CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

NAVIGATING POWER DYNAMICS: COMBATING BULLYING BETWEEN FACULTY AND STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. *Bullying between faculty and students in higher education represents a significant challenge, influencing both individual well-being and the overall institutional climate. Given the complex nature of academic environments characterized by inherent power imbalances, this issue requires detailed exploration to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies. The relevance of addressing bullying in universities arises from its detrimental impacts on students' psychological health, academic performance, and institutional reputation. Recognizing these challenges, the study aimed to explore bullying dynamics within higher education, focusing specifically on interactions between faculty members and students. The primary objective was to clarify the concept of bullying, identify prevalent forms, uncover barriers to reporting incidents, and evaluate institutional responses to such occurrences. A mixed-method research methodology was employed, combining a thorough comparative literature review and an international survey conducted among university students from Poland, Estonia, India, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The comparative literature review offered various interpretations of bullying, highlighting critical dimensions such as persistence, power imbalance, psychological impacts, cultural and organizational contexts, and intersectional factors. The international survey provided empirical data identifying "abuse of authority," "public humiliation," and "verbal harassment" as the most frequently encountered bullying behaviors. It also illuminated significant barriers that deter students from reporting these incidents, including fear of retaliation, potential academic consequences, and the absence of anonymous reporting mechanisms. These findings underscore the necessity for universities to implement comprehensive, transparent policies, robust reporting structures, proactive training programs, and supportive mechanisms to protect affected students and create safer educational environments.*

Keywords: bullying, higher education, power dynamics, faculty-student relationships, institutional responses, barriers to reporting, academic bullying, psychological impact, prevention strategies, university policy.
JEL Classification: I21; I23; I31
Formulas: 0; fig. 5; tabl. 2; bibl. 9

Introduction. Bullying in higher education, specifically involving interactions between faculty and students, has increasingly been recognized as a critical challenge with significant implications for the overall health of academic institutions. This issue is particularly problematic due to inherent power imbalances that can foster environments conducive to bullying behaviors. Such behaviors not only affect individuals directly involved but also deteriorate the broader institutional climate, undermining trust, respect, and academic integrity. Given the complexity of these dynamics, a comprehensive exploration into bullying's manifestations, causes, and consequences in university settings is essential for developing effective preventative and responsive strategies.

The relevance of addressing bullying within higher education stems from its substantial adverse effects on students' psychological health, academic performance, and future career trajectories. Students subjected to bullying often experience heightened stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem, which significantly impair their learning experience and academic outcomes. Moreover, these negative interactions can lead to decreased motivation, increased absenteeism, and even dropout, further exacerbating institutional challenges such as student retention and academic performance metrics. Thus, addressing bullying is not merely a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for maintaining the quality and reputation of higher education institutions.

Literature review. Bullying prevention in higher education has gained significant attention in recent academic literature, reflecting growing recognition of bullying's adverse impacts on students, faculty, and institutional environments.

Current literature emphasizes clarity in defining bullying within higher education contexts, distinguishing it from normal academic rigor or disagreements. Scholars such as Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) and Keashly and Neuman (2010) stress that bullying involves persistent negative actions characterized by power imbalances, making higher education environments particularly vulnerable.

Research consistently highlights that bullying in universities is more prevalent than traditionally acknowledged. Keashly and Neuman's (2010) comprehensive analysis underscores how faculty-student dynamics, peer interactions, and administrative relationships contribute to diverse bullying manifestations, including verbal harassment, psychological intimidation, cyberbullying, and professional marginalization.

Several studies, such as those by Hollis (2016) and Nielsen and Einarsen (2018), underline the profound psychological, academic, and organizational consequences of bullying. Victims often experience heightened anxiety, depression, academic disengagement, and decreased productivity. Moreover, bullying affects overall institutional reputation, student retention rates, and faculty morale.

A significant body of literature explores effective prevention strategies. Twale and De Luca (2008) argue that comprehensive institutional policies, combined with proactive educational measures, significantly reduce bullying occurrences. Recommended practices include mandatory training programs, awareness campaigns, and transparent, confidential reporting mechanisms. Moreover, Zabrodska and Kveton

(2013) emphasize that meaningful institutional response and accountability are crucial components in establishing anti-bullying norms.

Despite advances, literature identifies persistent challenges and gaps. Giorgi et al. (2016) critique existing anti-bullying policies for inadequate implementation, inconsistent enforcement, and insufficient resource allocation. Additionally, limited research specifically addressing the complexities of digital or cyberbullying within higher education remains a critical gap (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2014).

Current scholarly consensus suggests the need for longitudinal studies to better understand bullying dynamics over time, particularly regarding evolving online interactions. Researchers call for deeper exploration of intersectional factors—such as race, gender, and power structures—impacting bullying experiences and prevention efficacy (Misawa & Rowland, 2015).

The literature collectively underscores the urgency and complexity of bullying prevention in higher education institutions. Effective prevention requires sustained institutional commitment, comprehensive policy frameworks, proactive educational interventions, and ongoing research to address existing gaps and emerging challenges in the field.

Aims. The primary aim of this research was to investigate bullying in higher education, focusing specifically on faculty-student interactions. It aimed to define and clarify the concept of bullying, identify prevalent forms and barriers to reporting, evaluate current institutional responses, and propose practical solutions for universities to effectively prevent and address bullying.

Methodology. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, including a comprehensive literature review, comparative analysis of bullying definitions, and an international survey involving university students from Poland, Estonia, India, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The survey aimed to identify prevalent forms of bullying behaviors and barriers to reporting these incidents.

Results. A precise definition of bullying in higher education is critical, yet academic literature presents varying perspectives. Based on the results of the review of scientific works, a comparative analysis of the interpretation of the concept of "bullying" in higher education was carried out (Figure 1).
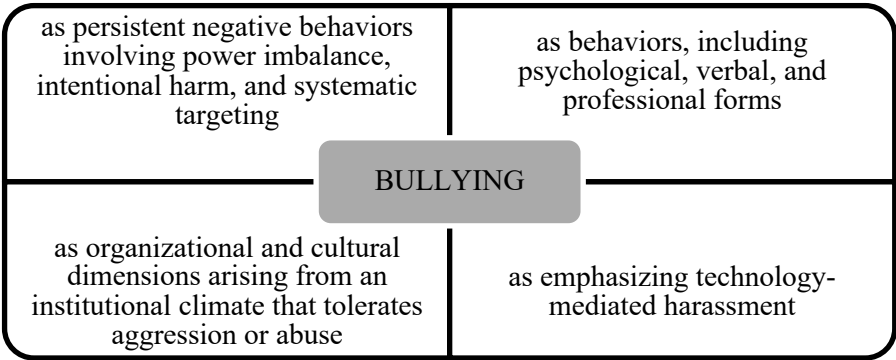

Figure 1. Modern approaches to the interpretation of the definition of bullying in higher education

Source: systematized by the authors

Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) define bullying in academia as persistent negative behaviors involving power imbalance, intentional harm, and systematic targeting. Their emphasis on the persistence and repetition of behaviors offers clarity but may overlook isolated yet significantly impactful incidents.

Conversely, Keashly and Neuman (2010) advocate for a broader definition that captures diverse bullying behaviors, including psychological, verbal, and professional forms. They emphasize context-specific considerations, notably power dynamics unique to academia. Their definition accommodates subtle yet detrimental bullying but could be criticized for vagueness and subjective interpretation.

Twale and De Luca (2008) stress the organizational and cultural dimensions, arguing bullying arises from institutional climates tolerating aggression or abuse. Their definition spotlights institutional accountability, directing attention toward systemic solutions rather than individual-level interventions. However, this approach may diminish individual accountability.

Cassidy, Faucher, and Jackson (2014) introduce definitions specific to cyberbullying, emphasizing technology-mediated harassment. Recognizing digital contexts is crucial given the growing prevalence of online interactions. Yet, this definition alone may inadequately address face-to-face bullying nuances.

Misawa and Rowland (2015) integrate intersectionality into defining bullying, highlighting how identities such as race, gender, and ethnicity intersect with power dynamics in higher education settings. Their definition acknowledges complexity but could complicate consistent policy implementation.

While Einarsen and Nielsen provide clarity beneficial for policy creation, Keashly and Neuman's broader approach ensures inclusivity of varied bullying experiences. Twale and De Luca focus effectively on cultural transformation, Cassidy et al. specifically address emerging digital challenges, and Misawa and Rowland highlight intersectionality's critical role.

Each definition provides valuable insights but also presents unique limitations. Einarsen and Nielsen's precise definition aids clarity in policy-making, while Keashly and Neuman ensure inclusivity in recognizing diverse experiences. Twale and De Luca focus strategically on systemic cultural shifts, Cassidy et al. address the growing challenge of cyberbullying, and Misawa and Rowland bring essential attention to intersectionality.

Effective anti-bullying policies in higher education institutions should integrate these multidimensional perspectives. Policies must encompass clear criteria for persistent behaviors, sensitivity to power dynamics and context, systemic institutional accountability, digital harassment recognition, and intersectional understanding. Combining these elements will allow institutions to create comprehensive and adaptable frameworks to robustly prevent and address bullying.

Prevalence and forms of bullying in higher education. Bullying in higher education institutions is an issue that warrants attention due to its widespread prevalence and varied manifestations. Numerous studies indicate that bullying is a frequent but often underreported problem within academic environments, affecting students, faculty, and administrative personnel.

Research by Keashly and Neuman (2010) highlights that bullying in universities may be more common than traditionally recognized, with significant occurrences often going unnoticed or unaddressed due to institutional silence or inadequate reporting mechanisms. Various surveys and studies suggest that a substantial proportion of university communities have witnessed or experienced bullying firsthand, pointing toward the hidden nature of the issue.

Bullying manifests in multiple forms, each uniquely damaging to victims and disruptive to academic culture (Figure 2).
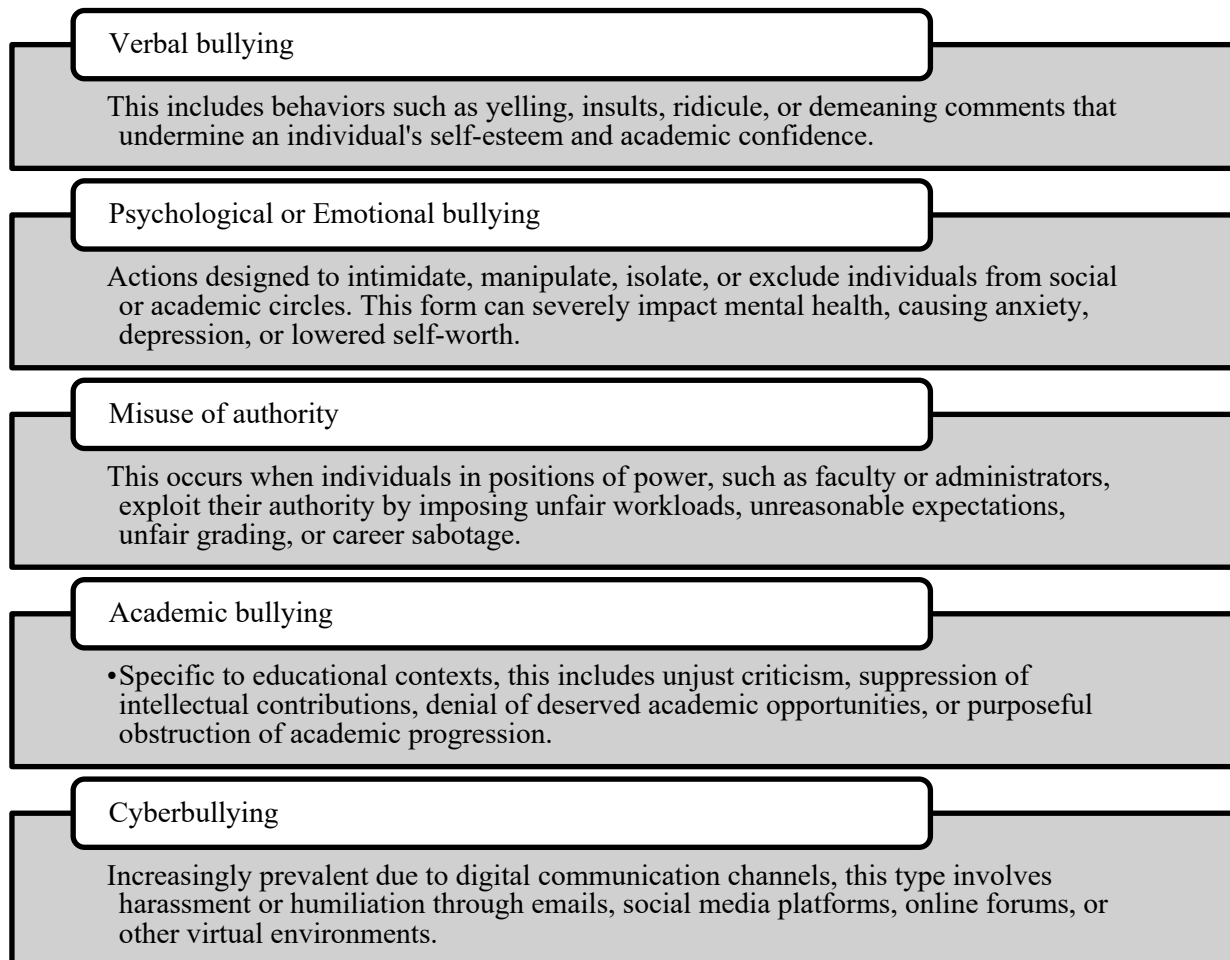
Verbal bullying

This includes behaviors such as yelling, insults, ridicule, or demeaning comments that undermine an individual's self-esteem and academic confidence.

Psychological or Emotional bullying

Actions designed to intimidate, manipulate, isolate, or exclude individuals from social or academic circles. This form can severely impact mental health, causing anxiety, depression, or lowered self-worth.

Misuse of authority

This occurs when individuals in positions of power, such as faculty or administrators, exploit their authority by imposing unfair workloads, unreasonable expectations, unfair grading, or career sabotage.

Academic bullying

•Specific to educational contexts, this includes unjust criticism, suppression of intellectual contributions, denial of deserved academic opportunities, or purposeful obstruction of academic progression.

Cyberbullying

Increasingly prevalent due to digital communication channels, this type involves harassment or humiliation through emails, social media platforms, online forums, or other virtual environments.

Figure 2. The main forms of bullying in higher education
Source: systematized by the authors

Understanding the prevalence and forms of bullying is crucial for institutions aiming to create comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. Effective responses require addressing both overt and subtle forms of bullying, ensuring clear policies, transparent reporting systems, and robust support frameworks are established and maintained within academic communities.

Bullying in higher education institutions is a serious issue impacting educational quality, psychological well-being, and the overall academic environment. To gain a deeper understanding of the forms of bullying that university students encounter, an international survey was conducted, covering students from Poland, Estonia, India, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The main goal was to identify the most prevalent bullying

behaviors occurring between faculty and students, thus enabling institutions to pinpoint critical areas for targeted interventions and improvement (Figure 3).
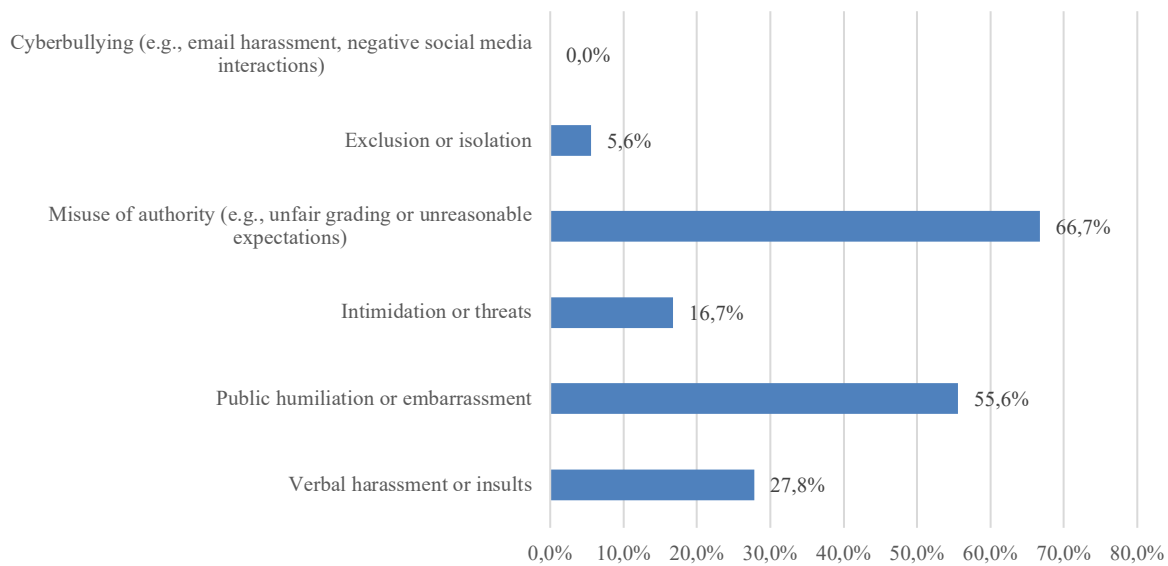

Figure 3. Respondents' answers to the question "Which forms of bullying behavior do you think are most prevalent between faculty and students at your institution?"

Source: systematized by the authors

The survey results indicate that the most common form of bullying identified by respondents is "abuse of authority," reported by two-thirds (66.7%) of participants. Additionally, "public humiliation or belittling" (55.6%) and "verbal harassment or insults" (27.8%) were also significantly reported. These findings highlight critical challenges related to power imbalances and negative communication patterns within the educational environment. It is imperative to develop clear strategies and measures to strengthen accountability, improve transparency in interactions, and support those affected. Such efforts will contribute to establishing a healthy, safe, and inclusive academic atmosphere.

Reporting bullying incidents is critically important in addressing this issue within higher education institutions. However, students frequently encounter certain barriers preventing them from openly speaking about negative experiences. The survey aimed to identify the key factors that discourage students from reporting bullying incidents involving faculty members (Figure 4).

Survey results indicate that the most significant barriers preventing students from reporting bullying are fear of retaliation (83.3%), concern about academic consequences (72.2%), and lack of anonymity (55.6%). These findings highlight the urgent need to establish safe, confidential, and reliable reporting mechanisms, along with enhanced support for victims and protection of their academic interests.
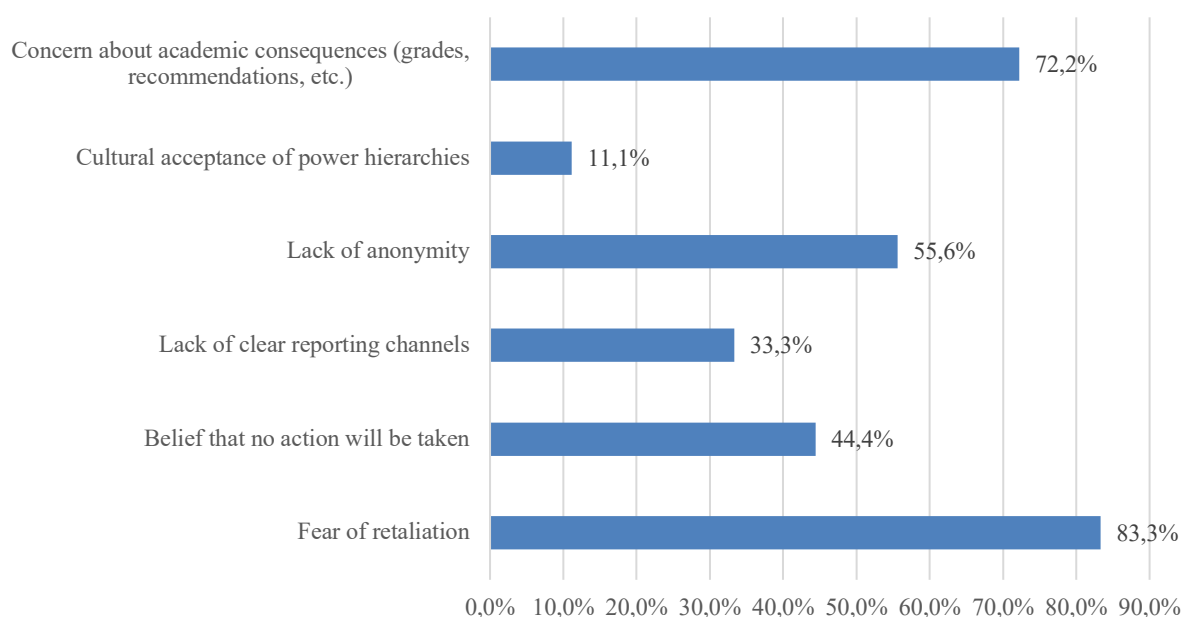
Figure 4. Respondents' answers to the question "What factors discourage students from reporting bullying behaviors by faculty members?"
Source: systematized by the authors

Practical activities of the university to combat bullying. Effectively combating bullying in universities requires proactive, inclusive and ongoing activities that involve the entire academic community. Based on the results of the study, the main practical measures for the activities of universities to combat bullying were summarized (Table 1).

Table 1. The main practical measures for the activities of universities to combat bullying were summarized

Category	Activities
Awareness and Education Campaigns	Launch regular campaigns highlighting bullying impacts.- Organize workshops on recognition, prevention, and response.
Training Programs	Mandatory anti-bullying training for faculty, staff, and students.- Role-playing and interactive scenarios for empathy and intervention skills.
Peer Support Networks	Establish mentoring and support programs for safe discussions.- Train peers to identify bullying and refer to support services.
Clear Reporting Mechanisms	Anonymous reporting platforms or helplines.- Clearly communicated procedures and resources.
Institutional Policies	Define bullying explicitly with zero-tolerance in handbooks.- Regular policy reviews for emerging issues like cyberbullying.
Community-Building Initiatives	Social and extracurricular activities to foster collaboration and inclusivity.- Interdisciplinary events and dialogues for institutional cohesion.
Counseling and Support Services	Accessible counseling and psychological support.- Dedicated personnel or offices for guidance and advocacy.
Evaluation and Improvement	Regular effectiveness assessments through surveys and feedback.- Continuous adaptation based on evaluations and community input.

Source: systematized by the authors

By actively engaging in these practices, universities can significantly reduce bullying, promote a healthy educational environment, and enhance the overall well-being of their academic communities.

Prevention models and institutional responses: case studies from individual universities. Universities worldwide have developed distinct prevention models and institutional responses to effectively address bullying within their communities.

A study of university websites highlighted different prevention models and institutional responses to bullying issues at individual universities (Table 2).

Table 2. Prevention models and institutional response to bullying issues in selected universities

Feature	Common Practices	Distinctive Practices
Policy Frameworks	Clearly defined bullying policies and zero-tolerance stance	Integration of restorative justice approaches (University of British Columbia)
Educational Programs	Regular training sessions and workshops	Online mandatory educational modules (Monash University)
Reporting Mechanisms	Anonymous reporting systems, confidential helplines	Comprehensive online reporting platforms with immediate administrative response (UC Berkeley)
Institutional Response	Formal investigative procedures and counseling support	Dedicated anti-bullying officers and mediation specialists (Monash University, University of Helsinki)
Awareness and Community Engagement	Awareness campaigns and community-building activities	Specialized campaigns like "Breaking the Silence" initiative (University of Cambridge)
Support Services	Psychological counseling and victim advocacy services	Equity and inclusion offices dedicated to bullying cases (University of British Columbia)
Accountability Measures	Clearly articulated consequences and disciplinary actions	Emphasis on restorative dialogue and conflict resolution (University of British Columbia, University of Helsinki)
Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	Regular feedback mechanisms and policy reviews	Use of comprehensive assessment tools and long-term monitoring of outcomes (UC Berkeley, University of Helsinki)

Source: systematized by the authors

University of Cambridge (UK). Cambridge employs a comprehensive model emphasizing clear policies, education, and awareness. Their "Breaking the Silence" campaign promotes transparent communication, offers training workshops for both students and staff, and maintains confidential reporting mechanisms. Additionally, the university prioritizes counseling services and clear procedural guidelines for responding to incidents, ensuring accountability and support.

University of British Columbia (Canada). UBC implements a proactive approach through their Respectful Environment Statement and dedicated offices such as the Equity & Inclusion Office. The institution conducts regular educational initiatives, mandatory training programs on recognizing bullying, and offers accessible reporting tools. UBC's response framework emphasizes restorative practices, fostering open dialogue and resolution-focused interventions.

Monash University (Australia). Monash adopts a preventive model centered around inclusive institutional culture. Their comprehensive anti-bullying policies clearly define unacceptable behaviors and consequences. The university provides continuous education through interactive workshops and an online module required for

staff and students. Monash's response mechanisms include dedicated anti-bullying officers who oversee impartial investigations and provide victim support services.

University of California, Berkeley (USA). UC Berkeley's prevention model emphasizes active community participation. They focus on cultivating awareness through campaigns and mandatory training sessions. Berkeley's robust online portal allows anonymous reporting and swift administrative follow-up. Their institutional response combines educational interventions, counseling, and, if needed, disciplinary actions to uphold a respectful campus culture.

University of Helsinki (Finland). Helsinki University's model is deeply rooted in maintaining transparent, democratic academic environments. Their prevention initiatives include clearly articulated behavioral guidelines, regular anti-bullying seminars, and continuous staff training on ethical conduct. Their institutional response incorporates conflict mediation, counseling services, and comprehensive investigative procedures to maintain trust and transparency.

These universities exemplify effective bullying prevention and response strategies. Common factors include clearly defined anti-bullying policies, mandatory training programs, accessible reporting systems, transparent investigative processes, and robust victim support services. Institutions seeking to enhance their anti-bullying measures can benefit by adopting a combination of these successful practices tailored to their specific context.

Prospects for combating bullying. Addressing bullying within higher education offers promising prospects for creating healthier academic environments that enhance educational outcomes and overall community well-being. Growing awareness and increasing research into the causes, forms, and impacts of bullying provide universities with the foundation necessary for informed, proactive interventions. Institutions are increasingly recognizing the urgency of addressing bullying, creating an impetus for substantial policy changes and preventive measures.

Advancements in technology and communication offer significant opportunities for improving reporting mechanisms and providing support to bullying victims through confidential, accessible digital platforms. Moreover, international collaboration among universities allows for sharing best practices and successful models, further enhancing anti-bullying efforts.

Prospects for combating bullying in universities are presented in Figure 5.

By pursuing these directions, universities can significantly advance their efforts in combating bullying, creating safer and more inclusive educational environments for all members of the academic community.

Discussion. The findings of this study illuminate critical issues regarding bullying between faculty and students in higher education, highlighting both challenges and potential areas for institutional improvement. The complexity of power dynamics inherent in university settings creates environments where bullying can manifest subtly yet significantly, complicating detection and intervention.

The comparative analysis of definitions demonstrates that understanding and addressing bullying in academia requires a multidimensional approach. Definitions proposed by Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) emphasize persistence and clear criteria,

beneficial for policy enforcement yet potentially excluding isolated impactful incidents. Meanwhile, broader definitions by Keashly and Neuman (2010) capture a wider array of negative behaviors but present challenges regarding consistency and clarity in interpretation. Institutional definitions must, therefore, strike a careful balance between specificity and inclusivity, considering both overt and covert manifestations of bullying.

Institutional Policy Enhancement:

Develop clear, comprehensive anti-bullying policies that explicitly define unacceptable behaviors, reporting procedures, and consequences.
Regularly review and update policies to address new forms of bullying, including cyberbullying and intersectional bullying related to race, gender, and identity.

Strengthening Reporting Mechanisms:

Implement secure, anonymous reporting platforms to encourage students and staff to report bullying without fear of retaliation.
Ensure transparency in the handling of reports, including regular communication about institutional responses and outcomes.

Education and Training:

Conduct mandatory training for faculty, administrative staff, and students to raise awareness, build empathy, and teach effective intervention strategies.
Offer specialized training sessions focusing on recognizing subtle forms of bullying and understanding the psychological impact on victims.

Enhanced Support Services:

Establish dedicated offices or personnel to provide psychological counseling, legal assistance, and academic support for bullying victims.
Foster peer support networks to encourage students to support one another in addressing bullying experiences safely and constructively.

Cultural and Community Initiatives:

Promote campus-wide initiatives and awareness campaigns to foster a culture of respect, tolerance, and inclusion.
Organize regular events, discussions, and workshops focused on building positive relationships and addressing power imbalances within academic communities.

International Collaboration:

Facilitate cross-university partnerships and international dialogue to exchange effective anti-bullying practices and learn from successful global examples.
Encourage research collaborations to explore innovative anti-bullying strategies and develop globally applicable solutions.

Figure 5. Prospects for combating bullying in universities

Source: systematized by the authors

Survey results clearly indicate abuse of authority as the predominant form of bullying experienced by students, aligning closely with the hierarchical structures prevalent in academia. Public humiliation and verbal harassment also emerge prominently, suggesting a need for educational programs focusing specifically on communication ethics and respectful professional interactions. Addressing these behaviors explicitly in institutional policy and training can mitigate their occurrence and impact.

One of the study's most significant findings is the critical role barriers play in preventing students from reporting bullying. The overwhelming fear of retaliation and academic repercussions underscores the urgency for anonymous, reliable, and safe reporting channels. Additionally, concerns about anonymity highlight that transparency alone is insufficient without robust confidentiality guarantees. Institutions must thus enhance their reporting systems, making them trustworthy and accessible, paired with proactive outreach to educate students about available protections and resources.

The review of practical interventions across various universities provides valuable insights into effective strategies, emphasizing institutional commitment and active community engagement. Models from universities such as Cambridge and Monash underscore the importance of clear policies, comprehensive training programs, dedicated anti-bullying officers, and restorative justice approaches. These examples serve as templates that other institutions could adapt and implement effectively within their unique contexts.

Finally, the prospect for improvement in bullying prevention lies significantly in international collaboration and technological advancements. Online platforms facilitating safe reporting, international sharing of best practices, and cross-institutional research cooperation could significantly enhance effectiveness in combating bullying. Such coordinated efforts not only amplify institutional responses but also promote broader cultural shifts toward respect, accountability, and inclusion within higher education globally.

Conclusions. Combating bullying effectively requires comprehensive, multidimensional policies incorporating clarity of definitions, persistent behavioral criteria, sensitivity to power dynamics, and systemic institutional accountability. Universities must prioritize transparent reporting mechanisms, strengthen support systems, and actively engage the academic community through regular training and community-building initiatives. Leveraging technological advancements and international collaboration further enhances these efforts, ultimately fostering safer, inclusive, and respectful academic environments.

Author contributions. The authors contributed equally.

Disclosure statement. The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

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