Bullying prevention for students in mainstream schools

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Abstract

Bullying is one of the pressing problems in modern schools, which leads to numerous destructive consequences: suicide, aggression, violence, psychological problems, and poor academic performance. Therefore, special programs for bullying prevention and practical recommendations for teachers, students, and parents to combat bullying are needed. They aim to identify specific risk factors and develop an inclusive bullying prevention approach to safeguard the well-being and safety of vulnerable students. The study was conducted on the basis of mixed methods: questionnaire surveys, observations, interviews, and methods: "Structure of bullying" by Norkina [1]. The study revealed that students with SEN face heightened exposure to psychological bullying (e.g., verbal abuse, social exclusion, ridicule) compared to their non-SEN peers. Gender differences were observed, with boys reporting higher victimization rates than girls and exhibiting more assertive (but often ineffective) responses, whereas girls tended to employ avoidance strategies. The proposed prevention model emphasizes social-emotional learning, peer support systems, and teacher training to foster an inclusive school climate. The findings underscore the urgent need for educational policies and practices that address the unique vulnerabilities of all students, including those with SEN. Schools must prioritize targeted bullying prevention programs, teacher professional development, and parental involvement to create safer and more supportive learning environments.

Keywords: Anti-bullying program, Bullying prevention, Bullying risk, Inclusive education, Peer victimization, Psychological safety, Special educational needs (SEN).

1. Introduction

The problem of school bullying is becoming a very common phenomenon on a global scale. According to UNICEF, every third child in the world faces various types and forms of bullying. Kazakhstan is no exception; according to statistics, every fifth teenager becomes a victim of bullying. According to the results of a study conducted by UNICEF in Kazakhstan (2020), 63% of children witnessed violence and discrimination, 44% became victims, and 24% committed acts of violence and discrimination against other children at school [2].

Research on the problem of bullying began in Western Europe in the early 20th century, while in Kazakhstan, it started much later, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. Among the notable foreign researchers, scholars such as Dukes [3], Olweus [4], Heinemann [5], and many others should be mentioned. They developed the theoretical and methodological foundations of bullying, provided psychological characteristics of the participants, and outlined general directions for anti-bullying programs.

Modern international research on bullying is quite diverse and revolves around finding ways to prevent bullying [6, 7] developing specialized programs aimed at equipping the younger generation and teachers with specific skills to "extinguish" bullying at its early stages [8-11] and identifying the factors and causes of bullying [12, 13].

With the rapid development of information technologies, a new form of bullying, cyberbullying has become widespread, causing even greater harm to mental health due to round-the-clock pressure and the rapid spread of information. This phenomenon has attracted the interest of researchers. For instance, A. Adeoye studied the issue of cyberbullying among adolescents and adults, establishing a link between cyberbullying incidents and suicidal tendencies Adeoye [14]. McVean [15] explored the cross-connections between self-reported bullying status among adolescents and their social and emotional adaptation. The findings have both theoretical and practical significance for understanding the risks of cyberbullying [15].

The issue of bullying is relatively new to Kazakhstani science. However, in recent years, due to the increasing incidents of violence in schools, which we learn about from the media and social networks, it has been increasingly discussed in academic circles and at the governmental level.

Understanding the complexity of bullying and cyberbullying, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his 2020 Address to the People of Kazakhstan, called for the prevention of cyberbullying (Address of the Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to the People of Kazakhstan, 2020). In his speech at a parliamentary session in 2021, he instructed that measures be taken to protect children's rights, ensure their safety, and prevent bullying. In response, the *Rules for the Prevention of Child Bullying* were promptly approved in 2022 [16].

These rules regulate the procedure for conducting preventive measures and reviewing bullying cases. However, they lack specific methodological recommendations for recognizing bullying situations, implementing prevention strategies, and resolving the issues. There are also difficulties in understanding the individual psychological characteristics of bullying participants and the connection between the causes of bullying and the victim's personality traits [9, 10, 17, 18].

For example, Lapteva [17] proposed considering resilience as a key personality trait that helps individuals successfully overcome difficulties in situations of violence Lapteva [17]. Kelly [18] established a link between bullying and suicidal thoughts, bullying and the use of psychoactive substances and drugs, as well as bullying and personality traits, which contributed to a better understanding of the content required for bullying prevention methods [18].

The analysis of bullying causes emphasizes the need for a closer examination of individual personality traits, family upbringing, and power-seeking tendencies [9]. Additionally, bullying has been linked to teachers' personality traits [10], types of aggressive behavior and levels of involvement [19] as well as the ethnic characteristics of victims [20].

In recent years, several dozen studies on various aspects of bullying have been published in Kazakhstan, and several dissertations have been defended in the fields of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and law. Among the most significant works, the following authors should be noted: [21-25].

For instance, Uzakbaeva et al. [21] have identified the causes and consequences of bullying, proposed preventive measures for addressing violence cases, and suggested support strategies for bullying participants. They have also provided specific methodological recommendations for teaching staff and school psychological services on bullying prevention [21].

Arymbaeva [22] and Duysebaev [23] explored the characteristics of behavior correction in at-risk adolescents and the psychological-pedagogical conditions for their re-education to prevent bullying [22].

Kuanyshbek [24] and Duzbaeva [25] proposed victimological prevention methods to address bullying incidents [24, 25].

All of the aforementioned researchers have made significant contributions to the study of bullying. However, the Kazakhstani education system still faces the crucial task of developing a scientifically grounded theoretical and methodological framework for bullying prevention among children and adolescents.

1.1. Research Objective

To determine the prevalence of bullying among children and adolescents, identify associated risks, and propose prevention strategies.

1.2. Research Questions
1. What are the role positions of adolescents in bullying situations, and how widespread is bullying?
2. What are the potential risks associated with bullying?
3. What constitutes an effective bullying prevention program for adolescents?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Essence and Main Approaches to the Concept of "Bullying"

In English, the term *bullying* comes from *bully*, meaning a hooligan, a fighter, or an aggressor. It refers to harassment, persecution, or aggressive targeting of one member of a group (especially among schoolchildren, students, or even colleagues) by other members of the group or a part of it [26].

Bullying manifests in various forms, including harassment, insults, hostility, slander, and refusal to trust or delegate authority to an individual by others (or a group), usually driven by envy, jealousy, fear, a desire for dominance, lack of tolerance, poor upbringing, or a low level of cultural and social development [27].

According to Grishina [11], bullying is intentional, non-self-defensive, and not sanctioned by the legal and regulatory acts of the state. It is prolonged (repeated) physical or psychological violence exerted by an individual or a group that holds certain advantages (physical, psychological, administrative, etc.) over another individual. This form of aggression predominantly occurs within organized groups and is carried out with a consciously recognized personal objective [11].

After analyzing the works of both foreign and domestic scholars, we have identified the following approaches to understanding bullying:

- A form of aggression, in which one child or a group of children deliberately and negatively influences another child or group with the intent to cause physical, psychological, or emotional harm [28].
- Prolonged and repeated physical or psychological violence exerted by an individual or a group that holds advantages (physical, psychological, administrative) over another person, driven by a specific personal objective [11, 29].
- A social phenomenon, manifesting as direct bullying (insults, beatings, extortion of money or belongings) and indirect bullying (spreading rumors, boycotting, ignoring, manipulation), often accompanied by sexually, nationally, or ethnically charged comments with a negative context [30].
- Conscious violence, which is not an act of self-defense and is initiated by one or multiple individuals [31].

These researchers have emphasized the relevance of bullying as a problem and have defined the essence of school bullying.

Based on our study, we refine the definition of *bullying* as a deliberately organized and systematic form of violence directed at the same person, intending to cause suffering, which ultimately leads to the psychological deformation of all participants involved. Bullying is often accompanied by aggression from the bully or group.

2.2. Risks of Bullying

One of the risks of bullying is a dysfunctional school environment. As a rule, schools identify bullying in cases of physical violence; however, most acts of violence relate to forms of negative social assessment rather than physical or psychological bullying. In our opinion, to prevent bullying, it is necessary to optimize group dynamics, i.e., to promote the development of team cohesion, equality, tolerance, and openness.

Another important risk of bullying, as noted by the British Researcher Lane [32], and this is confirmed by the results of our study, are the features of family education. The bullying child shows violence when brought up in the following families: incomplete family, high risk of bullying, as the child applies emotional violence to others; a family where the mother has a negative attitude towards school and life, so she does not condemn the violence shown by the child; on the contrary, she justifies and does not correct his behavior; in an authoritarian family, where a child grows up in conditions of the impossibility of freedom, he is completely subordinated to the will of his parents and is depressed; therefore, school becomes a place for outbursts of negative energy and aggression; a conflicted family, where adults often quarrel, show aggression, and assert themselves at the expense of each other. In such cases, the child begins to use violent communication, assimilating a certain behavior model to solve various life situations. Constant conflicts in the family force the child to defend himself and show aggression. In addition, the child perceives this form of communication as normal and does not see anything prejudicial in beatings and screams; a family with a genetic predisposition to violence. Scientists have proven the existence of a "warrior gene"; a child shows aggression without controlling himself.

Another risk of bullying is low academic performance [33]. As a rule, good academic performance contributes to high self-esteem, the child confirms himself and satisfies his need for a high status. Failing children satisfy this need at the expense of others by showing violence.

School violence is also promoted by the indifferent attitude of teachers, who, seeing violence and aggression, pretend that everything is fine, and let the situation take its course. Teachers can also indirectly provoke bullying against a particular child, for example, by emphasizing the student's failure in the presence of the entire class.

The risks of bullying may be related to the nature of the victim's upbringing and their physical and social characteristics. Most often, the victims of bullying are children who are frequently punished, overprotected, and not supported, particularly those from disadvantaged and low-income families. Children with a low level of social skills, communicative incompetence, and hostility towards others, including increased aggressiveness and conflict, are often at risk.

The risk group of bullying victims most often includes children with various health disorders. The risk of bullying increases in a socially disorganized environment, with a high level of overpopulation, alcoholism and drug addiction, and social stratification. Various crises family (for example, divorce, remarriage of parents), social (revolution, perestroika) can significantly increase aggressiveness and vulnerability at the same time.

The consequences of bullying can be very diverse, but they are always negative. It impacts all participants in bullying and affects all areas of the body: health, condition, self-esteem, behavior in general, and the life of the child. The whole class suffers from the consequences of bullying; all children experience stress, and stress, as is known, exhausts the child's psyche, prevents learning, reduces educational motivation, and slows down the development of abilities and creativity.

The main and irreparable risk of bullying is the suicide of the victim of bullying, as well as retaliatory aggression against bullying participants and possible reprisals against them in the future. Bullying requires a lot of energy and often there is no strength left for positive activity. The consequences of bullying are characterized by long-term negative outbursts that postpone their imprint for the rest of their lives.

Thus, in order to identify ways to prevent bullying, it is important to be able to recognize bullying situations, to understand that not all conflict situations are bullying, and to take into account the risks of bullying in the organization of educational work with adolescents.

3. Materials and Methods

The primary objective of this study was to develop an original methodology for bullying prevention among adolescents based on an analysis of bullying risks, the psychological characteristics of adolescence, and the nature of students' interpersonal relationships.

The research methodology was grounded in activity-based, personality-oriented, systemic, and comprehensive approaches to organizing educational work. This work aimed to foster tolerant behavior toward others and improve the psycho-emotional climate within the school community.

The development of the original bullying prevention methodology was carried out in three stages using mixed methods.

The goal of the first stage was to assess the level of research on the problem, explore ways to design an anti-bullying program within the modern school setting, and identify bullying risks. To achieve this, systematic literature reviews, comparisons, generalizations, and observation methods were employed.

The literature analysis and comparison method helped examine scientific sources on the research topic, identify existing approaches to understanding bullying, and highlight potential risks for all participants involved. Through the generalization method, the key principles and conceptual ideas for designing the original bullying prevention methodology were determined. The observation method was used to study existing educational practices in schools in the Republic of Kazakhstan and to analyze the nature of interpersonal interactions among adolescents.

At the second stage, using the "Bullying Structure" methodology by Norkina [1] we identified the role positions of adolescents in the bullying process and assessed the prevalence of bullying in the school environment. The survey was conducted anonymously and the results were processed via google form.

The third stage involved the development and implementation of a bullying prevention methodology for adolescents based on the results of theoretical and practical research.

The study of scientific literature was conducted using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, RSCI (Russian Science Citation Index), Google Scholar, eLIBRARY, and others. The search was performed using key terms including "bullying," "anti-bullying programs," "bullying risks," "effectiveness of the school educational system," "harassment," "psychological trauma from violence," "interpersonal relationships," and "psycho-emotional climate." The search covered a period of 15 years, analyzing over 70 sources.

The empirical study was conducted in six cities of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Astana, Almaty, Semey, Karaganda, Pavlodar, and Kostanay, located in different regions of the country—North, South, West, and East. A total of 370 respondents participated in the study. This sample was chosen for several reasons: to determine the prevalence of bullying in the Republic of Kazakhstan and to identify regional differences in its manifestation.

The selected cities are home to representatives of various nationalities, cultures, religions, regions, and social backgrounds. Consequently, the school environments in these cities are quite diverse, which in turn creates conditions that may contribute to the emergence of bullying.

The combination of methods allowed us to view bullying prevention as a comprehensive system of specially organized educational activities aimed at strengthening interpersonal interactions through the development of tolerant behavior and improving the psycho-emotional climate. In our research, we relied on the Bullying Prevention Guidelines of the Republic of Kazakhstan as well as international studies.

4. Results

The development of an original methodology for bullying prevention among adolescents, based on the organization of specialized educational activities to strengthen interpersonal interactions, was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, theoretical material on bullying prevention in the school environment was analyzed and summarized.

We agree with researchers that bullying most often occurs in "bored" and unhealthy groups. For example, when a person is engaged in meaningful and interesting projects, they do not have time to pick on others for no reason. People stuck in routine and monotony may easily channel their excess energy into bullying a new member of the group. Therefore, when designing our original bullying prevention methodology, we identified a key idea that should guide the organization of educational work in modern schools developing zero tolerance for bullying, along with fostering personal responsibility for one's behavior and attitude toward others. This approach contributes to the development of essential social competencies in individuals.

The goal of our methodology is to create an educational environment that is comfortable for children's development and upbringing, free from bullying. The key strategic values of our proposed methodology should include:

- Awareness of humanism and personal well-being;
- Trust and mutual respect among students, teachers, and parents;
- Commitment to a safe and comfortable environment;

- Establishment of a positive psycho-emotional climate in the school community;
- Aspiration for a high level of self-organization and cohesion within the student body.

We believe it is appropriate to highlight four areas of educational work for bullying prevention:

1. A program for class teachers and school educators aimed at strengthening students' interpersonal relationships and fostering a positive psycho-emotional climate within the school community. This program is based on developing a culture of zero tolerance for bullying, promoting tolerant behavior, and respecting the rights and interests of all members of the educational environment.
2. A professional development program for educators (teachers, psychologists, social educators) focused on the prevention, early detection, and intervention in bullying among students.
3. An awareness-raising and support program for parents to help prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying among students.
4. A support program for victims of bullying.

During the second stage, we conducted a survey among students using Norkina [1] "Bullying Structure" methodology. A total of 370 students from two schools in Astana participated in the survey. It was conducted anonymously via Google Forms to ensure more accurate results and gain insight into children's opinions on the issue. Among the respondents, 46% were boys, and 54% were girls. The responses were processed using Google Forms.

We selected Norkina [1] "Bullying Structure" methodology because it allows for identifying the role positions of adolescents in bullying situations. The test consists of 25 questions, including specific ones that help detect bullying not only initiated by classmates but also by teachers. It also helps identify children prone to creating bullying situations. This methodology categorizes students into five groups:

1. "Initiators (bullies)" – adolescents with high levels of aggression. They can initiate bullying not only against potential victims but also against teachers and close individuals.
2. "Assistants" of the bully – the bully's entourage, who support and help carry out the bullying. They try to imitate the bully and use direct intimidation.
3. "Defenders" – those who try to help the victim and intervene in bullying situations. They are not afraid of the bully and their assistants and can stand up for the victim.
4. "Victims" – children who are bullied. They are characterized by high sensitivity, anxiety, fear, nervousness, and suspicion. These children are usually socially isolated.
5. "Observers" – witnesses of bullying. Any child, regardless of character, can take on the role of an observer in bullying situations.

As a result of the survey, it was found that 62.2% of respondents stated that they are friends with everyone in their class (defenders), while 29.7% reported having a few close friends in their class (assistants). No children were identified as having no friends at all. Questions 13, 17, and 19 help answer the question: Is there violence in the classroom?

For Question 13, 95.6% of students responded that "There is no child in our class whom everyone is afraid of." (you see Figure 1).

370 responses
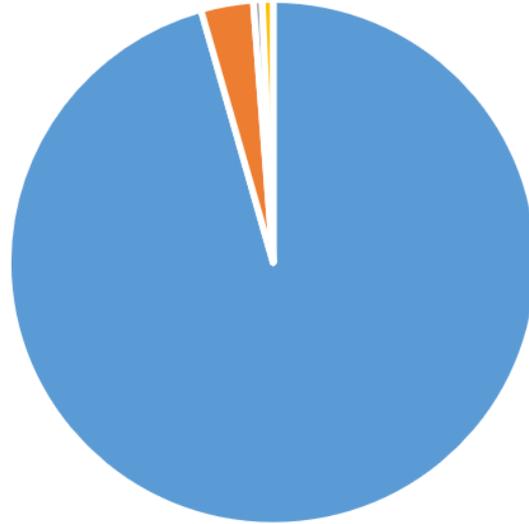
Figure 1.
Is there violence in the classroom?

Question 17, which addressed acts of violence or bullying, showed that 64.9% denied their presence in the class, 29.7% reported a few incidents, and 5.4% indicated that such incidents occur systematically (see Figure 2).
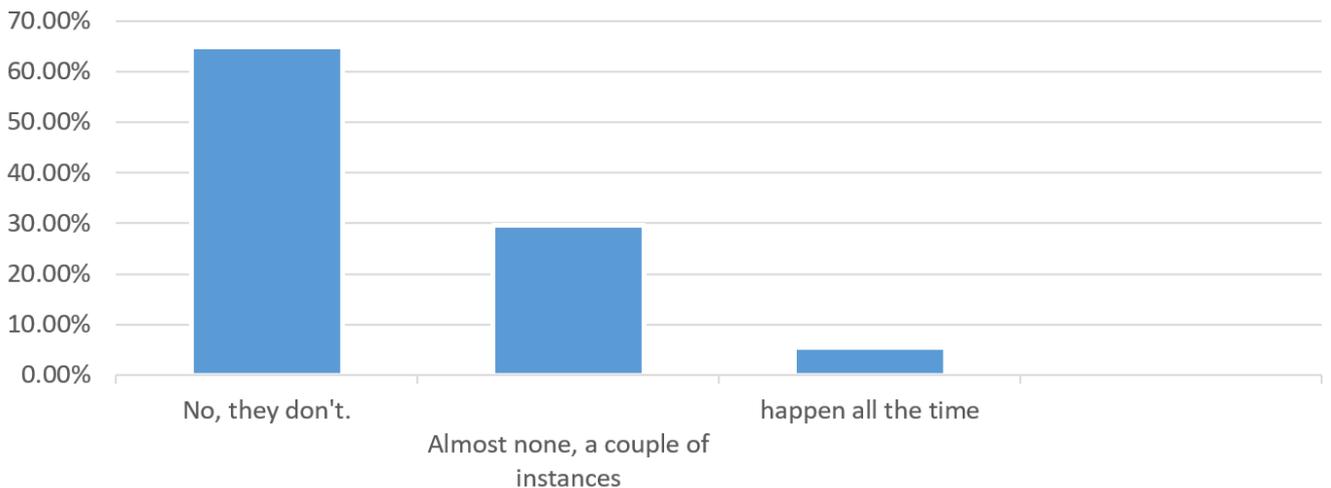
Figure 2.
There are acts of violence going on in my classroom

Let's look at the answers to this question by region (you see Table 1 and Figure 3).

Table 1.
Answers of respondents by region to the question: Is there violence in the classroom?

Regions	No. they don't (%)	Almost none. a couple of instances (%)	Happen all the time (%)
Astana	59.5	30.2	10.3
Almaty	64.8	29.6	5.6
Semey	65.3	29.6	5.1
Karagandy	67.2	28.8	4
Pavlodar	66.8	30.4	2.8
Kostanai	65.8	30.2	4

As we can see, the results are similar; however, students in Astana face bullying more frequently. This is likely due to the fact that Astana is the capital of the country and a destination where people from other regions aspire to move. Astana is considered a very attractive city for living, as it offers great opportunities for realizing even the most ambitious projects. The city is regarded as very young; young people move and settle in the capital, many children are born, and many schools are being built.

Since one can encounter representatives of various nationalities, cultures, religions, regions, and social backgrounds here, the school environment is quite diverse, which creates a potential risk for the emergence of bullying. The situation is more favorable in Karaganda and Kostanay. In our opinion, this is due to the homogeneity of the social environment, which is more uniform in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion. Children grow up in a culturally homogeneous environment, which reduces the fear of "others" and the occurrence of bullying based on these differences.
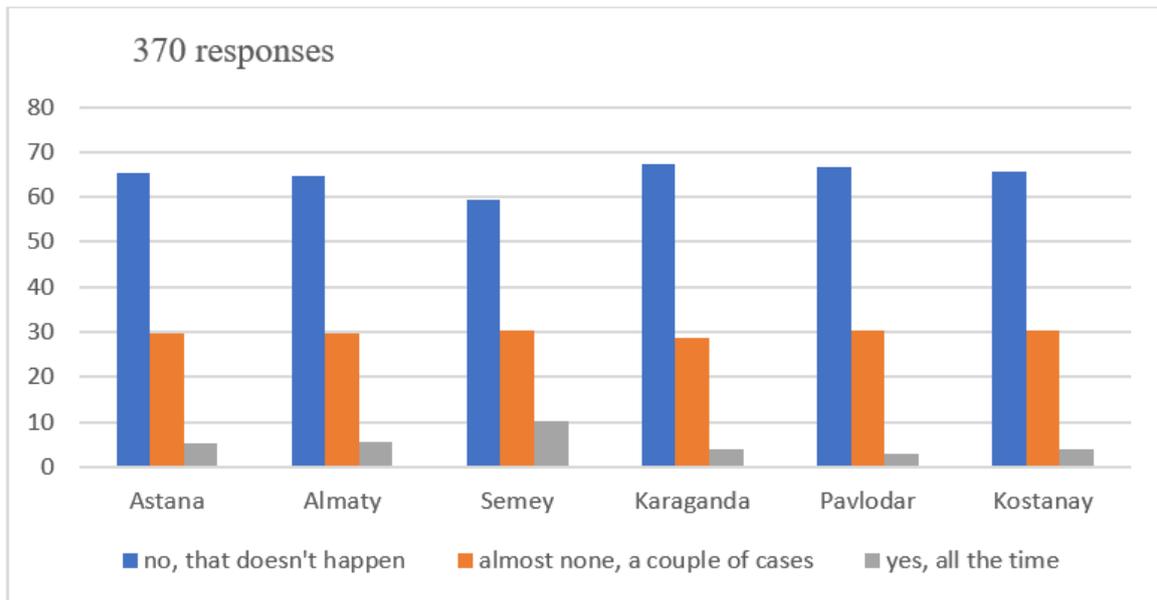
Figure 3.
Answers of respondents by region to the question: Is there violence in the classroom?

In response to Question 19, "In my opinion, teachers at school humiliate and insult students," 16.2% answered yes, 51.4% said no, and 32.4% responded "sometimes." (You see Figure 4).

370 responses

■ no ■ yes ■ sometimes
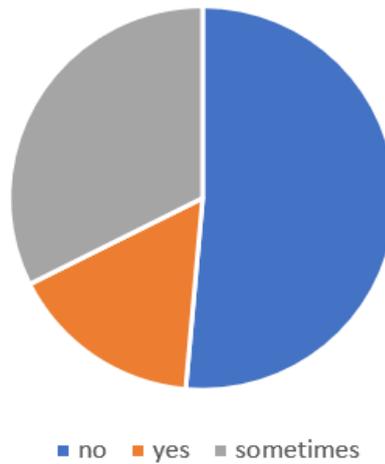
Figure 4.
I don't think I'm valued in the workplace.

The results indicate that there is almost no overt bullying in the classroom from either students or teachers, but some forms of it do exist.

The question about the importance of appearance to others helps determine adolescents' role positions: 67.6% of respondents answered negatively, which, according to the author, classifies them as Defenders. 27% answered positively, categorizing them as Assistants. 5.4% reported suffering because of their appearance, identifying them as Victims.

To visualize the distribution of bullying participants according to the survey, let us present Figure 5.

■ Defenders ■ assistants ■ victims
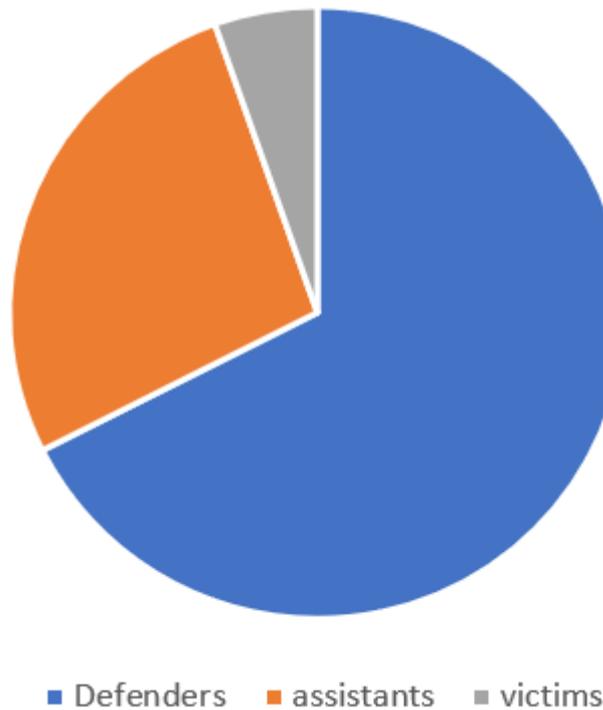
Figure 5.
Participants in bullying

When asked, "There are guys in my class that I don't like" 59.5% of students mentioned 1–2 classmates they dislike, 32.4% did not indicate anyone, 5.4% stated that there are classmates whom everyone dislikes, and 2.7% said they dislike everyone (you see Figure 6).
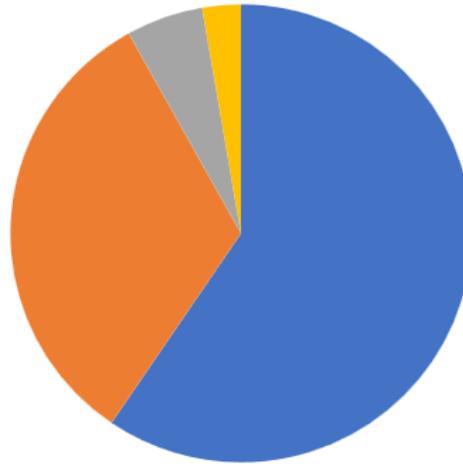
Figure 6.
Answers to the question "There are some kids in my class that I don't like"

To the question, "I think my classmates are better than me" 48.6% worry that they are worse than others, 10.8% see themselves as leaders whom others want to emulate, and 10.8% sometimes worry that they are the worst (you see Figure 7).
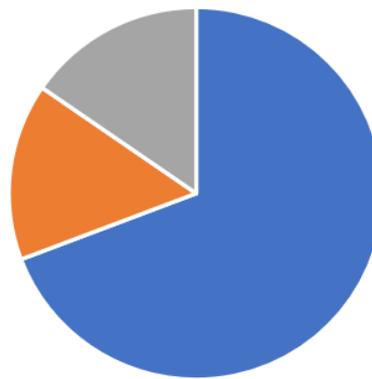
Figure 7.
Answers to the question "I think my classmates are better than me".

To the question, "If my classmate comes in wearing glasses," 91.9% would not change their attitude toward a classmate if they started wearing glasses, while 8.1% would stop interacting with them.

To the question, "My class is very friendly" 51.4% consider their class to be very friendly,

32.5% answered that they communicate with a narrow circle of classmates, while 10.8% disagreed, and 5.4% noted that some students are constantly bullied.

This question we were interested in looking at by region (you see Table 2 and Figure 8).

Table 2.
Answers of respondents by region to the question: "My class is very friendly".

Regions	Yes. very (%)	Socialize with a small circle of classmates (%)	No. We barely talk to each other (%)	There are kids in the class who get bullied all the time (%)
Astana	49.2	33.2	10.9	6.7
Almaty	50.6	32.2	10.4	6.8
Semey	52.5	32.6	10.5	4.4
Karagandy	53.6	30.4	10.8	5.2
Pavlodar	52.2	33.2	10.3	4.3
Kostanai	50.3	33.4	10.7	5.6

As we can see from the table, the data variation is minor; however, the situation with communicative connections in cities such as Astana and Almaty appears to be slightly worse. Notably, there is a higher percentage of children who are constantly bullied. In our view, this is related to the fact that Astana and Almaty are large metropolitan cities, and in big cities, people tend to be more self-contained and engage less with those around them, including classmates. Children may experience a lack of emotional support both at home and at school.

Additionally, a large number of people from various regions of Kazakhstan migrate to these cities, bringing with them cultural differences, behavioral traits, and varying economic backgrounds, which can provoke bullying among peers. One contributing factor may also be the higher level of competition, which can lead to more aggressive behavior among children. In large cities, parents tend to focus more on academic achievements, often neglecting to foster empathy, self-regulation, and conflict resolution skills in their children. For greater clarity, we can refer to Figure 8.
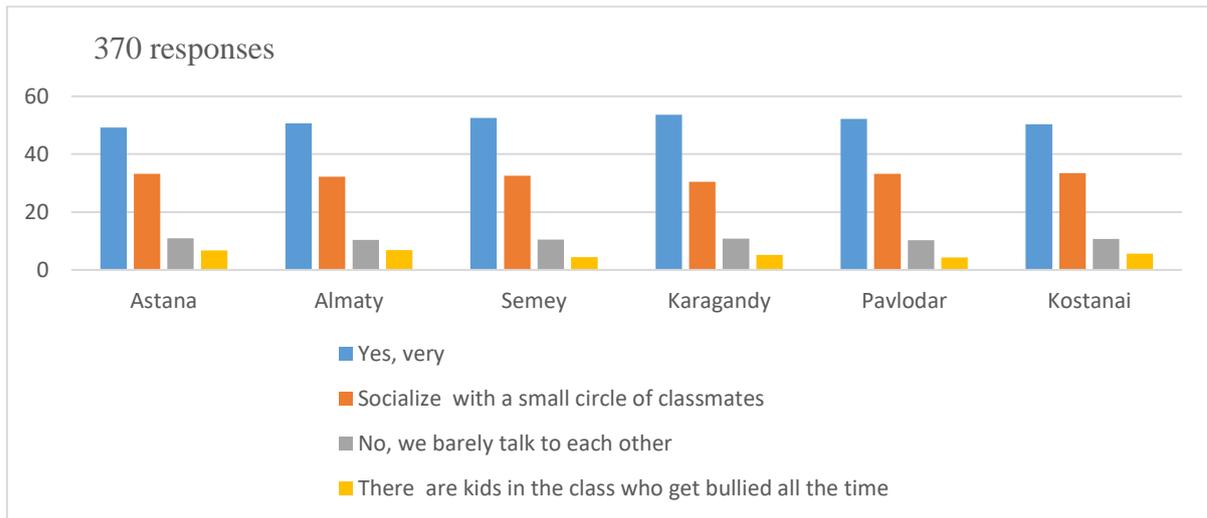
Figure 8.
Answers to the question: "My class is very friendly".

When asked, "I feel like my classmates don't want to socialize with me," 16.2% feel that their classmates do not want to interact with them, 64.9% are friends with everyone and feel comfortable, while 10.8% do not communicate with anyone.

When asked, "I want to be in a different class or school," 16.2% of students want to transfer to another class, 48.6% feel comfortable in their current class, 24.3% sometimes consider transferring due to conflicts, and 10.8% fear that moving to another class might make things worse.

Thus, this method has demonstrated the presence of bullying in schools across Kazakhstan, with not only classmates but also teachers acting as initiators of bullying. Some children find themselves in isolation, with others unwilling to communicate with them. Many children note that their class is not particularly friendly. According to the structure proposed by Norkina [1], representatives of all five groups were identified among the respondents. Victims are more often boys.

At the third stage, we began testing our authorial anti-bullying prevention methodology. Within each of the four directions, we planned and implemented a set of activities. Direction 1: Program for Class Teachers and School Educators. This program aimed to strengthen interpersonal relationships among students and foster a positive psycho-emotional climate in the school community. It was based on developing a zero-tolerance culture toward bullying, promoting tolerant behavior, and respecting the rights and interests of all members of the educational environment. The following activities were conducted: educational seminars, discussions and class meetings, extracurricular activities and outings, meetings with psychologists and social workers, and training sessions for students. Direction 2: Program for Enhancing Teachers' Professional Competence. This initiative focused on preventing, recognizing, and addressing bullying among students through training seminars for teachers, workshops, and masterclasses, as well as specialized training sessions. Direction 3: Awareness Program and Support for Parents. This program aimed to help prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying among students. Activities included thematic seminars and training sessions for parents, the "Менің Otbasym" ("My Family") flash mob, and parental counseling. Direction 4: Support Program for Bullying Victims. This initiative focused on individual work with affected children, offering them personalized support and psychological assistance.

To reduce the risks and consequences of bullying, we conducted discussions with students, showed videos featuring bullying situations, and organized a series of training sessions. The discussions helped us assess students' awareness of the nature, causes, and solutions to bullying. Notably, children and teenagers demonstrated a fairly clear understanding of bullying. When asked about its causes, they mentioned: poor academic performance, differences in appearance or behavior of those who experience bullying, a conflict-prone nature or unwillingness to conform in some cases. Students also discussed possible solutions, suggesting that: they should inform their class teacher, principal, or parents; they could talk to the bully directly; some suggested fighting back; others mentioned filing a report with law enforcement. We showed films and social videos about bullying. The students watched attentively and engaged in active discussions afterward. They highlighted: the cruelty of bullies, the importance of protecting oneself, the need to inform adults, and hold bullies accountable.

Next, we conducted training sessions aimed at the following purposes: Developing students' interpersonal relationships based on the principles of tolerance; improving the psycho-emotional climate in the school environment; and teaching students how to recognize and respond to bullying, especially from the perspective of a bystander.

4.1. Objectives
1. Develop an understanding of the causes and forms of bullying.
2. Analyze participants' responses to bullying situations.
3. Foster socially humane motives in communication.
4. Encourage constructive conflict resolution.
5. Teach goal-setting and achievement strategies.
6. Build and strive toward future life prospects.

Format: Group-based, 20-25 participants. Together with the students, we established key behavioral rules for the training sessions, including: respecting everyone, following the schedule, not interrupting others, and maintaining confidentiality. Training Engagement: during the sessions, students were highly active and quickly engaged in games and discussions. They easily associated their names with personal attributes in the "My Associations" exercise. Examples included: *Gulnar – Flower, Saule – Sun, Aidana – Moon*, etc.

The children were very active during the brainstorming session "Problems That Concern Us." They were divided into five groups and identified the following issues: name-calling, misunderstanding, insults, lack of support, and bullying. At first, the students struggled to come up with solutions, but as the discussion progressed, they actively suggested ways to address these problems. Their ideas included: learning to negotiate, seeking help from the class teacher or adults, respecting others, and explaining their actions. The "Mirror" game was particularly engaging. During the discussion, the students concluded on their own that a good deed attracts a good response, while a bad deed, like a boomerang, brings suffering. The "My Strengths" exercise initially posed some difficulty. However, after reflecting, the children were able to list three to four of their strengths, including kindness, communication skills, strength, and speed. They also identified qualities they would like to develop, such as erudition, determination, and understanding others.

In the exercise "I Want to Say Something Nice to Another Person," we organized group work with three children in each group. During the discussion, the children noted that it is easier to praise others than to praise themselves. One boy could not praise himself at all and said that his grandmother was teaching him modesty. The children also mentioned that receiving compliments is pleasant, but giving compliments to others is even more enjoyable.

The children were very active during the game "The King." Many wanted to step forward and become the king. The children gave very kind commands, such as: "Say something nice to your neighbor," "Hug a friend," and similar actions. At the end, they chose the kindest king. Almost everyone was recognized. One interesting situation occurred when a child volunteered to be the king and then passed his power to another.

In the game "Helpers," the children shared many interesting stories about times when they had done good deeds. It is worth noting that the children were very kind and open. They help classmates with their homework, assist friends in the neighborhood in making peace, help adults cross the road, carry bags, feed stray animals, and more.

In the game "I'm Glad You Came Because…," the children were also very engaged and only said kind words to one another. The "Tree of Tolerance" game was conducted quickly and actively. The children wrote down many positive qualities, such as responsiveness, kindness, honesty, politeness, peacefulness, respect, prudence, courage, fairness, a beautiful soul, and more.

At the end of the training sessions, we distributed handouts to the students with useful advice on how to act in cases of bullying. Overall, it should be noted that the children were open, had their own opinions, expressed themselves freely, and were not afraid to speak up. We believe that the trial of the educational program for bullying prevention was successful, as we received only positive feedback from children, teachers, and the administration. Everyone was very grateful for the work done and expressed a desire for more training sessions in the future.

5. Discussion

The proposed authorial methodology for bullying prevention covers all key areas of an educational organization's activities in implementing bullying prevention. It enables the systematic and effective coordination of interactions between teachers, students, and parents. The proposed system of measures, aimed at strengthening the school community, enhancing teachers' professional competence, educating and supporting parents, and providing specialized individual assistance to bullying victims, creates conditions for fostering zero tolerance for bullying and developing essential social competencies. It is evident that in the process of implementing educational work on bullying prevention, potential risks and consequences must be considered. Moreover, not only students but also teachers and parents should be actively involved in this process.

In conducting this study, we took into account all expert recommendations on organizing specialized work for bullying prevention. In particular, the scientific works of James [8], Rigby [34], Grishina [11], and Lapteva [17] emphasize the development of students' social skills and emotional intelligence [8, 11, 17, 34]. At the same time, Soloviev [7] and Uzakbaeva et al. [21] argue that anti-bullying programs should focus on strengthening group cohesion and fostering tolerant interpersonal relationships [7, 21]. Additionally, expert [9] emphasizes the importance of involving parents in preventive efforts [9]. In this study, we have implemented the ideas of the aforementioned experts within our authorial methodology for bullying prevention. This methodology includes approaches for working with students to strengthen interpersonal relationships and develop social skills, as well as specialized programs for teachers and parents to educate them on organizing bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

At the same time, the developed authorial methodology for bullying prevention has significant differences from previously created programs by other researchers.

1. Purpose and Goal of Bullying Prevention – The primary aim is to establish zero tolerance for bullying among all participants in the educational process: children, teachers, and parents.

2. Comprehensiveness of the Methodology – It is characterized by a broad coverage of various aspects of the educational process and a focus on working with all participants in the educational system. This level of integration is not feasible in other narrowly focused prevention programs, such as those by Grishina [11], Lapteva [17], Duysebaev [23], Duzbaeva [25], and Uzakbaeva et al. [21].

3. Value-Based Communication and Conflict Resolution – The content of this methodology is enriched with value-oriented aspects of communication and interaction, as well as the development of skills to respond to and resolve conflicts. These elements are not fully reflected in the programs of other researchers (K. Rigby, D.N. Solovyov, N.S. Celik, and others).

4. Compliance with Regulatory Requirements – The methodology aligns with the content and organization of bullying prevention in accordance with all regulatory documents governing educational activities, particularly the *Rules for the Prevention of Child Bullying (Harassment)*.

5. Adaptability – The methodology can be adjusted to both external and internal conditions of an educational organization. Moreover, each institution can individually design its own educational trajectory, considering specific conditions and capabilities.

During the implementation of the first area of work, difficulties arose in carrying out extracurricular educational activities, as most children were occupied with additional classes in specialized subjects, language courses, sports, and extracurricular clubs. To address this, we utilized weekends and conducted training sessions during homeroom periods, which were included in the school schedule.

While implementing the authorial methodology, challenges also emerged in communicating with parents due to their busy schedules and frequent absences from planned sessions and training programs. Additionally, there were misunderstandings regarding child-rearing approaches, particularly in instilling the core values we had identified as essential. To overcome these difficulties, we had to allocate extra resources and time, conducting individual sessions or moving some activities online.

A key challenge in organizing bullying prevention efforts remains the need for specialized corrective and developmental work with the initiator of bullying (the bully) and their parents. Another critical issue is the exploration of additional resources, mechanisms, and strategies for optimizing and updating the professional training of future teachers and specialists to address this socio-pedagogical problem.

The materials in this article will be useful to researchers and professionals engaged in bullying prevention and those working to enhance the effectiveness of educational efforts in schools and other educational organizations.

6. Conclusion

This study provides preliminary evidence that bullying is becoming increasingly common among children and adolescents, taking on various forms and manifestations. It typically arises in environments where there are issues and shortcomings in the management of educational work, pedagogical mistakes are made, and proper family upbringing is lacking. The specially organized educational work presented in this study contributes to bullying prevention among children and adolescents by increasing students' awareness of the forms, causes, and risks of bullying. It fosters tolerant interpersonal relationships, helps develop communication skills, teaches negotiation, and promotes constructive conflict resolution. Future research could focus on pressing issues such as developing specialized programs for teachers and parents to prevent bullying and creating methodological recommendations for specialists, including psychologists and social educators.

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