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**PREVALENCE OF BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PHENOMENA  
ENCOUNTERED IN THE STUDENT’S OBSERVATION AND  
ORIENTATION CYCLE**

*Extended abstract*

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**Keywords:** violence, acts of aggression, bullying behavior, cyberbullying, guidelines, anti-bullying strategy, anti-cyberbullying strategy, prosocial behavior, awareness, prevention, intervention, resilience, educational policies, the cycle of observation and orientation, prevalence, formative program, personal development, self-esteem.

## ARGUMENT

**The chosen research topic, the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying, the influence in the Romanian school environment with an educational intervention program for middle and high school students, from the observation and orientation cycle, starts from the premise that, as the aggressive-behavioral character intensifies, accentuates the occurrence of bullying and cyberbullying, thus perpetuating the level of aggression. Given this working premise, we intend to experiment with an educational intervention program for middle school students.**

The importance of the topic on the issue of aggressive acts of bullying and cyberbullying lies, on the one hand, in the fact that defining elements of the two phenomena have been insufficiently analyzed, and, on the other hand, today, bullying and cyberbullying represent, an exciting field of theoretical and applied research, not scientifically exhausted, although increasingly exploited. Also, the lack of systematic approaches to the causality of the two phenomena has allowed the creation of myths, such as that the school population may be a factor that promotes violence.

The current educational and social context has, in addition, the characteristics of a hostile environment being a junction between violence - aggression - intimidating behavior - bullying - cyberbullying. The need to analyze the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in the school environment comes precisely from the fact that, today, bullying behaviors are recognized as problems of adaptation of adolescents. Therefore, the topic regarding the issue of aggressive acts of bullying and cyberbullying in the Romanian education system, especially the pre-university one, is adequate to the current educational and social context, which is being reformed and reconfigured. Thus, this thesis is part of a series of researches, in order to improve the educational climate. Education must open new values for human existence, helping to harmoniously develop the personality of the actors involved, students, teachers, parents.

Also, the topic of this paper is a point of interaction between the current educational policies of the responsible Romanian governmental bodies, of the civil society, by approaching the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in terms of specificity. Rigorous establishment, even in limited contexts, of each target group, the causes, factors, and dimensions of these phenomena can

lead to the prevention and improvement of aggressive forms of bullying and cyberbullying in the school environment.

# CHAPTER I

## THE PHENOMENA OF BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING IN THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL REALITY

**Keywords:** violence, aggression, bullying, cyberbullying

### I.1. Bullying, cyberbullying and related concepts - terminological clarifications, definitions and relationships

“ Normality is learned. If we could find the vision and the desire to bring about a real change in education - to align teaching and learning methods with the reality in which we live - one of the prejudices we should overcome would be that the current educational model was inevitable. [...] Hard but not impossible. From my point of view, we need a new perspective on our core beliefs about teaching and learning, a perspective that challenges reality and focuses on what works, with and why not.” (Sal Khan, *The one world schoolhouse*, 2015, pp. 69-71)

What is bullying, cyberbullying? How does it differ from the concepts: aggression, intimidation, harassment, abuse or violence? What are the connecting elements between the four concepts?

Roony K. in *the Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999), defines the concepts of *bullying, aggression, and similar terms such as intimidation, harassment, abuse, or violence.*

Terms	Defining the terms (according to <i>Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999</i> ).
Aggression	Attack - hostile action, especially physical or military attack, directed against another person or country, often without provocation.  Hostile attitude or hostile behavior - a threatening behavior or action.
Bully	Aggressive person - who intimidates or mistreats weak people.
Intimidation	To persuade or discourage someone through fear - to persuade someone to do something or to discourage someone from doing something through blackmail, violence.
Harassment	To attack, to constantly and persistently disturb someone.
Abuse	Abuse - physical, sexual or psychological abuse of a person.  Insult, insult - in offensive language.

Violență	Physical force - the use of physical force to injure someone or damage something.
Cyber	Hostility in the virtual environment

Definitions of terms according to Encarta World English Dictionary (1999)

Peter K. Smith notes that "the lexeme bully is (probably) of Dutch origin, the other words have the point of origin in Latin or French. This is important when looking at words for bullying in different languages, because there is no close word as correspondence in basic Latin" (Smith, 2014, p.11). Thus, it can be stated that the terms *bullying*, *cyberbullying* can be replaced with the terms aggression or violence, this being the most common terminological overlap in the literature.

### **I.1.1. The concept of bullying and cyberbullying, causes and theoretical perspectives**

In the spirit of J.M. Ramirez (2000) the study of human aggression is a difficult approach, given the heterogeneous nature of the term. If in the common language the terms aggression and violence seem to be two concepts with the same meaning and the same effect, the specialized literature, through the studies and observations of the researchers carried out in the last years, differentiates these notions. The phenomenon is obvious due to the use of several terms from the same semantic area of the literature. Thus, both in French-language literature and in Anglo-Saxon literature there are concepts that can cause confusion, if the researcher is not consistent in the use of specialized terms throughout the study.

It is important to define aggression in relation to bullying or cyberbullying of the child, because these concepts are often interchangeable.

The two additional criteria delimit the concepts of aggression and bullying by the fact that the latter is an aggression, but not any aggression can be bullying. This differentiation must be respected when establishing the presence of the phenomenon in school, in an institution.

### **I.1.2. Analysis of studies on aggressive bullying and cyberbullying at the international level**

An extremely detailed analysis of the phenomena of cyberbullying, but especially of bullying, was made by the American Psychological Association. The researches of over 40 years of these phenomena have surprised the complexity of their forms, generating new directions in the research of the issue. A distinct form of aggression, namely, interpersonal aggression, was not systematically studied until the 1970s. Particular attention to this type of subject has "grown



exponentially" in recent times. In the first researches on the phenomenon of bullying, as school aggression, only the family and the economic situation in which it was found were used as determining factors. The notion of bullying today has much more complex connotations (Gills Ferreol, 2003, pp. 36).

According to the report of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2016), out of the 42 European countries in which the phenomenon of bullying was investigated, Romania will be on the 3rd place in their ranking, with 17% of 11-year-old students who stated that they assaulted other students at least three times a month, the percentage of students aged 13 and 15, respectively, who repeatedly assaulted being 23%.

### **I.1.3. Analysis of studies on aggressive bullying and cyberbullying at national level**

One form of high-risk aggression in the development of emotional intelligence, regardless of the age of the students involved, is emotional aggression. This form of emotional aggression can be determined in the school space, primarily by the "actors involved" teachers and students.

In conclusion, the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying are a definite presence in the Romanian school environment. These are phenomena that are difficult for both parents and teachers to control, because the child can hide, out of fear, fear, the intimidation messages received, passwording the accounts on social networks.

## **I.2. Causal relationship between victim, aggressor, witness, implications of bullying and cyberbullying**

Harassment, intimidation is defined as a repeated behavior of acts of intimidation, aggression, in which one or more people intend to physically hurt, intimidate or tease, ironize, verbally, mentally or physically another person (Olweus, 1991 ).

From the perspective of the same author, who emphasizes the existence of three major factors between aggression and intimidation, the aggressor's behavior is intentional and repeated towards the victim, which he harasses both physically and verbally, mentally.

Thus, some of the differences in the manifestation of aggression against bullying can be:

- a) aggression is usually manifested in unique, singular acts, while intimidation, harassment, bullying, cyberbullying have a repetitive character;
- b) the aggressor-victim relationship is characterized by an imbalance of power, while acts of aggression can take place between people who have the same level of power;
- c) acts of intimidation are always characterized by intentionality.

### **I.2.1. Causes and forms of manifestation of bullying and cyberbullying in schools**

An essential role in the learning experience, a process that all students go through, has the Theory of Modeling, so Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1986), applied the theory of social learning in the study of the phenomenon of aggression. According to Bandura, aggression can be a social behavior learned from appropriate models, it is not an innate behavior being similar to any reaction acquired, by observation, by imitation leading to frustration (Bandura, 1973).

The non-existence of a “parents' school” often leads to a lack of skills, a precarious preparation of the adult to assume the role of parent in accordance with the immediate needs of the child.

It should be noted that these elements are only some of the triggers of aggressive behavior, in fact it is impossible to talk about a single cause; basically, we are talking about a complex of causes, which works synergistically.

### **I.2.2. The characteristics of the actors involved in bullying aggressions - aggressors, victims, witnesses**

Bullying is reported by many researchers to be ubiquitous in many countries around the world. (Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green, 2001; Olweus, 1994).

Bullying phenomena, harassment, repeated intimidation, aggression take place in a certain social context of the group of friends, in class, at school, in the family and in the community. These phenomena are not only the prerogative of those involved in acts of aggression. Therefore, it becomes essential to define a more comprehensive framework in order to investigate the various elements that influence bullying, harassment (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler 1997; Craig, Pepler & Atlas 2000; Hanish & Guerra 2000; Olweus 1994). These researchers present the predominant characteristics of both children who are aggressed / harassed, but also children who are abused / harassed.

Witnesses can play an important role in both bullying and cyberbullying, being divided into: passive witnesses or active witnesses (Wong-lo & Bullock, 2014). Their way of acting can be: passive witnesses are not involved; active witnesses can share the derogatory information with the victim, can be with the victim or seek the help of a specialist or a trusted person. Witness behavior can have a major influence on the further evolution of bullying / cyberbullying.

### **I.2.3. Behaviors of students in the category of bullying and cyberbullying - types.**

Students involved in bullying behaviors act as victims, aggressors or witnesses. In general, the victim, the assaulted student, is overwhelmed by fear, dread. Some students are prone to abuse because they are "different." The victim, in general, manifests a symptomatology that can indicate the presence of bullying or cyberbullying. The witness is the one who observes the phenomenon of bullying, and generally decides not to intervene.

This behavior is generated by the fear of not becoming a victim himself / herself. In some cases, the witness instigates the aggressor to harass the victim. Most witnesses passively accept the development of the bullying phenomenon, regarding and not manifesting itself in one form or another, for the reason stated earlier.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **EFFECTS OF AGGRESSIVE BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PHENOMENA IN STUDENTS**

Both school violence and bullying, cyberbullying as complex phenomena, exist in the Romanian school environment, especially at the level of high school students. These phenomena can negatively affect the victim, sometimes for a long time, through behavioral problems, through a high level of anxiety. Consequence of this type of bullying behavior leads to an isolation of the target, the victim. The two phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying do not take into account gender, they are present in both the girls 'and boys' communities, being in an increasingly alarming growth in the Romanian school environment. In different countries and cultures have been highlighted by several studies, differences in behavior between girls and boys in terms of bullying / cyberbullying.

Although the negative effects of bullying / cyberbullying are perceived by teachers, students, parents in terms of victimization, committing acts of bullying / cyberbullying is closely linked to compromising, humiliating consequences.

#### **II.1. The positive effects of resilience development activities**

Overall, the anti-bullying/anti-cyberbullying programs implemented in the school environment had contradictory results, some of the intervention programs implemented revealed a reduction in bullying, others had no effect and some of them reported an increase. of phenomena. These results had several causes, so younger students tend to benefit slightly less from curriculum-based interventions, multi-disciplinary, older students benefit less from interventions based on social skills training (Protogerou and Flisher, 2012).

Even if some of these programs did not have relevant results in reducing bullying, they did have a major effect on awareness of bullying/cyberbullying in students, teachers, parents, but also on improving school results, social skills and their general well-being.

#### **II.2. Teachers and their role in raising awareness, preventing and reducing bullying/cyberbullying**

Teachers have an important role in raising awareness, preventing and reducing bullying/cyberbullying, and training them to deal with bullying/cyberbullying or not to be

promoters of these phenomena themselves is essential. As cyberbullying involves online harassment, both teachers and parents need up-to-date information about the type, nature and effects of cyberbullying on students but also on how to manage it.

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that takes place largely outside the school space, among schoolmates, it has grown with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, so it remains a problem that belongs to the internal and external educational environment.

### **II.3. The effects of bullying on the victim, the witness and the aggressor**

Emotional or mental bullying leaves deep traces on the victim, thus deteriorating the feeling of self-esteem, reduced ability to make decisions and develop healthy relationships in the community to which he belongs.

The emotional wounds of victims of bullying or cyberbullying can persist and have effects throughout life.

Researchers, teachers and clinicians have focused considerably on child victims of bullying among peers. The observations led to the highlighting of negative psychological effects, such as: depression, loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem. Studies have found an increased risk for the development of outsourcing of behavioral problems in child victims, including hyperactivity, impulsivity and aggression.

### **II.4. The effects of cyberbullying on the victim, the witness and the aggressor**

Beyond the effect of online abuse, cyberbullying is also a form of psycho-emotional abuse, which changes the relationship between the victim and the group of friends on social networks. Psycho-emotional abuse that occurs over a longer period of time can have serious psychological consequences for the victim.

Although some research claims that the possibility of being a cyberbully aggressor is higher in boys than in girls (Li, 2006), no relevant gender differences were found in the victimization relationship. Both cyberbullying and bullying can be associated with psychosomatic problems. Some researchers in the phenomenon of cyberbullying believe that it is necessary to develop clear rules for healthy behavior in the online environment (Sourander et al., 2010). For students this phenomenon is a form of online abuse.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND MEASURES TO REDUCE BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PHENOMENA - CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

#### **III.1. International and European policies on reducing bullying and cyberbullying in schools**

At the international level, there is a series of official research and policies of the United Nations (UN), the European Union, the Council of Europe, on finding a common strategy to reduce the two phenomena, strategies that we will highlight below:

- The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child adopted in 2011 and reaffirmed in December 2013
- 8th Declaration of the European Forum (2013) and, in particular, 8th Declaration of the European Forum for Session 3: The role of child protection systems against Bullying and Cyberbullying.
- 7th European Forum on the Rights of the Child 2012 and, in particular, the basic statement of the Forum on Workshop on Violence against Children
- The European Charter for a non-violent democratic school.
- Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on children's justice (2010).
- Resolution 160 (2003) on local partnerships for preventing and combating school violence.
- Commission Strategy for a Safer Internet for Children (2012)
- Statement by Members of the European Parliament pursuant to Rule 123 of the Rules of Procedure on the establishment of a European Day against Bullying and Violence in Schools (2013)
- UN Committee on the General Rights of the Child (CRC), Answer No. 13 (2011): The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence Art. 19.
- UN General RCC Answer No. 1 (2001) the purposes of education Art. 29 (1).
- CRC UN General Committee Answer 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary issue (art. 3, para. 1).
- UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency ("Riyadh Principles", 1990)
- Report of the Oslo Expert meeting on "Combating school violence" (2011).
- The 2006 World Report on Violence against Children
- EU Kids Online Study (2011)
- Eurobarometer survey on safer internet use for children in the EU, from a parents' perspective (2008)

- WHO / Europe - surveys, Sanogenetic Behaviors in Schools (HBSC) -2010.

### **III.2. Programs to prevent bullying and cyberbullying at national level**

Thus, at the level of our country, as a member state, Romania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child of November 20, 1989 of the UN General Assembly and transposed it into national legislation: \*\*\* Law no. 18 of 1990.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989 of the UN General Assembly subsequently represented the legislative basis for the emergence of other normative acts, including:

- Law no. 272 of 2004;
- Law no. 217 of 2003;
- H.G. no. 49 of January 19 (2011) with the methodological norms of prevention and intervention in cases of violence against children;
- Order of the Minister of National Education no. 1,409 / 2007 \* on the approval of the Strategy for reducing the phenomenon of violence in pre-university education units - was published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I;
- National Education Law no. 1/2011;
- Order of the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research no. 5,079 / 2016 on the approval of the Framework Regulation for the organization and functioning of pre-university education units;
- Order no. 4,742 / 2016 for the approval of the Student Statute;
- Law no. 221/2019;
- Order no. 4,343 / 2020 of May 27, 2020 regarding the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions of art. 7 para. (1 ^ 1), art. 56 ^ 1 and of point 6 ^ 1 of the annex to the National Education Law no. 1/2011, on psychological violence - bullying.

### **III.3. Programs and intervention measures to reduce bullying and cyberbullying worldwide**

A series of researches and specialized studies regarding the reduction of bullying and cyberbullying (Jones et al. 2012; Implementing Bullying Prevention Programs in Schools) support the inclusion of specific activities in programs for the prevention and effective intervention of aggressive bullying behaviors. Educational institutions “may use either educational programs specific to bullying behaviors or may consider implementing learning programs, teaching socio-

emotional skills (SEL)” (Jones et al. 2012; Implementing Bullying Prevention Programs in Schools).

Some of the programs included in the aforementioned research project were:

- Steps to Respect Programs, in the United States;
- Roots of Empathy, in Canada;
- The PATHS- Providing Alternative Thinking Strategies, in England;
- The RULER program, USA.

#### **III.4. Critical comparative analysis of anti-bullying policies in the U.E.**

The comparative approach in relation to anti-bullying policies or a meta-analysis of the results obtained in various European studies is a challenging task. This exciting status is generated by the difficulty of collecting real data, elaborated in a unitary way. There are also methodological limitations, such as those of a linguistic nature, but also those regarding the updating of the data collected. Moreover, some studies include information concerning only a specific community or region of the country. These limitations prove the importance of developing a unitary anti-bullying policy at European and global level.

However, general comparative conclusions can be formulated based on existing data in various studies that refer to the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying. In some U.S. states such as Sweden, Great Britain, Finland, etc. research policies, studies and strategies are present. Strategies are based on a long tradition, while others follow current trends (EAN Strategy Position Paper, 2014). There is a need to raise awareness in the school community about the issue of violence, harassment and intimidation, and to implement anti-bullying policies at the community level.



## CHAPTER IV

### GENERAL COORDINATES OF THE RESEARCH

#### **IV.1. The context, the motivation for choosing the research topic**

The chosen research topic starts from the premise that, as the aggressive-behavioral character intensifies, the appearance of bullying and cyberbullying phenomena is accentuated, thus perpetuating the level of aggression.

The current educational and social context has, in addition, the characteristics of a hostile environment being a junction between violence - aggression - aggression - intimidating behavior - bullying - cyberbullying.

Also, the topic of this paper is a point of interaction between the current educational policies of the responsible Romanian governmental bodies, of the civil society, by approaching the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in terms of specificity. Rigorous establishment, even in limited contexts, of each target group, the causes, factors, and dimensions of these phenomena can lead to the prevention and improvement of aggressive forms of bullying and cyberbullying in the school environment.

Given this working premise, we set out to investigate the formative and informative valences of an experimental program based on activities that would result in the reduction of bullying and cyberbullying, as well as the formation of skills to prevent and manage problematic situations encountered. in various contexts.

The structure of the research paper considers the analysis of frequency and prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying, in the cycle of observation and guidance of students and is built in two parts.

The first part is structured in three chapters and consists in the theoretical substantiation, the presentation of the legislative and action landmarks of the research, the effects of the two phenomena on those involved. The theoretical substantiation is relevant from our perspective through the issues addressed in terms of bullying and cyberbullying aggression in students in the cycle of observation and guidance.

The second part of the research refers to experimental approaches on the prevalence, form and effect of bullying and cyberbullying encountered in the roles of victim aggressor and witness in the cycle of observation and guidance of students, structured in three distinct chapters.

The results obtained from our experimental program are addressed to teachers in secondary and high school education, especially to teachers and students in the curricular cycle of observation and guidance.

## IV.2. Research design

The design chosen in the course of the research is the design of the subjects. Through this program, the evolution of the group of students was followed throughout the experiment, the research technique being that of the unique group.

The training experiment proposed and carried out by us aimed at applying an educational program focused on non-aggressive communication. The program includes awareness, prevention, intervention and control activities in relation to the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in the educational environment. The implementation of the program was carried out in order to optimize personal and social development activities, to model prosocial behaviors and to increase the degree of resilience in students in the orientation and observation cycle.

### IV.2.1. Purpose and objectives of research

The purpose of this research is to identify concrete ways of awareness, prevention, intervention and combating the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying at the level of students, teachers, principals.

Through the designed experimental program we aimed to highlight the effectiveness of relevant activities and policies for preventing and combating bullying and cyberbullying, as well as distinguishing the ways of awareness and intervention applicable to students in the observation and guidance cycle.

The objectives of the research are the following:

The general objective of the research is to achieve the guidelines of the strategy for preventing and combating bullying and cyberbullying in education, capitalizing on the results and good practices of the experimental program of awareness, prevention, **intervention and combating bullying and cyberbullying.**

*Specific objectives:*

1. Validation of research methods;
2. Identifying the causes of bullying and cyberbullying;
3. Investigating the opinions of principals or deputy principals on the scale of bullying and cyberbullying at the level of educational institutions.
4. Identifying the existence of gender difference in bullying and cyberbullying behavior among students in the cycle of observation and guidance;

5. Highlighting bullying and cyberbullying situations and developing a typology of the phenomenon;

6. Identifying the existence of an association relationship between the degree of resilience and bullying behavior among students in the observation and guidance cycle;

7. Carrying out, applying and testing the effectiveness of the experiential program based on the organization of a system of awareness, prevention and intervention activities, regarding the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying

8. Assessing the impact of the intervention program on the development of resilience among students in the observation and orientation cycle, in the case of bullying and cyberbullying behaviors (witness, aggressor, victim);

9. Development of recommendations on improving the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying.

## **IV.2.2. Research questions, hypothesis and variables**

### **IV.2.2.1. Research questions**

The main research question that guides the investigative approach is:

1. How prevalent and persuasive are the phenomena of bullying / cyberbullying among students in the observation and orientation cycle in Cluj County?

2. What are the formative and informative valences of the application of the experimental program based on the organization of a system of awareness, prevention and intervention activities, regarding the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying?

3. Is there a relationship between experiencing bullying and cyberbullying as a victim and perpetuating the two as an aggressor? - (victim becomes aggressor)

4. How is the participation in the training program of the students from the experimental group reflected in the increase of the degree of resilience?

### **IV.2.2.2. Research hypotheses**

The application of the experimental program for preventing and combating the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying, on the students from the observation and orientation cycle (from the 7th to the 9th grade), significantly influences the formation of prosocial behaviors, personal development and the increase of resilience.

### **Specific hypotheses:**

1. We assume that there are significant gender differences in participants' behavior in terms of their quality in bullying and cyberbullying situations (aggressor, witness, victim);
2. We assume that students participating in the psycho-pedagogical intervention program, there will be a considerable level of development in terms of prosocial behavior and the degree of resilience in situations of bullying and cyberbullying;

#### **IV.2.2.3. Research variables**

***Independent variable:*** designing and implementing the program for improving the pro-social behaviors of middle school and high school students in the observation and orientation cycle (from seventh to ninth grade).

***Dependent variable:***

The changes at the level of the pro-social behaviors of the high school students, from the observation and orientation cycle (from the 7th to the 9th grade), determined by the completion of the experimental program.

Development of prosocial behaviors of middle school and high school students, from the cycle of observation and orientation, operationalized using the following indicators:

- The results obtained in the process of evaluating the implications of the bullying phenomenon in the educational environment.
- The behavior of the participants from the perspective of typology (aggressor, witness, victim) related to gender criteria.
- The degree of knowledge of ways to prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying - recognition by students of ways to report antisocial behaviors.
- Applicability of internal bullying / cyberbullying prevention policies, adopted in selected educational institutions.
- Recognition by students of bullying and cyberbullying conditions the development of pro-social behavior.

### **IV.2.3. Research strategy**

#### **IV.2.3.1. The system of research methods and tools**

The research methods used are a system of complementary investigation methods, which aims to quantify and capitalize on research data.

The methods used in conducting the research are:

- A. the method of analyzing curricular documents and other school documents;
- B. survey method;
- C. the psycho-pedagogical experiment;
- D. the method of analyzing the products of the activity;
- E. Focus group method

#### **A. The method of analyzing the curricular documents of other school documents**

The analysis of the curricular documents through which numerous information was provided on the strategies for preventing the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying, consisted in the quantitative and qualitative measurement of the existing policies with preventive role, as well as the concrete ways to capitalize on their effects.

#### **B. Survey method**

In order to validate the research methods, questionnaires were applied to identify students' opinions on identifying students' opinions on bullying and cyberbullying, identifying and naming the actions that are subject to these phenomena, as well as the environment and quality of action. may have in these situations.

**C. The experimental program** influenced the modification of the proposed educational variables, in order to analyze them and to accumulate scientific information on the manifestation of bullying and cyberbullying in school and virtual environment. The purpose of the proposed experiment was to form prosocial behaviors, and the degree of resilience in situations of bullying and cyberbullying.

**D. The method of analyzing the products of the activity** is a method that highlighted the results obtained by the study participants, in close correlation with the actions carried out by them

during the experimental program. This method highlighted characteristic aspects of the students' personality in the observation and orientation cycle. In the research, this method was used during the experimental stage to analyze the degree of empathy for children who may be abused in school.

#### **E. Focus grup method**

The focus group method was organized in the form of a group interview, both for students and teachers and was focused on informing and raising awareness of the existence of bullying and cyberbullying in schools. The participants in the focus group are the teachers from the educational units selected in the experimental sample. By applying this method we aimed to qualitatively analyze the collected data.

#### **IV.2.3.2. The sample of participants**

**In the piloting stage** for the validation of the research method, two questionnaires were applied to the students from Cluj County.

In conclusion, at the end of the piloting phase, based on the investigated situations, we found the presence of bullying and cyberbullying in both urban and rural areas, highlighting a higher frequency of these phenomena in urban areas.

**In the pre-experimental stage**, the research was conducted during the period April - October 2019 and included both students studying in urban state schools in Cluj County, and principals / deputy principals of pre-university education units in Cluj County. The students participating in this research are students who live in both urban and rural areas (commuting). Also, the questionnaire identifying the opinions of managers of educational institutions in Cluj County on the phenomenon of bullying / cyberbullying was applied to principals / deputy principals, between September and October 2019. It aimed at understanding the implications of bullying and cyberbullying in schools.

**In the experimental stage**, the formative intervention program was implemented in two educational units A.M. and you have. from Cluj County, from the four schools entered in the research program, between March and May 2020

**During the experimental phase**, evaluations took place in the form of focus groups and quizzes.

Thus, between March and May 2020, a focus group was held with students in the two schools A.M. and you have. from Cluj County, entered the intervention program with students.

**During the same period**, March-May 2020, a focus group of teachers was conducted in the two educational units A.M. and you have. from Cluj county. The interactive activities, the quizzes,

carried out within the intervention program in March - May 2020, in the two educational units A.M. and you have. where the experimental stage was performed, it represented a method of evaluation during the program.

**The post-experimental stage** took place in the two educational units in Cluj County, included in the research program. The post-experimental research was conducted at the end of the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year and targeted students studying in state schools in urban areas in Cluj County.

#### **IV.2.3.3. Sample content**

The content sample consists of the system of training activities performed and included in the experimental program, selected based on scientific content established as a result of interpretations of data obtained by applying research methods to middle school and high school students, from the observation and guidance cycle.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONTENT OF RESEARCH STAGES**

#### **V.1. Stages of pedagogical research**

The research approach respects the characteristics of the psycho-pedagogical experiment, having besides the three stages: the pre-experimental stage, the experimental stage and the post-experimental stage, but also the piloting stage.

#### **V.2 PRE-EXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

##### **V.2.1. Objectives of the pre-experimental stage**

From the research objectives we compiled a group of specific objectives that support the realization of the experimental project:

1. Identifying the causes of bullying and cyberbullying;
2. Investigating the opinions of principals and / or deputy principals on the dimension of bullying and cyberbullying at the level of educational units;
3. Identifying the existence of gender difference in bullying and cyberbullying behavior among students in the observation and guidance cycle;
4. Highlighting situations of bullying and cyberbullying by reference to the type of phenomenon (verbal, physical, mental, online);
5. Identify the extent to which the psycho-pedagogical program "United against bullying" forms the increase of formative / educational values for participants.

##### **V.2.2. Presentation and interpretation of data from student questionnaires**

###### **V.2.2.1. Presentation and interpretation of data from the questionnaire applied to students on the identification of bullying situations**

The bullying situations encountered by students are illustrated below. We presented their answers in correlation with the gender of the participants and their age. Positive responses were taken into account for all bullying situations encountered by students in school.



From the interpretation of the data, it is found that physical aggression among boys is more common compared to girls, and verbal aggression is found in a higher percentage among girls of 53.9%.

Following the association between bullying situations and the gender of students, we identify the intensity of the connection as low. The Chi-Square test for the association of variables indicates that the results for the situation of repeated irony and verbal aggression differ significantly depending on gender,  $p > 0.05$ , which shows an association between repeated irony and gender; verbal aggression and gender.

<b>Bullying situations</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>Contingency coefficient</b>	<b>Phi coefficient</b>	<b>p</b>
Repeted irony	0.112	0.013	0.013	<b>0.738</b>
Verbal aggression	1.080	0.040	0.040	<b>0.299</b>
Physical aggression	5.877	0.093	0.093	0.015
Group exclusion	8.851	0.113	0.114	0.003
Emotional abuse	5.955	0.093	0.094	0.015
Teasing	5.083	0.086	0.087	0.024

From the analysis of the bullying situations encountered by students, it can be seen that the bullying situations most often encountered by 13-year-old students are, teasing 43.8% and verbal aggression by 43.8%. For 14-year-olds, the most common situation of bullying is physical aggression with 49.7%, and for 15-year-olds, emotional abuse in 13.8% is the most common. Regarding the age of the students, it can be seen that students under 13-14 years old face more bullying situations, so 49.70% of 14-year-old students face physical aggression, and 41.30% of 14-year-old students face bullying the same aggressiveness.

#### **V.2.2.2. Presentation and interpretation of data from the questionnaire applied to students on the identification of cyberbullying situations**

Following the analysis of the data for identifying cyberbullying situations, statistical tools were used which highlighted the following results.

From the principals' answers we find that there are certain measures that are included in the internal policy on bullying prevention such as receiving useful advice to prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying by students during counseling classes, receiving and providing parents with useful advice for managing and combating the two phenomena in meetings with parents. The principals, at the same time, indicate as a measure included in the domestic policy the discussions with the parents regarding the students involved in aggression, but also the application of sanctions to the students and the objective investigation of these types of incidents.

### **V.3. EXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

#### **V.3.1. Formative intervention program**

The intervention program took place in two schools in Cluj County A.M. and A.I., and took place over a semester, in the 2019-2020 school year.

Based on the interpretation of the data from the pre-experimental stage, we selected topics that respond to the identified training needs, such as the needs for training social skills, creating a set of values to prevent bullying and cyberbullying behaviors, etc.

By implementing the psycho-pedagogical experiment we aimed to train skills in students and teachers, through a set of 12 activities to prevent bullying and cyberbullying in schools.

The “United Against Bullying and Cyberbullying!” intervention program was designed/developed on multiple levels, relating from the individual level to the community level and vice versa.

The proposed activities can be integrated into the curriculum at the decision of the school, through an optional discipline, which can support the implementation of the bullying and cyberbullying prevention program in your school. This program is intended for students in the cycle of observation and guidance (grades VII-IX), as well as teachers.

The motivation for choosing this modality lies in the fact that the intervention program was carried out during the state of emergency COVID -19. We consider that this choice is welcome, because, from a statistical point of view, the number of cases of cyberbullying has increased during this period.

### **V.3.2. Progress evaluation stage**

In order to highlight the progress made by the participants in the training program, the focus group method was applied to students. The application of the focus-group method to students aimed at presenting their chance to express their opinions on school safety and bullying. Effective bullying prevention requires evidence reporting and must always involve students. Key questions for students in a safe place through which the right moderator can learn not only the bullying trends in a school, but also their ideas for making the school safer. Students also pointed out bullying prevention strategies that work and can provide concrete suggestions for improving the school climate and reducing bullying among peers.

The results of the research indicate important aspects of how teachers perceive the phenomenon of bullying at school and how they believe that students are affected by this phenomenon.

Proper teacher training leads to appropriate reactions in such situations. Victims of harassment often believe that their allegations of intimidation will not be believed, so the situation remains unchanged. There is also the fear of reprisals that many victims of harassment go through, even if the aggression has been punished. Usually, the only real punishments are either suspension or detention, which is usually not effective for students to feel safe.

## **V.4. POST-EXPERIMENTAL STAGE**

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, we developed and applied two questionnaires designed to study the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in students in the orientation and observation cycle. The method of collecting the study data was represented by the use of the questionnaire survey. The way of statistical processing of data and information and results was the use of the IBM SPSS Statistics program 23.

### **V.4.1. Presentation of post-experimental data for the bullying phenomenon**

The post-experimental research was conducted during the 2019-2020 school year and targeted students studying in state-run schools in urban areas in Cluj County. The students participating in this post-experimental research are students who live in both urban and rural areas.

Following the association between bullying situations and the gender of students, we identify the intensity of the connection as low. The Chi-Square test for the association of variables indicates that the results for the situation of physical aggression, emotional abuse differ significantly depending on gender,  $p > 0.05$ , which shows an association between physical aggression and gender; emotional abuse and gender.

<b>Bullying situations</b>	Chi-Square	Contingency coefficient	Phi coefficient	p
Repeted irony	4.729	0.188	0.188	0.316
Verbal aggression	4.787	0.189	0.193	0.091
Physical aggression	1.235	0.097	0.097	0.539
Group exclusion	3.601	0.165	0.165	0.165
Emotional abuse	0.750	0.076	0.076	0.687
Teasing	2.746	0.144	0.144	0.253

#### **V.4.2. Presentation of post-experimental data for the phenomenon of cyberbullying**

The students participating in this post-experimental research on the phenomenon of cyberbullying are students who live in both urban and rural areas.

A percent of 13.89 of 15-year-old students encountered online harassment as a form of cyberbullying, 9.26% excluded from online activity, and between 34.26% posted derogatory comments or posted photos. which affects mental integrity.

Regarding 16-year-old students, they indicated as a situation of cyberbullying the exclusion from online activities in proportion of 9.26%, the posting of pictures that can affect the integrity in proportion of 16.67%, and the posting of derogatory comments in proportion of 23.15%. Following the association between the situations of cyberbullying manifested by students and age, we identify the intensity of the connection as low. The Chi-Square test for the association of variables indicates that the results for the following situations: posting, exclusion, group exclusion, posting pictures, online tracking, false profiles ( $p > 0.05$ ) can be attributed to chance.

<b>Cyberbullying situations</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>Contingency coefficient</b>	<b>p</b>
Posting	1.569	0.120	<b><i>0.666</i></b>
Exclusion	8.195	0.266	<b><i>0.042</i></b>
Group exclusion	5.185	0.214	<b><i>0.159</i></b>
Photo posting	5.640	0.223	<b><i>0.131</i></b>
Online tracking	2.635	0.154	<b><i>0.451</i></b>
Fasle profiles	7.382	0.261	<b><i>0.061</i></b>

#### **V.4.3. Comparative data: pre / post-experimental stage - bullying phenomenon**

We present below the results obtained after the comparison between the pre-experimental and post-experimental stage. Following the participation in the program of psycho-pedagogical intervention and remediation of bullying situations, the students from the observation and orientation cycle presented the following results.

The percentage of female students who were not allowed to play was 17.76%, compared to 13% of students in the post-experimental stage. Male students aged 13-14 years did not encounter such a phenomenon in the post-experimental stage, compared to 16.90% and 24.51% in the pre-experimental stage. In the case of male students aged 15 years, they encountered this phenomenon in a percentage of 10% situation presented in the post-experimental stage compared to 20% in the pre-experimental stage. There is a 10% decrease in the percentage of students who were not allowed to play.

The phenomena of humiliation and irony were encountered both in the post-experiment and in the pre-experiment. A weighted increase of these situations can be observed in the postexperimental stage. We consider that an increase of the phenomenon is generated by the fact that this form of bullying is one of the easy forms of manifestation, often not being considered negative, the perception being that it does not seriously affect the interlocutor. The Chi-Square test in the postexperimental stage expresses that the results differ significantly depending on gender,  $p > 0.05$   $\chi^2 = 1,090$ , ( $\phi = 0.092$ ), which shows that there is a small association that can be attributed to chance.

The spread of rumors was reported in both the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages. A weighted increase in the situation regarding the spread of rumors can be observed in the post-experimental stage. This evolution is an effect of the preconception according to which the rumor is only a hypostasis of the fun, of the bravado through which one can stand out. The Chi-Square test in the postexperimental stage indicates that the results differ significantly depending on gender,  $p > 0.05$   $\chi^2 = 1.828$ , ( $\phi = 0.118$ ), which shows that there is a small association that can be attributed to chance.

#### V.4.4. Comparative data: pre / post-experimental stage - the phenomenon of cyberbullying

The following are the results obtained after the post-experimental stage for the phenomenon of cyberbullying encountered by the participating students.

In the presented data we find the situation in which a percentage of 25% of 14-year-old students met the prohibition of access on social groups in the post-experimental stage. In the pre-experimental stage, there were situations of prohibiting the access of colleagues on the social group in a percentage of 16.43%, a percentage that decreased significantly, by a percentage of 11.17%, in the post-experimental stage. The Chi-Square test applied for the postexperimental stage indicates that the results differ significantly depending on age ( $\chi^2 = 6.188$ ,  $p > 0.05$   $\phi = 0.233$ ) and gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.012$ ,  $p > 0.05$   $\phi = 0.011$ ) which shows that there is a small association.

The causes identified for the occurrence of the phenomenon of cyberbullying according to age and gender in the post-experimental stage: Following the association between cyberbullying situations manifested by students and gender, we identify the intensity of the connection as low. The Chi-Square test for the association of variables indicates that the results for the following causes: quarrels / misunderstandings, desire, opinions / opinions ( $p > 0.05$ ) can be attributed to chance.

Cyberbullying causes	Chi-Square	Contingency coefficient	Phi coefficient	p
Arguments, misunderstandings	2.078	0.139	0.139	<b>0.149</b>
Wishes	0.002	0.005	0.005	<b>0.962</b>
Opinions	1.414	0.114	0.114	<b>0.234</b>

#### **V.4.5. Forms of feedback for the activities carried out in the intervention program**

The formative intervention program for students took place in two schools in Cluj County A.M. and A.I., and took place over three months in the 2019-2020 school year as presented in the experimental stage of this paper. Following the program, students in the observation and orientation cycle (ninth grade) were selected to present feedback on how the program managed to develop pro-social behaviors.

The main purpose of this approach was to find, using the case study method, ways to prevent the prevalence of bullying / cyberbullying in their school, as well as in awareness of the effects of bullying / cyberbullying on the victim, the aggressor, but and the witness.

##### **V.4.5.1. Students' feedback**

In order to see how students express themselves after the intervention program, a work task was given that involved both creativity and other skills acquired by students after the program. Thus the workload included the following indications:

*"Please choose a form of feedback for your activities:*

- *Write an essay, referring to the topic covered: "What would I do if ....."*
- *Make an animated film about bullying / cyberbullying.*
- *Creating a poster highlighting the negative role that this phenomenon can play in the life of a teenager.*
- *Any other form of expression of the idea of bullying and cyberbullying."*

##### **V.4.5.2. Teacher feedback**

The teachers were the ones who implemented the classroom intervention program. It was important that they become a support in the program. The teacher plays an important role in managing aggression and bullying in the classroom. Teachers are in an influential position as educators and social agents, helping to promote healthy relationships between students and prevent negative interactions. Teachers are often present when an episode of aggression occurs and are often the first adults that students contact. Teachers could react in several ways after an episode of aggression, including intervening, observing the situation, not intervening, ignoring and trivializing the aggression. Specific competence in relation to the phenomenon that teachers

may have can influence the probability of teachers' intervention and, in turn, the level of aggression in schools.

#### **V.4.6. Guidelines of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying Strategy**

##### *Argument*

Bullying and cyberbullying are two problematic phenomena existing in the Romanian education system, insufficiently known, insufficiently studied, for which urgent actions are needed, a coherent strategy at national level in order to combat them. Prioritizing educational efforts to raise awareness, prevent, reduce the factors generating bullying and cyberbullying among students by involving in the education process of: teachers, parents, students, decision makers, non-governmental organizations, government, ministry of education.

The present result revealed a fairly high percentage of students who were harassed or subjected to bullying and cyberbullying, which generated the idea of the need to develop and implement an anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying strategy to increase awareness on the two phenomena and to regulate at procedural level the intervention mechanisms in preventing and combating bullying and cyberbullying in the Romanian school environment.

Having regard to Recommendation 2006/962 / EC on the inclusion and learning of key competences in the strategies of EU governments, for lifelong learning, in this thesis the structure of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying Strategy will include one of the eight key competences namely, Competence 6 which includes social and civic competences - the ability to participate effectively and constructive social and working life and to be actively and democratically involved, especially in increasingly diverse societies (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac11090>).

From this competence, we will derive the guidelines for the implementation of **the Anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying Strategy**.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE PREVALENCE OF BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PHENOMENA

#### VI.1. The conclusions of the experimental research

**In the piloting stage**, following the application of the two questionnaires aimed at analyzing the opinions of students in the orientation and observation cycle on the frequency and incidence of bullying and cyberbullying, based on the investigated situations, we found the presence of these phenomena in both urban and in rural areas, highlighting a higher frequency of these phenomena in urban areas.

**In the pre-experimental stage**, we find the level of the opinions of the students of the managers of the educational institutions from Cluj county regarding the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying. From the analysis of the bullying and cyberbullying situations encountered in the surveyed students, it can be seen the existence of a difference in aggressive bullying behavior between girls and boys.

Thus, following the percentage results obtained, presented in the form of graphs, by applying the two questionnaires, of the intervention program we can claim that the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the research were confirmed. The hypothesis according to which the students' participation in the program "*United against bullying and cyberbullying!*" causes a significant improvement in prosocial behavior, the degree of resilience in situations of bullying and cyberbullying, it is confirmed.

**The Focus group method** highlighted the prevalence of the bullying phenomenon in the schools selected in the research program, the forms of bullying, the effects that bullying has on the victim, the aggressor, but also the witness.

Starting from the objectives of this research in the post-experimental stage, it was wanted to reveal how the impact of the intervention program influenced the development of resilience among students in the observation and guidance cycle, in the case of bullying behaviors and

**In the post-experimental stage**, 16-year-old students were more involved in episodes of cyberbullying than students of other ages, as evidenced by the data collected.

**In conclusion**, based on the analyzed results, we can consider that the two hypotheses formulated at the beginning of the study were confirmed.

Following the implementation of the intervention program "*United against bullying and cyberbullying!*" which aimed at developing skills in students and teachers, through a set of 12

activities to prevent bullying and cyberbullying in schools, it was found that the intervention program generated a decrease in the frequency of bullying and cyberbullying.

Therefore, the study outlined, post-experimentally, the diminution of the two phenomena and their substitution with aggression, as a form of illustration of the need for power, control, coercion.

## **VI.2. Final conclusions**

The importance of the topic on the issue of aggressive acts such as bullying and cyberbullying lies, on the one hand, in the fact that the defining elements of the two phenomena have been insufficiently analyzed, and, on the other hand, today, bullying and cyberbullying represent, an exciting theoretical and applied field of research, not scientifically exhausted, although increasingly exploited. Also, the lack of systematic approaches to the causality of the two phenomena has allowed the creation of myths, such as that the school population may be a factor that promotes violence.

Also, the topic of this paper is a point of interaction between the current educational policies of the responsible Romanian governmental bodies, of the civil society, by approaching the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in terms of specificity. Rigorous establishment, even in limited contexts, of each target group, the causes, factors, and dimensions of these phenomena can lead to the prevention and improvement of aggressive forms of bullying and cyberbullying in the school environment.

The design chosen in the course of the research is the design of the subjects. Through this psycho-pedagogical intervention program, the evolution of the group of students was followed throughout the experiment, the research technique being that of the unique group.

The training experiment proposed and carried out by us aimed at applying a psycho-pedagogical intervention program focused on non-aggressive communication. The program includes awareness, prevention, intervention and control activities in relation to the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in the educational environment. The implementation of the program was carried out in order to optimize personal and social development activities, to model prosocial behaviors and increase the degree of resilience in students in the cycle of observation and guidance.

### **VI.3 The originality of the thesis**

The package of adapted questionnaires, developed and verified in this thesis, can have an extended applicability with a successful implementation to other categories of students in middle school and high school, but with ensuring specific differences between levels of education. Their structure allowed the students participating in the study an easy completion. Thus, the detection of forms of bullying and / or cyberbullying by students in the cycle of observation and guidance, does not provide elements of recognition of the respondent based on the answer provided.

A second important contribution in this thesis is the conceptualization in a program of psycho-pedagogical intervention of new activities and tools (quizzes) that lead to the development of resilience among students in the cycle of observation and guidance, in the case of behaviors bullying and cyberbullying (witness, aggressor, victim), thus consolidating the basis of their permanent education. The proposed topics and activities, accompanied by quizzes, worksheets, films, are models proposed to teachers, interested in reflecting on their own procedures to identify and raise awareness of the existence of bullying and cyberbullying and strengthen their skills to capitalize on the values of psycho-pedagogical intervention program.

Thirdly, this thesis presents an action research to reduce the two phenomena among students, to combine awareness, prevention, intervention and support, at the individual level, at the school level and at the community level. of them by elaborating the guidelines for the realization of **the Anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying Strategy**.

### **VI.4 Limits**

A first limitation of this research is the non-existence of standardized tests that provide a clear, eloquent picture of the phenomena under analysis. Thus, only the guidelines on the anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying strategy were made, being only a first step towards clarifying it.

Another limitation of the study is the representativeness of the sample for the two phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in other populations. For example, for children in rural areas, who grow up with a single parent or grandparents or are exposed to domestic violence, such an intervention program could be deficient and should focus more on activities in the family universe. Also, teachers change much more frequently in rural areas, because the tendency is to reach urban areas, this being an obstacle to the continuity of potential good practices that would discourage bullying behavior in school.

## **VI.5. New directions for research on bullying and cyberbullying**

This research did not exhaust all the possible directions of studying the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying encountered in students, these being particularly complex manifestations. Intervention program "*United against bullying and cyberbullying!*" is a program that contains activities that can be adapted / customized according to the specific problems of each bullying or cyberbullying situation.

We hope that this research will encourage future studies on the complex issue of the two phenomena, which bring humanity to our knees, thus being able to establish on the basis of the Anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying Strategy, strategies at local, community level, to improve access to education in order to reduce the incidence of bullying and cyberbullying on children / students.

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