# TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES TO BULLYING AT SCHOOL

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**Abstract**

Bullying is a form of intentional, repeated aggressive behavior aimed at causing physical, psychological or emotional harm to an individual perceived as weaker or disadvantaged. It occurs when there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, with the former using physical force, intimidation, insults or other forms of manipulation to exercise control or hurt the other person. School bullying is recognized as a global phenomenon affecting a substantial proportion of children and adolescents and, consequently, our society as well. This paper examines the concept of bullying and the historical stages of its emergence. Its purpose is to examine how bullying infringes children's rights and freedoms, causing trauma and other psychosocial problems. The study addresses the factors contributing to bullying, as well as the teacher's role in preventing this harmful phenomenon. The paper also includes research conducted in several primary schools in the city of Tetovo. Using primary sources, it provides a more detailed picture of the development of this phenomenon and highlights teachers' perceptions and attitudes, together with measures and mechanisms for preventing bullying.

***Keywords:*** bullying, bullying behaviour, teacher, school, students.

## Introduction

For a long time, bullying was perceived as an ordinary part of growing up. Today, however, it is widely recognized as a serious and preventable problem central to the mental health and social well-being of children and young people. Educational research and practice show that bullying has profound and lasting consequences, not only for victims but also for perpetrators, passive bystanders, the school environment and society as a whole.

In the school context, bullying includes any form of negative, repeated behavior among peers or between students and teaching staff intended to inflict physical or psychological harm on an individual who is unable to defend themselves. It constitutes a deliberate exercise of power to disadvantage another person and create long-term stress.

Recognizing and understanding the causes, participants and mechanisms through which bullying develops is an important step towards effective preventive interventions. In this context, the main aim of this paper is to examine teachers' role in both the occurrence and prevention of bullying in schools. The research also seeks to identify effective practices for addressing and managing bullying situations at school, and to examine possible strategies for prevention and effective intervention against this troubling phenomenon.

Given this aim and the complexity of the problem, we adopted theoretical and descriptive analysis through a review of the literature on bullying, the survey method to collect data from practice, and content analysis to interpret open-ended responses and literature related to our selected topic. The research instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire with closed-ended questions addressing teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning bullying. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms. Fifty teachers from schools in Tetovo were surveyed. The research sample is random, as the questionnaire was distributed online and completed voluntarily by teachers.

## 1. Literature Review / Theoretical Approach

The term bullying belongs to the vocabulary of modern psychology and, when translated into Albanian, conveys the meaning of "threatening" or "intimidation". It describes a range of persistent, aggressive and abusive behaviours that have a substantial emotional and physical impact on young individuals, particularly children and adolescents who are often vulnerable, isolated or insufficiently supported.

Alongside the contemporary problems associated with this age, some mild behavioral disturbances also emerge, including anxiety, aggression and a critical stance towards adults' system of attitudes and values (Nushi, P., 1999: 144). During this stage, adolescents face numerous challenges as they try to find their place in society and develop their identity.

For many, however, this period brings another significant challenge: harassment (bullying) at school. Bullying occurs regularly, particularly in the times in which we live, and undoubtedly constitutes a major concern for both parents and schools (Zenuni-Idrizi, V.; Idrizi, L., 2024: 1205). This phenomenon has existed in various forms for centuries, but only recently has it begun to be recognized and addressed as a serious social problem.

Bullying is a form of violence directed against an individual by one or more individuals. The intent of the bully or bullies is a relevant aspect of bullying behaviour. Unlike ordinary acts of violence, bullying involves the intention of the bully or bullies to deliberately harm a weaker party, excluding accidental and unintentional acts. However, the concept of malicious intent in defining bullying behaviour depends on the perception of the
victim, rather than solely on the bully's intention (Danuza, T., 2021: 18).

Harassment, or bullying, is a social phenomenon manifested through various forms of physical, psychological and social violence. It involves repeated, harmful and aggressive behavior between individuals who differ in their level of physical or psychological power. It is not simply an ordinary conflict between students, but a deliberate exploitation of power and control over a weaker individual or group. Whereas bullying behavior was often considered a normal part of growing up and socialization in school settings in the past, it is now clear that its consequences are profound and lasting, affecting victims' emotional, social and educational development.

The literature indicates that school bullying is not limited to students bullying other students. Drawing on classic sources, such as Fried & Gault (1984), as well as more contemporary analyses, several groups of potential perpetrators can be identified:

- **Teachers bullying students.**
  Although discussed less frequently, bullying by teachers is a recognized phenomenon in which a teacher abuses their authority. Studies show that teachers may display psychological or physical aggression, including insults, isolation, denial of basic needs and humiliation.
- **Students bullying teachers.**
  There are also cases in which students bully teachers, for example through verbal attacks, ridicule or defiant behaviour. A study conducted in Türkiye shows that a considerable proportion of teachers reported having been bullied by students.
- **Students bullying students.**
  This is the most widely recognised form of bullying and involves the classic peer dynamic of victims and perpetrators (Lisa De Luca, Annalaura Nocentini & Ersilia Menesini, 2019) (Jahja-Asani, A.; Zenuni- Idrizi, V., 2025: 2605-2611).

In schools, bullying can take various forms, which often occur in interconnected and persistent ways.

The most visible form is physical bullying, which includes hitting, pushing, grabbing or other forms of physical harm, often used to instil fear and exercise control. Another widespread form

is verbal bullying, expressed through insults, ridicule, offensive name-calling or threats; these can have psychological consequences as serious as those of physical violence. Another equally harmful dimension is social exclusion or deliberate isolation, in which the victim is excluded from social activities, peer groups or classroom collaboration, creating feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem.

With technological advances and the growth of digital media, cyberbullying has also increased. Insults, threats, rumours and defamatory statements are conveyed through social networks, messages or online platforms, leaving victims feeling powerless even outside the school environment.

Understanding these different forms of bullying is essential to identifying and addressing this phenomenon effectively. Each form has a distinct impact on students' lives and requires different intervention and prevention strategies. In this context, early prevention and timely intervention are crucial to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research is empirical in nature and is guided by a main aim: to examine teachers' role in both the occurrence and prevention of bullying in schools.

Given this aim and the complexity of the problem, we adopted theoretical and descriptive analysis through a review of the literature on bullying, the survey method to collect data from practice, and content analysis to interpret open-ended responses and literature related to our selected topic. The research instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire with closed-ended questions. Fifty teachers from schools in Tetovo were surveyed.

## 3. Interpretation of the Research Results

This section presents and interprets the research results, drawing on the data collected and analysing them in relation to the research aim and questions. Particular attention is paid to their significance for the teaching process.

### Question 1. How often do you think bullying occurs in your classroom?

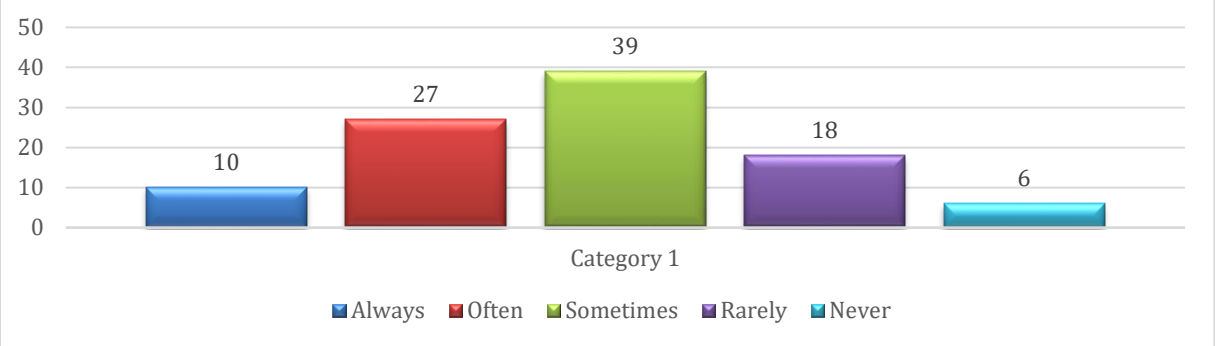



**Figure 1. Teachers' attitudes towards the frequency of bullying at school**

As shown in Figure 1, 39 teachers answered that bullying occurs "sometimes", while 18 stated that it occurs "rarely". Of all the teachers surveyed, 27 believe that incidents occur "often", while only 6 stated "very rarely" and 10 considered that they occur "very often". These findings indicate that most teachers surveyed are aware of bullying in the classroom, but regard it as a phenomenon that does not occur every day.

**Question 2. Do you feel prepared to identify bullying behaviour in the classroom?**

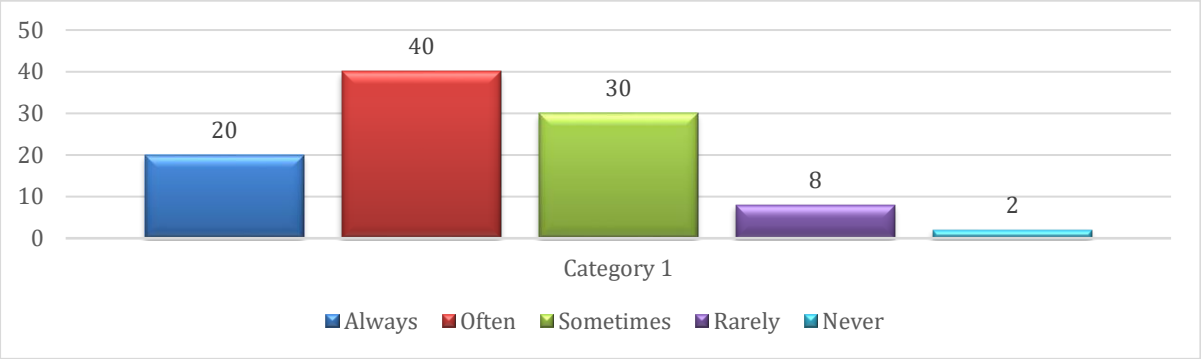



**Figure 2. Teachers' attitudes towards their preparedness to identify bullying behaviour in the classroom**

Figure **2 shows** that 20% of teachers believe they are "always" prepared to identify bullying behaviour, 40% "often" and 30% "sometimes". Compared with the remaining respondents, 8% of whom "rarely" and 2% "never" feel they have this competence, these findings suggest that most feel capable of recognising problematic behaviour in the classroom and are aware of it.

**Question** 3. **How effective do you think the classroom management methods you use are in preventing bullying?**

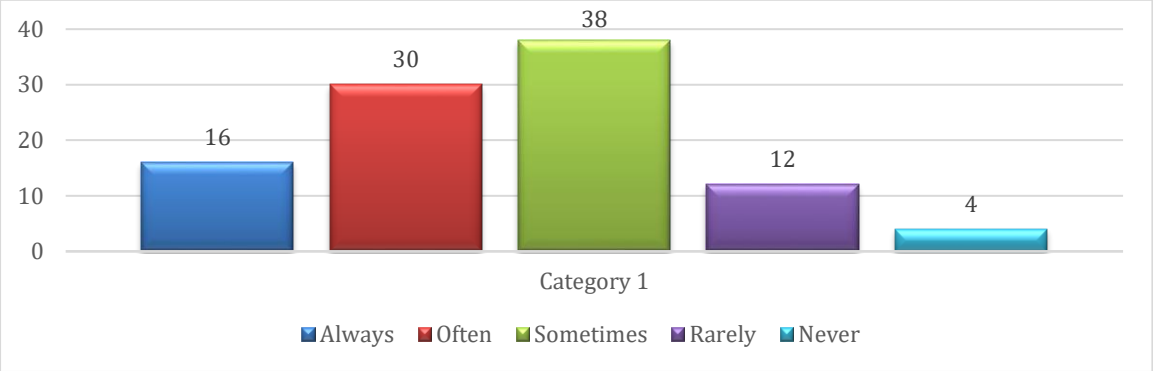



**Figure 3. Teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the methods they use to prevent classroom bullying**

According to this figure, the most frequent response is "sometimes". Of all teachers surveyed, 16% believe they "always" use effective strategies, while 30% believe that the methods they use are "often" effective. A further 12% believe that they "rarely" manage to address the problem through the methods applied, and only 4% express scepticism. This indicates that a considerable proportion of teachers need additional training in classroom management in the context of bullying.

**Question 4. Have you ever conducted classroom activities or discussions about bullying and violence?**

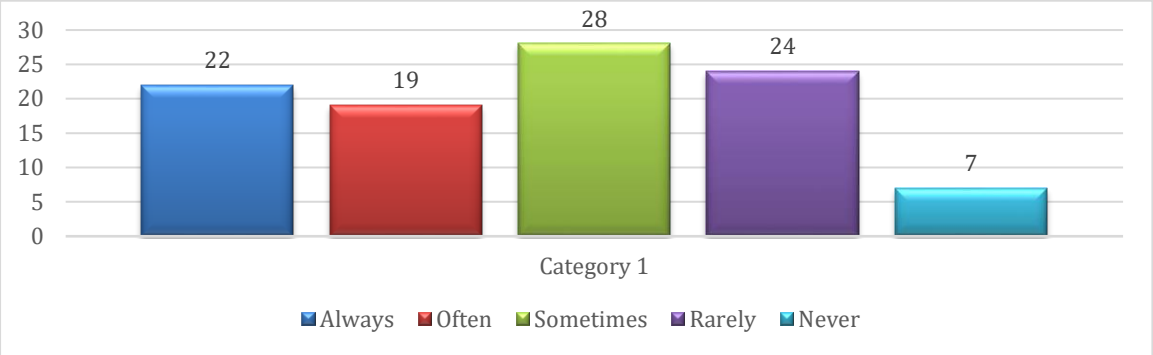



**Figure 4. Teachers' attitudes towards the conversations and discussions they conduct in class about bullying and violence**

**Figure 4 shows** that 28% of teachers have conducted activities "sometimes", while 19% stated "often". A further 24% answered "rarely", and 22% reported conducting such activities "very often". Only 7% stated that they had "never" conducted activities in this area. This suggests that anti-bullying education remains insufficiently integrated into everyday teaching content.

**Question 5. Do you respond when you witness an incident of bullying in the classroom?**

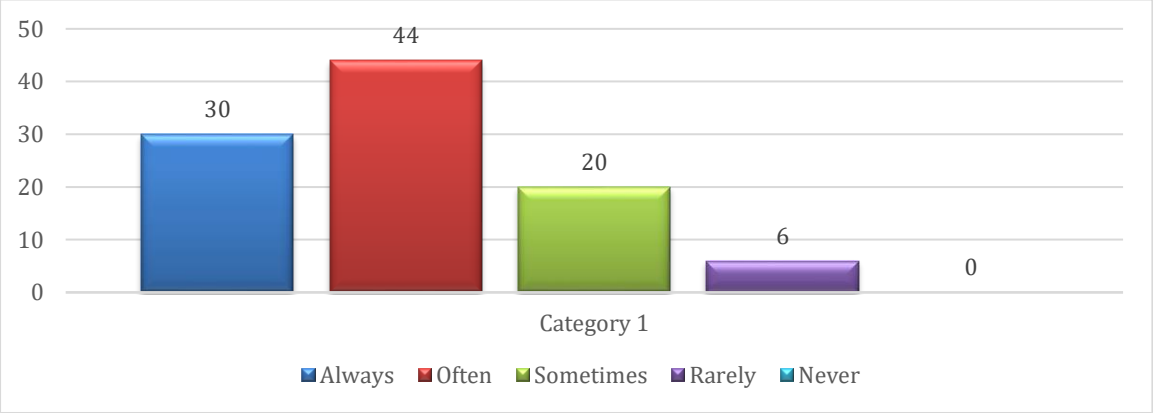



**Figure 5. Teachers' attitudes towards how often they witness bullying in the classroom**

According to the data **in Figure** 5, 30% of teachers state that they "always" respond and a further 44% respond "very often". Another 20% reported responding "sometimes", while 6% stated that they "rarely respond". No one stated that they "do not respond" at all. This indicates general awareness and a tendency towards prompt intervention in bullying incidents.

**Question 6. Do you collaborate with the school psychologist or pedagogue in cases of bullying?**

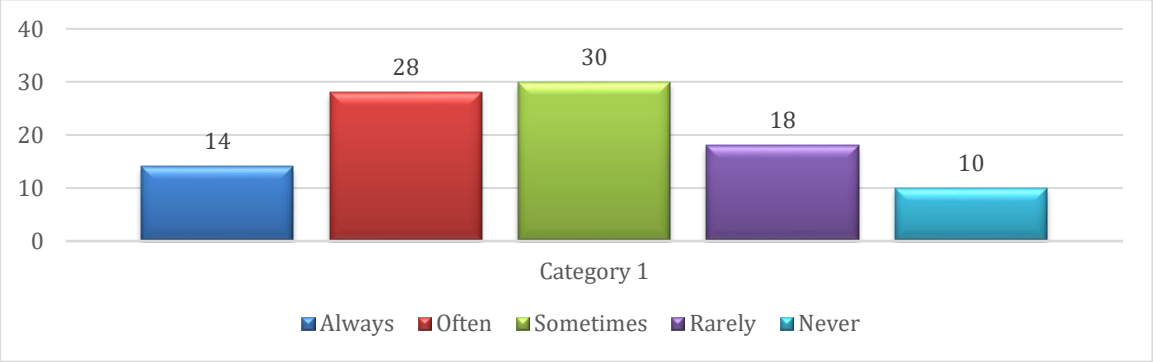



**Figure 6. Teachers' attitudes towards how often they witness bullying in the classroom**

As shown in Figure **6, 30%** of teachers stated that they "sometimes" collaborate with support staff, 28% "often" and 14% "always". Meanwhile, 18% said they do so "rarely", and only 10% stated "never". This suggests that although collaboration exists, it is not yet standard practice in every case.

**Question 7. Do you organise meetings with the parents of students involved in bullying incidents?**

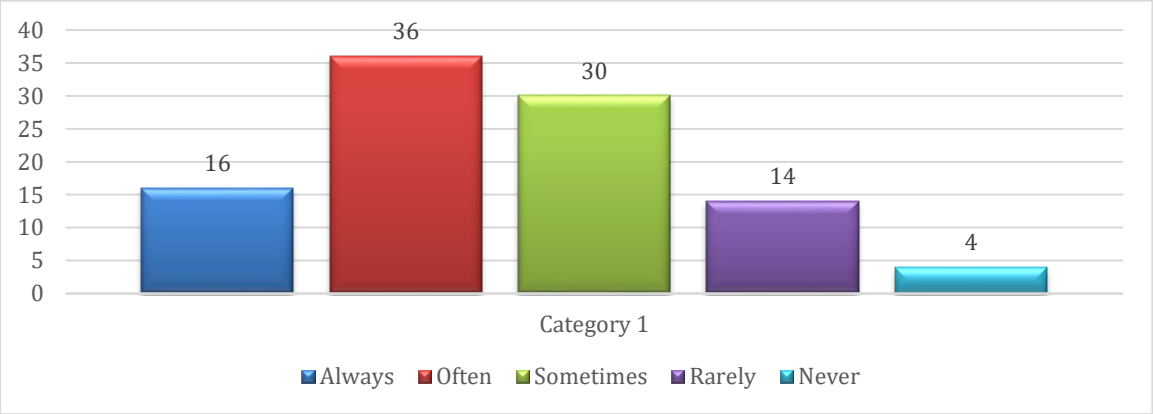



**Figure 7. Teachers' attitudes towards how often they organise meetings with the parents of students involved in classroom bullying**

Figure **7 shows** that 36% of the teachers surveyed state that they organise meetings "often", 16% "always" and 30% "sometimes". Only 14% said they hold these meetings "rarely", and 4% "never". This indicates a positive commitment to involving parents in resolving bullying incidents.

**Question 8. Do you use strategies to prevent bullying and raise awareness even when bullying is not present in your working environment?**

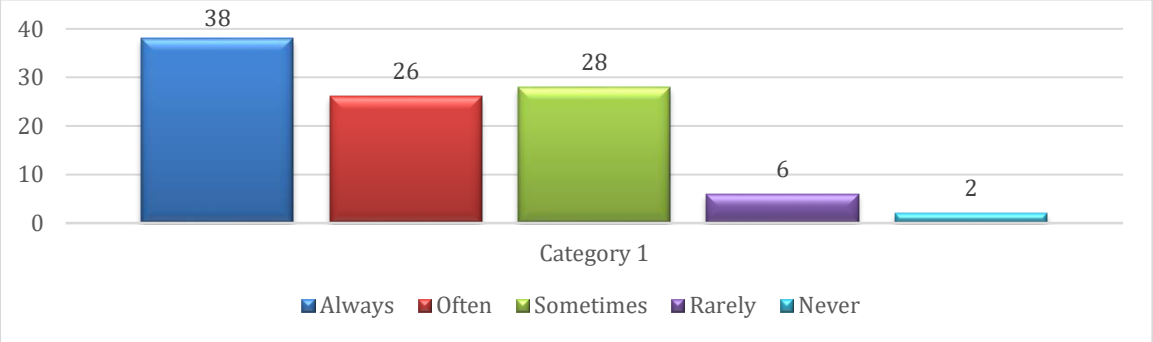



**Figure 8. Teachers' attitudes towards using strategies to prevent bullying and raise awareness even when bullying is not present in their working environment**

As Figure 8 **shows, most** teachers report using bullying prevention strategies even when bullying is not present in their classroom. This reflects a proactive and informed approach to creating a protective and safe environment.
Meanwhile, 28% of teachers take a neutral position, suggesting uncertainty or a lack of concrete implementation in this area. Only 2% of the teachers surveyed "do not use" such strategies. Comparing the two extremes, with 64% giving a positive response, we find these results truly commendable.

## 4. Conclusion

The results of the research provide a clear and meaningful picture of teachers' perceptions, attitudes and practices concerning bullying in the schools included in the study. Responses collected from a sample of 50 teachers show that awareness of bullying as a problem in the school environment exists, but that a more structured and serious approach is still needed.
First, most teachers consider that bullying occurs "sometimes" or "often" in their classrooms. This means that they acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon, but do not see it as a persistent problem, which may influence how they address it in practice. In addition, over 90% state that they feel prepared to identify bullying behaviour, a positive indicator reflecting professional competence that should be further supported through specific, ongoing training. On the other hand, prevention and awareness-raising strategies are not always incorporated systematically. Some teachers acknowledged using these strategies only when actual bullying incidents occur, while others remain neutral or uncertain about their actions in the absence of clear situations.
Specific activities undertaken by teachers include organising discussions with students, involving them in setting rules, collaborating with psychologists and meeting with parents. However, these activities do not take place regularly in every classroom, leaving room for improvement in building a more inclusive and protective school climate. It is important to emphasise that most respondents identify timely intervention in bullying incidents as an established practice, demonstrating teachers' individual commitment.
Overall, the analysis shows that there is a strong foundation for further developing practices and interventions to prevent bullying in schools. To improve this approach, educational institutions are advised to invest more in staff professional development, the formulation of comprehensive anti-bullying positions, and the establishment of internal reporting and response mechanisms. This research reinforces the idea that addressing bullying is not the isolated responsibility of an individual teacher, but should become a collective effort involving

all school stakeholders—teachers, students, parents and school leaders—to build a safer, fairer and more inclusive school for everyone.

## Recommendations

The theoretical analysis and analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire allow us to draw conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving the approach to preventing and managing bullying at school.
The recommendations below aim to help teachers, school leaders and policymakers take structured steps towards building a safer school climate.

- Provide ongoing training for teachers in identifying and managing bullying
- Develop clear school rules and apply them consistently
- Actively involve students in developing classroom rules and prevention strategies
- Integrate anti-bullying education into teaching content and school life
- Strengthen collaboration between the school, family and community
- Apply non-punitive approaches to managing bullying incidents
- Develop bullying awareness campaigns at school and community level.
- Establish multidisciplinary teams within schools to address bullying incidents.
- Develop practical guidelines for teachers on responding to bullying incidents.
- Increase the presence and engagement of psychologists and social workers in schools.
- Encourage students to report bullying anonymously through reporting boxes or digital platforms.
- Include bullying and human rights topics in civic education curricula.
- Ensure institutional support from the Ministry of Education for implementing anti-bullying policies.

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