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Youth Attitudes Towards Bullying and Hate Speech in Lithuania: Problems, Prevention and Vision for the Future

Abstract

In the vision of creating a safe society, the issue of society's own involvement is particularly highlighted – how much and in what ways society is capable and motivated to engage in crucial issues concerning the prevention of violations of law. The aim of the article is to examine the concepts of bullying and hate speech, and to analyse the attitudes of young people (students and pupils) towards the problems of bullying and hate speech: their actions in dealing with these issues, their reactions, and the suggested methods for combating bullying and hate speech. The results of the study highlighted and confirmed three essential attitudes. First, there is a “thin line” marking the differences between bullying and hate speech. The analysis has shown that the main distinguishing features of bullying and hate speech are the motive and consequences of the actions. Second, there is a lack of involvement among students and pupils in responding to bullying and hate speech and in revealing/identifying negative facts. Third, there is a need for ongoing educational activities. Therefore, in the future educational dimension of society, it is necessary to analyse both the essential features and differences of bullying and hate speech, to encourage their recognition, and to activate young people by encouraging proactive actions when cases of bullying or hate speech are identified.

Keywords: aggression, hate speech, bullying, prevention, violence, public safety.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, the dimension of creating a safe society has reflected a balance between the expectations raised by society and the active involvement of society itself in ensuring safety. In order to develop the concept of a safe society and to meet the public's expectations of

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safety, law enforcement agencies have been increasingly using the latest technologies and rethinking the organisational, managerial, and tactical measures applied in the detection and investigation of criminal offences. However, the application of such measures does not always guarantee positive results, especially since ongoing institutional, structural, and functional reforms within law enforcement agencies cause new issues related to human resources, response to incidents, and other organisational activities. It is therefore understandable that the harmonisation and improvement of the detection and investigation of criminal offences alone would not ensure the public's expectations of security. A paradox is observed in this era: bullying and hate speech have become common, but at the same time, there is a visible increase in society's involvement in preventive actions (Wachs, 2021; Navickienė & Velička, 2022). Large-scale applied researches "Hate crimes and hate speech: an overview of the situation in Lithuania" (2021) and "Institutional response to hate speech and hate crimes" (Velička, Gutauskas, Navickienė, Laužikas, 2021) showed the need to raise public awareness in the fight against insults and hate speech in Lithuania but the issue is relevant all over the world. Various channels have been created where residents may report violations, as well as join groups on social media where they discuss security challenges and seek local, regional, and even global solutions in the field of public safety. As a response to increasing public awareness, law enforcement agencies have offered various recommendations and guidelines, along with other educational activities aimed at increasing the maturity of society. More and more companies, institutions, and organisations from various fields are engaging in active, comprehensive preventive measures. Therefore, education, communication, development of targeted guidelines, training manuals, and recommendations, as well as various didactic methods, allow the establishment of a suitable balance between the expectations and activity of the society in the field of public safety, despite the widespread bullying and hate speech.

Relevance and novelty of the study. This article is particularly relevant to the identification of different types of negative phenomena. The concept, characteristics, and origin of bullying are analysed; at the same time, the concept and characteristics of hate speech are evaluated. This suggests a thin line which, if crossed irresponsibly, often leads to different types of legal consequences. Bullying is a common phenomenon which is associated with the insights of D. Olweus. A more detailed scientific analysis of this phenomenon started during the 1970s and 1980s, initially attracting the attention of social educators, psychologists, and teachers. The analysis of hate speech as a prohibited negative phenomenon started in the last decade of the same century, specifically on October 30 1997, with the Recommendation No. R (97) 20 on Hate Speech by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, linking it to the discriminatory characteristics. In this article, the presentation of bullying and hate speech at a theoretical level was not aimed at analysing deep positions of different scholars, but rather aimed only at understanding the essence of these negative phenomena, which would facilitate the understanding of the results of the empirical study.

It is noticeable that there are studies only about bullying or only about hate speech, but there is almost no comparison of these negative phenomena. However, some authors already point out that these meanings are inseparable from each other and need to be examined together and compared with each other (Wachs, 2021). This article is novel as it analyses bullying and hate speech from the youth's perspective by highlighting the subtle distinction between the two phenomena. This is the first attempt in Lithuania to assess the parallel discourse of bullying and hate speech. Additionally, it evaluates whether there are differences in the youth's attitudes towards these negative phenomena and what measures are suggested in order to solve these issues.

Subject of the study – the evaluation of the youth's attitude towards bullying and hate speech in Lithuania.

Aim of the study – to analyse the attitude of Lithuanian students and pupils towards bullying and hate speech, and to suggest specific preventive measures.

In order to achieve this aim, **the following objectives have been set:**

- 1 based on the research and approaches of the individual researchers to analyse the concept and characteristics of bullying;
- 2 based on the analysis of international and national legislation and approaches of the individual researchers to analyse the concept and characteristics of hate speech;
- 3 to evaluate the youth's attitude towards bullying and hate speech in order to highlight the most relevant problems and the ways of effective prevention.

Methods of the study. A method of scientific literature and legal acts analysis has been applied to support theoretical concepts of bullying and hate speech, as well as current attitudes, presenting key insights of researchers on bullying and hate speech issues. In addition, a quantitative research method – a questionnaire survey – has also been used to analyse the attitudes of youth (students and pupils) towards the problems of bullying and hate speech and the ways and means for solving them (see Methodology part).

2. THE CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING

Bullying, also known as mobbing, has been a topic of interest for researchers from various fields for a long time. More extensive analysis of this phenomenon started in the 20th century in Sweden. The interest spread to other countries such as Japan, England, Canada, the USA, and Australia, ultimately making the combat against bullying a global concern. Bullying is a social problem that affects people's relationships and well-being all over the world, which is why a focus on the prevention of bullying is relevant for all groups of society.

The concept of bullying has been extensively studied in the fields of psychology, educology and sociology in order to understand its causes, phenomena and consequences and to develop effective strategies for prevention. It is a systematic and deliberate behaviour where one person or group continuously harms another person. Bullying takes many forms, such as physical, verbal, social or electronic bullying, i.e. cyberbullying. It is not a one-time or random behaviour; bullying is characterised by intentionality and repeated occurrences. It can take various forms, ranging from direct physical violence to subtle verbal harassment.

Many researchers (Smith & Sharp, 1994:185; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Kowalski & Limber, 2013:14-15) have relied on or expanded upon Dan Olweus's definition of bullying in their studies. According to different analyses by Olweus, a pupil is bullied or becomes a victim of bullying when he or she repeatedly faces negative long-term actions of one or more pupils. Here are some key aspects through which D. Olweus contributed to the research and understanding of bullying. D. Olweus's work contained statistical data based on surveys and observations (1994: 1171-1172). D. Olweus's work and methodology remain important in educational, psychological and social science research on bullying.

One of the eminent researchers on bullying is the American psychologist Susan Swearer, who, together with her fellow scholars (Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano, 2009), provides valuable insights into the causes, consequences and prevention strategies of bullying. S. Swearer and co-authors have particularly focused on teenagers' bullying, emphasising how bullying can affect their emotional well-being and social adjustment; therefore,

that research is important for understanding how bullying can impact personal development (Swearer et al., 2009).

In S. M. Swearer and S. Hymel's analysis of the concept of bullying, they argue that bullying is a unique but complex form of aggression in interpersonal relationships that takes different forms, serves different functions and manifests itself in different ways (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Bullying is not just a dyadic problem between the offender and the victim, but is recognised as a group phenomenon occurring in a social context where various factors encourage, support or inhibit such behaviour (i.e., Olweus, 2001; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Salmivalli, 2001). Accordingly, scholars and researchers have argued that understanding the usefulness of the social-ecological system is beneficial in comprehending bullying at schools. (Espelage, Rao & de la Rue, 2013; Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Hong & Garbarino, 2012; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer et al., 2012).

The social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) conceptualises human development as a bidirectional interaction between individuals and the multiple systems in which they operate – home, neighbourhood, school, community, and society. Thus, behaviour related to bullying is not only the result of individual characteristics but also depends on relationships with peers, families, teachers, neighbours, and interaction with the influence of society (e.g., media, technology). In his monograph, V. Pruskus states that the phenomenon of harassment and its frequency started to be studied “as a phenomenon of aggressive behaviour” (Pruskus, 2012). He argues that students' aggressive behaviour is not a random phenomenon but is influenced by many factors—family, school, lack of student engagement, the influence of the streets and informal youth groups, media, and computer games (Pruskus, 2012:55). The above-mentioned professor V. Pruskus refers to professor G. Navaitis' (Navaitis, 1997) statements that aggression in adolescence is a natural phenomenon and an expression of emotions, moods, or moral attitudes towards others (Pruskus, 2012, pp. 19-20), he provides an insight into the deeper causes of bullying behaviour. It should be noted that the research on bullying and the activity of researchers in Lithuania and abroad can be integrated into a broader social or educational research, depending on the topic of research and the specialisation of the researchers. As we can see from the scholars' research, bullying occurs in different areas of young people's lives; therefore, many complex prevention strategies are integrated into schools, families, youth clubs— involving an aggressive person in sport activities, educational discussions, charity events, aid support and other after-school events.

3. THE CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HATE SPEECH

The term “hate speech” was used in the Recommendation on Hate Speech No. R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (1997) and in scientific research (Murauskienė, 2019; Wachs, 2021). The Council of Europe defined hate speech as incitement to hatred directed against individuals or groups with certain protected characteristics. Hate speech is understood as publicly disseminated negative information intended to discriminate, incite violence or hatred, or hostility against an individual or a group of individuals characterised by certain protected characteristics. The protected characteristics of individuals are defined in the Recommendations of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Lithuania (2023) (hereinafter referred to as the Prosecutor General). These are the characteristics of an individual or a group of individuals, such as race, language, religion or belief, ethnicity, nationality, gender, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and other shared

characteristics that form the core of the identity.

The purposes of hate speech include but are not limited to: intent to insult, humiliate or degrade a particular social group or a member of a social group with a protected characteristic, showing real or perceived vulnerability, limitations or inferiority. Hate speech violates the fundamental principles of a democratic society, such as the equality, dignity, honour and individuality of individuals. The targeted individuals are chosen based on their actual or imaginary connection to a community or group characterised by protected characteristics, their membership in this group, or their support for it.

The Recommendation of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (2015) (hereinafter Recommendations) defines hate speech as “any form of advocacy, promotion or incitement of disparagement, hatred or slander of an individual or a group of individuals, as well as any form of harassment, abuse, insult or the application of negative stereotypes, stigmatisation or threatening of such an individual or a group of individuals, and any justification of any of the foregoing expressions on the grounds of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status.” (Recommendations, 2015:3). The concept of hate speech is outlined in the Recommendations of the Prosecutor General (2023). These Recommendations (2023) as well as the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on combating hate speech, state that “hate speech encompasses all forms of expression (e.g., verbal, visual, etc.) that incite, promote, disseminate, or justify violence, hatred, or discrimination against an individual or a group of individuals, or that demean an individual or a group of individuals based on their actual or attributed personal characteristics or status, such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.” The Strategy and Action Plan of the United Nations Organisation on Hate Speech (hereinafter The Strategy and Action Plan) defines hate speech as “any form of communication, whether oral, written or behavioural, that attacks or uses derogatory or discriminatory language against a person or group because of who they are, in other words, because of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, birth, gender, or any other identifying factors.” (The Strategy and Action Plan, 2019). The United Nations also notes that currently there is no universal definition of hate speech under the International Human Rights Law and that this concept remains a subject of debate (Strategy and Action Plan, 2019). The concept of hate speech is also presented in the report of the working group formed by the order of the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (2023). It states that “hate speech is the public dissemination (in oral, written, other forms) of information (ideas, opinions, presumably false facts) that mocks, disparages, incites hatred, or provokes discrimination, violence, or physical confrontation against a group of people or an individual belonging to such group based on age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, colour, nationality, language, origin, ethnic origin, social status, religion, beliefs, or views.” (Report, 2019).

The freedom of people to express their thoughts and beliefs is provided for in the laws of the Republic of Lithuania and international law (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992, Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950). However, such free expression of thoughts and beliefs is not absolute, that is it must not infringe the rights and freedoms of others. When exercising their rights and freedoms, people must comply with the laws of the Republic of Lithuania and international legal acts and not restrict the rights and freedoms of others. The freedom to express one's own thoughts and beliefs is incompatible with criminal acts such as incitement to national, racial, religious

or social hatred, violence and discrimination, defamation and disinformation (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992). Thus, the dissemination of hate speech competes with two legal values: the right of individuals to express themselves and the equality of others. A person may exercise the right to freedom of self-expression as long as it does not violate the equal rights of others. Any infringement of this right is subject to legal liability. The following criteria are used to decide what legal liability should be imposed for hate speech, such as content and form of speech; context; method of dissemination of claims and extent of their reach; history (e.g., criminal record), status and social role of the author of the speech; contribution of disseminated speech to the harmful effects and nature and size of the audience, the characteristics of the group targeted by hate speech (Recommendations, 2023). These criteria were developed at the final expert meeting organised by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Rabat in October 2012 (Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the expert workshops on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, No A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, 2013). These important criteria were subsequently enshrined by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its General Recommendation No. 35 (2013). These criteria have been followed by the European Court of Human Rights and national authorities.

The question of legal responsibility for hate speech must be determined on the basis of all the relevant circumstances: publicity, linguistic expression, context, dangerousness, impact on the community, society or the state, the distinction between facts and opinions, as well as the limits of criticism (Gutauskas, 2022:23). The Recommendations of the Prosecutor General (2023) state that hate speech may or may not be so dangerous as to impose the legal liability depending on its seriousness, and require alternative measures such as education, awareness raising, etc. Based on the criterion of seriousness, hate speech can lead to criminal, administrative or civil liability. However, in practice, the imposition of administrative liability is very limited, as the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania specifies liability only in Article 524, which addresses the distribution or display of nationalist or communist symbols. The imposition of civil liability is also limited in this respect, as there is not always a specific victim. When assessing the seriousness of hate speech, it often does not rise to the level of criminal responsibility, and the offender remains unpunished (Gutauskas and Navickienė, 2022:88).

In order to assess the distinction between bullying and hate speech, it is important to identify the units of meaning – the criteria by which bullying and hate speech should be compared. The chosen criteria are related to both objective and subjective characteristics. Compiled by the authors following Lithuanian law enforcement practice (decisions of police and courts), a comparison of bullying and hate speech according to seven criteria (guilt, aim, duration, form, motive, method, consequences) is given below (see Table 1). Comparing the aims of bullying and hate speech, it is evident that both negative phenomena are oriented towards deliberate actions and essentially have very similar goals – to offend, to hurt, and to demean another person or their group. However, distinct differences between bullying and hate speech are identified through motive: in the case of bullying, the motive is assessed as a physical or psychological power imbalance, whereas in hate speech, a discriminatory motive is necessary. The motive is typically established from statements by the victim, witnesses and the perpetrator and includes aspects like the words and gestures used. Hate speech also often includes messaging indicating that the victim should feel unwelcome. Furthermore, differences are evident in the consequences: for example, in bullying, actions are usually directed at a specific individual, whereas in hate speech, they may not necessarily target a

specific individual. This fundamental difference is also highlighted by other authors who have compared bullying and hate speech, noting that bias is inherent in both phenomena (Wachs, 2021).

Table 1: The Comparison of Bullying and Hate Speech According to Criteria

Criteria	Bullying	Hate speech
Guilt	Deliberate actions	Deliberate actions
Duration	Systematic actions	Single or systematic actions
Aim	To insult, to hurt, to humiliate	To insult, to hurt, to humiliate
Forms	Physical, verbal, social or electronic	Verbal, social or electronic
Motives	Psychological or physical power imbalance	Discriminatory motive (race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs, age, etc.)
Method	Direct or indirect	Direct
Consequences	Bullying is usually directed at a specific person, such as a child. Bullying affects not only the individuals directly involved but also the broader community. For example, in the case of bullying of a pupil, it affects the entire school community: the pupils witnessing the bullying, teachers, other school staff, and parents.	Hate speech is not usually directed at a specific person, but sometimes could be directed at a person (Labanauskas, 2019). Hate speech sends a negative message to groups of people to which the victims belong, either in reality or supposedly. Hate speech causes significant harm not only to individuals but also to the entire community and society.

As the present analysis shows, there is a thin line between bullying and hate speech. The essential distinguishing feature of bullying and hate speech is the discriminatory motive and effects.

It should also be noted that hate speech is quite common on social networks and online news portals. Children often become victims of hate speech and bullying that spread online, which is why the European strategy for a better and safer internet for children is continuously being improved to prevent cyberbullying and hate speech in cyberspace (Communique from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions: European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children, 2012). This is aimed at preventing the expression of hatred at an early age, among children and young people.

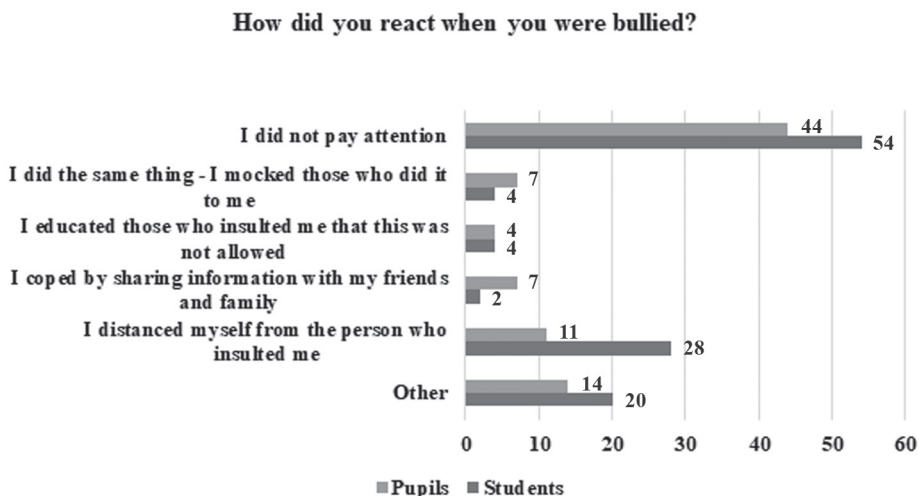
4. PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS BULLYING AND HATE SPEECH

Methodology of the study. In order to evaluate the youth's attitudes towards bullying and hate speech, to identify the most pressing problems they face and their reactions to bullying and hate speech, as well as to identify the most effective ways of combating bullying and hate speech, a survey of Lithuanian pupils and students was carried out between February and May 2023.

The survey was conducted by using a prepared questionnaire. When developing the questionnaire, the need to separate and analyse bullying and hate speech issues was assessed, and to understand whether survey participants understand the difference between these issues. The concepts of bullying and hate speech were explained in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part consists of 2 questions and provides general information about the respondent, choosing two cities – Vilnius and Kaunas – and two groups of young people – pupils and students from different educational institutions. The second part consists of 4 questions on bullying and bullying prevention. The third part consists of 5 questions on hate speech and its prevention. Answer options were constructed by collecting empirical material from practice and reading scientific literature. The questionnaire is anonymous, and its answers are used for research purposes to reduce bullying and hate speech. In order to have a clear understanding of the content of bullying and hate speech, respondents were given a brief definition and explanation of the concepts of bullying and hate speech. In addition, the respondents answering questions of the second and third parts had the opportunity to make individual comments on the bullying and hate speech they had experienced, as well as on the effectiveness of the proposed measures. Due to the scope of the article, only a portion of the results of this study are presented. During the survey, respondents were also required to provide their answers in the “other” section.

Three hundred twenty-four respondents (133 pupils, aged 13-18 and 191 students, aged 18-21) took part in the survey. The research followed ethical guidelines by not collecting information on sensitive issues related to vulnerability. The gender criterion was not excluded because it was not the subject of this study. **Presentation of the survey results.** Both pupils and students who took part in the study reported experiencing bullying. A very similar percentage of students and pupils reported this: specifically, 88 students (or 46.07% of all students surveyed) and 63 pupils (or 47.37% of all pupils surveyed).

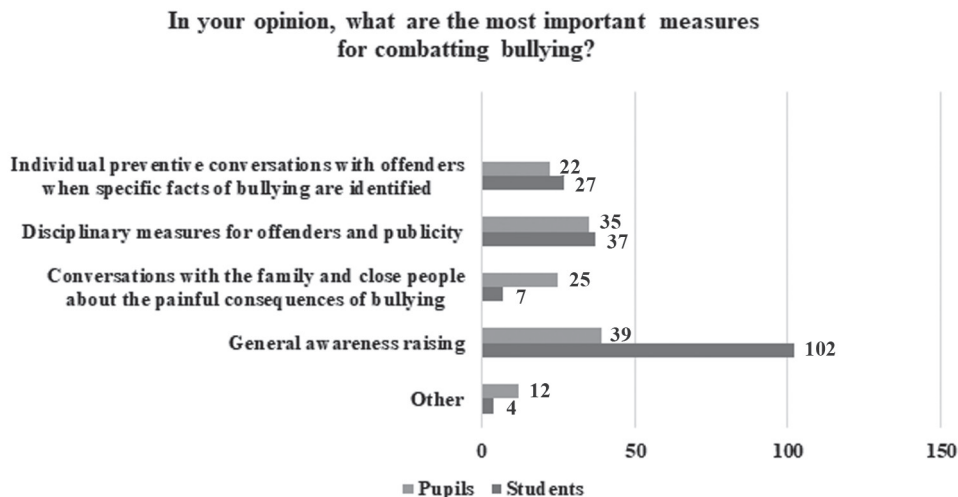
Figure 1: Respondents' Reactions to Bullying



Further stage of this study of students' and pupils' experiences of bullying was aimed at assessing their reaction to bullying. The question allowed more than one answer option.

The majority of students and pupils reacted similarly. A very small minority chose other ways to combat bullying (see Figure 1). However, it is possible to distinguish individual respondents' observations and reactions to bullying. Respondents noted various other reactions to bullying – they would physically confront those who insulted them, or they would try to defend themselves or others when faced with bullying.

Figure 2: Preventive Measures to Combat Bullying



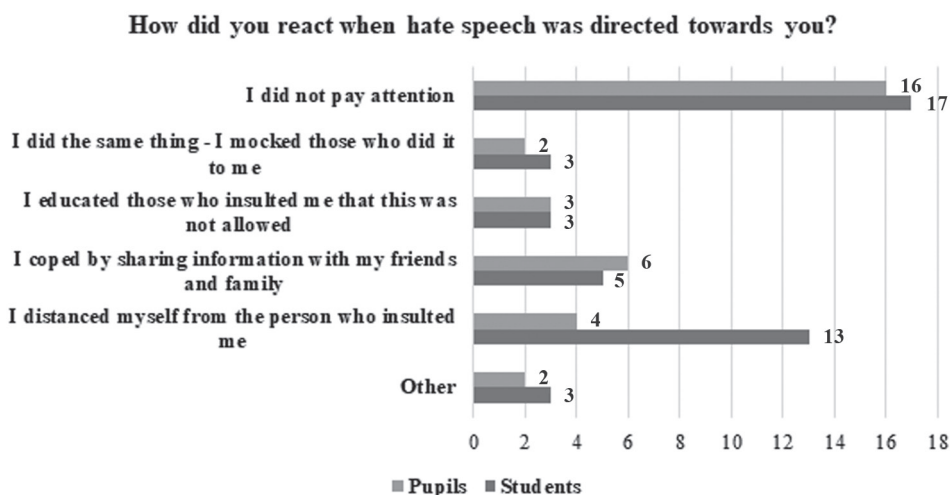
Analysing respondents' answers regarding preventive measures against bullying, respondents noted that essentially all measures of combating bullying contribute to positive changes, indicating the impact of complexity. Not all students in the study answered this question. Out of 191 students, 14 did not answer this question. According to the respondents, the most effective measures in combating bullying are raising general awareness and disciplinary measures for offenders, along with publicity of information (see Figure 2). The results of the study show that general awareness raising of both students and pupils is the most influential factor in combating bullying. In addition, a similar proportion of students and pupils noted that individual preventive conversations with the offender are an effective measure of bullying prevention. The distinction in pupils' opinions regarding discussions with family members or close individuals about painful consequences indicates the importance of family support for school-aged children (youth). Meanwhile, students feel that this preventive measure is not as prominent, probably due to their maturity and the fact that they have started to live independently.

In the next part of the study, respondents' answers on hate speech were analysed. Sixty-six students (34.55 per cent of the students) participated in the study stated that they had been subjected to hate speech. Comparing the responses of students and pupils, it can be seen that hate speech was more often directed towards pupils, as stated by 65 pupils (48.87 per cent of pupils).

The study further explored students' and pupils' experiences of hate speech by examining their reactions to hate speech. The question allowed more than one answer; however, not all students and pupils who experienced hate speech answered that question. The majority of respondents noted that they did not pay attention. A tiny minority indicated that they had

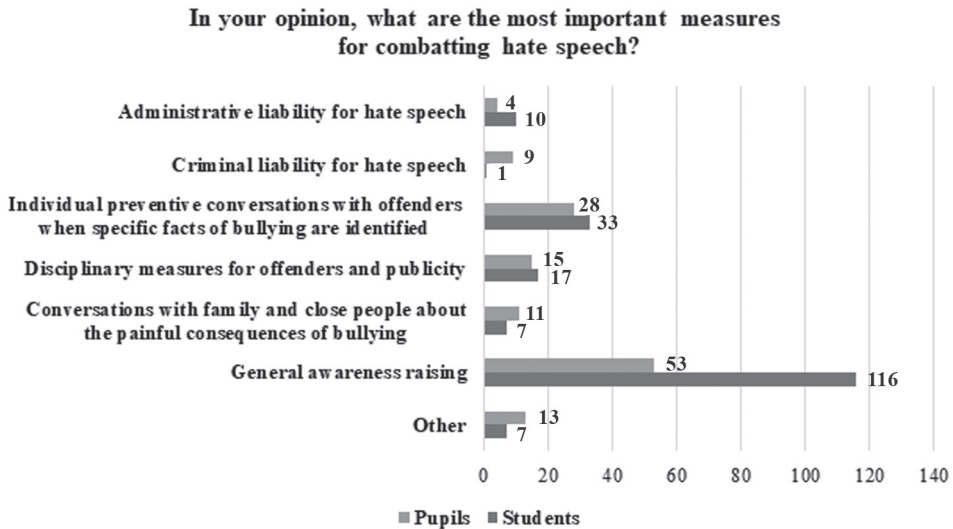
coped and shared this information with their close people (Figure 3). The majority marking “I did not pay attention” as their reaction indicates a dual problem: first, the passivity of young people, their silence, and reluctance to delve into issues; on the other hand, tolerance for hate speech, as without taking more active actions, it is likely that such cases of hate speech may recur. The reason for this behaviour may also be a fear of being active. The specific possible reasons for the chosen answer should be examined in more detail in a separate study. It should be noted that there were marked differences in the options of students and pupils regarding keeping a distance from the offender.

Figure 3: Respondents' Reactions to Hate Speech Against Them



All students and pupils who participated in the study answered the question about the most effective measures to combat hate speech (see Figure 4). When analysing the most effective means of combating hate speech, both students and pupils emphasised general awareness raising as the most important preventive measure (60.1% of students and 40% of pupils). In comparison, a significant number of respondents also noted the effectiveness of individual conversations (17.2% of students and 21.1% of pupils). Only a few respondents mentioned active preventive measures of their own, such as sharing information with others or educating the offenders about their negative actions (see Figure 4). Answers show a significant difference between the responses expressed by students and pupils in distancing themselves from the offending person. Students could understand this for different reasons: see it as a conscious way to avoid confrontation with the offender, lack of trust, unwillingness to delve into the situation, or pressure.

Figure 4: Preventive Measures to Combat Hate Speech



Besides, this demonstrates a lack of proactive actions by young people themselves. It should also be noted that neither students nor pupils consider the imposition of administrative or criminal liability for hate speech as a practical measure. Answers show a significant difference between the responses of students and pupils. There is a significant difference between the response of students and schoolchildren regarding educational activities – students understand this as a conscious, strong tool in combating hate speech.

5. SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Approximately half of the respondents of the study reported experiencing bullying. The results show that there is no significant difference between the answers given by students and pupils. When analysing respondents' experiences of bullying, most of them ignored or distanced themselves. This indicates that students and pupils chose a passive approach. There could be several reasons for this: avoiding (escaping) the problem instead of addressing it, and not taking active measures to neutralise negative situations; lack of trust; fear; and pressure. A separate study would be needed to analyse these deeper reasons. However, in contrast, respondents noted that general awareness raising (education) and individual conversations with the offenders when such facts are identified would be the most effective measures to combat bullying. It is believed that individual preventive conversations with offenders are only possible if the student or pupil actively responds to the bullying incidents and reports them to the appropriate teachers, supervisors, lecturers, or school administration, as well as to parents, or by discussing with the offender. Therefore, from this perspective, if the individuals who experience bullying remain passive and do not respond to it, such incidents will essentially remain latent, i.e., undisclosed. As a result, individual preventive conversations will not take place. At the same time, we want to emphasise that systemic measures are necessary: it is necessary to create an environment of trust, implement secure trust lines (message channels), investigate such facts after they are revealed, and conduct preventive measures with young

offenders. According to the authors, one way to raise awareness (through educational activities) could be focused on encouraging active responses from individuals who experience bullying, in identifying offenders and neutralising such incidents.

The experiences of students and pupils regarding hate speech directed at them differed. Pupils' experiences of hate speech are very similar to those of bullying. Similarly, to bullying cases, most respondents chose a passive approach, not responding to instances of hate speech or distancing themselves from the offender. However, in contrast, they claimed that awareness raising and having individual conversations with the offender are the most effective measures to combat hate speech, highlighting a pressing issue – the lack of activism of society in exposing instances of hate speech. Ignoring and being passive in not reacting to and disclosing cases of hate speech also prevents the proper implementation of individual prevention measures. However, the predominant suggestion is to pay more attention to educating pupils about the consequences of bullying and hate speech in schools. Thus, the proposed clear direction for prevention is awareness raising.

It is worth noting that other authors have also addressed this issue (Hate crimes and hate speech: an overview of the situation in Lithuania, 2021:66). That study revealed that individuals reacted passively to hate speech. However, the study participants were adults (18 – 75 years old), and at that time, the study noted that fear and distrust were the leading causes of passive behaviour.

In addition to what has already been examined, it is important to continue research focusing on the goal of determining the reasons for such a young person's actions, for example, what caused the person's mentioned reaction (behaviour) due to the bullying they experienced / or the hate speech expressed towards them? Are the consequences for involvement in hate speech and bullying the same? What are the barriers or obstacles to a person being more proactive in responding to a violation? What would encourage a person to build greater confidence in this area when combating bullying and hate speech? The object of such deeper research would be to analyse the reasons and conditions for the chosen person's way of acting or reacting to hate speech or bullying. The authors of this article see the need to further examine the topic by comparing the similarities, differences, and impact on the individual of bullying and hate speech, which is also noted by other authors (Wachs, 2021). By examining these questions, it would be possible to identify and assess the reasons that determine individuals' reactions to bullying and hate speech. It would be interesting to compare the reasons for behaviour among students and adults. Also, this would help to provide a clearer and more evidence-based preventive model. Other authors have also seen the need for more in-depth research to assess the effectiveness of preventive programs in combating hate speech (Wachs, Wettstein, Bilz, Krause, Ballaschk, Kansok-Dusche, and Wright, 2022). Therefore, in this case, it is important for future research to see how various prevention programs can impact individuals.

6. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was not large-scale, did not include all elements and subjects of the assessment of the negative phenomenon, and it was the first attempt to derive a parallel discourse between bullying and hate speech in assessing the attitudes of young people. The results of the study are not sufficient for the development of a preventive model. A suggested direction for further research could be focused on analysing the causes and conditions for behaviour in response

to bullying and hate speech, the role of other entities in combating these negative phenomena, and environmental influence factors. This would allow for a clearer understanding of why the young person chose this course of action and to understand what measures need to be taken to create a more effective preventive model. In order to create an effective preventive model, it is necessary to develop a validated methodology for future research that would include not only an analysis of the causes of youth reactions and behaviour, but also the actions of more subjects – parents, teachers, and lecturers, who would help create a safe environment. Other authors, who have even conducted detailed research, claim that further research on this issue is necessary (Wachs et al., 2022), which shows the inexhaustible relevance of this topic. Finally, by presenting this study, we provide an opportunity for other researchers to compare the results of the Lithuanian study with the results of similar studies in other countries.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the selected sources, the analysis of bullying concepts showed that the concept of bullying is associated with non-accidental and non-one-time, but repeated instances of harassment against a person, encompassing various forms: verbal, social, or electronic violence, ranging from subtle verbal harassment or aggression to direct physical violence. A more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of scientific and practical research approaches is needed to reveal a comprehensive understanding of bullying.

Based on the selected sources, the analysis of researchers' perspectives on the perception of hate speech showed that hate speech is understood as publicly disseminated negative information aimed at discriminating, inciting violence or hatred, or hostility towards an individual or their group, characterised by a particular protected characteristic. The preventive dimension of the combat against hate speech has a strong preventive orientation, focusing on public awareness raising. The main distinguishing feature of bullying and hate speech is the motive and consequences of actions.

The results of the study showed that in Lithuania, both students and pupils recognise bullying and hate speech and have encountered these negative phenomena. Analysis of reactions to bullying and hate speech, both students and pupils, when faced with bullying or hate speech, would most often choose to react by ignoring. However, the study results highlighted some differences between the responses of students and pupils to bullying and hate speech. Significantly more students noted that if faced with bullying or hate speech, they would choose to distance themselves from the offender. The majority of respondents indicated the importance of public educational activities and individual preventive conversations with the offender in both bullying and hate speech cases. However, respondents also identified other important measures for combating bullying and hate speech (individual conversations with the offender, family conversations, application of responsibility, etc.), which shows the importance of not individual, but systemic measures.

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Sažetak

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Stavovi mladih prema vršnjačkom nasilju i govoru mržnje u Litvi: Problemi, prevencija i vizija za budućnost

U viziji stvaranja sigurnog društva naglašeno je pitanje njegove angažiranosti – koliko je i kako društvo sposobno i motivirano uključiti se u krucijalna pitanja vezana uz prevenciju kršenja zakona. Cilj je ovog članka razmotriti pojmove vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje te analizirati stavove mladih (studentata i učenika) prema problemima vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje: njihove postupke i reakcije pri suočavanju s tim pitanjima, kao i predložene metode za suzbijanje vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje. Rezultatima ispitivanja naglašena su i potvrđena tri važna stava. Prvi je da postoji tanka linija između vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje. Analizom je pokazano da su motiv i posljedica postupaka glavne razlikovne značajke vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje. Drugi je stav da među studentima i učenicima nedostaje angažman u odgovaranju na vršnjačko nasilje i govor mržnje, kao i u otkrivanju/utvrđivanju negativnih činjenica. Treći je pak da je uočena potreba za kontinuiranim obrazovnim aktivnostima. Slijedom toga buduća obrazovna dimenzija društva iziskuje analizu važnih značajki, kao i razlika između vršnjačkog nasilja i govora mržnje, poticanje njihova prepoznavanja, kao i mladih na poduzimanje proaktivnih koraka kada se utvrde slučajevi vršnjačkog nasilja ili govora mržnje.

Ključne riječi: agresija, govor mržnje, vršnjačko nasilje, prevencija, nasilje, javna sigurnost.

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