
TOGETHER EVERYONE CAN PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

STUDY:

Identifying the opinions of students and teachers on cyberbullying

Due to the ever-increasing prevalence of cyberbullying and the negative impact this type of aggression can have on the psychosocial and academic lives of young people, the study aimed to identify the presence of cyberbullying among adolescents from 6 countries, investigating both young people and their teachers' opinions.

It is important to point out how students and teachers deal with cyberbullying events and what the characteristics of victims and aggressors are. Also, it was necessary to identify to what extent the teachers are prepared to identify and act in case of cyberbullying and what important strategies teachers use to deal with the problem.

THE RESEARCH has 2 parts, presenting the results of the study in both students and teachers.

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The aims of the project were:

- to identify the presence of cyberbullying in schools from six countries (Romania, Lithuania, Turkey, Italy, Greece, and Portugal)
- to identify the opinions of students about cyberbullying
- to shape the profiles of victims and aggressors of cyberbullying
- to identify the opinions of teachers about cyberbullying
- to identify the attitudes and methods of teachers when facing cyberbullying



Target groups

- students aged 10-19 enrolled in private or public schools (Romania, Lithuania, Turkey, Italy, Greece, and Portugal),
- teachers working with students aged 10-19, who are full-time employees in private or public schools in the following countries: Romania, Lithuania, Turkey, Italy, Greece and Portugal



Definitions

Cyberbullying is the intentional, repeated act of sending aggressive or harmful messages online to a victim with the intent to harass, ridicule, or mistreat the target.

An adolescent is - according to WHO and UNICEF - a person belonging to the category of people aged 10-19.

The terms that are scientifically accepted by the international forums are the following:

- ▶ Adolescent: 10-19 years of age
- ▶ Young People: 10-24 years of age
- ▶ Youth: 15-24 years of age



Research Methodology

Two different questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms among adolescents and teachers with the purpose of collecting information about cyberbullying and about how victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and teachers deal with the widespread

phenomenon. The students and teachers were first informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that the answers would remain confidential.

PART 1. STUDENTS - VICTIMS AND AGGRESSORS IN VIRTUAL SETTINGS -

INFOS ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was translated from English into all six national languages.

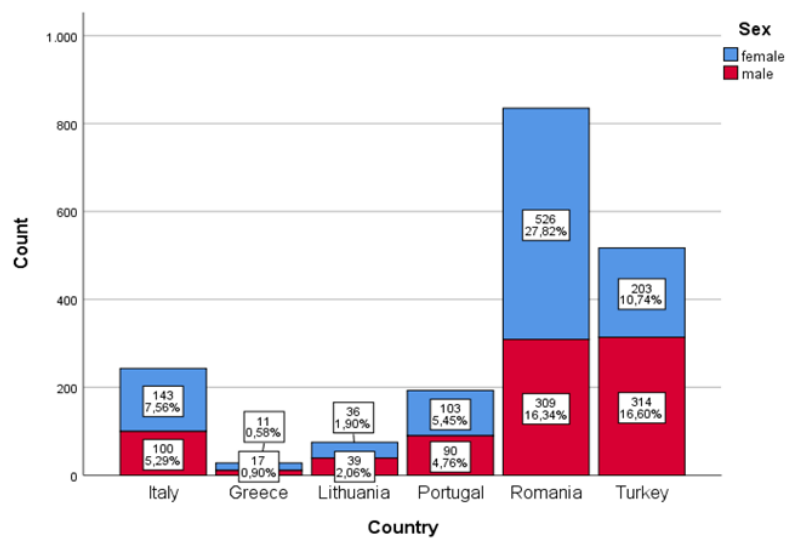
- a) The first part of the questionnaire gathered socio-demographic information (such as age, gender, level of education of children and their parents, home environment, school environment, and members of the household). Data about family income was measured using the *Family Affluence Scale* (FAS), which was developed first in Scotland as a measure of family affluence. It was also developed as an alternative measure in the WHO Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study.
- b) The second part includes questions about children's satisfaction with their relationships with parents, classmates, colleagues from school, friends, and teachers. Self-assessed items were constructed and responses were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. Other questions in this section include items about grades obtained last year, as well as the relationships between mother and father from the children's perspective, children's relationships with parents, the main decision-maker in the family, self-assessment of social position (leader, popular or lonely person), positioning in the school learning situation compared to classmates, number of best friends, and number of children in a class.
- c) The third part targets bullying and cyberbullying behaviours, including items that refer to children's views on the gender of people who are most often abusers or abuse others (boys or girls), if they have ever been online abusers or victims of physical or online bullying, if they have colleagues who terrorize others, if they have seen colleagues who are terrorized physically or online and if they have reported the incident in those cases.
- d) The fourth part of the survey collected information about the use of mobile phones and the internet, the main reason for using the internet, the time spent on average on a usual working day and on a weekend day on the internet, and the age at which children received their first phone call, how often they socialize with people they know on the internet, as well as their parents' behaviour towards them regarding excessive phone use (blaming, insulting, restricting access).
- e) The final part of the questionnaire addressed several standardized scales used to assess self-esteem, and loneliness, as presented below:
 - *Rosenberg self-esteem scale* (RSES) is a self-report instrument for evaluating individual self-esteem.
 - *UCLA Loneliness Scale* (ULS-8) measures one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation.
 - *The Cyber-aggression Scale* (CYB-AGS) measures the adolescent's experience as a cyberbullying perpetrator (directly or indirectly) in the past 12 months.

- *The Cyber victimization Questionnaire (CYVIC)* is a self-report instrument that identifies the frequency of different types of aggression suffered through mobile phones or the Internet. The students should mark the frequency with which they were the victims of each one of these situations in the past three months.
- *The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)* measures parenting styles by grouping them into six typologies of supportive, controlling, compassionate, aggressive, avoidant, and orthodox parents.

Results

Students included in the research were studying in six different countries: Romania (44.2%), Turkey (27.3%), Italy (12.9%), Portugal (10.2%), Lithuania (4%), and Greece (1.5%). More female students participated to the study (54.36 %).

The distribution of students according to country and sex is presented in the next figure.





Going to school

The research showed that more than half of the students lived in urban areas.

More than 40% of students had their school in another department/town, and they had to travel in order to reach their schools.



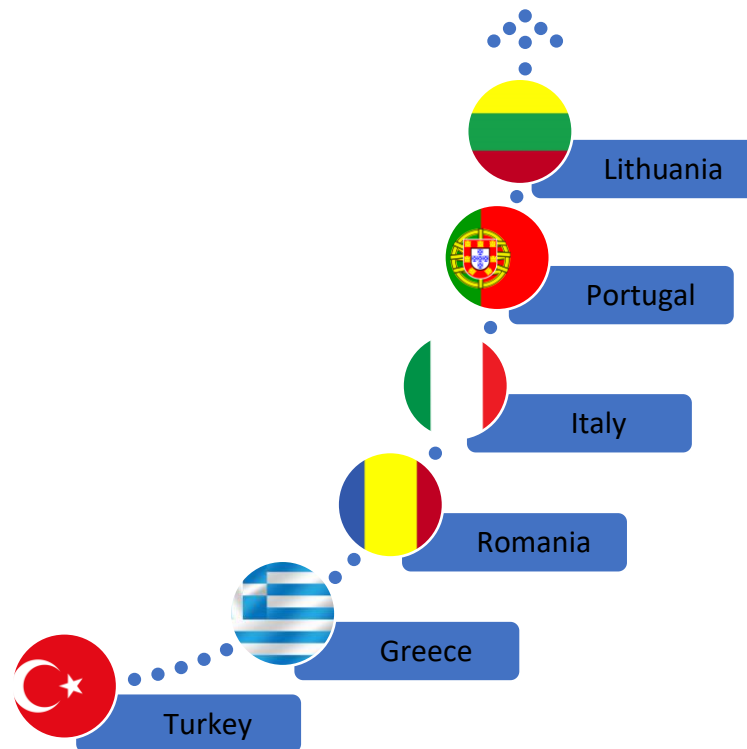
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Family income

The students were asked to answer some items in order to identify their socio-economic level and to discriminate between poor and rich countries. The results showed that the **highest family income is in Lithuania and the lowest is in Turkey.**



The following figure presents the hierarchy of family incomes as resulted for each country:



 In Portugal, although the results showed that there is one of the highest average in terms of family affluence, most students said they had at least one parent working abroad.



Family Type

- 21% of students had at least one parent working in another country
- 18% of students had divorced parents
- 15% declared that they lived with only one parent
- 17.8% were only children, 48.5% had a brother or a sister, 22.1% had two siblings, and 11.6% had more than 3 brothers or sisters

- more than one-third of mothers and fathers graduated at university level
- 82% of students considered to have a collaborative relationship with their parents
- 11% of students sustained that there was no relationship between their parents anymore
- 63% considered that the decisions were usually shared between their parents, while 21% declared that their mothers took decisions, and 13% declared that their fathers usually took decisions in their families
- around 40% of students sustained that their parents yelled at them and verbally offended them



Analysis by country

- Students from Romania and Portugal had more frequently at least one parent working abroad.
- In general, the average number of children in a family is 2, the highest number being registered in Turkey, and the lowest in Greece.



The use of the internet and smartphones

Cyberbullying is about using phones and having access to social networks. The study indicated that, in general, children had their first phone at the age of 10 (with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 16 years old).

The results showed that there was a significant difference between children living in cities and those living in rural areas when it comes to the age at which children had their own smartphone, in the sense that children living in a city received their first phone at a younger age compared to children living in a village.

In general, children had their own smartphones at the **age of 10**, and it is more common for children from urban areas to have smartphones at a younger age.

The **main reasons** why students use smartphones are primarily for **having fun** (43.6%) and **chatting** (42.6%) and **less so for solving academic tasks** (13.9%).

Students spend at least **5 hours per day** using phones during the week, while on **weekends the time is about 10 hours per day.**



Analysis by country

Country	Mean age of the first phone	Hours on social media during the week	Hours on social media during the weekend
Italy	M = 10.98 ± 1.57	M = 6.26 ± 2.91	M = 7.99 ± 5.24
Greece	M = 12.07 ± 2.29	M = 2.50 ± 1.26	M = 3.14 ± 1.86
Lithuania	M = 8.06 ± 1.87	M = 3.97 ± 2.68	M = 5.50 ± 3.73
Portugal	M = 10.53 ± 1.50	M = 4.80 ± 2.58	M = 6.86 ± 6.56
Romania	M = 10.24 ± 2.43	M = 5.53 ± 2.75	M = 10.82 ± 9.56
Turkey	M = 9.83 ± 2.39	M = 5.37 ± 2.69	M = 10.76 ± 9.61

- ▶ Lithuanian students own smartphones at a younger age (8 years old) and Greek students own smartphones at an older age (12 years old).
- ▶ The amount of time spent by Romanian and Turkish students on the internet is doubled during the weekend compared to weekdays.
- ▶ Greek students spend less time using smartphones (both on weekdays and weekends).
- ▶ Students from Italy spend the highest number of hours using smartphones compared to other countries.



Parental restriction to the use of smartphones

More than half of the students (58%) declared that their parents never restricted their access to smartphones, a quarter of them stated that sometimes their parents restricted their access to smartphones, while the others mentioned that their parents did that frequently (16%).

42% of parents **restrict the time** spent by their children on smartphones.

Supporting parental style and controlling parental style are related to a lower number of hours spent on the internet.



Analysis by country

Parents in Portugal and Turkey use aggressive parenting style, whereas Lithuanian parents use it less.

Compassionate parenting styles were proven by parents in Portugal and Greece and less by parents in Turkey and Italy.

A controlling parenting style is practiced by parents in Turkey.



Loneliness

More than half of the students (53%) have a moderate level of loneliness, and more than one-third have a **high level of loneliness** (35 %).

Girls have a higher score on loneliness.

Adolescents who have a **low family affluence** had a **lower level of loneliness** than children who have a high family affluence.

Lonely students declared more often that they were **victims of cyberbullying**.



Cyberbullying behaviour

girls are the most common victims of cyberbullying

the bully is a boy or a girl, equally

50% say they have seen other children being bullied online

23% were victims of cyberbullying

11% declared that they act as perpetrators



Analysis by country

Girls are the most common victims of cyberbullying, which is true for all countries except Lithuania, where the situation is reversed.



Reporting cyberbullying incidents

Have you ever reported it to an adult when you saw a kid being bullied online (messages, social media, enol, chatrooms etc.)?	
Yes, to my parents.	12.2%
Yes, to the kid's parents.	3.3%
Yes, to a teacher.	5.6%
Yes, to the school psychologist.	1.2%
Yes, to the principal.	0.6%
To another adult.	3.6%
No, I did not report any incident.	19.5%
No, I did not report any incident because I did not see any.	54.2%



The victim of cyberbullying

- The higher the level of loneliness and the higher the age of the children, the more the children will report themselves as victims
- Children living in a village report themselves more often as victims of cyberbullying.
- Children with low parental control style will report themselves as victims.
- Conflicts in the family will increase the risk of becoming a cyber victim.
- Children with a low level of satisfaction with the relationship with their parents
- Girls are more often victims of cyberbullying than boys.



Analysis by country

Students from Greece and Romania reported being cyber victims more often than students from other countries.



The perpetrator

The study identified that children with the following characteristics are more prone to become a perpetrator:

a child who is very dissatisfied with the relationship with his/her parents

a child who has at least one parent working abroad

girls and children living in a village

a child who is dissatisfied with his or her friendship relationships

a child having a conflictual relationship between parents

children with a higher affluence score will self-evaluate more often as aggressors

the more often it happens that children are the victims of cyberbullying, the higher the risk of reporting themselves as aggressors

the older the child, the more aggressive he or she may become.

children with a low controlling parental style

Supporting parental style and controlling parental style are related to a lower level of victimisation but also to a lower level of aggression



Analysis by country

Students from Greece and Italy reported themselves as being more aggressive than students from the other countries.

PART 2. TEACHERS

– PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH CYBERBULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS –

INFOS ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- a) The first part of the questionnaire gathered socio-demographic information (such as country, age, gender, marital status, number of children, profession, total number of years in teaching, total number of years in teaching at their current school, type of school, where they teach).
- b) The second part contains questions about the position of teachers regarding bullying and cyberbullying behaviours, to which they had to answer with YES/NO or TRUE/FALSE, namely: if they have taken anti-bullying courses, if they think that bullying is more common than cyberbullying, if they think that bullying and cyberbullying occur more frequently in the case of girls, if they teach students how to deal with bullying behaviours, and what they consider to be the age range at which bullying and cyberbullying occur most frequently.
- c) The third part examines teachers' perceptions about cyberbullying by using a questionnaire developed by Li (2009) regarding perceptions about cyberbullying and about teachers' educational experiences in relation to cyberbullying.
- d) The fourth part of the survey collected information about teachers' views on the actions that teachers, parents, school principals, or even the Ministry of Education should take in order to prevent cyberbullying in schools, and how teachers or the school principal intervene in the event of observing such behaviours. Furthermore, teachers are asked whether they believe students are exaggerating about cyberbullying behaviours; whether they believe students should handle bullying and cyberbullying on their own; and whether they are confident in their ability to recognize and manage bullying and cyberbullying situations.
- e) In the fifth section, respondents were asked items regarding their attitude towards cyberbullying and how cyberbullying can be reduced by prevention or intervention.
- f) The sixth section includes questions about the frequency of bullying and cyberbullying behaviours observed or reported by others among students, and how often teachers have intervened to discipline or counsel students during these behaviours.
- g) The final part of the questionnaire addressed two scales presented below:
 - *The Teacher Cyberbullying Perception Scale* measures how well teachers perceive the problems of cyberbullying among their students.

- *Strategies for Coping with Cyberbullying Scale for Teachers (SSBCS)* was created in 2018 by Altundag & Ayas to identify the coping strategies of teachers who often witness cyberbullying events experienced by adolescents. The measurement tool consists of two sub-domains, the 'knowledge area' and the 'application area'.



Characteristics of the teachers and school counsellors included in the research:

- average age of the teachers is $M = 46$ (with a minim of 20 and a maximum of 68 years old)
- average of their length of experience in their profession is 21 years
- the length of experience in the current department/institution is 11 years
- 95% are teachers
- 5% are school counsellors
- 90% of teachers are employees in public schools
- 70% are married
- average number of children – 1 child

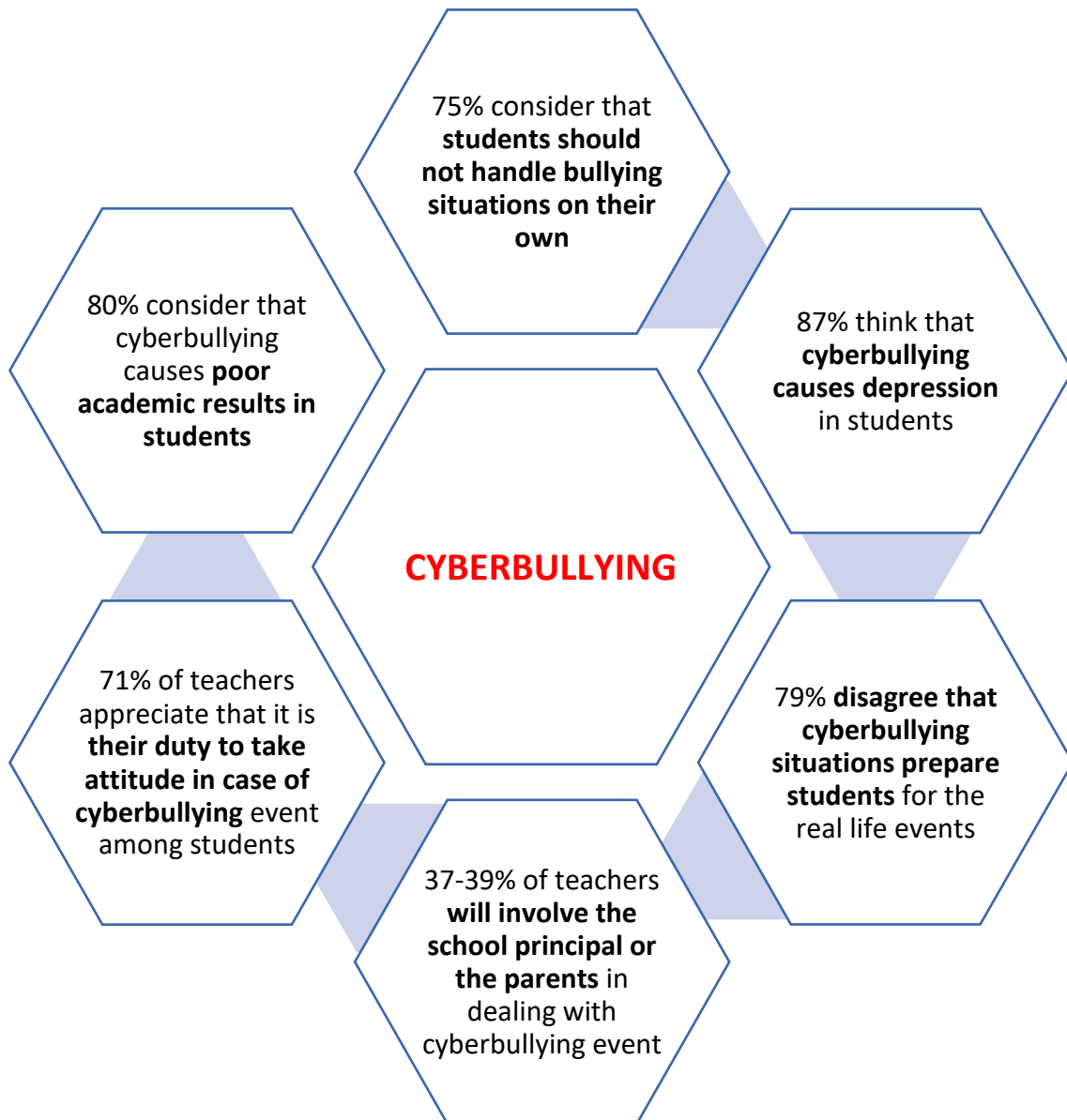
More than **61%** of teachers **have never attended a course** on bullying or cyberbullying.

Opinions of teachers regarding bullying and cyberbullying behaviours

- 61% of teachers consider that the age most prone to bullying is between 11 and 14 years old and that cyberbullying is more frequent among children older than 14.
- 63% of teachers consider that bullying is more frequent than cyberbullying,
- 63% of teachers think that cyberbullying is equally frequent in boys and girls,
- **only 26% of teachers consider that cyberbullying is a problem in school,**

- 75% are concerned about cyberbullying,
- 65% appreciate that the victims are affected by cyberbullying,

61% of teachers consider that they can **identify** cyberbullying
47% think that they can **manage** a cyberbullying event



HIGH RISK

Teachers considered that the following categories of children are at **very high risk of becoming victims of cyberbullying**:

children with **obesity**
children with **mental illness**
children with **physical syndromes**
introverted children

Teachers' behaviour in the case of rumour or even participation in cyberbullying events

Items	YES
I was told that students harass each other online during class	21%
I was told that students harass each other online after class	34%
I think that the phenomenon of cyberbullying is intensifying among teenagers	86%
The students complained directly to me that they had received malicious text messages on the phone about themselves	31%
The students directly complained to me that they had been the subject of online rumours.	29%
My students complained directly that they had received malicious or threatening emails or other messages.	22%
My students complained directly that someone had hijacked their identity online.	15%
I know students who are cyber-harassed by others.	30%
I know students who cyberbully other students in my school.	20%
I always inform parents about an incident of aggression that I witness.	79%

I always inform parents about an aggression incident of which I am informed.	78%
I believe that the phenomenon of cyberbullying can be mitigated by prevention.	90%
I believe that the phenomenon of cyber harassment can be mitigated by intervention.	90%



How sensitive and empathic are teachers towards cyberbullying? (Global cyberbullying perception)

- ▶ women have a lower score on cyberbullying perception compared to men
- ▶ teachers who have no children or only one child have a lower score on the Perception of Cyberbullying scale compared to teachers who have three children
- ▶ teachers who work in a public school have a lower score on the scale of perception of cyberbullying compared to those who work in a private school
- ▶ teachers in both public and private schools have a lower score on the scale of perception of cyberbullying, compared to teachers working in special schools

In general, male teachers are more sensitive to identifying cyberbullying among adolescents. Similarly, the more children the teachers have, the more empathic to cyberbullying event they are. Teachers working in special schools are more sensitive to cyberbullying. When we compared public and private schools, the teachers working in public schools proved to be more receptive in case of cyberbullying events.

Strategies for Coping with Cyberbullying Scale for Teachers

The older the teachers are, the more experience they have, and the more increased perception of cyberbullying they have, the more often they observe aggressive behaviours in schools.

The higher the number of years in education and the higher the teachers' beliefs that cyberbullying is rising, the lower the teachers' perception regarding cyberbullying.

The more the teachers' perceptions of cyberbullying increase, the more the coping strategies regarding cyberbullying decrease.



Problems teachers face

- ▶ More than half of the teachers have never taken anti-bullying courses.
- ▶ Teachers did not see or report bullying behaviours in school very frequently and few students reported bullying events to teachers as victims.
- ▶ Women and teachers who have no children or only one child have lower scores on the Perception of Cyberbullying scale.



Teachers` perception about bullying and cyberbullying

- ▶ Most teachers believe that bullying occurs more often than cyberbullying, in both girls and boys.
- ▶ Teachers believe that bullying occurs frequently between the ages of 11 and 14, while cyberbullying occurs between the ages of 15 and 18.
- ▶ Half of the teachers have confidence in both identifying and managing cyberbullying issues.
- ▶ More than 75% of the teachers agree that all possible strategies (school policy, classroom strategies, and school activities) should be addressed to prevent or address the problem of cyber harassment.
- ▶ This phenomenon of cyberbullying is intensifying among adolescents, but this phenomenon could be eradicated by both intervention and prevention.
- ▶ Most teachers state that they intervene if they notice aggression among students, and the school principal will approve the teacher's decision to act in cases of cyberbullying.