

## ***Empathy: The Key to Combating Bullying Among Children and Adolescents***

**Maria Birth CUNHA**

ISMT - Miguel Torga Higher Institute, Coimbra, Portugal

CIAC - Center for Research in Arts and Communication, University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal e-

mail: maria14276@gmail.com

### **Summary**

The increase in the occurrence of bullying situations in schools has been a cause for concern for society in general. Bullying is defined as aggressive, systematic, and prolonged behavior and an imbalance of power, which greatly affects children and young people, harming their healthy development, with short- and long-term effects. The promotion of empathy has been highlighted in the literature as an element of inhibition or reduction of this type of violent behavior, since the more empathic capacity is developed, the greater the chances of recognizing inappropriate attitudes that cause suffering and changes in behavior. Through a systematic review of the literature, based on research of empirical studies in the B-On database between 2006 and 2021, this study sought to understand whether there is in fact a relationship between the variables and how promoting empathy helps to combat bullying. It is concluded that empathy plays a fundamental role in preventing bullying in children and adolescents because it contributes to inhibiting aggressive behavior and increasing moral behavior.

**Keywords:** *Empathy; Bullying; Peer Relations; System Review*

### **Abstract**

The increase in the occurrence of bullying situations in schools has been a matter of concern for society in general. Bullying is defined as an aggressive, systematic behavior, prolonged over time and in an imbalance of power, which affects children and young people with great intensity, harming their healthy development, with effects in the short and long term. The promotion of empathy has been pointed out in the literature as an element of inhibition or reduction of this type of violent behavior, since the more empathetic capacity is developed, the more chances there are to recognize inadequate attitudes that cause suffering and changes in behavior. The present study sought, through a systematic literature review, based on the research of empirical studies in the B-On database, between the year 2006 and 2021, to understand if in fact there is a relationship between the variables and how promoting helps empathy fight bullying. It is concluded that empathy has a fundamental role in the prevention of bullying in children and adolescents because it contributes to the inhibition of aggressive behavior and to the increase of moral behavior.

**Keywords:** *Empathy; Bullying; Peer relationships; Systematic review;*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Empathy is an important psychological construct for people's lives, and its social influence has been studied over the years by several authors and researchers in the field of psychology. The concept of empathy has been present in the literature for about 300 years (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017).

Several authors have developed studies on this topic, seeking to define empathy and understand its importance. Empathy is defined as the ability to understand the state of emotional state of others and consequently internalize that emotional state (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010). According to Collins, Gratton, Heneage and Dagnan (2017), empathy consists of an instinctive emotional response to the experiences of others and the intellectual recognition of the states of others without experiencing the emotion oneself (Collins, Gratton, Heneage & Dagnan, 2017). From the perspective of Sahin (2012), it consists of a basic cognitive function or the ability to be aware of the thoughts and feelings of another (Sahin, 2012). According to some researchers, high levels of empathy are consistently associated with prosocial and altruistic attitudes and behaviors (Williford, et al., 2016). From the perspective of Lee, Lee and Kim (2018), empathy can also be

defined as the act of understanding the emotional state of another, responding to it in a socially beneficial way. According to the same researchers (2018), empathy can promote cooperation and citizenship, strengthen prosocial behavior and reduce aggression and social prejudice (Lee, Lee & Kim, 2018).

Subsequently, a study carried out by You, Lee, Lee and Kim (2020) presents empathy in three aspects: a cognitive aspect of recognizing the feelings of others or accepting their point of view, an emotional aspect of feeling the feelings of others, and a communicative aspect that allows the individual to communicate accurately and sensitively what has been understood. The same researchers describe that, for an individual to have full empathy for others, he or she needs to acquire the ability to cognitively identify what others are feeling, to emotionally understand the feelings of others and to sensitively share his or her understanding of the feelings of others (You, Lee, Lee & Kim, 2020).

Empathy is described by Pfetsch (2017) as a multidimensional construct that includes at least two dimensions: cognitive empathy and affective empathy (Pfetsch, 2017). Other researchers complement cognitive empathy as being the taking of perspective or understanding of the emotions of others, while affective empathy is characterized by empathic concern and experiencing the emotions of others (Ryzin and Roseth, 2019). Based on Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2017), empathy also offers a strong contribution to the prevention and reduction of aggression, thus helping to resolve problems such as bullying (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017).

According to Sahin (2012), peer bullying consists of a subclass of aggressive behavior, accepted as a universal concept, although its definition may vary from one culture to another (Sahin, 2012).

Bullying is defined by Stavrinides, Georgiou and Theofanous (2010) as a physical, verbal, psychological or intimidating attack that aims to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim. According to the same researchers, to be considered bullying, the aggressive act must be intentional and systematic. The researchers also add that bullying is a subset of proactive aggression because aggressors use aggression to achieve a desired goal or to dominate and intimidate others (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010).

Bullying is characterized by Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2017), assuming four aggressive forms: verbal (e.g., threats and insults), physical (e.g., punches and kicks), relational (e.g., spreading rumors and social exclusion) and cyber, that is, through the internet, the so-called cyberbullying (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017).

According to Williford, Boulton, Forrest-Bank, Bender, Dieterich and Jenson (2016), bullying can also be defined as chronic and repetitive behavior, and presents itself as an imbalance of power, whether physical or psychological, with more powerful individuals asserting their dominance over less powerful peers. Based on the interpretation of the same researchers, bullying can be overt or directive, for example, through acts of aggression, pushing, threats and malicious provocations, while in other situations bullying can be relational or indirect in nature, through social exclusion, defamation and the demand for conformity according to a condition of friendship (Williford, et al., 2016). It is also important to note that, according to Pfetsch (2017), the imbalance of power in bullying may not reside exclusively in the form of physical force, but may also reflect characteristics of the subject's personality (Pfetsch, 2017).

Taking into account the problem of bullying, according to Machackova and Pfetsch (2016) and other researchers mentioned above, empathy appears to be a possible protective factor against bullying (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016).

## Research Strategy

### 2

## METHOD

The main objective of this literature review is to understand the relationship between the variables of empathy and bullying, and how it is possible to prevent bullying by promoting empathy in children and adolescents, based on the analysis of sources, in the chronological period from 2006 to 2021. Therefore, the question that we intend to answer, in the context of this study, is: "Is there a relationship between bullying and empathy? If so, how can we prevent bullying by promoting empathy?"

Firstly, in order to delimit the theme, a research was carried out in the first phase studies that took into account the following combinations of descriptors, also called keywords: *empathy*, *bullying* and *experimental design*. The database searched was B-On.

The research strategy used to identify and select articles was PICO, which considers that to carry out an Evidence-Based Practice, the 4 essential elements for the research question are: the Patient, the Intervention, the Comparison and the Outcomes/Results (Santos, Pimenta and Nobre, 2007).

The inclusion criteria defined were: presenting the words empathy and bullying in the title; peer-reviewed articles; presentation of a full text; the language of the articles being either in Portuguese, English and/or Spanish, in order to facilitate their interpretation and understanding; referring to children and/or adolescents, since bullying practices occur mostly in an educational context; presenting information at the level of the parameters considered essential to analyze: Participants (P), Interventions (I), Results (O) and Type of Study (S) and also, year and author(s); having been published between 2006 and 2021, and articles demonstrating the relationship of the role of empathy in preventing bullying.

The exclusion criteria established were: duplicate articles; being a dissertation or thesis; being a literature review; articles where the sample is not the intended one; articles that present difficult-to-understand languages and studies that do not relate to the topic that is intended to be analyzed.

In total, 18 articles were identified by title that were relevant to this study. After reading the articles in full, reading the abstract and applying the exclusion and inclusion criteria, 9 articles were rejected because they were not related to the intended theme. Therefore, 9 articles were accepted for the following literature review, and the language of the articles was English. After their selection, based on an exhaustive reading of the articles, the year, country, author(s), participants, interventions performed, results obtained and study design used were identified. Thus, a summary of each of them is presented below in Table 1.

## RESULTS

In the systematic reviews found regarding the promotion of empathy as a way to prevent bullying, the main research objectives of the articles, according to their authors, consist of knowing, examining or evaluating the mediating influence of empathy on the topic of bullying, regularly distinguishing between affective empathy and cognitive empathy. In at least 3 articles, the authors sought to verify the existence of a relationship between empathy and other variables, namely moral disengagement and the different forms of bullying (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017); cooperative learning in bullying and its effects mediated by empathy (Ryzin & Roseth, 2019); and cultural diversity and perception of teacher support for diversity (TSD) as protective factors against bullying and victimization, mediated by empathy (Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel & Scheithauer, 2020).

According to the articles analyzed, it can be seen that 2 articles are experimental studies (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2015; Sahin, 2012), 1 quasi-experimental article (Ryzin & Roseth, 2019), 4 articles are of a cross-sectional exploratory nature (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017; Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel & Scheithauer, 2020; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006) and 2 longitudinal exploratory articles (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010; Williford, et al., 2016).

Regarding the years of publication of the studies, it can be seen that, between the years 2006 and 2021, the year 2016 was the year with the highest number of articles published, namely two articles. Regarding the country of publication, it can be seen that they were published in several countries such as Cyprus (1), Greece (1), United States of America (2), Germany (2), Spain (1), Turkey (1) and England (1), with Germany and the United States being where the largest number of empirical studies occurred. The number

3

The number of participants in the studies varied between 38 and 1890 participants, with no significant discrepancies in the results obtained, however, the larger the sample, the more consistent the results become.

All studies collected in Table 1 present information relevant to answering the question. starting point of this research, since the data obtained revealed the role of empathy in preventing bullying and its influence on others.

Through the analysis of different studies, in relation to empathy, the predominance of the use of scale was verified *Basic Empathy Scale (BES)* developed by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017; Ryzin & Roseth, 2019; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2010) which, according to Stavrinides, Georgiou and Theofanous (2010), is an instrument that allows examining the degree to which each person understands and feels the emotions of others. It consists of 20 items that assess the cognitive and affective components of empathy (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010).

In the article written by Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel and Scheithauer (2020), the authors evaluated cognitive empathy through *Perspective Taking Subscale*, consisting of 8 items from the *Index of Interpersonal Reactivity* (1992), and affective empathy was operationalized through the presentation of a stimulus situation *Sympathy Reactivity Questionnaire* (2008) adapted by the authors to the school context (Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel & Scheithauer, 2020).

Based on the studies by Garaigordobil and Martínez-Valderrey (2015), and Sahin (2012), the use of the Index scale was also identified *Empathy for Children and Adolescents (IECA)*, developed by Bryant (1982), which allows the assessment of empathy through 22 statements, some of which reflect situations in which there is empathic arousal towards another person in a given situation, while others reflect a lack of empathy (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2015; Sahin, 2012).

Regarding the assessment of the bullying variable and its consequent predominance, all researchers used different scales. Stavrinides, Georgiou and Theofanous (2010) used the *Bullying and Victimization Questionnaire-Revised (BVQ-R)*, which consists of 9 items based on the original questionnaire initially constructed by Olweus (1996), which aims to reflect the dimension of bullying (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010). Scales such as the subscale were also used *Bullying Behavior*, consisting of 42 items from *Bullying and Victimization Scale*, as a way of assessing bullying in general (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017); the subscale of *University of Illinois Bullying Scale*, developed by Espelage and Holt (2010), with the aim of assessing bullying through 5 items that present situations of inappropriate behavior (Ryzin & Roseth, 2019); *Bullying and Victimization Scales of European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire* (2012), which aims to understand and relate bullying and cyberbullying (Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel & Scheithauer, 2020); *Cyberbullying: Peer Harassment Screening* (2013), which has as its main objectives to assess bullying and cyberbullying behavior in 12 items (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2015); *Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire Revised* (1996), used to measure the frequency with which students participated in specific bullying behaviors (Williford, et al., 2016); and finally the *Bullying Identification Scale/Children's Form* developed by Piskin and Ayas (2007) consisting of 37 items, in order to identify moral harassment behaviors (Sahin, 2012).

## Interventions

The interventions used, according to the study by Ryzin and Roseth (2019), sought to understand the effects of cooperative learning on peer relationships, empathy and bullying in secondary education. Their intervention was carried out through training of staff at the intervention school, between October 2016 and continued throughout the 2016-2017 school year, prepared in 3 face-to-face sessions at different times of the day, periodic check-ins via conference and access to resources, such as newsletters and a copy of the book *Cooperation in the Classroom*, 9th Edition by Johnson et al., (2013). The

4

training of these professionals focused on reciprocal teaching, peer tutoring, collaborative reading and other methods in which peers help each other learn in small groups under conditions of positive interdependence, individual accountability, explicit coaching in collaborative social skills, a high degree of face-to-face interaction, and guided processing of group performance. The training aimed to train staff as observers to promote appropriate reliability in the study by assigning them simulated data before they were allowed to conduct observations in real classrooms. During the observation process, observers remained in a classroom for an entire class period. Students responded to items in the *Empathy Scale Basic* and *Scale Bullying at the University of Illinois*, and through observation and filling out, the results obtained allowed us to conclude



that cooperative learning can significantly reduce bullying by leading to improvements in affective empathy (Ryzin & Roseth, 2019).

Based on the study by Garaigordobil and Martínez-Valderrey (2015), the researchers sought to evaluate the effects of Cyberprogram 2.0 on bullying, cyberbullying and empathy. The intervention program was applied to 5 experimental groups (93 individuals aged 13 to 15) in 19 one-hour sessions, while the 4 control groups (83 individuals aged 13 to 15) received their center's regular tutoring program. The intervention consisted of 19 one-hour sessions held during the school year, and the main objectives of the program were to identify and conceptualize bullying and cyberbullying, and the three functions involved in this phenomenon; to analyze the consequences of bullying and cyberbullying for victims, aggressors and observers, promoting critical thinking skills and the ability to report such actions when discovered; develop coping strategies to prevent and reduce bullying and cyberbullying behaviors, as well as other cross-cutting objectives, such as developing variables such as empathy, active listening, among others. The sessions began with the group members sitting in a circle on the floor, where an adult explained the activity and its objectives and the participants carried out the action. Afterwards, there was a discussion and reflection phase guided by the adult, where the adult encouraged reflection through questions without any judgment. This program used several group dynamics techniques to stimulate the development of the activity and debate. The instruments used to assess bullying and cyberbullying behavior were the scale *Cyberbullying: Peer Harassment Screening and the Child and Adolescent Empathy Index (CAIE)* as a way of assessing adolescents' empathy. The results obtained confirmed the effectiveness and positive effects of the program, since the experimental group demonstrated a decrease in the amount of aggressive behavior, bullying and cyberbullying in relation to the control group, confirming that Cyberprogram 2.0 significantly increased the capacity for empathy of the adolescents who participated in its intervention (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2015).

The research conducted by researcher Sahin (2012) aimed to determine the effectiveness of the empathy training program in preventing bullying in primary schools. The intervention involved the participation of 38 children, and the researcher divided the students into four groups, two of 9 students and the other two of 10 students. The groups of 9 students were labeled group A and B, with group B being the experimental group and group A the control group. Using the same method, the other two groups of 10 students were labeled experimental group C and control group D. The experimental groups received the empathy training program, designed by the researcher himself in 11 sessions of 75 minutes. Without being informed of the concept of the control group and the content of the study, the control groups were involved in 30-minute discussion sessions over a period of 11 weeks to exchange ideas on everyday issues. After the training program, both the experimental and control groups were given the empathy scale *Bullying Identification/Children's Form* and the Empathy Index for Children. The results showed that the empathy training program was effective in reducing bullying behaviors among students in the experimental group, while no changes were observed in students in the control group in which the program was not applied. Thus, the empathy education program had a positive impact on the development of empathic skills in bullying students, and once again, no significant changes occurred in the control group, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of its intervention (Sahin, 2012).

The remaining studies selected for the systematic review did not apply interventions, with their data being obtained from the completion of questionnaires and through the administration of self-report measures carried out with children and adolescents.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5

Evaluating the effect on the relationship between bullying and empathy, the authors Stavrinides, Georgiou and Theofanous (2010), reached a consensus on the existence of a negative correlation between bullying and empathy. Empathy appears to be a protective factor against bullying and victimization. The same researchers relate that only the affective dimension of empathy is involved in this relationship, that is, understanding the feelings of others does not influence the child's tendency to engage in bullying. The researchers point out that, although cognitive empathy was positively related to affective empathy, the former did not have any significant prediction about bullying. However, cognitive empathy should not be

completely excluded from the bullying equation, since its relationship with affective empathy appears to be powerful. They point out that, although children who understand other children's emotions do not necessarily reduce their bullying behavior, there is an indirect link between cognitive empathy and bullying, which allows children with high cognitive empathy to increase their affective empathy, and through this process reduce their involvement in these types of situations. According to the researchers, they determined that empathy is significantly related to bullying, serving as a barrier to future behaviors, while previous involvement in bullying works against the development of empathy (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010).

Through the analysis by researchers Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2017), they summarize that in relation to the correlations between the variables, the results indicated that empathy, regardless of whether affective or cognitive, is negatively associated with bullying. Like previous researchers, they observed that affective empathy demonstrated much stronger associations. Some of the main aspects promoting cognitive and affective empathy were intergroup contact and multicultural education, with agreement among several authors selected for the review (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017; Ryzin & Roseth, 2019; Schultze-Krumbholz, Ittel & Scheithauer, 2020). Taking into account the articles analyzed, in general, researchers state that male individuals are more likely to engage in acts of bullying compared to female individuals (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016; Williford, et al., 2016).

Based on the following authors, empathy plays an important role in the development of bullying during childhood, with low empathy and the deactivation of moral controls being the main risk factors for the emergence of aggressive behavior among children and adolescents. Empathy inhibits aggression because it reinforces children to behave in a way that is not harmful to others. Thus, they demonstrated that high empathy serves as a protective factor against future bullying, while past involvement with bullying is conducive to lower levels of empathy (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017).

According to Williford, Boulton, Forrest-Bank, Bender, Dieterich and Jenson (2016), developmental changes occur in subjects' cognitive empathy during changes from a primary school, where the environment is smaller, to a larger environment such as secondary school (Williford, et al., 2016).

Based on the study carried out by Machackova and Pfetsch (2016), they concluded that adolescents, as bystanders of bullying, believe that it is appropriate to react with verbal aggression to assertively defend the victim against the aggressor, thus concluding that even individuals who have a higher level of cognitive empathy can inadequately assess the severity of the situation, leading to an immediate decrease in affectivity and supportive responses (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016). The researchers determine that these social pressures can contribute to increased involvement in bullying, and this type of behavior was associated with lower levels of cognitive empathy throughout the study, complementing once again previous studies. They appeal to the need for and effectiveness of preventive interventions (Williford, et al., 2016).

After confirming the importance of empathy in preventing bullying and that there is indeed a relationship between the variables, it is necessary to recognize which interventions should be applied, especially in a school context, in order to promote empathy in students and combat bullying and violence. Through the studies analyzed, it was found that teachers and mental health professionals need to emphasize the promotion of emotional education for children and adolescents, since they have the opportunity to develop their affective empathy and emotional skills (Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010). Some researchers argue that in order to combat bullying, there should be anti-bullying prevention and intervention programs applied in the classroom, which seek to emphasize not only the development of cognitive empathy, but also the increase in the aggressors' awareness of their transgressions and moral judgments, since interventions carried out demonstrated effects and changes in behavior. significantly positive results (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2017; Ryzin & Roseth, 2019).

Researchers Ryzin and Roseth (2019), as mentioned earlier, concluded that the effects of cooperative learning on cognitive and affective empathy are mediated by increased peer relationships. These results suggest that the social nature of cooperative learning, its emphasis on group work and collaboration, can improve students' interpersonal relationships. These improved relationships and the concomitant building of experiential skills in learning groups will contribute to a deeper understanding of others' emotional states (Ryzin & Roseth, 2019).

Based on the study by Schultze-Krumbholz, Inttel and Scheithauer (2020), intergroup contact and



multicultural education are important interventions that favor the promotion of cognitive and affective empathy. Interventions can start from the teacher's efforts, which are successful in fostering social skills (Schultze-Krumbholz, Inttel and Scheithauer, 2020). It is also possible to add interventions that promote the acquisition of active empathy skills, consistent with many current practices, such as emotional learning programs, such as *Second Step* (Williford, et al., 2016).

Regarding cyberbullying, it was highlighted that programs such as Cyberprogram 2.0 help in the prevention and reduction of bullying and cyberbullying. Researchers emphasize that the best way to prevent violence is to promote harmonious coexistence (Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderrey, 2015).

In short, considering that bullying situations occur most frequently in schools, it is important that strategies are planned in schools with a view to promoting empathy. as a way to help prevent these types of situations.

*Table 1 - Articles selected for the Literature Review*

Author(s)/ year/ country	Participants	Interventions	Results	Design of study
Machackova & Pfetsch (2016)  Germany	321 students Germans, between 12 and the 18 years, being that 10% of these students do not were born in Germany, 86% have a computer in the room and 96% have access to Internet.	To assess the role that normative beliefs and affective and cognitive empathy have in the spectators of bullying and cyberbullying were applied asked a question- river, the adapted Steffgen, Happ Scale and Pfetsch, the Basic Empathy Scale and the German Krahé and Möller Scale.	The effect of normative beliefs and empathy differs according to the type of behavior (whether it is supportive or reinforcing) and whether it is bullying or cyberbullying. Therefore, although individuals may have reacted correctly in certain bullying/ cyberbullying situations in which they were bystanders, they may react differently/ incorrectly in other situations that they observe. It was observed that bystanders believe that it is appropriate to react with verbal aggression in order to assertively defend the victim against the aggressor. Thus, it was concluded that even individuals who present a higher level of cognitive empathy may inadequately assess the severity of the situation, leading to an immediate decrease in affectivity and supportive responses. Furthermore, while affective empathy predicted supportive responses in both types of incidents, cognitive empathy was only associated with supportive responses to offline bullying.	Explo- Trans- versal
Garaigordobil & Martínez-Valderking (2015)  Spain	176  teenagers, with ages understand- didas between the 13 and the 15 years, which attend the 3rd cycle  - 4 Groups of Control- it (83 in- individuals)  - 5 Groups Experiment- such (93 indi- videos)	To evaluate the effects that Cyberpro- gram 2.0 (program of intervention for prevent and reduce cyberbullying) had in bullying, cyberbullying and empathy were applied the Cyberbullying: Tria- Peer Harassment Index and the Child Empathy Index and Adolescents.	Cyberprogram 2.0 has achieved very positive results, as there has been a decrease in the number of aggressive behaviors, bullying victims, bullying practices and cyberbullying. As a result, a significant increase in empathy was also observed in these adolescents, supporting other studies that claim that empathy increases when violence is prevented. The study provides evidence of the effectiveness of Cyberprogram 2.0 in preventing and reducing bullying and cyberbullying.	Study Experiment- such



<p>Williford, Boulton, Bank, Bender, Dieterich &amp; Jenson (2016)</p> <p>States Uni- of the America- here</p>	<p>431 students</p> <p>(52% women) res</p> <p>and 52% lati- us) between the 10 and the 18 years of age</p>	<p>Data were collected through the administration of me- self-report data at each moment.</p> <p>Cognitive empathy was measured through of 5 perspective taking items</p> <p>Index dimension of Reactivity</p> <p>Interpersonal. The fre- frequency of bullying was measured using the Questionnaire Olweus Bully/ Victim Revised.</p> <p>The victimization was measured with a similar set of 6 items, but adapted to assess whether the student was a victim of each behavior.</p>	<p>Empathy declined in an approximately linear fashion, as reflected in both scores over time. Similarly, levels of victimization declined in the control group over the course of the study, also in an approximately linear fashion. Bullying levels initially declined and then increased in the sixth grade, close to their original levels. Skew and kurtosis indices suggest that bullying, and to a much lesser extent victimization, were positively skewed and leptokurtic. Empathy, on the other hand, was slightly negatively skewed but otherwise approximated normality. Bullying and victimization were associated with lower levels of cognitive empathy.</p>	<p>Study Exploratory Longitudinal- nal</p>
--	--	--	--	--

<p>Jolliffe &amp; Farrington (2006)</p> <p>United Kingdom of</p>	<p>376 men and 344 women with about 15 years in Hertfordshire</p>	<p>Were administered anonymous questionnaires we self-report in classrooms by a former researcher expert.</p> <p>Empathy was measured using the Scale of Basic Empathy (BES). To measure bullying, we used a Questionnaire of Bullying based on Whitney study and Smith (1993).</p>	<p>Low affective empathy was significantly related to bullying for females but not for males. However, for both males and females, low affective empathy was related to frequent vs. occasional bullying. Low total empathy was related to violent bullying by males and indirect bullying by females. Cognitive empathy was not significantly related to any type of bullying by males or females.</p>	<p>Explo-Trans- versal</p>
	<p>38 students of all the schools primaries in the center of Trabzon</p> <p>Group of control: A (9 students); D (10 students)</p> <p>Experienced group rimental: B (9 students); C (10 students);</p>	<p>It was administered to Identification Scale Bullying Action/ Children's Form developed by Piskin and Avas (2007).</p> <p>The Empathy Index for children was then evaluated through a scale developed by Bryant (1982). They were also applied techniques used in empathy training.</p> <p>It was also used ANOVA of measures repeated for analysis analyze the time and effects of the intervention tion under the children under investigation.</p>	<p>Multivariate analysis yielded a significant interaction effect. The intervention group became significantly more likely to decrease bullying behaviors as a result of empathy training. The intervention group was more empathetic than the control group at post-intervention and follow-up. The empathy training program was effective in reducing bullying behaviors in the experimental group, while no change was observed in the control group in whom the training program was not applied.</p>	<p>Study Experiment- such</p>
<p>Stavrinets, Georgiou &amp; Theofanous (2010)</p> <p>Cyprus</p>	<p>205 students of 6th year (108 girls and 97 boys-us), with ages between the 11 years, selected random-mind in urban schools in and rural areas in Cyprus.</p>	<p>Data were collected using a longitudinal design of six months and two moments were used (Time 1 and Time 2), in which participants completed the sub-Revised Questionnaire Bullying Questionnaire Bullying and Victimization (BVQ-R) and the Basic Empathy Scale.</p>	<p>The results of this study showed that bullying at Time 1 negatively predicted the affective component of empathy at Time 2. Furthermore, children's empathy at Time 1 negatively predicted bullying at Time 2.</p> <p>2. The results of this study indicate a reciprocal model of understanding the relationship between bullying and empathy. They demonstrated that there is a negative relationship between a child's ability to be in touch with what another person feels and the tendency of that child to engage in bullying others, that is, understanding the feelings of another does not influence the child's tendency to engage in acts of bullying. Therefore, cognitive empathy does not have any significant direct prediction of bullying and is weaker compared to affective empathy.</p>	<p>Study Exploratory Longitudinal</p>

<p>Kokkinos &amp; Kipritsi (2017)</p> <p>Greece</p>	<p>301</p> <p>teenagers (138 boys) us and</p> <p>160 boys in) the 5th year (n=155) and</p> <p>6th year (n=145) with ages between the 10-12 years</p>	<p>The data was collected through of the Subscale of Behavior</p> <p>Bullying Scale of 42 items from the Bullying and Victimization Scale</p> <p>mization, used to evaluate the bullying.</p> <p>To assess moral disengagement the Disengagement Scale was used</p> <p>Morality constituted by 14 items and the 20-item Basic Empathy Scale.</p>	<p>The results indicated that both dimensions of empathy were significantly negatively correlated, while moral disengagement was positively correlated with the forms of bullying. Two mediation models were tested separately for each gender. The mediation analysis indicated that boys with low affective, but not cognitive, empathy were more likely to demonstrate morally disengaged behavior, which in turn increased self-reported bullying involvement. Furthermore, boys with high moral disengagement were more likely to report cognitive and affective empathy, which resulted in greater direct and indirect relational bullying. In the case of girls, low affective and cognitive empathy evoked highly morally disengaged behavior, which triggered greater involvement in various forms of bullying. Finally, cognitive and affective empathy partially mediated the link between moral disengagement and all forms of bullying for girls.</p>	<p>Explo-Trans- versal</p>
<p>Ryzin &amp; Roseth (2019)</p> <p>States Uni- of the America- here</p>	<p>1,890 students of</p> <p>15 schools of teaching average (47.1%</p> <p>women, 75.2% white case)</p>	<p>To assess students' empathy, a sub-Empathy Scale item set</p> <p>Basic, and bullying was assessed through of the subscale of Bullying Scale from the University of Illinois.</p> <p>A was carried out training for school staff of intervention for promote greater adequate reliability square in the study.</p>	<p>The results indicated that cooperative learning can significantly reduce bullying and that some of this effect is conveyed through improvements in affective empathy. Cooperative learning also demonstrated significant positive effects on cognitive empathy, but this did not affect bullying. They also found that the effects of cooperative learning on cognitive and affective empathy were mediated by improvements in peer relationships. These findings add some clarity to the literature and also represent the first time, to our knowledge, that an anti-bullying program has been shown to have significant effects on cognitive and affective empathy.</p>	<p>Study Almost- Ex- perimental</p>

Schultze-Krum-bwood, Ittel & Scheithauer (2020)  Germany	897 students from 7th to 10th year (51.3% girls and 46.7% boys) of 36 classes of 5 schools of a big one german city bad.	Bullying and victimization in context offline were measured with the bullying and victimization scales of the European Cyber-bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (ECIPQ).  Cognitive empathy was assessed with the Taking Subscale Perspective of 8 items of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index social.  The perceived TSD was evaluated using the subscale of support for cultural pluralism 4-item Climate Inventory inventory School - Student (ISC-S).	The effect of perceived TSD on bullying was partially indirect through affective empathy. Victimization was not predicted by the study variables. Class level showed no effects. Bullying and victimization are complex phenomena that appear to be linked to individual rather than class characteristics. The finding that higher perceived TSD was linked to empathy and bullying provides a promising starting point for measures to enhance competence and prevent bullying. Cultural diversity and STD are negatively associated with bullying and victimization while being positively linked to empathy, which has been shown to be a protective factor against bullying and victimization. Studies show that intergroup contact and multicultural education promote cognitive and affective empathy.	Explo-Trans- versal
--	--	--	---	------------------------

## Final Considerations

Empathy, as consolidated throughout this systematic literature review, has a beneficial effect on bullying, and, regardless of whether it is affective or cognitive, it is negatively associated with the variable, constituting a barrier to future behaviors. Empathy inhibits aggression and violent behaviors, promoting pro-social and altruistic behaviors, since it reinforces children and adolescents to behave in a way that is not harmful to others.

As such, it is essential that schools support measures that recognize their relevance in preventing bullying, thus promoting harmonious coexistence among students. Based on what was described by the authors, the use of prevention programs, anti-bullying intervention applied in the classroom, cooperative learning, intergroup contact and multicultural education are considered by them to be important interventions to promote empathy and consequently avoid bullying situations.

It is therefore suggested that greater investment be made in research to clarify the importance of empathy and the fundamental role it plays in preventing bullying, seeking more effective interventions to prevent this type of behavior and to encourage children and adolescents to understand the emotional effects of their behavior on victims of bullying, promoting assertiveness, cooperation and tolerance among peers. In addition to promoting this type of empathetic behavior, it is important that it is acquired and maintained by individuals throughout their life cycle.

In summary, we can conclude that there is indeed a relationship between both variables, and that promoting empathy helps in combating and preventing situations of violence and, in particular, situations of bullying among children and adolescents.

## REFERENCES

12

Collins, K., Gratton, C., Heneage, C., & Dagnan, D. (2017). *Employed Carers' Empathy Towards People with Intellectual Disabilities: The Development of a New Measure and Some Initial Theory*. Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 30, pp. 133-146

Garaigordobil, M. & Martínez-Valderrey, V. (2015). *Effects of Cyberprogram 2.0 on "face-to-face" bullying, cyberbullying, and empathy*. Psicothema, 27(1), pp. 45-51

Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). *Examining the Relationship Between Low Empathy and Bullying*. Ag-

- Kokkinos, C. M. & Kipritsi, E. (2017). *Bullying, moral disengagement and empathy: exploring the links among early adolescents*. Educational Psychology, 38(4), pp.535-552
- Lee, J., Lee, Y., & Kim, M. H. (2018). *Effects of Empathy-based Learning in Elementary Social Studies*. Asia-Pacific Edu Res, 27(6), pp. 509–521
- Machackova, H., & Pfetsch, J. (2016). *Bystanders' responses to offline bullying and cyberbullying: The role of empathy and normative beliefs about aggression*. Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 57, pp. 169–176
- Pfetsch, J. S. (2017). *Empathic Skills and Cyberbullying: Relationship of Different Measures of Empathy to Cyberbullying in Comparison to Offline Bullying Among Young Adults*. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 178(1), pp. 58-72
- Ryzin, M.J.V. & Roeth C.J. (2019). *Effects of cooperative learning on peer relations, empathy, and bullying in middle school*. Aggressive Behavior. 45, pp. 643–651
- Şahin, M. (2012). *An investigation into the efficiency of empathy training program on preventing bullying in primary schools*. Children and Youth Services Review, 34, pp. 1325– 1330
- Santos, CMC, Pimenta, CAM & Nobre, MRC (2007). *The PICO strategy for constructing the research question and searching for evidence*. Latin American Journal of Nursing, 15(3)
- Schultze-Krumbholz, A., Ittel, A., & Scheithauer, H. (2020). *The association between in-class cultural diversity with empathy and bullying in adolescence: A multilevel mediation analysis*. International Journal of Psychology, 55(5), pp. 769–778
- Stavrinides, P., Georgiou, S. & Theofanous, V. (2010). *Bullying and empathy: a short-term longitudinal investigation*. Educational Psychology, 30 (7), pp. 793-802
- Williford, A., Boulton, A.J., Forrest-Bank, S.S., Bender, K.A., Dieterich, W.A. & Jenson, J. M. (2016). *The Effect of Bullying and Victimization on Cognitive Empathy Development During the Transition to Middle School*. Child Youth Care Forum, 45, pp. 525–541
- You, S., Lee, J., Lee, Y., & Kim, E. K. (2020). *The effects of middle school art class with an Empathy-based learning model*. Current Psychology, 39, pp. 1819–1829