, and 5% have detailed information about bullying and mobbing. According to the results of the survey conducted among students (grades IX-X-XI), 84% have no information about it and have never heard of it, 10% are at least a little familiar with this concept, and 6% of students have extensive information about it. As a result of the survey, we determined that there is very little information about bullying among the general contingent of the school, and for this purpose, we conducted conversations with both teachers and students for the purpose of raising awareness. "Who did you turn to for help when you were bullied at school?" 56% of students turned to their parents, 12% to their peers, 24% to their class teacher, and 8% did not turn to anyone, thus they were subjected to physical and psychological pressure for a long time" (Mollayeva E.A., 2024, 183–184).

School violence has a serious impact on both the social sphere of the school and the educational process, as well as on students' attendance at school. A student who is subjected to bullying becomes a real-chronic victim of it, and the school becomes an unbearable, undesirable place. According to the results of a survey conducted in schools, 12% of seventh-grade students perceive school as a source of danger, and 5% indicated that they refused to go to class due to this problem.

Scientists studying school violence and bullying (D. Olveys, R.J. Hazler, J.H. Hoover, etc.) propose the following plan to prevent bullying in schools:

1. **Referring to factual evidence when investigating bullying-related problems**, since such violence is widespread in secondary schools and negatively affects students' attendance, academic performance, and social life.

2. **Rejecting myths that normalize violence and intimidation**, recognizing their connection to stereotypes; acknowledging the role of parents who may condone aggressive behavior as a "male standard," and emphasizing the school's decisive role in promoting the inadmissibility of such antisocial behavior.

3. **Conducting comprehensive school-wide assessments of bullying** to reveal the severity of the problem and analyze social relations between victims and their peers.

4. **Preparing and monitoring behavioral norms** with the active participation of students to prevent the spread of bullying.

5. **Providing support to both victims and perpetrators of bullying** to facilitate the development of alternative, positive behaviors.

6. **Establishing cooperation between the school and families** by inviting parents of both the bullying student and the victim to participate in preventive discussions.

7. **Implementing targeted interventions with students who display aggressive behavior**, focusing on controlling and eliminating bullying conduct.

8. **Assessing monthly compliance with general behavioral norms**, informing teaching staff about students involved in bullying incidents, identifying both victims and perpetrators, and conducting preventive work accordingly.

Teachers have a certain role in the bullying process at school. It is true that in this process, there are fewer cases of bullying by teachers against children than cases of violence committed by students against each other. But one thing should not be forgotten, that cases of violence against teachers by children are also one of the realities of today. This also shows that within the school, in the educational process, the teacher does not always play a dominant role. Regarding bullying by teachers in the classroom, we can come to the following conclusions: 1. Female teachers are twice as likely to be victims of violence in the classroom as male teachers; 2. Teachers aged 50-60 are more likely to be victims of violence than teachers in other age groups.

The following social factors related to the student play a role in the violence-bullying committed by students: – the intellectual level of the student and psychological factors related to school activities; – the social situation in the student's family (specificities of the parents' upbringing, conflicts between parents, changes in family relationships); – socio-economic factors (income level, place and type of residence, family size. This also shows that the likelihood of both students and teachers being exposed to bullying in schools remains high.

Most schools have anti-bullying policies. Best practice recommendations advise policies should explicitly identify forms of unacceptable behavior, such as racism or homophobia (Hughes, A., 2025).

Approbation and practical application. The research work was carried out at the Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Psychology.

Conclusions. So what measures should the school take to prevent students from being bullied? In this area, the school psychologist has more responsibility and should coordinate the activities with the class teacher and the deputy director for educational affairs. The school psychologist's attempt to address this problem alone does not seem realistic, as this is not fully part of their professional duties. However, a school psychologist who regularly works with children can help both the school and the parents in finding the optimal way to help the child in such situations. At the same time, psychologist should try to eliminate intra-school violence (violence in student-student, teacher-student relationships), and should conduct socio-victimological-pedagogical conversations with both the student and teacher contingent. In short, psychologist should actively fight against violence at school and the victim behavior of children and teachers" (Mollayeva E.A., 2024, 174–175).

"A school psychologist should follow a number of principles to eliminate violence committed by teachers against students and by students against teachers: 1. Psychologist should study in depth the state laws, the social policy of the state and the rights and obligations of citizens related to the problem. The school psychologist should be closely familiar with the Basic Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan – the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Gender Law and the school charter. 2. The school psychologist should contact and interview students, teachers, parents and other school employees to reveal the facts of violence at school. He should regularly observe this problem. 3. To prevent the process of victimization at school, it is necessary to develop a plan that takes into account the following factors: monitoring student behavior; imposing prohibitions on any form of violence on school grounds; holding discussions with students and parents about the problem; organizing meetings with teaching staff to help prevent violence; reporting and investigating incidents of violence that occur at school; intervening in violence-related incidents and carrying out corrective educational work; widely promoting the school's anti-violence policy; familiarizing teachers and students with the types and manifestations of violence; and regularly monitoring the effectiveness of the measures applied" (Mollayeva E.A., 2024, p. 175).

From the analysis of the situation with bullying in schools in Azerbaijan, it can be concluded that the school staff is not sufficiently aware of it. In order to prevent the problem of bullying in the future, it is important to prepare anti-bullying programs in all schools. For its implementation, state organizations, certain educational structures, and at the same time, the entire society should support the school.

The recent increase in bullying in our schools gives reason to say that there are certain gaps in social work there and it is necessary to give serious attention to this issue. At the same time, to strengthen social work within the school, ensure constant monitoring of events, and regularly implement preventive measures, it is essential to make a social work specialist and a social pedagogue permanent member of the school staff. In order to prevent violence in school, a specific action plan should be prepared in this direction and the following tasks should be included in it: implementing prohibitions on violence within the school, conducting educational conversations with students and their parents on the topic of school violence, holding preventive meetings with the pedagogical staff to eliminate school violence, analyzing the bullying incident that occurred on the school territory, taking into account correction in educational work in this direction, school propaganda against bullying, informing both teachers and students about bullying and its types by holding conversations between them. It is also clear from the observations that anti-bullying measures not only create favorable conditions for the educational process within the school, but also lead to a decrease in aggression. As a result, students can study in safer conditions in terms of violence.

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Причини шкільного булінгу та підходи до його ліквідації

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У цій статті розглядається явище булінгу, яке визначається як форма насильства та соціальної ізоляції, що стає все більш поширеним у сучасних школах. Результати дослідження показують, що булінг може мати серйозні наслідки, включаючи депресію та, в крайніх випадках, самогубство. Важливо, що булінг не обмежується учнями; в деяких випадках його можуть зазнавати також вчителі. Відмінною рисою поширеного шкільного булінгу є залучення всього колективу до цього процесу. У цьому колективі члени класифікуються як жертви, агресори або пасивні спостерігачі, які залишаються байдужими до подій. Школа, як один з інститутів, що відіграє значну роль у соціальному житті суспільства, відображає процеси, що викликають занепокоєння громадськості. Школи відіграють вирішальну роль у соціалізації дітей, і запобігання шкільному насильству, яке негативно впливає на цей процес, слід розглядати як пріоритетний обов'язок адміністрації школи. Які основні причини шкільного насильства та хто є його жертвами? Спостереження свідчать про те, що жертвами переважно стають діти, які є фізично або психоемоційно вразливими, мають брак соціального досвіду, не можуть інтегруватися в групу однолітків, страждають від хвороб або мають нижчі інтелектуальні здібності. Для запобігання шкільному насильству слід розробити цілеспрямований план дій, який включатиме такі заходи: забезпечення дотримання правил боротьби з насильством у школі, проведення освітніх бесід щодо шкільного насильства з учнями та їхніми батьками, організація профілактичних зустрічей з педагогічним колективом, спрямованих на викорінення шкільного насильства, аналіз випадків булінгу, що відбуваються в шкільних приміщеннях, інтеграція коригувальних заходів в освітню діяльність, підвищення обізнаності щодо боротьби з булінгом у школі та інформування як вчителів, так і учнів про булінг та його різні форми через структуровані дискусії.

Ключові слова: *булінг, учнівський колектив, соціалізація, морально-психолого-соціальна ізоляція, фізичний тиск, насильство.*