

# Examination of the Relationship Between the Virtual Bullying Awareness Levels and Communication Skills of Primary School Teachers

Ezgi Pelin YILDIZ<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kafkas University Kazım Karabekir Vocational School of Technical Sciences-Computer Technologies Department, Türkiye

Correspondence: Ezgi Pelin YILDIZ, Kafkas University Kazım Karabekir Vocational School of Technical Sciences-Computer Technologies Department, Türkiye.

Received: June 22, 2023

Accepted: August 5, 2023

Online Published: August 15, 2023

doi:10.5539/jel.v12n5p219

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v12n5p219>

## Abstract

Cyberbullying is by an individual or a group by using resources such as e-mail, smart phone, pagers, short message services (SMS) and websites, Information and Communication technologies in order to harm a person; intentional, repetitive hostile behavior. When the literature is examined; it is seen that cyberbullying behaviors are carried out with the aim of intentionally harming, peer pressure, negative family-friendship relations, aggression, taking revenge for harming, and making the target person do an action that they do not want to do. According to the results of a study in which the percentage of performing cyberbullying behaviors was determined; According to the results of the study conducted with 160 adolescents between the ages of 14–18 in Türkiye; it has been determined that the rate of exposure to cyberbullying of young people is 83% and the severity of this rate is emphasized. When the negative effects of cyberbullying on the psychology of individuals, especially young people, are examined in the long term, depression and depression, fear and/or embarrassment of people, a constantly warned state, avoiding virtual environments and technology, avoiding responsibility, use of addictive harmful substances, negative behaviors such as being away from school draw attention. Communicating with other stakeholders in education (such as school administrators, class-branch teachers, guidance teachers, families) in order to prevent children and/or young people from being exposed to the stated negative effects of cyberbullying and in this context, it is foreseen that the collaborative work to be carried out between the stakeholders can be important and effective in terms of problem solving. Awareness behaviors such as supporting students to receive safe education in an academic sense, encouraging children and young people to use the internet safely, controlling the sites and shares that children visit, and drawing attention to abnormal and aggressive behaviors they display while using technology will support the prevention of cyberbullying. In this context, determining the cyberbullying awareness levels of the specified stakeholders and organizing trainings by the relevant institutions and organizations within the scope of the findings will contribute to raising the awareness of the stakeholders on this issue. In the light of all these, the aim of this study is to determine the cyberbullying awareness levels of primary school teachers and to associate it with the dependent variable of communication skills proficiency levels. In order to serve this purpose, research was conducted with a total of 154 teachers working in primary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Kars Türkiye. As a method in the research, mix method was used and the findings related to various statistical tests were revealed. It is predicted that the findings obtained in the study will contribute to the literature and researchers in order to raise awareness of cyberbullying to education stakeholders.

**Keywords:** cyberbullying, information and communication technologies, awareness level, communication skills, primary school teachers

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduce the Problem

As the place and importance of communication and social media tools in our lives has increased, many problems have been encountered in the field of electronic bullying, cyber bullying and/or cyber bullying. In this context, related concepts have become a problem that has been seriously researched and discussed by both educational

scientists and psychologists in recent years, especially in Türkiye, the USA and European countries.

In general, cyberbullying; harming people by malicious behavior by an individual or group, and in this context, making defamatory, offensive publications and announcements by using media and tools such as smart phones, social media and communication media, websites, digital games, e-mail, and by these means It is the whole of aggressive behavior such as deliberately and consciously harassing and threatening people. When the literature is examined, it is possible to come across many different definitions of cyberbullying. According to Arıca (2009), cyberbullying; It is defined as activities that support deliberate, repetitive and hostile behavior with the aim of harming others by using information and communication technologies tools and environments. According to Sarak (2012), cyberbullying is defined as all of the hostile behaviors exhibited such as sending malicious text and/or images using electronic media, spreading rumors about people on the internet in order to defame them.

There are two types of cyberbullying; the first is electronic bullying, such as seizing passwords of people, arranging attacks on websites, sending messages containing infectious viruses, and sending spam messages. The other type is; it is electronic communication bullying, which includes attacks against psychological factors such as offending, exposing, defaming, humiliating, spreading rumors about and leaving people in a difficult situation with such aggressive behaviors. This type of cyberbullying is being carried out today to threaten children and young people in particular. Especially the fact that children and young people can access any information and virtual environment they want uncontrollably with a single click and a single screen makes them vulnerable to these threats.

Considering that children or young people who encounter such cyberbullying do not have sufficient equipment and experience against threats, it is not difficult to understand how panic and fear they continue their lives. Studies have shown that children and young people who are exposed to such threats and bullying cannot tell their families about the situation they are in, and they experience a vicious circle because of their fear that they may also be harmed such as going so far as to give up their own lives. In the same studies, it was underlined that it is almost impossible for parents to realize the situation, it is understood late and as a result, the person or people are seriously harmed. It is essential to communicate with other stakeholders in education (such as school administrators, class-branch teachers, guidance counselors, families) in order to prevent children and/or young people from being exposed to the stated negative effects of cyberbullying. In this context, it is foreseen that the collaborative work to be carried out between the stakeholders can be important and effective in terms of problem solving.

When the conceptual framework is examined, the existence of a very limited number of domestic/abroad academic researches on the relevant subject draws attention. According to this; Horzum and Ayas (2013) studied with 180 guidance teachers working in the Ministry of National Education to reveal the cyberbullying awareness levels of guidance teachers in their research. In the study, a scale developed by the researchers was used to determine teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels. In conclusion; teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels differed in terms of gender variable, and this difference was determined in favor of female teachers. As another finding, a negative significant relationship was found between the age variable and cyberbullying awareness levels.

Kaya (2014) aimed to determine the cyberbullying sensitivity and awareness levels of teacher candidates. The research method of the study is descriptive research. The study group consists of a total of 344 teacher candidates who continue their education in different departments of the Faculty of Education of a private university in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The data collection tools of the research are cyberbullying sensitivity scale, cyberbullying awareness scale. According to the findings obtained from the data collection tools; pre-service teachers' cyberbullying sensitivity and awareness levels were found to be quite high. It was also among the other results that the cyberbullying sensitivity and awareness levels of teacher candidates did not differ according to gender, age, class and department variables.

Kopecký and Szotkowski (2017) conducted a study examining the characteristics of cyberbullying against Czech teachers. The research focused on the prevalence of cyberbullying of teachers, the impact of cyberbullying on teachers, strategies of coping with cyberbullying and methods of solving the incidents. The research has shown that a fifth of respondents has experienced a cyber attack on their person. Most often the cyberattacks were committed by students.

Gurpınar and Oğuz (2018) similarly examined the relationship between teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels and online technologies self-efficacy in their studies. For this purpose, a total of 486 teachers working at secondary and high school levels in Silivri/Türkiye district were determined as the sample group. Teachers' Cyberbullying Awareness Scale and Online Technologies Self-Efficacy Scale were used as data collection tools.

As a result, no significant difference was detected in the demographic variables determined. However, teachers' online technologies self-efficacy was found to be high. A low-level, significant positive relationship was found between cyberbullying awareness levels and online technologies self-efficacy.

Cankaya (2018) studied with teacher candidates and aimed to reveal the cyberbullying perceptions of teacher candidates in his research. A total of 268 teacher candidates studying in different departments at the Faculty of Education of a state university were selected as the sample group. According to the findings obtained from the data collection tool preferred in the study; It was determined that teacher candidates' cyberbullying perceptions were quite high. In addition, it has been revealed that cyberbullying perception scores differ significantly according to the department of education and this significance is in favor of the Music Education department.

Challenor (2019), examined post primary school teachers' perceptions on virtual bullying. The first aim was to identify an overall awareness of the prevalence of the cyberbullying of post-primary teachers, and to do so by examining awareness. As a result; the participants in this research identified that were aware of the cyberbullying of another teacher in post-primary education. In contrast, of participants stated that they did not know any teachers who were experiencing cyberbullying.

### *1.2 Purpose and Sub-Aims of the Research*

In the light of all these, the aim of this study is to determine the cyberbullying awareness levels of primary school teachers and to associate them with their communication skills proficiency levels. In this context, in this study, unlike other studies, the concept of "communication skills proficiency levels" was defined as the dependent variable in the research. The significant relationship between teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels and communication skills proficiency levels was tried to be determined by the interview form developed by the researchers and related analyzes. The sub-objectives within the scope of the general purpose are listed below:

- Do primary school teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels differ significantly according to gender?
- Do primary school teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels show a significant difference according to the age variable?
- Do primary school teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels differ significantly according to the branch variable?
- Do primary school teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels differ significantly according to the professional experience variable?
- Do primary school teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels show a significant difference according to the variable of time to connect to the internet?
- What is the cyberbullying awareness level of primary school teachers in general?
- What are the primary school teachers' views on the importance of communication skills in the context of preventing and/or minimizing the abusive behaviors that students are exposed to within the scope of combating cyberbullying?

### *1.3 Important of the Research*

Although there are varieties of cyberbullying by definition, in general terms; considered as an electronic form of peer bullying. Today, this concept is no longer a form of behavior and spread rapidly and is perceived as a great threat that has entered schools, children's homes, and their rooms. The concept of cyberbullying has been caught in the close lens of experts. According to field experts, cyberbullying will be considered as a concept that will be handled more than face-to-face bullying in education systems in the near future. All aggressive behaviors such as harassing individuals using information and communication technologies or smart technology tools, making fun of them, calling them nicknames, creating gossip, insulting, posting private information and pictures on the internet without the consent of individuals are all described as cyberbullying.

In a study conducted in the USA, cyberbullying has become a much more common problem than educators anticipated. So, 6–12. It has been determined that between 20 percent and 40 percent of young people studying between grades have been exposed to cyberbullying at least once. It has been emphasized that as a result of these attacks, children and/or young people cause academic failure, drop out of school, and even worse, attempt suicide. As an example of the existence of young people who are victims of cyberbullying in Turkey in this sense; In 2011, it was determined that a university student attempted suicide and entered a vegetative state due to false information about him through a social media account opened on his behalf. It was found that 32.6% of the students in the second level of primary education were exposed to cyberbullying at least once, and 22.5% of them were cyberbullying once or several times (Aydoğan, Dılmaç, & Deniz, 2009). It is important to develop

intervention programs by completing preliminary studies by relevant institutions and organizations on the subject.

In conclusion, cyberbullying is a multifaceted problem and it is necessary to address and solve this problem with an interdisciplinary approach. These disciplines include educational technologists, psychologists, computer programmers, and most importantly, classroom and branch teachers working at different levels of education. In this context, the related research will both reveal the general cyberbullying awareness levels of primary school teachers and question the teachers' cyberbullying awareness levels and communication skills proficiency levels. In this sense, it is anticipated that the research will fill the gap in the literature and will guide future research and researchers in line with the findings obtained.

## 2. Method

Mixed design was used as a method in the research. The mixed method design is a design in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and used together (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Relational scanning method was used in the analysis of quantitative research data within the scope of mixed design. Relational screening model is a screening approach that aims to determine the existence of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2011). Qualitative research data in the study were revealed through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers.

### 2.1 Sampling Group and Sampling Method

The sample of the research consists of a total of 154 teachers working in the Central Primary Schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Kars/Türkiye. Purposive sampling, one of the non-random sampling methods, was preferred in the study. In purposive sampling, the researcher chooses a subgroup as a sample that he thinks represents the universe and is a typical example of the universe.

### 2.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Group

The demographic characteristics of primary school teachers, who constitute the sample group of the research, are presented in the tables below:

Table 1. Gender

Gender	f	%
Female	93	60.4
Male	61	39.6
Total	154	100

It was determined that 93 of the teachers constituting the sample group of the study were "female" and 61 of them were "male".

Table 2. Age

Age	f	%
41–50	40	25.9
50 and more	33	21.4
31–35	32	20.7
36–40	29	18.8
25–30	20	13.2
Total	154	100

It has been determined that the average age of the teachers who constitute the sample group of the research is "41–50".

Table 3. Branch

Branch	f	%
Primary-School	138	89.6
Pre-School	5	3.2
English	4	2.6
Psychological Counseling	3	1.9
Special Education	3	1.9
Art	1	0.8
Total	154	100

It has been determined that 138 of the 154 primary school teachers who make up the sample group of the research are in Primary-School, 5 in Pre-School, 4 in English, 3 in Psychological Counseling, 3 in Special Education and 1 in Art department.

Table 4. Professional experience

Professional Experience	f	%
16–20 years	53	9.1
11–15 years	34	22.1
6–10 years	32	20.8
1–5 years	21	13.6
20 years and more	14	34.4
Total	154	100

It has been determined that the frequency of the professional experience average of the teachers who constitute the sample group of the research is “16–20” years.

Table 5. Frequency of connecting to the internet

Connecting to the Internet	f	%
2–4 hours	63	40.9
1–2 hours	62	40.3
4–6 hours	22	14.3
6 hours and more	7	4.5
Total	154	100

It has been determined that the average frequency of internet connection of the teachers who constitute the sample group of the research is “2–4” hours.

Table 6. Cyberbullying Research

Cyberbullying Research	f	%
No	97	63.0
Yes	57	37.0
Total	154	100

Teachers often answered “no” to the question of whether they have done research on cyberbullying.

Table 7. Source of research

Source of Research	f	%
Internet	36	63.1
Educational Videos	14	24.5
Books	4	7.0
Expert Psychologist-Tutorial	2	3.3
Others	1	2.1
Total	57	100

The teachers who answered that they are doing research on cyberbullying stated the source of their research and it was determined that the frequency of this source was the “internet”.

Table 8. Cyberbullying education

Cyberbullying Education	f	%
No	118	76.6
Yes	36	23.4
Total	154	100

Teachers often answered “no” to the question of whether they had received training on cyberbullying.

Table 9. Source of education

Source of Education	f	%
School-university collaboration within the scope of the project	17	47.5
Psychological Counseling	10	27.7
School Management	5	13.8
Expert Psychologists	2	5.5
Other	2	5.5
Total	36	100

Teachers who answered that they received training on cyberbullying stated the source of their education and it was determined that the frequency of this source was “school-university collaborative work carried out within the scope of the project”.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tools

“Communication Skills Proficiency Levels Interview Form” developed by the researchers and “Virtual Bullying Awareness Scale” developed by Ayas, Aydın and Horzum (2015) were used in data collection with the permission of the researchers. Communication Skills Proficiency Levels Interview Form consists of a total of 3 open-ended questions developed within the scope of the relevant subject. While developing the questions, expert opinions were taken from 2 educational technologists and educational psychology instructors. The questions in the relevant interview form are presented below:

- 1) Do you think that the transition to the emergency and compulsory distance education system implemented in our country’s education system with the Covid 19 epidemic increased the cyberbullying behaviors that students are exposed to?
- 2) Do you think that teacher-student, student-student, teacher-family, student-family communication skills can be effective in preventing and/or minimizing exposure of your students to such behaviors within the scope of combating cyberbullying?
- 3) If you observe that any of your students in your class are faced with cyberbullying behavior, briefly explain the measures you can take to combat this behavior.

The “Virtual Bullying Awareness Scale” developed by Ayas, Aydın & Horzum (2015) is a data collection tool consisting of 26 items and 3 factors, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis for factorial validity, convergence and distinctiveness for construct validity, Cronbach for validity and reliability. alpha internal consistency and composite reliability coefficients were examined.

### 2.4 Variables of the Study

Dependent variables of the research; while cyberbullying awareness levels and communication skills competencies, independent variables are information and communication technologies tools, social media environments and online environments, and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, branch, professional experience.

### 2.5 Analysis of the Data

Evaluation of the data was made through the statistical program SPSS 24. Since the data in the study did not show a normal distribution, quantitative data were analysed with the Kruskal Wallis Test, one of the non-parametric tests. Qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted with the via of the relevant themes

determined using the content analysis method. Based on the data obtained from the interview form, the codes were created with the content analysis method based on the interview transcript. In order to obtain accurate and reliable findings from the code generation process, coding processes were determined with the help of 3 lecturers/members working in the field of educational sciences and the codes determined in line with common opinions were finalized. All the codes determined in the research were tabulated in terms of comprehensibility.

### 2.6 Ethical Principles of Research

Before the implementation phase of the study, the necessary approval permission was obtained from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Kafkas University (the decision letter of the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Kafkas University, No. 33 dated 04.06.2022). Moreover necessary permissions were obtained from the developers for the use of the Cyberbullying Awareness Scale. With the relevant permissions, T.C. an application has been made to the Ministry of National Education Research, Competition and Social Activity Board and after the necessary permissions have been obtained, the official permission letter from the Kars Provincial Directorate of National Education (Governor's Office Approval letter dated 16.09.2022 and numbered 58029110) and the data collection tools are centralized for implemented in primary schools.

### 3. Findings

The findings of the quantitative data revealed in line with the purpose and sub-objectives of the research are presented in the tables below:

Table 10. The mean and standard deviation of cyberbullying awareness scale items

Items and Factors	$\bar{X}$	SD
M1	3,91	1,16
M2	3,41	,988
M3	4,14	,959
M4	4,21	,885
M5	4,00	,946
M6	4,05	,934
M7	4,62	,594
M8	4,53	,696
M9	4,17	,864
M10	4,48	,706
M11	4,53	,849
M12	2,14	1,159
M13	2,18	,988
M14	2,10	1,226
Total	4,17	,925

According to the table above, when the mean and standard deviation values obtained within the scope of the scale items are examined; It was determined that the general average for 14 items was 4.17. 12th, 13th and 14th items in the scale were described as reverse items. According to the table, it was revealed that teachers' responses to cyberbullying awareness generally focused on the "I agree" option. Considering the mean and standard deviation values; the item with the highest score is "M11: Punishments should be given to those who do this to prevent cyberbullying incidents"; it was determined that the item with the lowest score was "M2: I find myself sufficient in dealing with cyberbullying incidents". As a result, it has been determined that the cyberbullying awareness levels of primary school teachers are quite high in general. Since the data in the study did not show a normal distribution, quantitative data were analysed with the Kruskal Wallis Test, one of the non-parametric tests. According to the results obtained from the relevant tests.

Table 11. The effect of teachers' cyberbullying levels on gender variable

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	S	t	P
Female	93	4,18	,40980	,04249		
Male	61	4,00	,53654	,06870	,226	,020
Total	154					

When Table 11 is examined, according to the results of the independent group t test; it was concluded that teachers' cyberbullying levels had a significant effect according to the gender variable ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to the relevant table, it was determined that this significance was in favor of female teachers.

Table 12. The effect of teachers' cyberbullying levels on the age variable

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Squares Average	F	P
Intergroup	1,424	4	,356	1,632	1,69
Within groups	32,490	149	,218		
Total	33,914	153			

When Table 12 is examined, according to the results of the independent group t test; it was concluded that teachers' cyberbullying levels did not have a significant effect according to the age variable ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 13. The effect of teachers' cyberbullying levels on the branch variable

Source of Variance	Sum Of Squares	sd	Squares Average	F	P
Intergroup	,927	5	,185		
Within groups	32,987	148	,223	,831	,529
Total	33,914	153			

When Table 13 is examined, according to the independent group t-test results; it was concluded that teachers' cyberbullying levels did not have a significant effect according to the branch variable ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 14. The effect of teachers' cyberbullying levels on the professional experience variable

Source of Variance	Sum Of Squares	sd	Squares Average	F	P
Intergroup	2,253	4	,563		
Within groups	31,660	149	,212	2,651	,035
Total	33,914	153			

When Table 14 is examined, according to the results of the independent group t test; it was concluded that there was a significant effect according to the professional experience variable ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 15. The effect of teachers' cyberbullying levels on the professional experience variable

Professional Experience (I)	Professional Experience (J)	$\bar{x}$	Rank Difference	S	P
1–5 years	6–10 years		-0,17765	0,0791	,913
	11–15 years	2, 8505	-,32263*	0,1086	,999
	16–20 years		-0,40667	0,1904	,996
	20 years and more		-0,30556	0,1180	,497
6–10 years	1–5 years		,177,65	0,7913	,913
	11–15 years	3,0281	-0,14498	0,0976	,955
	16–20 years		-0,22902	0,1843	,997
	20 years and more		-0,10320*	0,2236	,033
11–15 years	1–5 years	3,2571	,40667	,19035	,999
	6–10 years		,22902	,18431	,955
	16–20 years		,08403	,19873	1,000
	20 years and more		,09876*	,17689	,0192
16–20 years	1–5 years	3,2571	,15905	,32312	,996
	11–15 years		,14771	,39374	,997
	6-10 years		,14638	,43302	1,000
	20 years and more		,10129	,05881	,376
20 years and more	1–5 years	3,2571	,11886	,38033	,1375
	6–10 years		,10320*	,46943	,0162
	11–15 years		,10129*	,05887	,0488
	16–20 years		138,52	,09755	,1328



When Table 15 is examined, according to the Scheffe test results; When professional experience subgroups were compared, it was revealed that there was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ). The findings of the qualitative data revealed in accordance with the purpose and sub-objectives of the research are presented in the tables below;

Table 16. Do you think that the transition to the emergency and compulsory distance education system has increased the cyberbullying behaviors that students are exposed to?

Yes, I think it increased.	No, I don't think it increased.
73	81

When the table above is examined, 73 of the teachers who participated in the research thought that the transition to the emergency and compulsory distance education system increased the cyberbullying behaviors that students were exposed to; 81 of them claimed that it had no effect. The teachers who answered yes to the question explained their reasons and these reasons were thematized with the via of Table 17.

Table 17. Themes

Themes	(n)
Internet Addiction	14
Objectionable video and/or sites	10
Inability to socialize	11
Virtual games	9
Withdrawn from formal education	5
Smart phone/Tablet addiction	4
Information security ignorance	4
Increased screen time	2
Social media environment	2
Free time/ Negative increase in activity	2
Ease of accessing virtual environments	2
Unlimited sharing of information	2
Uncontrollable by the trainer	2
Online dating sites	1
Unwanted behavior	1
Not controlled by parents	1
Online advert	1

According to Table 17, it is noteworthy that the themes vary in line with the answers given by the teachers. However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “internet addiction”, “Objectionable video and/or sites”. In addition, the teachers stated that the emergency and compulsory distance education that came with the pandemic prevented their students from socializing and they exhibited behaviors at the level of internet, smartphone and tablet addiction due to the increase in the time spent on the screen. When the open-ended answers from the teachers are examined, the examples are;

- “I am concerned that the time spent at the computer and screen is increasing, and with this, children are exposed to bullying behaviors in virtual environments due to their insufficient knowledge about internet safety”
- “I think that children’s constant confinement at home and the necessity of using electronic devices made compulsory by distance education bring them closer to cyberbullying”.

Table 18. Do you think that teacher-student, student-student, teacher-family, student-family communication skills can be effective in preventing and/or minimizing cyberbullying on your students?

Yes, I think it increased.	No, I don't think it increased.
154	0

When the table above is examined, all of the teachers participating in the research drew attention to the importance of two-way communication skills of teacher-student, student-student, teacher-family, student-family

in order to prevent students from being exposed to cyberbullying. The teachers explained the reasons for the effectiveness of this factor together with their reasons and these reasons were thematized with the help of Table 19.

Table 19. Themes

Themes	(n)
Stakeholder cooperation in solving the issue	36
Controlling communication sources	28
Student observation with school-parent cooperation	24
Teacher-parent-guidance service cooperation	17
Support received from relevant institutions and organizations	14
Informing, awareness raising awareness trainings	13
Home visits, student-teacher interaction	6
Providing control mechanism	4
Empathizing	4
Expert support	3
Communication skills training for families and teachers	2
Early detection of the problem	2
Searching for a common solution	1

According to Table 19, it is noteworthy that the themes vary in line with the answers given by the teachers. However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “stakeholder cooperation in solving the issue” and “controlling communication sources”. When the open-ended answers from the teachers are examined, the examples are;

- “Struggling cyberbullying should not be considered as a situation that can be prevented only by the efforts of teachers. It should be carried out in a solution-oriented manner with the joint cooperation of all education stakeholders. Parent-home visits, student-teacher conversations, expert support should be provided, and cooperative information and awareness-raising activities should be carried out”.
- “Since cyberbullying is a situation that is carried over to the school environment, first of all, the incident should be considered as a student, empathy should be established in this context, and school-student-family cooperation and necessary guidance services should be employed to combat the situation”.

Table 20. Measures (themes) you can take at the point of struggle when you observe that your student is faced with cyberbullying behavior

Themes	(n)
Observation with stakeholder collaboration	44
Communicating and empathizing with the student	30
Guidance service and expert support	25
Meeting with family and later relevant authorities	15
Raising awareness by using different safe online resources	11
Family observation	5
Increasing the socialization of students	4
Peer interview	3
Individual interviews	2
Psycho-educational studies	2
Addressing cyberbullying in course content	2
Identifying students’ needs and problems	1

According to Table 20, it is noteworthy that the themes vary in line with the answers given by the teachers. However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “observation with stakeholder cooperation”, “communication-empathy with the student”. When the open-ended answers from the teachers are examined, the examples are;

- “The main source of the problem can be determined through observation. It should be supported to seek

solutions through stakeholder cooperation such as student-family-guidance service. In addition, continuous communication should be established with the student, and the guidance service should be contacted to prevent psychological effects from the events. In addition to all these, I would like to emphasize the importance of awareness trainings that can be given by field experts on cyber bullying and cyber security to us as educators”.

- “I think it will be important to raise awareness of students in the fight against cyberbullying and to prevent cyberbullying. In this sense, I can also address the issue of cyberbullying in the course contents and raise awareness”.

#### 4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

The related research was conducted with a total of 154 teachers working in primary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Kars/Türkiye. Mixed design was used as a method in the research. In line with the sub-objectives determined within the scope of the mixed design, the relational survey method was used in the analysis of the quantitative research data. Necessary permissions were obtained from the researchers for the relevant data collection tools used in data collection. If the research results are summarized;

Considering the general average of all items for the Cyberbullying Awareness scale, it was revealed that teachers’ responses to cyberbullying awareness generally focused on the “I agree” option. Considering the mean and standard deviation values; It was determined that the item with the highest score was “M11: In order to prevent cyberbullying incidents, punishments should be given to those who do this bullying”.

As a result, it has been determined that the cyberbullying awareness levels of primary school teachers are quite high in general. Aydın and Arslan (2021), when the numerical data of the gender variable were examined in their research, it was determined that the cyberbullying awareness levels were moderate for both male and female teachers. When the teachers’ cyberbullying awareness levels were compared with their demographic characteristics and the related analyzes were evaluated; It was concluded that teachers’ cyberbullying levels had a significant effect according to the gender variable and this significance was in favor of female teachers. While no significant difference was observed for age and branch variables, a significant difference was found for professional experience variable. Accordingly, when professional experience subgroups were compared, it was revealed that there was a significant difference between having professional experience. From this finding, it was determined that the cyberbullying awareness levels of the trainers at the beginning and middle of the teaching profession and the cyberbullying awareness levels of the trainers who completed 20 years were different. Horzum and Ayas (2013) and Gürpınar and Oğuz (2018) similarly revealed in their research that teachers’ cyberbullying awareness differs significantly according to gender.

When other demographic variables are examined; the average frequency of teachers connecting to the Internet is “2–4” hours; It has been determined that they often give a “no” answer to the question of whether they have done research on cyberbullying. The teachers who answered that they are doing research on cyberbullying stated the source of their research and it was determined that the frequency of this source was the “internet”. Teachers often answered “no” to the question of whether they had received training on cyberbullying. Teachers who answered that they received training on cyberbullying stated the source of their education and it was determined that the frequency of this source was “school-university collaborative work carried out within the scope of the project”. In line with these findings, it has been revealed that primary school teachers have awareness about cyberbullying and that they have received the necessary training on the subject related to school-university collaborative work within the scope of a project. Despite this, the teachers stated that they are open to awareness-raising activities such as seminars, workshops, and field expert training that can be given to them on cyberbullying education.

When the qualitative data of the research is evaluated; While 73 of the teachers participating in the research thought that the transition to the emergency and compulsory distance education system increased the cyberbullying behaviors that students were exposed to; 81 of them claimed that it had no effect. The teachers who answered yes to the question explained their reasons and these reasons were thematized by tabulation. According to this; It was noted that the themes varied in line with the answers given by the teachers. However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “internet addiction”, “inappropriate videos and/or sites”. In addition, the teachers stated that the emergency and compulsory distance education that came with the pandemic prevented their students from socializing and they exhibited behaviors at the level of internet, smartphone and tablet addiction due to the increase in the time spent on the screen.

All of the teachers participating in the research drew attention to the importance of two-way communication skills of teacher-student, student-student, teacher-family, student-family in order to prevent students from being exposed to cyberbullying. It is noteworthy that the themes vary in line with the answers given by the teachers.

However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “stakeholder cooperation in solving the issue” and “taking communication resources under control”. In addition, the teachers who made up the study group demanded that the necessary trainings be provided to them by the authorized institutions and organizations and field experts in order to prevent the unjust treatment of their students.

Within the scope of the question of measures you can take at the point of struggle when you observe that your student is faced with cyberbullying behavior, it is noteworthy that the themes vary in line with the answers of the teachers. However, it has been determined that the frequency is on “observation with stakeholder cooperation”, “communication-empathy with the student”. At this point, teachers also emphasized the importance of awareness trainings that can be offered to them by field experts on cyber bullying and cyber security.

Aydemir et al. (2021), as a result of the study they carried out with 16 secondary school teachers in their research in which they examined the perceptions of secondary school teachers about the concept of bullying; Teachers defined the concept of bullying as “a situation involving an imbalance of power towards the person, including the types of psychological and physical violence and maltreatment”. Bulut (2018), on the other hand, conducted a research on the analysis of cyberbullying awareness levels of secondary school students from the perspective of students, teachers and parents. Within the scope of the research, data were collected from a total of 512 students, 239 teachers and parents studying in secondary schools from 10 provinces. In conclusion; Gender of secondary school students and income levels of their families affect cyberbullying awareness according to their demographic characteristics. In addition, the environments where the students spend the most time were also determined as the environments where they encountered the most cyberbullying behaviors.

Suggestions for future research and researchers within the scope of the relevant research are given below;

- The study group of this study is limited to a total of 154 teachers working in primary schools. Future studies can be carried out with different study groups and different teaching levels.
- Relational screening method was used in the analysis of quantitative research data within the scope of mixed design in this study. As the sampling method, purposive sampling, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was preferred. Future studies can be carried out with different research and sampling methods.
- In the study, teachers revealed their level of awareness about cyberbullying that happens and/or may happen to their students; however, they also specifically stated that they needed training that field experts could give them. Based on this demand, it is suggested at the end of the research that the Ministry of National Education and institutions and organizations related to cyber bullying & cyber security should carry out cooperative studies and plan and conduct family and teacher trainings on this subject.

### Acknowledgments

We thank the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Kafkas University, for obtaining the necessary permissions for the conduct of this study. We also thank the Kars Provincial Director of National Education for obtaining the necessary permissions for the application of the data collection tools to the relevant schools.

### References

- Arıcak, O. T. (2011). Cyberbullying: The new danger awaiting our youth. *Kariyer Penceresi*, 2(6), 10–12.
- Arıcak, O. T., Kınay, H., & Tanrıkulu, T. (2012). The first psychometric findings of the cyberbullying scale. *Journal of Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education*, 17(2012-1), 101–114.
- Ayas, T., Aydın, F., & Horzum, M. B. (2015). Cyberbullying awareness scale: Validity and reliability study. *Online Journal of Technology Addiction and Cyberbullying*, 2(2), 38–51.
- Aydemir, F., Göçen, A., & Yıldırım, İ. (2021). Perceptions of secondary school teachers about the concept of compassion and bullying. *Journal of Manisa Celal Bayar University Faculty of Education*, 9(1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.52826/mcbuefd.844813>
- Aydın, İ., & Arslan, K. (2021). Examining the cyberbullying awareness levels of senior pre-service teachers: The case of Buca Education Faculty. *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Eğitim Dergisi*, 4(2), 295–314. <https://doi.org/10.33400/kuje.913253>
- Aydoğan, D., Dilmaç, B., & Deniz, M. E. (2009). *Investigation of social support and cyberbullying in primary school students*. 18th National Educational Sciences Congress, 1–3 October, İzmir.
- Bulut, E. (2018). *Investigation of cyberbullying awareness levels of secondary school students from the perspective of students, teachers and parents* (Thesis No. 517837). Master’s thesis, Hacettepe University. National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education.

- Büyüköztürk, Ş., Kılıç, E., Akgün, Ö. E., & Karadeniz, Ş. (2018). *Scientific research methods*. Pegem Academy.
- Can, A. (2016). *Quantitative data analysis in the scientific research process with SPSS*. Pegem Academy.
- Challenor, L. (2019). *Cyberbullying of post-primary teachers in Ireland*. PhD thesis, Dublin City University.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE.
- Ekşi, F., & Ümmet, D. (2013). Internet addiction and cyberbullying as an interpersonal communication problem: Evaluation in terms of psychological counseling. *Journal of Values Education*, 11(25), 91–115.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational research: competencies for analysis and applications* (11th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Gürpınar, A., & Oğuz, E. (2018). Examining the relationship between teachers' cyberbullying awareness and online technologies self-efficacy (Istanbul Silivri example). *Journal of İnönü University Faculty of Education*, 19(1), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.17679/inuefd.298529>
- Horzum, M. B., & Ayas, T. (2013). Examination of the cyberbullying awareness level of counselors according to various variables. *Hacettepe University Faculty of Education*, 28(3), 195–205.
- İnam, N., & Öztürk, G. (2018). Cyberbullying perceptions of teacher candidates. *International Journal of Computers in Education*, 1(1), 24–38.
- Karasar, N. (2011). *Scientific research methods*. Nobel Publishing.
- Kartal, H., & Bilgin, A. (2012). Perceptions of primary school students about the causes of bullying. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 25–48.
- Kaya, O. S. (2014). *Sensitivity and awareness level of pre-service teachers about cyberbullying* (Thesis No. 875403). PhD thesis, Eastern Mediterranean University. National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education.
- Kopecký, K., & Szotkowski, R. (2017). Cyberbullying, cyber aggression and their impact on the victim – The teacher. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.08.014>
- Lin, N. (1976). *Foundations of social research*. McGraw-Hill.
- Mishna, F., Saini, M., & Solomon, S. (2009). Ongoing and online: Children and youth's perceptions of cyber bullying. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(12), 1222–1228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.05.004>
- Sarak, Ö. (2012). *Cyberbullying in high school students* (Thesis No. 294189). Master's thesis, Haliç University. National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education.
- Sencer, M., & Sencer, Y. (1978). *Methodology in social research*. Türkiye and the Middle East Public Administration Institute.
- Unicef Child Türkiye Annual Report. (2018). Retrieved March 18, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/ara%C5%9Ft%C4%B1rma-ve-raporlar>
- Ybarra, M. L., Mitchell, K. J., Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2006). Examining characteristics and associated distress related to internet harassment: findings from the second youth internet safety survey. *Pediatrics*, 118(4), 1169–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-0815>
- Yenilmez, Y., & Seferoglu, S. S. (2013). An overview of cyberbullying and teachers' awareness. *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 38(169), 420–432.

**Appendix A****Study Application Permit from the Directorate of National Education**

T.C.  
KARS VALİLİĞİ  
İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-91782061-605.01-58073368  
Konu : Ölçek İzin Talebi

19.09.2022

KAFKAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE  
(Personel Daire Başkanlığı)  
KARS

İlgi : a) 07.09.2022 tarih ve 32050 sayılı yazınız.  
b) 16.09.2022 tarih ve 58029110 sayılı Valilik Makam Onayı.

İlgi (a) sayılı yazınıza istinaden, Üniversiteniz Kazım Karabekir Teknik Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulu Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ezgi Pelin YILDIZ ve Öğretim Görevlisi Duygu DURMUŞ'un "İlkokul Öğretmenlerinin Sanal Zorbalık Farkındalık Düzeyleri İle İletişim Becerileri Yeterlilikleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi" konulu makale/araştırma çalışmasını İlimiz merkez ilçedeki ilkokullarda görev yapan öğretmenlere uygulanması ile ilgili alınan ilgi (b) sayılı Valilik Makam onayı ve mühürlü veri toplama araçları ekte gönderilmiştir.

Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

Aydın ACAY  
İl Milli Eğitim Müdür V.

**Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).