

# Study of Different Forms of Peer Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools – a Systematic Literature Review

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## **Purpose:**

The purpose of this article is to review the literature on peer violence in primary and secondary schools, and to present key findings of these studies.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

The systematic literature review was performed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, using the PRISMA method.

## **Findings:**

A total of 81 articles were selected for the final review. The issue of bullying and cyberbullying is extensive and complex, yet there is still no single definition of this phenomenon. Traditional bullying in primary schools reaches up to 76%, while the prevalence of cyberbullying varies below 10%. The perpetrators are more often boys, while girls are often in the role of victims. Violence is more common in younger children. Risk factors for exposure to violence include belonging to an ethnic minority and the lower economic class. Well-developed emotional intelligence is highlighted as a protective factor. There is more cyberbullying in secondary schools (67%), while traditional bullying is as high as 97%. Male students are more often perpetrators, while female students are more often victims. Students with low self-esteem, members of ethnic minorities and lower economic classes are more exposed to violence. Risk factors for causing violence include a previous history of violence, substance abuse, bad associations, and a poor family environment.

## **Research Limitations/Implications:**

The findings of the article provide a starting point for the compilation of a comprehensive plan for researching the phenomenon of peer violence in primary and secondary schools in Slovenia, and serve as a basis for the development and implementation of a programme for establishing a safe educational environment.

## **Originality/Value:**

The article is the starting point for an empirical study that will address peer violence in primary and secondary schools in Slovenia.

**Keywords:** bullying, cyberbullying, peer violence, primary schools, secondary schools

**UDC:** 343.915

## **Proučevanje medvrstniškega nasilja v osnovnih in srednjih šolah – sistematični pregled literature**

### **Namen prispevka:**

Namen prispevka je pregled literature s področja medvrstniškega nasilja v osnovnih in srednjih šolah in predstavitev ključnih ugotovitev teh študij.

### **Metode:**

Sistematični pregled literature je bil opravljen po metodi PRISMA v bazah podatkov Web of Science in Scopus.

### **Ugotovitve:**

V končni pregled smo izbrali skupno 81 prispevkov. Problematika ustrahovanja in spletnega ustrahovanja je obsežna in kompleksna, kljub temu pa še vedno ni enotne definicije tega pojava. Tradicionalno ustrahovanje v osnovnih šolah sega do 76 %, medtem ko se pojavnost spletnega ustrahovanja giblje pod 10 %. Povzročitelji so pogosteje dečki, deklice pa so večkrat v vlogi žrtve. Nasilje je pogostejše pri mlajših otrocih. Dejavnika tveganja za izpostavljenost nasilju sta pripadnost etnični manjšini in nižjemu ekonomskemu razredu. Kot varovalni dejavnik je izpostavljena dobro razvita čustvena inteligenca. V srednjih šolah je spletnega ustrahovanja več (67 %), medtem ko tradicionalno ustrahovanje sega kar do 97 %. Dijaki so pogosteje povzročitelji, dijakinje pa žrtve nasilja. Nasilju so bolj izpostavljeni dijaki s slabo samopodobo, pripadniki etničnih manjšin in nižjih ekonomskih razredov. Dejavniki tveganja za povzročitev nasilja so predhodna zgodovina nasilja, zloraba substanc, slaba družba in slabo družinsko okolje.

### **Omejitve/uporabnost prispevka:**

Ugotovitve prispevka dajejo izhodišče za sestavo celovitega načrta raziskovanja pojava medvrstniškega nasilja v osnovnih in srednjih šolah v Sloveniji ter služijo kot osnova za razvoj in vpeljavo programa za vzpostavitev varnega vzgojnega in izobraževalnega okolja.

### **Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:**

Prispevek je izhodišče za empirično študijo, ki bo obravnavala medvrstniško nasilje v osnovnih in srednjih šolah v Sloveniji.

**Ključne besede:** ustrahovanje, spletno ustrahovanje, medvrstniško nasilje, osnovne šole, srednje šole

**UDK:** 343.915

### 1 INTRODUCTION - DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT AND THE OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

Providing education – and thus school organisations in a broader sense – can be categorised as a critical infrastructure responsible for »creating the citizens of the future«. Such organisations are the place where children spend a significant portion of their time. In Slovenia, the average number of planned instructional hours in primary schools for students of different ages (ranging from 7 to 14 years) is 711 hours. This means that children spend as many as 119 days a year in school, which amounts to one third of the calendar year. There are different levels and forms of interpersonal relationships occurring in schools, and both students and teachers can be exposed to various threats to their safety, including violence.

A safe school environment is a basic prerequisite for effective education of children and youth. Violence in schools in all its forms creates insecurity and fear, which harms the general school environment and violates the right of students to learn in a safe and supportive environment. In addition to endangering children's rights, it poses a particular risk to vulnerable children, with a focus on children with disabilities, excluded children, or simply children who are different from their peer group (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

A statement from the National Association of Psychologists on school violence (NASP, n.d.) emphasised the importance of schools' efforts to continue to act as safe havens that allow all young people to grow academically, socially and emotionally. School safety must include structured safety, as well as unstructured measures such as raising awareness, providing communication, strengthening and empowering students (Mali, 2019).

The problem of dealing with bullying in schools has led to many suggestions in recent years on how best to address it. The most commonly used approach is to introduce a zero-tolerance policy and to ensure that those perpetrating bullying are punished, regardless of the severity of the threats (Arslan et al., 2011; Carrera-Fernández et al., 2021; Mali, 2019; Rigby, 2012; Yurtal, 2014).

Peer violence is one of the most commonly observed types of violence in schools (Rigby, 2012), and the latest definitions of this type of violence include, in addition to physical violence, economic, emotional, verbal and sexual forms of violence. In modern times, it most often manifests in the form of physical violence, (including bullying) and cyberbullying (Frederique, 2020). The broader definition of peer violence has been defined as »aggressive, deliberate acts committed repeatedly and continuously by a group or individual against a victim who cannot easily defend themselves« (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

There is no uniform definition of bullying, as various experts define the term differently, and bullying itself is not legally regulated in the Slovenian environment. Scientific literature most often defines bullying as repetitive behaviour aimed at affecting another person, primarily on an emotional level, and often deliberate (Bae, 2021; Basile et al., 2020; Ekşi & Türk-Kurtça, 2021; Evans & Smokowski, 2016; Manin et al., 2020; Sherer & Sherer, 2011; Zych et al., 2019). Such behaviour is aggressive and involves an element of imbalance of power and continuity (Perren et al., 2010; Rigby, 2012; Stickl Haugen et al., 2019). Bullying thus includes actions such as threats, spreading rumours, and physical or psychological attacks with

intent to harm an individual (Bellmore et al., 2017; Gaffney et al., 2019). There are several types of bullying: verbal, social, and physical bullying (Turkmen et al., 2013; Whittaker et al., 2015). Verbal bullying includes teasing, insults, inappropriate sexual comments, and threats (indirect and direct). Social bullying includes aspects of damaging reputation by spreading rumours and untruths, ignoring, social exclusion, and humiliation, while the highest level of bullying is physical bullying, where verbal and social bullying escalates into bodily harm to the individual.

Recently, however, a new form of bullying has emerged with digitalisation: cyberbullying or online bullying (Perren et al., 2010). Scientific literature suggests several definitions of cyberbullying, but it is generally considered to be a form of bullying that uses technology to achieve a goal (De Pasquale et al., 2021; Manin et al., 2020; Margitics et al., 2020; Perren et al., 2010; Wang & Sek-yum Ngai, 2021). Cyberbullying is perpetrated by using digital technology, and the most commonly used are cell phones, computers, and tablets. It is understood as intentionally reparative behaviour that has a damaging effect on the victim. Authors mention three important aspects of traditional bullying which are intention, repetition, and power imbalance. Adding that cyberbullying also includes elements of anonymity and publicity (Campbell & Bauman, 2017). The difference between traditional bullying and cyber bullying is mainly that traditional bullying happens face to face, while cyberbullying happens online so the perpetrator can hide behind the computer screen. As cyberbullying allows anonymity it can result in perpetrators being crueller towards their victims (Donegan, 2012).

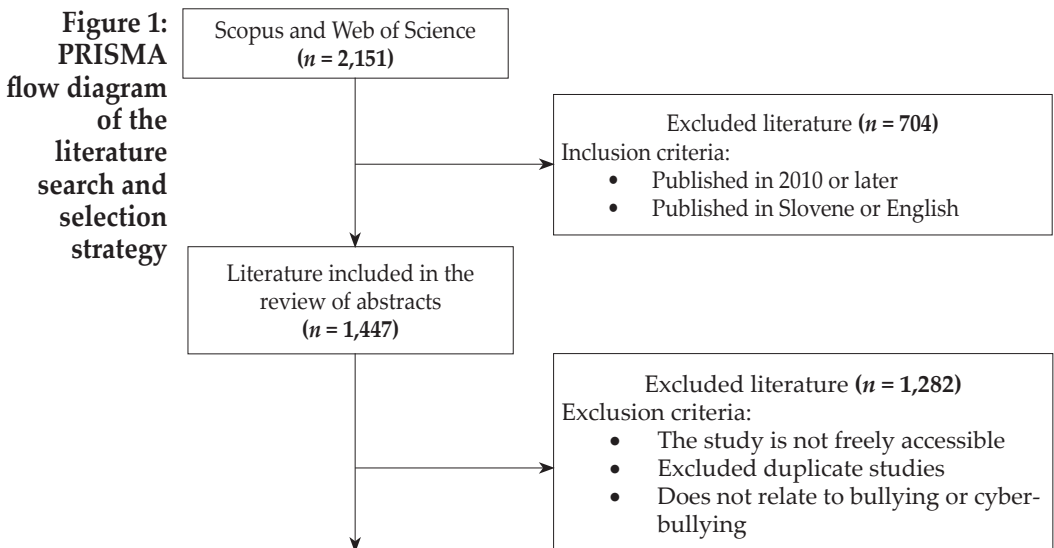
Currently, bullying and denigration are very common on social media (Margitics et al., 2020). Social media is used to post negative, harmful, false or malicious content about someone else, which is sent with the intent to cause embarrassment or humiliation (Mohseny et al., 2020). In this article we consider bullying to be one of the forms of peer violence that can include or not include cyberbullying.

The article presents a comprehensive review of literature on the prevalence of research on peer violence in primary and secondary schools. In this systematic literature review we included research that involves children from ages 6 to 19. According to the Slovenian school system we divided articles into two age groups (primary and secondary school). Children from ages 6 to 14 were included for the primary schools and ages 15 to 19 for the secondary schools. We summarise the findings of existing studies on the prevalence of violence in schools, on differences in age and sex of children and adolescents in relation to causing or experiencing violence, describe the different types of bullying, and present a comparison of selected good practices, which describe different approaches to creating a safe school environment with a zero-tolerance policy on violence. At the end of the article, we summarised our conclusions, discussed the gaps in the field of peer violence in schools, and provided guidelines for further research.

2 DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

The systematic review of literature on the topic of peer violence in primary and secondary schools was conducted in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. For the research of literature regarding peer violence in primary schools, we used the following search query combination: ((bull\* OR bully\* OR teasing OR tormenting OR harassing OR browbeat\* OR hectoring OR tyranniz\* OR »cyber bully\*« OR »online bully\*« OR »online harass\*« OR »cyber harass\*« OR »bullying online« OR »harassment online« OR trolling) AND (»elementary school\*« OR »primary school\*« OR »grade school\*« OR »junior school\*« OR »grammar school\*« OR »folk school\*«)). For the research of literature on the topic of peer violence in secondary schools, we used the following search query combination: ((»high school« OR »middle school« OR teen\* OR adolescent) AND ((bull\* OR bully\* OR teasing OR tormenting OR harassing OR browbeat\* OR hectoring OR tyranniz\* OR »cyber bully\*« OR »online bully\*« OR »online harass\*« OR »cyber harass\*« OR »bullying online« OR »harassment online« OR trolling). The synonyms used to define the search parameters for schools were determined on the basis of the most frequently used synonyms for primary and secondary schools in the global research environment and the valid Slovenian school system. We searched for the chosen combination of words in literature titles, keywords and abstracts. The literature review was conducted on 17 February 2021. Our inclusion criteria captured articles published in 2010 or later and articles written in Slovene or English. In the next phase, duplicate contributions were excluded from the article database. Furthermore, we excluded literature that is not freely available and that does not relate to bullying or cyberbullying. In reviewing the full texts of the articles, we excluded in the last phase studies that were not relevant for our review and those that do not meet all inclusion criteria.

The literature review process for articles on peer violence in primary schools is presented in Figure 1.



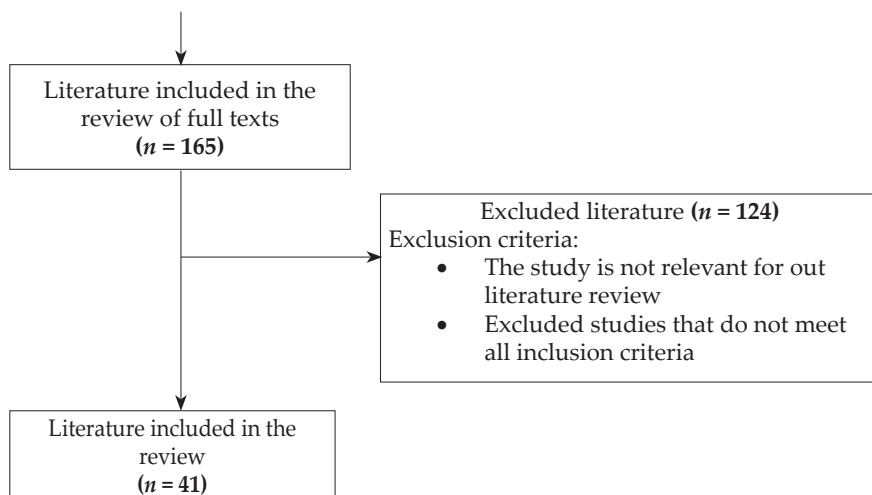


Figure 2 presents the literature review process for articles on peer violence in secondary schools.

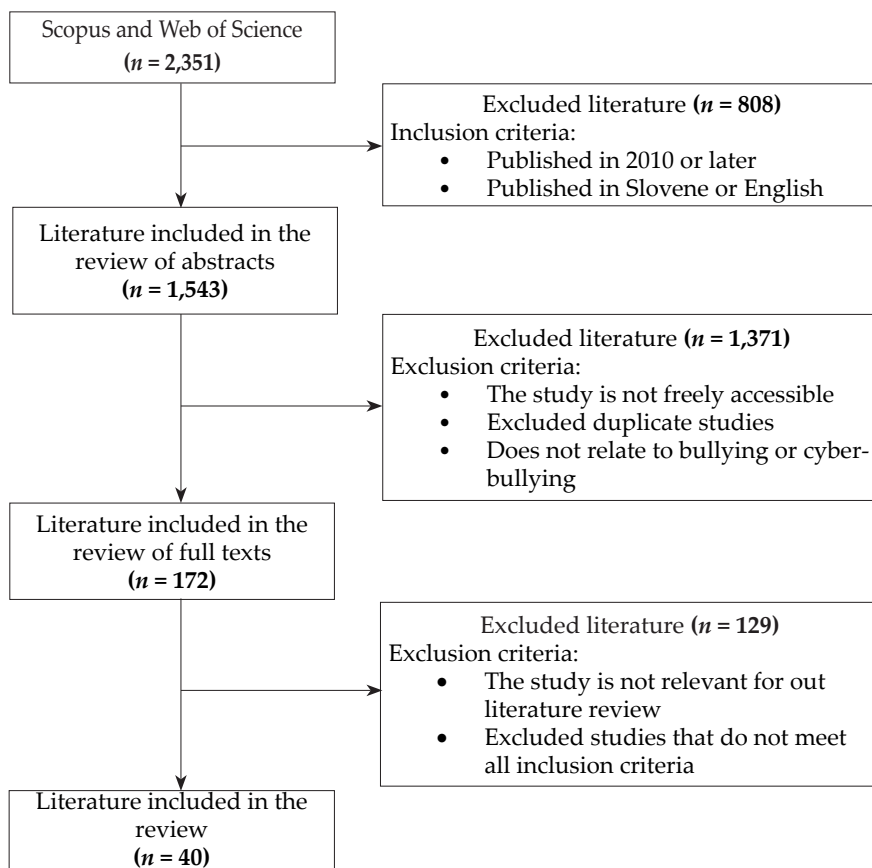


Figure 2: PRISMA flow diagram of the secondary school literature search and selection strategy.

3 FINDINGS

Based on the literature collection process described, a query using the selected search string returned a total of 4,502 potentially relevant papers. Taking into account the inclusion and exclusion criteria and after excluding any duplicates, 81 papers were included in the final analysis, of which 41 on the topic of peer violence in primary schools and 40 regarding peer violence in secondary schools. A description of the papers included in the systematic literature review is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

3.1 Findings of literature review on peer violence in primary schools

Table 1:  
Description  
of articles  
included in  
the literature  
review

Article	Type of article	Key results and findings
1. (Agee & Crocker, 2016) Are Current U.S. Anti-Bullying Programs Net Beneficial to Parents? Inferences from School Switching	Survey  <i>Parents from 595 families</i>	There is a link between changing schools and bullying of children, as the victim’s parents do not trust the quality and good work of the school. On average, parents would be willing to pay \$130.00 per year to reduce their child’s victimisation. The amount ranges from \$54.00 (parents of non-victim children) to \$633.00 (parents of child victims).
2. (Aizenkot & Kashy-Rosenbaum, 2020) The effectiveness of Safe Surfing, an Anti-cyberbullying Intervention Program in Reducing Online and Offline Bullying and Improving Perceived Popularity and Self-esteem	Experiment and survey  <i>1,550 students</i>	The implemented prevention programme reduced the prevalence of bullying, as well as cyberbullying, although it was focused primarily on the online form. Students’ self-esteem had also improved.

3.	<p>(Al-Saadoon et al., 2014)</p> <p>The Magnitude and Impact of Bullying among School Pupils in Muscat, Oman: A Cross-sectional Study</p>	<p>Cross-sectional study</p> <p>1,229 students</p>	<p>76% of students were victims of one type of bullying. Predominantly, victimisation took place near the school and was caused by students of the same or higher age as the victim. The most common form was verbal violence. The effects of bullying were resulted in absences, as the victims were more often absent from school.</p>
4.	<p>(Axford et al., 2020)</p> <p>The Effectiveness of the KiVa Bullying Prevention Program in Wales, UK: Results from a Pragmatic Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial</p>	<p>Longitudinal study</p> <p>22 schools from Wales</p>	<p>The bullying prevention programme did not show results in the schools where the programme was implemented. The data showed no improvement compared to the control group of schools.</p>
5.	<p>(Baas et al., 2013)</p> <p>Children's Perspectives on Cyberbullying: Insights Based on Participatory Research</p>	<p>Group sessions</p> <p>28 primary school students</p>	<p>Conversations with children indicated that not everyone knows the difference between cyberbullying and pranks. The distinction emphasised the purpose of the perpetrator and the frequency of the events. Children highlighted their fear of the parents' reaction if they found themselves in the role of victim.</p>
6.	<p>(Chokprajakchat &amp; Kuanliang, 2018)</p> <p>Peer Victimization: A Review of Literature</p>	<p>Literature review</p>	<p>Due to the occurrence of bullying in schools, a large number of prevention programmes have emerged over the years. The authors emphasise the importance of establishing programmes focused on victims and the possible consequences of bullying, which will understand the characteristics of perpetrators of violence.</p>



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7.	(Clarkson et al., 2019) Introducing KiVa School-based Antibullying Programme to the UK: A Preliminary Examination of Effectiveness and Programme Cost	Longitudinal study <i>41 primary schools in the UK</i>	Following the introduction of the one-year prevention programme, the level of bullying in primary schools decreased. However, the authors emphasise results should be interpreted with caution, as the study included no control group. The programme also proved to be financially favourable.
8.	(Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014) Addressing Bullying Problems in Irish Schools and in Cyberspace: A Challenge for School Management	Survey <i>44 principals</i>	There was very little response among principals to participate in the survey. The responses indicated that all participants had implemented policies to reduce bullying in their schools. Most had also included cyberbullying in their policies. The problems facing principals are reflected in further action in this area and the education of their employees. The authors emphasise the importance of better guidance and leadership by the Ministry of Education.

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9.	<p>(Donoghue et al., 2015)</p> <p>When is Peer Aggression ‚Bullying?‘ An Analysis of Elementary and Middle School Student Discourse on Bullying at School</p>	<p>Focus groups</p> <p>54 students</p>	<p>When describing their own perception of the definition of bullying, students used different words than those used in the definitions. However, they distinguished bullying from other aggressive acts among peers by similar criteria. Younger students placed more emphasis on the role of teachers to solve victimisation than older students, who stated that they would try to solve the problem on their own. Children often do not know the true definition of bullying, and education provided by teachers and parents plays an important role.</p>
10.	<p>(Dulovics &amp; Kamenská, 2017)</p> <p>Analysis of Cyber-bullying Forms by Aggressors in Elementary and Secondary Schools</p>	<p>Survey</p> <p>390 primary school students and 541 secondary school students</p>	<p>One in ten students bullied others online, and did so repeatedly. The most common forms were insults, threats and name-calling. In terms of forms of bullying, girls had a higher prevalence than boys only for social exclusion.</p>
11.	<p>(Eriksen, 2018)</p> <p>The Power of the Word: Students’ and School Staff’s Use of the Established Bullying Definition</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>455 employees and students in primary schools in Norway</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted in schools where the definition of bullying is clearly established. Teachers’ responses showed that this very specific definition was too rigid and not the best for use in schools. They also highlighted the excessive use of the word bullying among students, even if bullying did not occur.</p>

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12.	(Grifoni et al., 2021) Against Cyberbullying Actions: An Italian Case Study	Case study <i>Students, teachers and parents from 22 primary schools in Italy</i>	Strategies and preventive measures to reduce cyberbullying are key to improving the problem. They should be included in the school system itself. It is important that students, teachers and parents are actively involved.
13.	(Hall & Chapman, 2018) The Role of School Context in Implementing a Statewide Anti-Bullying Policy and Protecting Students	Survey <i>505 employees in schools</i>	There have been major differences observed in different schools in the implementation of the anti-bullying policy in effect in North Carolina. Larger schools with more student expulsions were less successful in the implementation of the policy. In addition, secondary schools were more effective than primary schools. The level of protection of children by teachers, however, was higher in primary schools.
14.	(Han et al., 2017) School Bullying in Urban China: Prevalence and correlation with school climate.	Survey <i>3,675 students</i>	The results of the questionnaire showed that 26.9% of students were victimised. Bullying is more common in primary schools than secondary schools. A good relationship with teachers and classmates is very important in protecting students against bullying.

15.	<p>(Jansen et al., 2012)</p> <p>Prevalence of Bullying and Victimization among Children in Early Elementary School: Do Family and School Neighbourhood Socioeconomic Status Matter?</p>	<p>Survey</p> <p>6,379 <i>primary school students</i></p>	<p>A third of the children were involved in bullying. Most of them were perpetrators of bullying, followed by students who were both victims and perpetrators. A few children were just victims of bullying. Statistically, the survey did not show a link between a higher prevalence of bullying and schools in a poorer socioeconomic environment. However, there was a greater likelihood that a child would participate in bullying if they came from a family with poorer socioeconomic circumstances.</p>
16.	<p>(Karabacak et al., 2015)</p> <p>Determination of the Level of Being Cyber Bully/Victim of Eighth Grade Students of Elementary Schools</p>	<p>Survey</p> <p>167 <i>students</i></p>	<p>Among Turkish children, the survey showed that cyberbullying is not very widespread. There is a higher proportion of boys among victims and perpetrators. A child who is a victim is also more likely to act as a perpetrator of cyberbullying.</p>
17.	<p>(Kaufman et al., 2018)</p> <p>Why Does a Universal Anti-Bullying Program Not Help All Children? Explaining Persistent Victimization During an Intervention</p>	<p>Longitudinal study</p> <p>9,122 <i>primary school students</i></p>	<p>When the KiVa bullying prevention program was introduced, students observed three different outcomes: bullying decreased, bullying remained frequent, and there was no bullying (stable). Isolation from classmates, internalisation of problems, and poor relationships with parents are the reasons why some children were still victimised even after the intervention.</p>

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18.	(Khan et al., 2020) Traits, Trends, and Trajectory of Tween and Teen Cyberbullies	Literature review	The literature review did not provide authors with an insight into when cyberbullying begins and how it develops. The traditional form develops long before entering adolescence. The online form of bullying, however, depends on the child starting to use the web.
19.	(Kim et al., 2011) Bullying at Elementary School and Problem Behaviour in Young Adulthood: A Study of Bullying, Violence and Substance Use from Age 11 to Age 21	Survey and observational study  <i>957 of young students</i>	The study showed that bullying at school can affect later behaviour. Specifically, it showed connections between causing violence and the use of alcohol and marijuana.
20.	(Kisfalusi, 2018) Bullies and Victims in Primary Schools: The Associations between Bullying, Victimization, and Students' Ethnicity and Academic Achievement	Survey  <i>1,054 primary school students in Hungary</i>	The study did not show a link between bullying and belonging to ethnic minorities in students with a higher socioeconomic status. Students who belonged to the lower socioeconomic class and were members of minorities were more often bullied. Students with higher grades are less victimised.
21.	(Kisić-Tepavčević et al., 2020) Bullying Victimization in Primary School: A Cross-sectional Study in One Municipality in Belgrade	Cross-sectional study  <i>380 students from 6 primary schools in Belgrade</i>	According to the results of the questionnaire, the prevalence of victimisation is 39.7%. This prevalence, however, decreases with age. So, it is higher in lower than in the higher grades. Gender differences are also evident, as the percentage of bullied boys is higher than the percentage of bullied girls. Bullying most often happens in classrooms and schoolyards. Education and the role of teachers are important in reducing the problem.

22.	(Kokkinos et al., 2013) Cyber-bullying, Personality and Coping among Pre-adolescents	Survey <i>300 primary school students</i>	There were no observable gender differences when it comes to the role of a victim of cyberbullying. However, perpetrators were more often boys. Children who are victims or perpetrators showed greater emotional instability in surveys. Boys, who are more aggressive by nature, are more likely to become perpetrators. On the other hand, children who did not participate in any of the roles showed a higher level of conscience.
23.	(Krek, 2020) Structural Reasons for School Violence and Education Strategies	Empirical study (survey and interview)  <i>Survey: 175 teachers</i>  <i>Interviews: 29 teachers, counsellors and principals</i>	Teachers have sufficient pedagogical knowledge to recognise violence among children and the reasons for it. Most of the respondents take appropriate steps to stop violent behaviour. Teachers are aware that the responsibility for action lies not only with counsellors, but also with teachers themselves. In practice, however, most leave measures to the counsellors.
24.	(Kritzinger, 2017) Growing a Cyber-safety Culture amongst School Learners in South Africa Through Gaming	Survey <i>47 students</i>	Educating students about online safety and cyberbullying is very poor in South Africa. Using video games could improve the situation and educate students, as well as teachers and parents.
25.	(León-Del-Barco et al., 2020) Emotional Intelligence as a Protective Factor Against Victimization in School Bullying	Survey <i>822 primary school students</i>	A child with better developed emotional intelligence and understanding has a lower likelihood of becoming a victim of bullying. These characteristics can thus be a protective factor for children. It makes sense to introduce learning emotional control into the school system itself or into prevention programmes.

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26.	(Machimbarrena & Garaigordobil, 2017) Bullying/Cyberbullying in 5th and 6th Grade: Differences between Public and Private Schools	Cross-sectional study  <i>1,993 students</i>	In a comparison of public and private schools, the study found no statistically significant differences in the prevalence of violence. However, public school students experienced several different types of violence. More aggressive behaviour was observed in public schools.
27.	(Mobin et al., 2017) Cybervictimization Among Preadolescents in a Community-based Sample in Canada: Prevalence and Predictors	Survey  <i>5,783 primary school students</i>	10.2% of surveyed children were bullied online. Among them, most were girls and students who are also traditionally bullied, have low self-esteem and poor relationships with their parents.
28.	(Monks et al., 2016) The Emergence of Cyberbullying in Childhood: Parent and Teacher Perspectives	Focus groups  <i>41 parents and teachers of primary school students</i>	Participants in the focus group showed that they understand what cyberbullying is, as well as its forms and potential consequences. They agreed that, in terms of severity, cyberbullying can be equated with traditional bullying. Supervising the use of the web and mobile phones at home was seen as a good measure to reduce the problem.
29.	(Muijs, 2017) Can Schools Reduce Bullying? The Relationship between School Characteristics and the Prevalence of Bullying Behaviours	Survey  <i>1,411 primary school students and 68 teachers</i>	There is less bullying in schools where prevention programmes are in place, and teachers and students monitor violent events in more detail. The size and type of school has no effect on the prevalence.

30.	(Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019) A Critical Review of Anti-Bullying Programs in North American Elementary Schools	Review and comparison <i>10 prevention programmes</i>	The PEGS prevention programme showed the greatest effect on reducing bullying in schools. This programme focuses on students who perpetrate bullying and thus changes their behaviour. Programmes that are universal and include all students are not as effective, but show positive effects on victims who gain more »allies«. It would make sense to combine these two types of programmes.
31.	(Ross & Horner, 2014) Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support: Preliminary Evaluation of Third-, Fourth-, and Fifth-Grade Attitudes Toward Bullying	Longitudinal study <i>3 schools</i>	A few steps have been added to the already introduced prevention programme in schools that would further improve the issue of bullying. Teachers assessed the programme as effective and easy to implement. The results of the study showed that children changed their behaviour, especially in the role of observer of victimisation. The practice of the stop sign worked very well in schools, empowering witnesses to take action in the event of incidents.
32.	(Salehi et al., 2016) Primary School Teachers and Parents Perception of Peer Bullying Among Children in Iran: A Qualitative Study	Interviews <i>4 teachers and 8 parents perpetrators of bullying and the victim</i>	Parents and teachers understand the issue of bullying, and perceive it as physical and verbal. But they are not aware of the long-term psychological consequences that children may bear. Teachers list punishment as the most effective method of ending bullying. Parental involvement is crucial in various prevention programmes and workshops.



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33.	(Seo et al., 2017) Factors Associated with Bullying Victimization among Korean Adolescents	Survey <i>2,936 students</i>	Bullying in schools declines with age. The 10 to 12 age group showed a higher rate of being bullied (9.5%) than the 15 to 17 age group (6.4%). Girls are more often victims of bullying.
34.	(Sidera et al., 2020) Bullying in Primary School Children: The Relationship Between Victimization and Perception of Being a Victim	Survey <i>4,646 primary school students</i>	The results of the survey showed that 36.7% and 4.4% of students were victims of bullying and cyberbullying, respectively. It is of some concern, however, that 56.9% of students were unaware that they were victims of traditional bullying. The data thus indicates normalisation of bullying among primary school students.
35.	(Tangen & Campbell, 2010) Cyberbullying Prevention: One Primary Schools Approach	Survey <i>35 students</i>	The study explored the effects of an approach based on the philosophy of community and dialogue building among students (Philosophy for children). Students attending schools with an implemented P4C programme recorded a higher rate of traditional bullying than children without the programme. The prevalence of cyberbullying did not differ significantly.
36.	(Umoke et al., 2020) Bullying Experience of Pupils in Nigerian Primary Schools	Observational study / cross-sectional study <i>1,080 primary school students</i>	Nigerian primary school students face a high rate of bullying (51.4% of boys and 50.8% of girls). There are also high rates of children witnessing and those perpetrating bullying. There is no gender difference in these three different roles. The implementation of state-supported anti-violence programmes is crucial.

37.	(Utari & Hermawati, 2017) Cyber Media Analysis: How to Read Cyber Bullying Messages among Children	Review of content and interviews  <i>250 students</i>	When using the Facebook social network, children use fake names and do not post their personal pictures. On their profiles, they also change their age by up to 10 years. When committing bullying, children are not fully aware of the consequences of their actions. Parents are responsible for supervising their use of social networks.
38.	(Van der Ploeg et al., 2016) The Support Group Approach in the Dutch KiVa Anti-bullying Programme: Effects on Victimization, Defending and Well-being at School	Longitudinal study  <i>66 primary schools (38 victims of bullying)</i>	The study investigated the effects of a support group on the frequency of victimisation of victims, their well-being at school, and the number of victim advocates. Reduced victimisation and improved child well-being were only short-term effects of the programme. During the school year of the study, the effects were no longer observed. Long-term improvement was seen observed with increased number of victim advocates.
39.	(Vannini et al., 2011) »FearNot!«: a Computer-based Anti-bullying-programme Designed to Foster Peer Intervention	Longitudinal study  <i>2 primary schools</i>	In implementing the three-week prevention programme, the authors found that in both schools, there is a higher proportion of boys who are victims or perpetrators of bullying. As part of the workshops, children most often chose girls as so-called victim advocates. At the last evaluation, the results showed that German children responded positively to the programme, and the situation improved. The opposite is true for children from the United Kingdom, where the results were not evident.

40.	(Woolley, 2019) Towards an Inclusive Understanding of Bullying: Identifying Conceptions and Practice in the Primary School Workforce	Survey <i>131 employees in primary schools</i>	There are many different definitions of bullying in use. Teachers who themselves judged that the most common form of bullying was verbal violence did not highlight it in their definition. More than half of respondents described bullying as a recurring event rather than a one-off event. A single definition is needed – one that is clear, comprehensive and understandable.
41.	(Zequinão et al., 2016) School Bullying: A Multifaceted Phenomenon	Survey <i>409 students from socially vulnerable schools</i>	The prevalence of bullying ranges up to 29.8% and 40.5% in boys and girls, respectively. There is no statistical difference between the roles played by the different sexes. The lack of social support, however, is particularly noticeable in children coming from more vulnerable families. Insufficient action by teachers when violent situations arose was also apparent.

A review of literature on bullying in primary schools reveals a significant predominance of studies investigating the prevalence of bullying (Al-Saadoon et al., 2014; Dulovics & Kamenská, 2017; Han et al., 2017; Jansen et al., 2012; Karabacak et al., 2015; Kisić-Tepavčević et al., 2020; Mobin et al., 2017; Seo et al., 2017; Sidera et al., 2020; Umoke et al., 2020; Utari & Hermawati, 2017) and studies relating to evaluation of prevention programmes (Aizenkot & Kashy-Rosenbaum, 2020; Axford et al., 2020; Clarkson et al., 2019; Hall & Chapman, 2018; Kaufman et al., 2018; Muijs, 2017; Rawlings & Stoddard 2019; Ross & Horner, 2014; Van der Ploeg et al., 2016; Vannini et al., 2011).

When discussing bullying in its traditional form, most studies present a high percentage of victims of bullying. This percentages though vary due to different reasons. Authors of studies use different definitions of bullying and cyberbullying, different methodologies when researching the problem, studies are carried out at different time slots, the samples vary in size etc. The percentage of traditional bullying is high and ranges from 26.9% (Han et al., 2017) to 76% (Al-Saadoon et al., 2014). In some cases, however, there are schools with a low rate of victimisation, only 9.5% (Seo et al., 2017). Compared to traditional bullying, cyberbullying is much less widespread (Dulovics & Kamenská, 2017; Karabacak et al., 2015; Mobin et al., 2017; Sidera et al., 2020). Surveys collected in this literature review have

shown a prevalence of cyberbullying of around 10% or less. The survey that found 36% of children to be victims of traditional bullying, found only 4% of children to be victims of cyberbullying (Sidera et al., 2020). The most common form of bullying is verbal violence (Al-Saadoon et al., 2014; Woolley, 2019), which occurs mainly in classrooms, in schoolyards and near schools (Al-Saadoon et al., 2014; Kisić-Tepavčević et al., 2020).

Some studies indicate no gender differences in causing violence (Umoke et al., 2020), while others indicate statistically higher prevalence of boys as perpetrators of violence (Kisić-Tepavčević et al., 2020; Kokkinos et al., 2013; Vannini et al., 2011). Specifically, boys are more often in the role of the victim and in the role of the perpetrator. In some places, however, girls are more often in role of the victim (Mobin et al., 2017; Seo et al., 2017; Zequinão et al., 2016). Differences can also be observed in the connections between bullying and other demographic factors, such as age, socioeconomic circumstances, and belonging to ethnic minorities (Kisfalusi, 2018; Kokkinos et al., 2013). The authors of the articles noticed that violence is more common in younger children and that the prevalence decreases with age (Kisić-Tepavčević et al., 2020; Seo et al., 2017). Students who belong to ethnic minorities and also to a lower socioeconomic class are more likely to become victims of bullying. However, being a member of an ethnic minority has no effect if the child belongs to the higher socioeconomic class (Kisfalusi, 2018). When a child is growing up in a family with a poorer economic status, there is a greater likelihood that they will participate in bullying. Schools located in a poorer socioeconomic environment do not record a higher prevalence of bullying (Jansen et al., 2012). Well-developed emotional intelligence and understanding, however, are personal characteristics of children that supposedly reduce the likelihood of victimisation (León-Del-Barco et al., 2020). However, in the case of a pronounced aggressive character, it is necessary to observe the student in more detail, as the likelihood of committing violence against others is greater (Kokkinos et al., 2013).

Studies in the field of prevention programmes in schools assess the success or improved circumstances after the completion of the programme. We could say that the perception of bullying has changed over the years due to the increased public attention and reduced tolerance. Chokprajakchat and Kuanliang (2018) emphasize that bullying in schools has become more serious and noticeable therefore, a large number of different programs have been developed. However, different programmes bring different results. Among the very positive results, of course, is the reduced prevalence of bullying. Simultaneously, some schools have improved students' self-esteem and empowered witnesses to take action in the event of incidents (Aizenkot & Kashy-Rosenbaum, 2020; Ross & Horner, 2014). Furthermore, teachers and students monitor violent events in more detail (Muijs, 2017). Following the introduction of a one-year prevention programme in the United Kingdom, the prevalence of bullying in primary schools dropped significantly, but the authors emphasise caution in interpreting the results, as the study did not use a control group (Clarkson et al., 2019). In a study conducted in the U.S., where several programmes were included in the evaluation, the PEGS prevention programme (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019) had the greatest effect on reducing bullying in schools. The study of the European KiVa programme,

which was conducted using a control group, showed no effect in improving the problems in schools (Axford et al., 2020). A separate article, referring to the same study, concluded that reduced victimisation and improved child well-being are only short-term results of the programme. During the next school year, the effects of the study were no longer observed (Van der Ploeg et al., 2016). It should be understood that different programmes also perform differently in different schools. In the implementation of the anti-bullying policy in the US, larger schools with more student expulsions were less successful in the implementation of the policy (Hall & Chapman 2018). In the implementation of the three-week prevention programme, the authors found that German children responded positively to the programme, and the situation improved. The opposite is true for children from the United Kingdom, where the results were not evident (Vannini et al., 2011).

In addition to many prevention programmes, there are also many different definitions of what bullying is. Often, teachers in the same schools use different definitions and want the competent institutions to define a single definition that is clear, comprehensive and understandable (Woolley, 2019). On the other hand, teachers from schools where the definition is well defined have the opposite opinion. They consider the definition too rigid to be used in schools (Eriksen, 2018). Even children are usually unfamiliar with the description of bullying, which is reflected in the excessive use of the term, even if this type of violence is not present (Baas et al., 2013; Donoghue et al., 2015).

Awareness and correct measures by teachers and parents are also important factors in reducing violence in schools. In studies, teachers and parents demonstrate sufficient knowledge for identifying both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, as well as an understanding that action is needed (Krek, 2020; Monks et al., 2016). Of course, some are not aware of the long-term psychological consequences that children may bear and thus implement the wrong measures (Salehi et al., 2016).

The majority of the articles included in this literature review mainly took place in the countries of Europe, such as Netherlands and Spain and in the UK. Other studies, included in our review took place in USA, Oman, South Korea, China, Iran, and Nigeria. The largest study was carried out within Dutch KiVa anti-bullying intervention program in a five-wave survey among 9,122 children, where authors of the study (Kaufman et al., 2018) tried to test whether social standing, child characteristics, and parent-child relationships explain why some children are persistently victimized despite participating in an anti-bullying intervention. The analysis of the findings of included articles shows no significant correlation between results of studies, carried out in a similar geographic environment.

### 3.2 Findings of literature review on peer violence in secondary schools

Article	Type of article	Key results and findings
1. (Aoyama et al., 2011) Cyberbullying among high school students	Grouping analysis <i>133 secondary schools</i>	Parental supervisions of children's social media use reduces the occurrence of cyberbullying. Victims of cyberbullying often become perpetrators of cyberbullying themselves.
2. (Arslan et al., 2011) Prevalence of Peer Bullying in High School Students in Turkey and the Roles of Socio-Cultural and Demographic Factors in the Bullying Cycle	Relational study <i>1,670 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Boys use more direct methods of bullying compared to girls. A higher percentage of boys take the role of perpetrators, while a higher percentage of girls are victims of bullying.
3. (Atalay et al., 2018) Violence and related factors among high school students in semirural areas	Cross-sectional study <i>1,465 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	8.5% of students exhibited violent behaviour at school, with the main reasons for such behaviour being social status, family problems and rejection among classmates.
4. (Bae, 2021) The relationship between exposure to risky online content, cyber victimization, perception of cyberbullying, and cyberbullying offending in Korean adolescents	Survey analysis <i>4,779 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Male students are more likely to perpetrate bullying than female students. Secondary school performance is directly related to bullying at school and online, and the detection of online and physical bullying and school supervisions have a significant impact on reducing both forms of bullying. A key factor in reducing bullying is limiting exposure to harmful content online.
5. (Bai et al., 2021) Cyberbullying victimization and suicide ideation: A crumbled belief in a just world	Survey analysis <i>3,322 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Cyberbullying victimisation can lead to adolescent suicidal ideation. Adolescents' self-esteem and social support have the effect of reducing the cyberbullying victimisation.

**Table 2:**  
Description of articles included in the literature review.

## Study of Different Forms of Peer Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools

24.	(Basile et al., 2020) Interpersonal Violence Victimization Among High School Students – Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019	Survey analysis <i>13,872 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	One in five students reported being bullied at school, and one in twelve students reported cyberbullying.
6.	(Bellmore et al., 2017) The Trouble with Bullying in High School: Issues and Considerations in Its Conceptualization	Literature review	The organisational and social aspects of secondary school can have an influence on bullying among students. Prevention programmes and a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying are successful solutions.
7.	(Bhat et al., 2017) Online Bullying among High-School Students in India	Survey analysis <i>646 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Half of the participating students have already been victims of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is more often perpetrated by male students, while female students are most commonly victims of sexual cyberbullying.
13.	(Carrera-Fernández et al., 2021) Me and Us versus the Others: Troubling the Bully Phenomenon	Survey analysis <i>1,165 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Bullying is influenced by sociocultural factors, such as gender stereotypes, sexism and attitudes towards cultural diversity.
30.	(De Pasquale et al., 2021) The role of mood states in cyberbullying and cybervictimization behaviors in adolescents	Survey analysis using FCB-VC and POMS <i>554 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Cyberbullying is more commonly perpetrated by older male adolescents, and the main contributing factor is anger or anxiety/tension.
8.	(Dorio et al., 2020) School Climate Counts: A Longitudinal Analysis of School Climate and Middle School Bullying Behaviors	Survey analysis <i>870 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Students consider the school atmosphere to have a strong influence on the level of bullying at school and online. Students are aware of the importance of safety at school and that they help create it together with the school staff.
9.	(Edwards & Batlemento, 2016) Caregiver Configurations and Bullying Among High School Students	Survey analysis <i>3,793 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Bullying in secondary school poses a major risk of suicidal ideation and other long-term and negative psychological consequences.



10.	(Ekşi & Türk-Kurtça, 2021) The Witness Experiences of Bullying in High school Students	Review and qualitative study <i>36 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Findings show that bullying is a common problem in today's schools. Cognitive empathy needs to be added to the anti-bullying programmes in schools. Bullying affects both the victims of bullying themselves and the students who witness this form of violence. Combating bullying needs to be undertaken systematically, and must involve school staff, parents, bullies, victims and witnesses.
11.	(Evans & Smokowski, 2016) Theoretical Explanations for Bullying in School: How Ecological Processes Propagate Perpetration and Victimization	Literature review	Studying the theory of social capital, the theory of domination, the theory of humiliation, and the theory of organisational culture helps us better understand the motivation for bullying behaviour. Bullying at school affects the school culture and school atmosphere, and can even increase in some cases of passive response to bullying among students.
12.	(Fahmi et al., 2020) Self-esteem and bullying behavior among junior high school students	Qualitative study <i>176 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	The number of cases of bullying in the school environment are increasing, and these are affecting the mental health of students themselves. Students' self-esteem and self-respect affect the likelihood of a person becoming a perpetrator or a victim of bullying.
14.	(Fischer et al., 2021) Teachers' Self-efficacy in Preventing and Intervening in School Bullying: a Systematic Review	Literature review	A teacher's effectiveness in perceiving and recognising bullying is influenced by their theoretical knowledge of the problem and their interaction with students.
15.	(Frederique, 2020) What do the data reveal about school violence in schools?	Analysis of statistical data and studies	Data from secondary schools show that the level of violence and bullying in schools is decreasing, while more serious incidents (suicides, systematic bullying) are more frequent.



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16.	(Gaffney et al., 2019) Examining the Effectiveness of School-Bullying Intervention Programs Globally	Meta-analysis  <i>100 studies from 12 different countries</i>	The results showed that anti-bullying and violence programmes assessed in Greece were the most effective in reducing bullying, followed by programmes in Spain and Norway. The NoTrap programme is the most effective programme in reducing victimization among students.
18.	(Juvonen, 2001) School Violence: Prevalence, Fears and Prevention	Literature review	Schools are aware of the importance of ensuring safety, and thus use both preventive and reactive programmes to ensure a high level of safety for all students.
19.	(Karaman et al., 2016) Opinions of High School Students involved in Violence	Survey analysis  <i>45 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Students perpetrated violence and bullying at school due to insufficient anger control, insufficient problem-solving skills, and for seeking support. Violent individuals also had poorer academic performance and often had problems in their home environment as well.
20.	(Liu et al., 2021) The association between sibling bullying and psychotic-like experiences among children age 11–16 years in China	Cross-sectional study  <i>3,231 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	The prevalence of bullying among under-age siblings is 13%, and bullying among siblings can also grow into bullying of other peers.
21.	(Mali, 2019) Prevention of Violence and Bullying in the School	Qualitative analysis  <i>20 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Almost every student is involved in violence and bullying during their education, which has major psychosocial consequences for adolescents.
22.	(Manin et al., 2020) Was that (cyber)bullying? Investigating the operational definitions of bullying and cyberbullying from adolescents' perspective	Literature review  <i>899 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Young people who are directly involved in bullying (both online and physically) have different understanding of the operational concept of bullying, depending on whether they are perpetrators or victims of bullying.

23.	(Margitits et al., 2020) Cyberbully and Cyber-victimization in Schools / Presentation of the Cyber Bully and Cyber Victim Scale	Analysis of surveys in e-book <i>882 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	68.7% of students were involved in cyberbullying. Online exclusion based on an individual's social status is also common.
25.	(Mohseny et al., 2020) Exposure to cyberbullying, cybervictimization and related factors among junior high school students	Cross-sectional study <i>1,456 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Social media has a tremendous effect on interactions between adolescents, and cyberbullying has evolved together with their development. Among secondary school students, cyberbullying has a prevalence of 22.3%, and as many as 18% of male and female students have already been victims of cyberbullying.
26.	(Myklestad & Stration, 2021) The relationship between self-harm and bullying behaviour among students	Population study <i>16,182 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	15% of individuals who were victims of cyberbullying and bullying at school reported self-harm. The tendency to self-harm is 5 times higher among victims of bullying in schools compared to other peers.
27.	(Nickerson, 2017) Preventing and Intervening with Bullying in Schools: A Framework for Evidence-Based Practice	Literature review	Schools are striving to establish a safe and accepting environment for all students, with the focus on bullying prevention programmes and intervention programmes in the event of such violence.
28.	(O'Malley Olsen et al., 2014) School Violence and Bullying Among Sexual Minority High School Students	Review of literature and statistics	Students belonging to sexual minorities are often victims of both violence and bullying. Students with low self-esteem are more often victims of bullying.
31.	(Perren et al., 2010) Bullying in school and cyberspace: Associations with depressive symptoms in Swiss and Australian adolescents	Survey analysis <i>1,320 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Victims of bullying are much more prone to depression and social exclusion. People who are victims of bullying in schools are often also victims of cyberbullying.

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32.	(Rigby, 2012) Bullying in Schools: Addressing Desires, not only Behaviors	Literature review	The approach of responding to bullying in schools focuses mainly on the use of punishments, which is statistically not the most effective. A more effective approach is to identify motives for bullying.
33.	(Rigby, 2019) Do teachers really underestimate the prevalence of bullying in schools?	Survey analysis <i>1,688 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	The argument that teachers often underestimate the prevalence of bullying among students is incorrect, as teachers perceive bullying / violent behaviour much earlier, and take strongly preventive action.
34.	(Sherer & Sherer, 2011) Violence among high school students in Thailand	Survey analysis <i>2,897 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	Bullying is directly affected by the social status of the student. Male students are more violent than female students, which also coincides with the local cultural arrangements.
17.	(Stickl Haugen et al., 2019) School District Anti-Bullying Policies: a State-Wide Content Analysis	Analysis review	For anti-bullying policies to be effective, they must be clear and unambiguous, they must include both logistical aspects, response models, as well as investigation and prevention of bullying.
35.	(Topaloglu & Topaloglu, 2016) Cyberbullying Tendencies of High School Students	Survey analysis <i>300 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	One of the most effective ways to deal with cyberbullying is to raise awareness among individuals. Cyberbullying is most often expressed in the form of harassment and humiliation.
36.	(Turkmen et al., 2013) Bullying among High School Students	Survey analysis <i>6,127 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	97% of students were already involved in bullying (either as perpetrators or victims). A male student was found to be 8.4 times more likely to be involved in violent behaviour than a female student.

37.	(Wang & Sek-yum Ngai, 2021) Understanding the effects of personal factors and situational factors for adolescent cyberbullying perpetration: The roles of internal states and parental mediation	Survey analysis <i>1,103 adolescents from secondary schools</i>	The ability to use technology is directly related to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying among peers is directly related to an individual's social status, but is not related to a person's physical strength. Parental intervention has a positive effect on reducing cyberbullying.
38.	(Yurtal, 2014) Violence in schools: From the perspective of students, teachers and mothers	Survey analysis <i>36 adolescents from secondary schools, 16 teachers and 17 parents</i>	Students and parents view solving the problem of bullying as distinctly repressive (punishment, expulsion from school, etc.), whereas school staff is focused primarily on solving the cause of the communication problem.
39.	(Zhu et al., 2021) Cyberbullying Among Adolescents and Children	Comprehensive literature review	Verbal violence is the most common type of cyberbullying. To be more successful in combating bullying, educational institutions need to collaborate with parents to design appropriate prevention programmes.
40.	(Zych et al., 2019) School Bullying and Dating Violence in Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	Meta-analysis <i>23 studies</i>	A connection was found between bullying at school and dating violence, as the manifestation of both is based on antisocial or violent dispositions.

Secondary school safety allows adolescents to be involved in a stimulating environment that aims for both social and creative learning (Evans & Smokowski, 2016; Frederique, 2020; Sherer & Sherer, 2011; Zych et al., 2019). If the safety needs of a child are not met in secondary school, adolescents are at risk of not feeling comfortable and safe in school (Mali, 2019; Turkmen et al., 2013). A safe learning environment and an environment where an individual develops both personally and professionally is essential for all secondary school students (Basile et al., 2020; Karaman, et al., 2016). Adolescents are very vulnerable when they enter secondary school (Parris et al., 2012), as their personalities are formed during these years (Myklestad & Stration, 2021). Secondary schools are thus organisations responsible for teaching certain skills and values, as well as a space where formal and informal socialisation takes place, both of which have a strong influence on the formation of a unique personality of the adolescent (Perren et al., 2010; Rigby, 2019).

Research shows a high occurrence of bullying in secondary schools: it ranges from 20.3% (Popović-Čitič et al., 2011) to 97% (Turkmen et al., 2013). One in five students reported being bullied at school (Basile et al., 2020), and a survey

conducted by Mali (2019) shows that almost every student is involved in violence and bullying during their education – directly or indirectly.

When any type of violence is present in the learning environment, it is the students who are most affected (Juvonen, 2001). Several studies have confirmed that even individuals who are not directly involved in violence itself are very likely to witness violence during their secondary school years (Dorio et al., 2020; Mali, 2019; Popović-Čitić et al., 2011; Stickl Haugen et al., 2019). Secondary school safety is important to protect all students and school staff from violence (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2021).

The problem of bullying in secondary schools has been present for a long time and manifests itself in various forms, with indirect bullying being more subtle and complex than direct bullying (Bae, 2021). Students perpetrate violence and bullying at school due to insufficient anger control, insufficient problem-solving skills, and for seeking support (Karaman et al., 2016). The main risk factors for a student becoming a bully are previous history of violence, alcohol and drug exposure, poor associations, poor family environment, poor school grades, poverty and low self-esteem (Evans & Smokowski, 2016; Fahmi, Aswirna & Ajeng, 2020; Orpinas, 2006; Turkmen et al., 2013).

Male students are more likely to engage in bullying than female students (Bae, 2021; De Pasquale et al., 2021), as male students were found to have an 8.4% higher likelihood to be involved in bullying (Turkmen et al., 2013), whereas female students are most often in the role of a victim (Arslan et al., 2011). These findings are also confirmed by the study conducted by O'Malley Olsen et al. (2014), where they add that homosexual students are more likely to be victims of both violence and bullying. Victims of bullying are most often adolescents who have low levels of self-esteem, poor self-image, who are not accepted by classmates due to their differences, and who come from minorities or have a poorer socioeconomic status (Sherer & Sherer, 2011; Whittaker et al., 2015). Victims of bullying are much more prone to depression and social exclusion, with a tendency to self-harm five times higher among victims of bullying in schools compared to other peers (Myklestad & Stration, 2021), which has long-term negative consequences for every individual (Edwards & Batlemento, 2016).

With the development of technology and digitalisation, young people are exposed to dangers in the online environment, as well as the physical environment. Cyberbullying is based primarily on psychological violence (De Pasquale et al., 2021) or online exclusion (Margitics et al., 2020). Verbal violence is the most common type of cyberbullying (Zhu et al., 2021), with research showing the prevalence of cyberbullying among secondary school students from 22.3% (Mohseny et al., 2020) to 67% (Margitics et al., 2020). Cyberbullying is much more brutal and direct due to the potential anonymity of the perpetrator, and the attacks are cruel and distinctly personal (Wang & Sek-yum Ngai, 2021). Cyberbullying is more commonly perpetrated by older male adolescents (De Pasquale et al., 2021); however, it is not directly related to a person's physical strength, unlike bullying (Wang & Sek-yum Ngai, 2021). Between 18% and 28% of male and female students have made rude or malicious comments online, 11% to 19% of male and female students have spread rumours about another

person online, and 9% to 15% of individuals have already deliberately harassed or embarrassed another person online (Bae, 2021; Margitics et al., 2020; Mohseny et al., 2020; Topaloglu & Topaloglu, 2016; Zhu et al., 2021). Individuals who have been victims of cyberbullying report self-harm, and also have a higher suicide rate (Edwards & Batlemento, 2016; Myklesstad & Stration, 2021). Often, the victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying are in a direct or even direct relationship in the real world (Vazsonyi et al., 2012), and cyberbullying often develops into bullying at school – is carried over into the physical environment (Bai et al., 2021).

Research shows that bullying is a common problem in today's secondary schools, and bullying in any form affects everyone. Combating bullying needs to be undertaken systemically, and must involve all parties: school staff, parents, bullies or perpetrators of violence, victims and witnesses (Ekşi & Türk-Kurtça, 2021). School staff and parents play a major role in preventing bullying online and in schools (Orpinas, 2006).

In the literature review we also included articles addressing the implementation of prevention programs of peer violence in schools. Bellmore et al. (2017) point out that it is precisely the prevention programs and zero tolerance policy towards peer violence that represent an effective address to the problem of peer violence in schools. The meta-analysis, which covers 12 different countries and analyses different implementations of prevention programs, highlighted the NoTrap program as the best prevention program against school violence – the school-based intervention program that utilizes a peer-led approach to prevent and combat both traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Gaffney et al., 2019). The review has shown that schools are aware of the problem of school violence and the importance of preventing it through prevention programs (Basile et al., 2020; Juvonen, 2001; Mali, 2019; Nickerson, 2017).

Students and parents view solving the problem of bullying as distinctly repressive (punishment, expulsion from school, etc.), whereas school staff is focused primarily on solving the cause of the communication problem (Yurtal, 2014). Successfully combating bullying can be achieved through reciprocal reactive and preventive addressing of the problem, by designing programmes that identify the causes of bullying rather than simply preventing its consequences (Fischer et al., 2021; Nickerson, 2017; Parris et al., 2012; Rigby, 2012; Stickl Haugen et al., 2019).

The review of literature on peer violence in secondary schools showed that very few studies have been conducted in Europe and more in Asia. The majority of the studies were carried out in USA, Turkey and China. Although the largest study was conducted in Norway (Myklesstad & Stration, 2021) among 16,182 adolescents, studying the relationship between self-harm and bullying behaviour among students. The study pointed out, that the tendency to self-harm is five times higher among victims of bullying in schools compared to other peers.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the systematic review of literature, we find that a large number of articles have been written on the topic of safety in primary and secondary schools,



specifically on the topic of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. The findings of our systematic review of 41 articles selected for the review of safety in primary schools and the 40 articles on safety in secondary schools show, that the issue of peer violence and thus bullying and cyberbullying is widespread and complex. The main challenge presents the lack of consensus among the research community and the profession on the very definition of peer violence. Nevertheless, we managed to capture various data on the prevalence of peer violence, definitions of this phenomenon, prevention programmes, and the role of parents and teachers in identifying and taking action in cases of violence.

The authors of the studies point out the high prevalence of violence in school settings. Traditional bullying in primary schools reaches up to 76% (Al-Saadoon et al., 2014), while the prevalence of cyberbullying varies below 10%. The results of studies in primary schools are comparable to studies conducted in secondary schools, but differ in terms of reporting on the prevalence of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is more common among secondary school students, as studies show a prevalence of 22.3% (Mohseny et al., 2020) to 67% (Margitics et al., 2020). Violence is more common in younger children. In both primary and secondary schools, the perpetrators are more often boys, while girls are often in the role of victims. Main identified risk factors in children in primary schools for exposure to violence were belonging to an ethnic minority and the lower economic class. Well-developed emotional intelligence was highlighted as a protective factor. In secondary schools, students with low self-esteem, members of ethnic minorities and lower economic classes were more exposed to violence. The most commonly identified risk factors for causing violence were previous history of violence, substance abuse, bad associations, and a poor family environment.

Considering the full literature review, large discrepancies can be observed in the findings of the studies. The authors use different methods to justify different points of view, which makes it somewhat difficult to draw sound conclusions. It is also important to emphasise that differences appear in the theory itself. There is no well-defined and standardised definition describing bullying and cyberbullying. Furthermore, most studies use surveys taken from other studies, which are then slightly modified by the authors to ensure a better fit to the measurements of their definition of the studied phenomenon. This prevents us from properly comparing the statistical data obtained in different studies. It would therefore make sense to establish a uniform definition of bullying and uniform questionnaires to investigate the prevalence of this problem.

Studies have shown the problem of bullying is extensive and complex, and researchers' interest in studying it has been growing exponentially over the last decade. With the growing research of this problem, the awareness among children and adolescents to recognise and talk about violence has also increased. Awareness of the seriousness of the problem is also reflected in the fact that young people, teachers, and parents show a greater degree of understanding of this phenomenon, which, unfortunately, has no effect on reducing its prevalence. With the rapid development of technology and social networks, a growing body of research on cyberbullying can also be observed. Since 2015, research in the secondary school environment has focused primarily on cyberspace. At the same

time, the traditional form of bullying was pushed somewhat into the background of research. We must keep in mind that all forms of bullying are serious problem and need to be researched equally or given the same amount of attention.

In the literature review, we also found some examples of good practices or implementation of effective prevention programmes. We would like to highlight three prevention programmes that have had a positive impact on reducing bullying. Programmes KiVa and PEGS address both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, whereas the Safe Surfing programme focuses on cyberbullying. However, there is a lack of articles related to events or actions after serious incidents, as there is (too) little written about the actions of parents and school employees. Our collection of literature also shows the obvious lack of research conducted in Slovenia. Existing research shows that Slovenia is no exception to the phenomenon of bullying in primary and secondary schools, so further research would be needed in Slovenia to help us better understand and confront this issue, and consequently contribute to the introduction of effective preventive measures.

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