

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON BULLYING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Bullying in early childhood education is a complex and often underestimated phenomenon; however, it manifests itself through behaviours that may go unnoticed due to the young age of the children, thereby making early detection and intervention difficult.

Analysing this phenomenon in children aged between 3 and 6 is essential for understanding its earliest manifestations and preventing it from becoming entrenched in later stages, particularly in a context where social, family and technological dynamics can influence the emergence of aggressive behaviours.

Early childhood education, characterised by socio-emotional development and learning to live together, provides a key framework for examining how these behaviours arise and how they are perceived by teachers, whose training and attitudes are decisive in identifying and managing bullying.

The aim of this study is to analyse the perceptions of early years educators in Spain regarding bullying among children aged 3 to 6, taking into account their level of training, their assessment of the school climate and associated risk factors, with a view to guiding future prevention and early intervention strategies.



METHOD

The research was conducted with 70 early years teachers aged between 39 and 40. It should be noted that, in Spain, this profession is practised almost exclusively by women at this stage of education. This study involved a descriptive quantitative research project focusing on early years teachers' perceptions of bullying among children aged 3 to 6.

To this end, several phases were followed: (i) definition of the research objectives and variables; (ii) design of the questionnaire; (iii) data collection; (iv) statistical analysis; and (v) formulation of conclusions.



Furthermore, variables related to the training received, perceptions of the school environment, the influence of risk factors, and knowledge of bullying cases—both within their own school and in others—were analysed.

In order to identify possible differences based on the school's ownership status and the existence of specific anti-bullying policies, non-parametric statistical tests were applied.

- Education received
- Perception of social interaction within the school
- Influence of risk factors
- Awareness of cases of bullying at their own school or elsewhere



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results show that teachers perceive their preparedness to tackle bullying as insufficient (2.66/5), whilst they rate the atmosphere at their schools very highly (4.29/5), indicating a favourable and harmonious school environment. The factors most influential in the development of bullying behaviour are linked to television and digital technologies, attributed to frequent exposure to violent scenes and the normalisation of violence in these media. The influence of parents, other children and, in particular, teachers is considered low, with the latter perceived as practically non-existent.



Question	Mean (out of 5)	Std. Deviation (out of 5)	CV	Skewness
Training	2.66	1.14	42.76%	0.48
Social interaction	4.29	0.62	14.51%	-0.27
Influence of other kids	2.71	1.64	60.32%	0.23
Influence of parents	2.60	1.40	53.75%	0.36
Influence of teachers	1.49	1.07	71.85%	2.27
Influence of the use of technologies	3.11	1.66	53.26%	-0.11
Influence of TV watching	3.03	1.50	49.68%	0.00

Teachers report being aware of more cases of school bullying in schools other than their own. The presence of action plans against school bullying is associated with a better perception of the training received and of the school climate, as well as with a more balanced assessment of the influence of the various factors.

Question	With action plan	Without action plan	W	p-value
Training	2.79	2.36	404	0.0973
Social interaction	4.46	3.91	304	0.0014*
Influence of other kids	2.42	3.36	692	0.0314*
Influence of parents	2.71	2.36	456	0.3527
Influence of teachers	1.58	1.27	428	0.0864
Influence of the use of technologies	2.88	3.64	648	0.1182
Influence of TV watching	2.79	3.55	674	0.0590

* $p < 0.05$

Teachers perceive a positive school environment, but identify gaps in their training when it comes to addressing bullying, and attribute its origins primarily to media influences. The implementation of action plans is linked to an improvement in perceptions of preparedness and the school climate, highlighting their significant role in prevention and educational intervention.

CONCLUSION

The lack of training and the externalisation of the causes of bullying highlight the need to strengthen teacher training and implement prevention protocols from an early age.

FUTURE WORK

To investigate how early exposure to digital media and television influences the development of aggressive behaviour in children aged 3 to 6, and whether reducing such exposure can help prevent bullying.