Policies Implemented by the Ministry of National Education on Cyberbullying in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

Technological developments experienced today, both socially and by individuals, have reshaped a wide range of fields, including education. While these developments have made life easier, they have also meant that many societal problems, such as bullying, have shifted to the virtual world. Cyberbullying is more than a type of violence that is experienced in many cultures. It is an international problem, where someone living in one country can cyberbully both individuals living in their own country and those in another country. In this context, countries have begun to update their policies in order to adapt to major developments, seeking solutions to emerging or evolving problems. In particular, cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has gained momentum in Türkiye in recent years. Both the incidence of cyberbullying and studies regarding the topic have increased. As a result of this increase, policymaking with regards to cyberbullying has become an important agenda in Turkish politics. With this importance in mind, this study aims to examine the state of cyberbullying-related policy in Türkiye. Current studies and policies on cyberbullying in Türkiye, the extent to which policies and practices match, and whether their inconsistency between them are the analytic focus on this thesis. In addition, this thesis offers a comparison between the perception of cyberbullying in Türkiye and in the West. As a result of the analysis, the thesis concludes that the practices for addressing cyberbullying in Türkiye are quite recent and that the concept is still not fully known among both students and other members of the education system (i.e., administrators and teachers). Although important political steps have been taken, these have been insufficient, with some types of violent behavior being perceived as nothing more than "joking" in Türkiye. Lastly, based on the findings of this thesis, policy recommendations are presented at the end.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Policies in Education, Violence.

RÉSUMÉ

Les développements technologiques vécus aujourd'hui, tant au niveau social qu'individuel, ont transformé un large éventail de domaines, parmi lesquels celui de l'éducation. Si ces évolutions ont rendu la vie plus facile, elles ont également conduit au déplacement de nombreux problèmes de société, tels que le harcèlement, vers le monde virtuel. La cyberintimidation est bien plus qu'un type de violence vécue dans de nombreuses cultures. Il s'agit d'un problème international dans lequel une personne vivant dans un pays peut intimider à la fois des personnes vivant dans son propre pays et des personnes d'un autre pays. Dans ce contexte, les pays ont commencé à actualiser leurs politiques afin de s'adapter aux évolutions majeures, en cherchant des solutions aux problèmes émergents ou en évolution. En particulier, la cyberintimidation est un phénomène qui a pris de l'ampleur en Turquie ces dernières années. L'incidence de la cyberintimidation s'est accrue et les études sur le sujet se sont développées. En raison de cette augmentation, l'élaboration de politiques concernant la cyberintimidation occupe désormais une place de choix à l'ordre du jour   de la politique turque. Compte tenu de cette importance, cette étude vise à examiner l'état de la politique relative à la cyberintimidation en Turquie. Les études et politiques actuelles sur la cyberintimidation en Turquie, la mesure dans laquelle les politiques et les pratiques concordent, correspondent, et si leur incohérence entre elles constituent l'objectif analytique de cette thèse. De plus, cette thèse propose une comparaison entre la perception de la cyberintimidation en Turquie et en Occident. À la suite de l'analyse, la thèse conclut que les pratiques de lutte contre la cyberintimidation en Turquie sont assez récentes et que le concept n'est pas encore bien compris à la fois par les étudiants et par les autres membres du système éducatif (c'est-à-dire les administrateurs et les enseignants). Bien que des mesures politiques importantes aient été prises, celles-ci se sont révélées insuffisantes,

certains types de comportements violents étant perçus comme de simples « plaisanteries » en Turquie. Enfin, sur la base des résultats de cette thèse, des recommandations politiques sont présentées à la fin.

Mots clés: cyberintimidation, politiques éducatives, violence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BTK : The Information Technologies and Communications Authority (**B**ilgi **T**eknolojileri ve İletişim **K**urumu)

MEB : Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education (**M**illi **E**ğitim **B**akanlığı)

NGO : Non-governmental Organization

RTÜK : Radio and Television Supreme Council (**R**adyo ve **T**elevizyon **Ü**st **K**urulu)

TCK : Turkish Penal Code (**T**ürk **C**eza **K**anunu)

TÜİK : Turkish Statistical Institute (**Tü**rkiye **İ**statistik **K**urumu)

TÜBİTAK : The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (**Tü**rkiye **Bi**limsel ve **T**eknolojik **A**raştırma **K**urumu)

TRT : Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (**T**ürkiye **R**adyo **T**elevizyon Kurumu)

TRT Çocuk : TRT Kids

TRT Radyo 1 : TRT Radio 1

YÖK : The Council of Higher Education (**Y**üksek**Ö**ğrenim **K**urumu)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the cyberbullying-related policies implemented by the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye. I argue that although the Turkish government and the public do not directly define cyberbullying, they are addressing its different forms through legislation. In this thesis, I will analyze how cyberbullying-related issues are handled in Türkiye and make some comparison between Türkiye and some Western countries. I will come to the conclusion that it is important to make the public, namely teachers, administrators and schools, aware of their legal risks and responsibilities and to denormalize violence as a culture. This introduction lays the foundation for what I will elaborate in the following chapters,

Background and Motivation

As someone who said their first words at six months old, I have always been passionate about explaining things to others. As I got older and began making friends and playing with them, I discovered that the games I enjoyed the most involved communication to some degree. At a young age, I was aware that this situation would shape my professional life, but I was not sure in which field it would be. Then I encountered the world of computers. I was pulled in by its fascinating atmosphere, in terms of both visuals and technology. When I reached high school and thought of a way to combine these two passions, I came across the option of teaching computers. For this reason, I completed my undergraduate education in the Department of Computer Education and Educational Technologies, which is one of the teaching branches of the Faculty of Education. Throughout my educational life, both as a student and as a teacher-candidate, I have witnessed many times that a teacher who loves their job and is effective in their classroom can touch the lives of students, open their horizons, and help them make important decisions about their lives. Of course, the opposite is also true. With this motivation, I came across a stumbling

block while continuing my education. I became aware of the fact that computers are more than magic; they can also have negative effects that lead to very serious consequences. Among these, cyberbullying caught my attention the most.

Cyberbullying, in many countries around the world, is a phenomenon in which people of almost every age group are involved as perpetrators or victims and which can lead to such serious consequences as suicide. While many countries contribute to international literature by conducting research on cyberbullying, policies have also begun to be developed around this research. In Türkiye, my country of origin, cyberbullying first came onto the academic agenda with an article published in 2007. This article was followed by a master's thesis published in 2008. As of the present (2023), the published works and the policies being developed have both increased, with the subject beginning to find a place in Türkiye's agenda (both a national/state agenda, and the agenda of institutions). However, the relatively insufficient number of studies on and applications of policy around cyberbullying has made me think, especially given some of the serious ramifications of the phenomenon.

As a mother and a teacher, my experience has taught me that observing children plays a very important role in detecting such problems. As I mentioned above, a devoted teacher has many positive contributions to make to children's lives, and these include not only supporting children along their educational journeys, but also being a powerful force for positive change in the face of the difficulties they experience. This made me think more about cyberbullying. Due to the fact that cyberbullying takes place online, content about it is included in the curriculum of my branch of teaching, which is computers. As someone who wants to continue to be a good teacher, I wondered about the status of existing and developed policies, such as whether sufficient course hours were allocated to the subject, the scope and number of extracurricular

activities, and whether there was a legal dimension. I wondered about how serious this situation is in Türkiye. My inner passion and curiosity in light of all these questions inspired me to believe that this topic, cyberbullying, was worth investigating.

Context of the Thesis

Considering that cyberbullying has a complex structure, its multifaceted nature can be examined within more than one discipline, such as education or law. For this reason, I decided to conduct a systematic review of the situation of cyberbullying in Türkiye. More specifically, this study looks at the state of the policies made by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) of the Republic of Türkiye, at the contributions and deficiencies of these policies in practice, as well as at the similarities and differences between the perception of cyberbullying in the West and the perception of cyberbullying in Türkiye. The main research question and other key questions are:

(RQ): What kind of policies has the Ministry of National Education (MEB) implemented related to cyberbullying in Türkiye?

(KQ1): When did the MEB begin to make policies on cyberbullying, which strategies and subjects are given priority by the MEB's policies, and how are the policies implemented?

(KQ2): What kind of crime is cyberbullying from a legal and political point of view and what are the administrative measures taken against cyberbullying by the MEB?

(KQ3): How effective are the MEB's policies on cyberbullying? Do the theory and practice overlap?

(KQ4): In what way are Türkiye and the West similar and different regarding the perception of cyberbullying?

Overview of the Thesis

In the first chapter, I have gone over the background and motivation of the study, followed by the research questions. I have also contextualized cyberbullying and addressed the gap in the Turkish literature.

In the second chapter, I will start with the definition and emergence of the concept of cyberbullying in Türkiye. Then I will discuss the existing studies on cyberbullying in the Turkish literature by focusing on which aspects of cyberbullying are frequently discussed. Finally, I will look at how and in what way the cyberbullying policies of the MEB are implemented through the lens of the Turkish literature, which is the aim of this thesis.

In the third chapter, I will examine and detail the cyberbullying policies of the MEB in Türkiye. I will talk about when these policies began, the current projects and curriculum studies, as well as the institutions and organizations that MEB cooperates with while preparing and executing all these policies.

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss cyberbullying with its legal and administrative dimensions in Türkiye. I will examine the sanctions imposed by the MEB against cyberbullying. I will also analyze cyberbullying through the Turkish Penal Code.

In the fifth chapter, I will evaluate how cyberbullying is perceived in Türkiye through studies in the Turkish literature. Then I will make an analysis of the MEB's policies, including what these policies mean in practice in Türkiye.

In chapter six, I will conclude the thesis by comparing the perceptions of cyberbullying of Türkiye and the West. Lastly, I will provide suggestions as a result of analyzing the policies based on both national and international scholarship.

Contextualization of Cyberbullying

One of the first people to define the term "cyberbullying" was Canadian Bill Belsey (Shariff, 2009). Belsey, on his website (https://cyberbullying.ca/), claims that he wrote the world's first definition of cyberbullying in 2005 (Cyberbullying, n.d.). That is: "Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others" (Cyberbullying, n.d.). In a study by Smith et al. (2008), cyberbullying is described as "An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith et al., 2008, 376). Wolke et al. (2017) state that cyberbullying can be accepted as an "additional form" of traditional bullying carried out on the internet (Smith, 2019). In a similar way, participants in a study by Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) described cyberbullying as "bullying via internet" (Zacchilli and Valerio, 2011, p. 12). However, in the literature, there are studies that discuss cyberbullying as a new and different phenomenon, not as a continuation or a type of traditional bullying (Baker and Kavşut, 2007; Arıcak et al., 2008; Zacchilli and Valerio, 2011; Menesini, 2012; Myers and Cowie, 2019). According to a study by Kowalski et al. (2008), there are difficulties in properly defining cyberbullying, with the study featuring a comparison of cyberbullying and traditional bullying, noting the similarities and differences (Zacchilli and Valerio, 2011, p. 12).

Cyberbullying is a very common concept in today's world. It has been discussed in many contexts in both international and national literature. On the international level, it can be said that Canada takes the lead among these countries. Servance's (2003, as cited in Farrington et al., 2023) paper was the first study on cyberbullying. Only four articles were published from this

time until 2006 (Farrington et al., 2023). A study by Beran and Li (2005), which examined 432 students in grades 7 to 9 studying in Canadian schools, is very important because it is among the first studies conducted on cyberbullying in Canada and the world.

There are many studies on cyberbullying in the international literature that discuss variables, such as student age groups (Mishna et al., 2010; Holfeld and Leadbeater, 2014), gender (Livingstone et al., 2011; Zsila et al., 2018), economic or educational status (Schumann et al., 2014; Shaheen et al., 2018), stress and depression (Beran and Li, 2005; Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2020), and decline in academic achievement (Beran et al., 2012; Hidayah et al., 2022), as well as thoughts of suicide or life-threatening consequences that end in suicide (Zaborskis et al., 2019; Wang and Wang, 2023).

Due to its complex nature, many disciplines (i.e., legal studies of cyberbullying) have paid attention to the concept (Gillespie, 2006; Campbell et al. 2010; El Asam and Samara, 2016; Smith, 2019). In international literature, there are many studies on the related policies and legal dimensions. Again, it can be said that Canada takes the lead in the international literature. In Canada, the legal regulations made both at the federal level and in the province of Quebec are of great importance. Canada is one of the rare countries with such regulations, with its cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs and its policies on cyberbullying. Faucher et al.'s (2015) study, which reviewed 465 policies applied to cyberbullying incidents at 74 Canadian universities, mentioned the existence of a number of institutional policies (Faucher et al., 2015). Nosworthy and Rinaldi (2012) similarly review the school board cyberbullying policies in Alberta. Shariff and Stonebanks (2022) take this situation one step further and propose a policy model utilizing a new approach that contributes long-term sustainable options to existing policies that were often little more than band-aid solutions.

Rationale of the Thesis

In this study, I focus on the policies on cyberbullying made by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) in Türkiye. Just like in the international literature mentioned above, awareness of cyberbullying has started to develop in Türkiye, especially in recent years (after 2016), and studies have increased in this direction (See Table 1 and Table 2). The MEB has started to develop and implement policies regarding cyberbullying in parallel with developments elsewhere in the world.

The MEB started its cyberbullying policies by incorporating a media literacy course into the curriculum (RTÜK, 2016). Livingstone et al. (2011) writes, "the more digitally literate or skilled children become, […the more they are] being better prepared to avoid or cope with online risks" (p. 26). In a study by Prihastuty et al. (2019), after social media literacy training courses were added to a high school curriculum, students' knowledge about cyberbullying increased and their intentions to perform cyberbullying-related behavior decreased (Prihastuty et al., 2019, p. 178). Media literacy can thus be seen as a supportive tool for students regarding the risks encountered in the internet environment (Alava et al., 2017).

The MEB first integrated a media literacy course into the curriculum as an elective in pilot schools in five cities it selected in 2006. Then, the MEB added the media literacy course to the curriculum as an elective for the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades across the country in the 2007-2008 academic year (RTÜK, 2016). In this thesis, I chose and examined the current curriculum published by the Ministry of National Education for media literacy on its website, because the expression "cyberbullying" is used directly in the curriculum outcomes of the media literacy course. I completed my Bachelor of Education degree in the field of Computer Education and

Educational Technology in the Faculty of Education in Türkiye; while making my choices, I benefited from my knowledge of the Turkish education system.

A policy put into practice by the MEB was to include the subject of cyberbullying in the Information Technologies and Software course. This course is compulsory at various grade levels (see the details in chapter 3 of this thesis) and the term "cyberbullying" is directly or indirectly included in several of the learning outcomes for the course. Salvatore and Weinholz (2006) mentioned a US curriculum, Help-Assert Yourself-Humor-Avoid-Self-Talk-Own, for students aged 10-12. It includes five lessons "to reduce bullying through increasing social skills," and according to results, there are "moderate levels of reductions in cyberbullying victimization" (Espelage and Hong, 2016, p. 377). In a study by Ortega-Ruiz et al. (2012), one of the units covered in a school-based program in Spain called ConRed is on Internet addiction and cyberbullying, and the "results indicated modest reductions in cyberbullying" (Espelage and Hong, 2016, p. 377). Similarly, Del Rey R et al. (2016) also examined the impact of the ConRed program on different cyberbullying roles, reaching the results of "significant intervention effects on cyberbullying victimization for cybervictims" and on "cyberbullying perpetration for cyberbullies" (Espelage and Hong, 2016, p. 377).

Since my bachelor's degree is computer education and educational technologies, I took many computer and educational technologies lessons. However, I was a student between 2003-2008, at a time when there were no lessons related to cyberbullying. I was mostly educated about technical topics, such as coding, animating, and educational games. Since my student years as a teacher candidate, it is obvious that the MEB has added the subject of cyberbullying to an updated curriculum and implemented policies similar to those in the rest of the world. However, to what extent the MEB's cyberbullying policies have been successful remains a question. To

answer it, I examine the curriculum for the Information Technologies and Software course published by the Ministry of National Education on its website.

Since cyberbullying is a term with a legal aspect, this dimension has been examined in many studies in international literature (Gillespie, 2006; Shariff, 2009; Campbell et al. 2010; El Asam and Samara, 2016; Shariff, 2017a). The MEB's cyberbullying policies include projects and activities from affiliated institutions, such as the Ministry of the Interior and the General Directorate of Security of the Republic of Türkiye. One of these projects, Siberay, draws attention to the legal dimension of cyberbullying. Visits to schools are organized by Siberay officers of the Branch Directorate Combating Cybercrime, with students being informed about cyber risks and threats, including cyberbullying.

I find this MEB policy (Siberay Project) very necessary; Nocentini et al. (2010) write that the "anonymity of the cyber environment is considered as a facilitating factor" (Mura et al, 2017, p. 88). When students exhibit cyberbullying behavior, they often hope that it will remain anonymous (Mura et al, 2017). However, I believe that students should know and take responsibility for their own behavior. When students perform any action in the cyber world, they should know that this behavior can be seen as a crime and that the perpetrator can be considered a criminal. For this reason, it is important for Siberay officials to meet with students and conduct information activities, which are among the cyberbullying policies of the MEB. I detail the Siberay project as part of my evaluation of MEB policies.

Moreover, the MEB prepared a circular titled "Prevention of Violence in Schools" in 2006 due to an increase in violence in schools, stating that the MEB is aware of the seriousness of the situation (MEB, 2006). Following this circular, the MEB took steps to impose sanctions in order to prevent acts of violence and published various regulations (Mevzuat, 2013, 2014). I

explain these regulations by focusing on the items that include the concept of cyberbullying directly or indirectly.

Cyberbullying is not a phenomenon unique to a single country, region, or culture. As can be seen from the international literature examples above, it can be experienced anywhere in the world. While researchers conduct national studies in their own countries, there are also studies comparing two or more countries in the literature. A study by Menesini et al. (2012), aiming to investigate how adolescents from six European countries define cyberbullying, provides important insights into adolescents' definitions of cyberbullying (Palladino, 2017). Livingstone et al. (2011) conducted a large-scale study with 25,142 children aged between 9 and 16 from 25 European countries, including Türkiye. Livingstone et al. (2011) examine policy implications by comparing countries with various variables, such as digital literacy and safety skills, internet usage, and ways in which children have been bullied. Livingstone et al. (2011) write, "At the national level, governments are responsible for legislative and regulatory controls especially in relation to illegal content and educational policy" (p. 147). At the same time, due to the rapidly changing internet arena and the expanding range of activities to which the whole world has access, "safety policy in turn needs to broaden and diversify to keep up with trends in this fast-changing arena" (p. 19).

Given the potential of cross-national studies, I analyze how cyberbullying is understood in Türkiye and in the West. Specifically, as mentioned above, Canada is the one of the leading countries in producing studies of and policies on cyberbullying. Therefore, I have chosen studies that compare Canada and Türkiye on cyberbullying.

Thesis Goals

The main goal of the thesis is to examine the policies implemented by the MEB on cyberbullying in Türkiye. Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has gained popularity in the MEB agenda and in the Turkish academic agenda, especially in recent years (after 2016). Determining that the phenomenon of general violence in schools has increased (MEB, 2006), the MEB has made various policies to prevent various types of violence in schools, including cyberbullying. My research question springs from this fact: "What kind of policies does the Ministry of National Education (MEB) implement on cyberbullying in Türkiye?"

Programs intended to increase digital skills and courses included in the school curricula increase awareness of cyberbullying, and at the same time decrease cyberbullying behavior (Espelage and Hong, 2016; Alava et al, 2017). Additionally, the legal dimension of cyberbullying has not yet been considered. Shariff (2009) writes that "most young people are not aware that they risk legal liability... Few adults, with the exception of those who work in law-related fields, are aware of the liability issues involved in ... law" (p. 17). From this educational and legal point of view, there are four key questions that feed the main research question. This thesis aims to uncover: 1) When did the MEB begin to make policies on cyberbullying, which strategies and subjects are given priority by the MEB's policies, and how are these policies implemented? 2) What kind of crime is cyberbullying from a legal and political point of view and what are the administrative measures taken against cyberbullying by the MEB? 3) How effective are the MEB's policies on cyberbullying? Do the theory and practice overlap? 4) In what way are Türkiye and the West similar and different regarding the perception of cyberbullying?

Addressing the Gap in the Literature

In order to get a better picture of the studies and theses on cyberbullying in the Turkish academic literature, I entered the Turkish words for "cyber" and "bullying" into Turkish Council

of Higher Education – Thesis Center and Turkish Google Academic. As a result of my examination, I noticed that the foundations of research on cyberbullying date back to 2007. In Türkiye, a study by Baker and Kavşut (2007) written in Turkish and a study by Arıcak et al. (2008) written in English are pioneering studies on the concept of cyberbullying. Moreover, except for Baker and Kavşut (2007), I could not find any academic research or thesis conducted in 2007. According to the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center, the first thesis I encountered on cyberbullying was produced in 2008. Between 2007 and 2016, although studies were conducted to examine the relationship between cyberbullying and various variables, such as age, gender, and academic achievement, the number of these studies was relatively small (See Table 1 and 2). Since 2016, both theses and academic studies on cyberbullying have gained momentum (See Tables 1 and 2).

On the other hand, studies of Turkish policies developed on cyberbullying were difficult to find in the literature. In fact, among the results of my search, there is only one master's thesis that discusses MEB policies on bullying (Adıkutlu, 2019). However, Adıkutlu's thesis addresses the bullying experienced in the school environment, starting from the traditional concept of bullying. There is no thesis study of cyberbullying through the lens of the MEB's policies. Therefore, my study would, I believe, contribute to this gap in the literature.

The target audience of this study is primarily academics. It could be also of use to the MEB and independent researchers. The MEB and then the General Directorate of Security and Turkish penal laws are among the stakeholders of the study. Plus, the language of the available literature is mostly Turkish (See Table 3). For this reason, while my thesis will contribute to the gap in the national literature, it also aims to present a perspective emerging from the Turkish experience to international scientists working on cyberbullying policies.

Methodology

This study, conducted by systematic review of selected documents on cyberbullying policies made by the MEB, aims to address a present gap in the literature and to attain certain goals. First of all, as I mentioned above, by entering the Turkish version of the words "cyber" and "bullying" into the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center and Turkish Google Academic, I was able to locate and then discuss the theses and academic studies on cyberbullying in the Turkish literature. I have detailed them in Chapter 2. I then examined the curriculum documents (programs of instruction) of the MEB. In examining these instruction programs, I particularly examined the introduction of cyberbullying into the Turkish education system, what kind of policies the MEB began to implement on cyberbullying, and when the MEB put the aforementioned policies into effect. Through reading the circulars published by the MEB, I have determined the priorities of the MEB on cyberbullying. For the legal aspect of cyberbullying, I examined and detailed the relevant articles of the Turkish Penal Code. I then examined the reports prepared in the international literature to compare the perception of cyberbullying between Türkiye and the West. Apart from all this, I reviewed the action plans, articles, and surveys of both Türkiye and other countries in the literature, written in Turkish and English, in order to analyze the cyberbullying policies in Türkiye.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Emergence and Definitions of the Concept of Cyberbullying in Türkiye

The concept of cyberbullying has been mentioned in Turkish literature under different names. There was no conceptual consensus in the initial studies, with the concept being identified under such denominations as "cyberbullying," "electronic bullying," "virtual bullying," and "cyber victimization." The first study on cyberbullying in Türkiye was conducted in 2007 by Baker and Kavşut. In their study, Baker and Kavşut (2007) mentioned that cyberbullying is also called "electronic bullying." The study did not define the concept in a direct way, instead expressing the following: "Cyberbullying is similar to the types of bullying carried out in the physical environment. The main difference is the use of information and communication technologies such as the internet or mobile phone, where virtual communication can take place" (p. 33). The study did, however, indicate some of the ways cyberbullying takes place, such as: 1) reading others' e-mails without permission, 2) using others' personal passwords, 3) sending embarrassing messages, 4) taking embarrassing pictures of the victim, and 5) disseminating these pictures (Baker and Kavşut, 2007).

In his master's thesis, Akgül (2020) elucidates the concept by using "cyberbullying" and "virtual bullying" interchangeably (p. 19). The study highlights the similarities between cyber/virtual bullying and physical bullying while highlighting that the former occurs exclusively via digital technologies. The study defined cyber/virtual bullying as engaging in harmful behaviour against an individual or group through technological methods, such as: text messages, videos and photos taken with a digital camera, e-mails, and websites (Akgül, 2020).

Çiftçi (2019) used the term "cyberbullying" to label the concept and defined it as: "intentionally and deliberately disturbing a person or people with negative emotions such as anger, hatred, jealousy, and acts with the aim of causing harm, such as humiliating and mocking" (p. 31). Tamer and Vatanartıran (2014) defined the concept as "technological bullying" and explained it as: "Cyberbullying or virtual bullying by use of high-tech equipment" (p. 1). The study outlined the aims of technological bullying as potentially including: proving the bully's power to the victim, using and leaking their personal information, making up false/fake news and spreading rumors about them, making fun of or humiliating them, and getting revenge (p. 5).

While the victims of cyberbullying may face financial difficulties as a result of the attacks against them, they may also experience short or long-term psychological problems (Çiftçi, 2019; Tamer and Vatanartıran, 2014). Cyberbullying can cause victims to live in great fear and anxiety because, unlike traditional bullying, perpetrators are able to hide their identities. These perpetrators can reach victims from any location in the world, regardless of religion, language, age, or other demographics. They use social networks, forums, blogs, chat rooms, and other avenues for online communication to find targets. The anonymity of this situation can cause the victim to live in constant uneasiness (Çiftçi, 2019).

As has been shown, the Turkish literature has used different names to explain the concept of cyberbullying. It is important to solve this naming problem and reach a consensus for both national and international researchers in terms of the scientific value of the concept. In recent academic studies (theses, articles, and reports), in the press (news sites, school websites, and TV programs), and in applications originating from the Ministry of National Education (MEB) (curriculum, cartoons broadcast on the national channel supported by the MEB, and the MEB's projects), the concept is frequently discussed under the name "cyberbullying". Through the

examples of studies and practices mentioned in the next parts of the present thesis, it will also be shown that the most common name for the concept is "cyberbullying".

Although Turkish studies are relatively few compared to the international literature, the existence of these studies signals the importance of the work done in the Turkish context. Because this is a relatively new concept, the current studies in the Turkish literature help to strengthen the definition. Accordingly, the concept continues to be examined without new definitions. Thus, we can say that the definition and features of cyberbullying have been detailed.

When examining the literature regarding cyberbullying in Türkiye, 207 master's and doctoral theses (based on the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center, as of August 8, 2023) and 1,330 academic studies have been found (by entering the words "cyber" and "bully" into Google Academic in the Turkish language, as of August 8, 2023). The majority of these, that is 172 of the theses and 1,084 of the articles, have been completed since 2016 and their language is mostly Turkish. This reveals that cyberbullying has been very recently included in the academic agenda and also that interest in this subject has been on the rise considerably.

Table 1

Timeline of the theses on cyberbullying

2008-2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
24	11	15	15	16	42	21	26	28	9	207

Note: Based on results from the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center obtained by entering the words "cyber" and "bully" in Turkish.

Table 2

Timeline of the academic studies on cyberbullying

2008-2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
174	72	88	109	129	193	145	183	175	62	1330

Note: Based on Turkish Google Academic results obtained by entering the words "cyber" and "bully" in Turkish

Table 3

Timeline of the theses on cyberbullying written in Turkish and English

Language	2008-2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Turkish	22	10	14	15	14	40	20	23	26	9	193
English	2	1	1	-	2	2	1	3	2	-	14

Note: Based on results from the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center obtained by entering the words "cyber" and "bully" in Turkish

According to the literature, theses on cyberbullying have been prepared in different departments. These include such diverse major disciplines as Forensic Medicine, Family Medicine, Computer Engineering, Sociology, Sports, Labor Economics and Industrial Relations, Journalism, and Public Relations. However, most of the theses about cyberbullying come from the fields of education and psychology. Out of 207 theses, 100 theses were prepared under Education and Training majors, while 47 were prepared by students of Psychology (based on the Turkish Council of Higher Education – Thesis Center, August 8, 2023).

Another remarkable point is the acceleration of cyberbullying research in Nursing departments in recent years. According to the Turkish Council of Higher Education database, there are nine total theses on cyberbullying from Nursing departments. As of August 8, 2023, four of the nine theses on cyberbullying prepared in 2023 came from the field of nursing. Güler and Erbil (2022), in their study examining the responsibilities of nurses in the face of violence against women, also included cyberbullying within the scope of violence against women. This study highlighted the medical dimension of the issue, and therefore its seriousness. The authors, who draw attention to the importance of the existence of different disciplines, state: "…all kinds of violence against women is a public health priority (Daruwalla et al., 2019, as cited in Güler and Erbil, 2022, p. 210) and should be combated with multidisciplinary cooperation. One of these disciplines is health workers" (Koştu and Uysal Toraman, 2021, as cited in Güler and Erbil, 2022, p. 210). This statement reveals why the number of studies of cyberbullying from Nursing departments is on the rise. As will be discussed in the following sections, combating cyberbullying requires a multidimensional perspective and approach. Considering the fact that one of these dimensions is medicine, the existence of related studies gains importance.

As shown by the findings of this thesis, cyberbullying and victimization have been investigated through many variables in theses and articles. Studies have been carried out based on such variables as age groups, gender, economic situation, daily internet usage time, effects on victims, and awareness and opinions of teachers, parents, and school administrators. Among these variables, gender has been noted as the most frequently discussed. Followed by gender, the age variable is the second most discussed.

Before examining the academic literature on the variables related to cyberbullying, it would be appropriate to mention how widespread cyberbullying is in Türkiye. One of the first

studies on the concept of cyberbullying in the literature, whose sample was Turkish students, is the research of Arıcak et al. (2008). According to the results of the research, conducted with 269 secondary school students, 35.7% of the students had been perpetrators in cyberbullying experiences and 23.8% exhibited cyberbullying behaviors as both the perpetrator and the victim. The rate of students who had experienced cyber victimization was 5.9%. Given its publication in a period when not many studies on the topic were being conducted in Türkiye (2007-2008), this and similar studies are of great importance. By comparing the studies conducted during this time with the studies carried out today, it is possible to observe the rate at which cyberbullying has increased. The findings of this comparison will be an indicator of whether cyberbullying has become a serious problem.

In a study by Baker and Tanrıkulu (2010), which examined the psychological consequences of cyberbullying with 165 secondary school students in the 10-14 age range, 30.94% of the 94 female students, 31.30% of the 71 male students, and an overall total of 31.10% of students were identified as cyberbullies (p. 2773). The rates of victims exposed to cyberbullying are as follows: 30.68% of female students, 30.52% of male students, and 30.61% of students in general had experienced cybervictimization of some type (p. 2774).

According to Eroglu et al. (2015)'s study examining the prevalence and risk factors of cyberbullying and victimization, 108 (67.5%) of 160 adolescents aged 14-18 had been exposed to cyberbullying and also exhibited cyberbullying behaviors. With a rate of 16.9%, 27 people had neither experienced cyber victimization nor committed such an action. Cyberbullies made up only 6.9% of the sample (11 adolescents), while only 8.7% (14 adolescents) were identified as cyber-victims.

The report titled "Digital Citizenship in Türkiye" prepared by Korkmaz et al. (2021) at the Oxford University Department of International Development highlights several important points. A portion of the research, which was conducted with 3,350 individuals of different age ranges (between 15 and 55 years old) nationwide, relates to cyberbullying. First of all, in order to measure the cyberbullying awareness of individuals, researchers asked the question: "Could you please indicate whether you have a good idea of what each of these terms means? Yes/No: Cyberbullying" (Korkmaz et al., 2021, p. 51). The results reveal that 45% of all the individuals surveyed had some awareness of the concept. In the 15-34 age group 64% knew the concept, in comparison to 71% of those with a university education level and above, and 71% of those with the highest level of economic status; these were the groups with the highest percentage of knowledge (p. 51). Based on the findings, less than half of the sample provided a positive answer to indicate that they had any information about cyberbullying. The majority of individuals who responded "yes" (55%) did not have any knowledge about the concept. However, in the face of this result, another question of the research is quite promising: "Which of the training programs regarding Digital Citizenship would you be interested in participating in" (Korkmaz et al., 2021, p. 52). Among the answers given, "Coping with cyberbullying" came first, with 66% (p. 52). In other words, 66% of the participants displayed a desire to increase their awareness about coping with cyberbullying by participating in a relevant program.

Another question asked by the research that had striking results is: "I will read you some expressions. Considering your personal life, please indicate whether you are exposed to any of these situations" (Korkmaz et al., 2021, p. 52). These situations included: "Verbal Harassment," "Sexual Harassment," "Threats," "Stolen Online Data," "Disclosure," "Humiliation," "Cyber Lynching," and "Defamation." Verbal harassment had the highest exposure level at 25%, while

defamation was the least experienced at 6%. In general, 33% of the respondents had been exposed to at least one of the mentioned situations (p. 52). This is quite remarkable. In the authors' own words: "In other words, 1 in 3 were the victim of at least one type of cyber-bullying" (p. 53). These figures draw attention to how widespread cyberbullying is in Türkiye.

The findings of two recent studies reveal incongruent, or inconsistent, results. Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul (2022), in their study conducted with 500 people between the ages of 18 and 95, found that 26.9% of the participants have experienced cyber victimization and that the rate of cyberbullying perpetrators is 4% (p. 563). Rodop et al. (2022), using a sample of 859 university students aged between 18-45, found that 72.3% of the students had experienced cyber victimization at least once and 64.3% of the students had engaged in cyberbullying.

Studies that investigate the prevalence of cyberbullying/victimization are ongoing in Turkish academia. As a result of the different results of the research findings, it is not possible to make a definitive statement about a continuous increase in cyberbullying over the years. At the same time, it cannot be claimed that cyberbullying has decreased over the years as a result of the projects carried out within the scope of cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs, which will be mentioned in the following sections. It remains a fact that when examining both international and national literature, cyberbullying and victimization rates for all age groups have reached a significant level. It thus remains a common problem with serious consequences worldwide, which are still being investigated.

Variables Related to Cyberbullying

Gender

The gender variable has been a frequent topic of cyberbullying research in the Turkish literature. The findings have revealed an inconsistency between gender and cyberbullying/victimization. While in some studies, the gender variable displays a significant difference for the subject, in others, it has not been possible to notice such a difference. Özer and Şad (2021) examined cyberbullying, cyber victimization, and school burnout among 604 high school students, 312 of whom were girls and 292 of whom were boys and could not find a significant difference between the gender variable and experiences of cyberbullying/victimization. They wrote: "The cyberbullying or cyber victimization levels of female and male students were found to be quite similar" (p. 410).

Moreover, although many studies have concluded that male students are more prone to engage in cyberbullying as perpetrators, other studies have noted that girls also exhibit such behaviour. Regarding cyber victimization, the results have varied. Boys are often noted as the main perpetrators of cyberbullying, but also as the most frequent victims in terms of ratio. However, there are also studies which indicate that female students also experience cyberbullying to a remarkable degree.

According to a study (Tuncer and Dikmen, 2016) conducted with 62 vocational high school students, 18 female and 44 male, female students are more likely to engage in cyberbullying. The study determined that male students, by contrast, are more exposed to cyberbullying as victims. A study by Eroglu et al. (2015) is consistent with the research of Tuncer and. Eroğlu et al. (2015) examined the gender variable in four subgroups: neither cyberbully nor cyber victim, cyberbully, cyber victim, and cyberbully/victim. According to the research findings, female students exhibit more cyberbullying behaviors and also experience more cyber victimization than male students. The rate of female students who were considered

only cyberbullies was recorded as 63.6%. This rate is about twice the percentage of male students (36.4%). Regarding those who only experienced cyber victimization, 71.4% of female students had, which is more than twice that of male students (28.6%). 40.7% of female students and 59.3% of male students exhibited neither behaviour. On the other hand, 42.6% of female students and 57.4% of male students had experienced being both a cyberbully and a victim. Although these two studies mentioned that the rate of girl cyberbullies is higher than that of boys, when examining the Turkish literature, it can be seen that boys engage in cyberbullying more than girls in general (Eroğlu, 2011, as cited in Eroğlu et al., 2015, p. 101).

In another study, whose sample consisted of 859 students of which 603 were female and 256 were male, Rodop et al. (2022) revealed that male students exhibit more cyberbullying behaviors. A striking component of the study is the apparently close relationship between being the perpetrator and victimhood. As the level of cyberbullying increases, exposure to cyberbullying also increases. In other words, the level of cyber victimization is higher for men, which is also the gender group that exhibits more cyber-perpetrator behavior. On the other hand, in a study with a total of 612 university students (379 women and 233 men), Bayram and Saylı (2013) found that female students were more exposed to cyberbullying than male students. In another study whose research group consisted of 554 female and 531 male high school students, Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2019) concluded that when the cyberbullying scores of both groups were compared, boys were more likely to engage in cyberbullying than girls and that in terms of gender, there is no significant difference between the exposure to cyberbullying of the two genders. Studies by Topcu et al. (2023) and Baştürk-Akca et al. (2015) are consistent with the literature. Topcu et al. (2023) compared the rates they obtained from the cyberbullying scale and concluded that male students scored higher than female students. Topcu et al. (2023) write:

"There is a significant difference between the gender variable of the students and the total score of the cyberbullying scale" (p. 15). Baştürk-Akca et al. (2015) write: "When the gender differences regarding cyberbullying experiences were examined, it was seen that males were significantly more likely to be perpetrators and more involved in online hate groups than females" (p. 72). On the other hand, Türk and Gürkan (2019) could not find a significant difference between gender and cyberbullying in their study with 355 students, including 169 girls and 189 boys. The scores they obtained on the cyberbullying scale from male and female students are very similar to each other.

Age

According to the results of the studies conducted on age groups and cyberbullying, there is no particular age group that stands out, with children and adolescents being both victims and perpetrators (intentional or unintentional) of cyberbullying. Research conducted with 1,154 students from six different types of high schools (such as science high schools and social science high schools) revealed that students at science high schools engage in cyberbullying more than students of other high schools. Cyberbullying had the least prevalence among students attending private high schools. In addition, the study found no meaningful difference between different types of high school and cyber victimization (Tunca, 2019).

According to another study conducted by Yıldırım (2021) with 549 people aged between 15 and 54, the age group of 15-24 both engages in and is exposed to cyberbullying the most. Compared to other age groups, this group has the highest average in terms of being both perpetrator and victim. Similarly, the 35 and over age group were considered cyberbullies and cyber victims at a much lower rate (Yıldırım, 2021). In their study with 612 university students

aged between 18 and 25, Bayram and Saylı (2013) found that students of all age groups both engage in and are exposed to cyberbullying.

Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul (2022) found an inverse correlation between age level and experiences of cyber violence in their study conducted with a research group of 500 people from five different generations between 18-95. These generations are the Silent Generation (1925-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Generation Y (1980-1999), and Generation Z (2000-2012) (Tolbiz, 2018, as cited in Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul, 2022, p. 558). In other words, as the age level increases, cyber violence is experienced less. Generation Y is the group that suffers the most from cyber victimization, at 47.1%. The generation that engages in cyberbullying the most is again Generation Y, at 73.3%. From a general point of view, the Silent Generation experiences minimal to non-existent levels of digital violence compared to the other generations. While the other generations have some experience with digital violence in varying percentages, the Silent Generation has next to no experience with it whatsoever.

Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2019) conducted a study with 1,085 high school students aged 14 to 17, finding that students in the 16-year-old group have higher cyberbullying scores when compared to other age groups. However, researchers have drawn attention to an important point here: It is believed that because Turkish students in the 17-year-old group are preparing for the university exam during the last year of high school, they spend less time on the internet overall. From this point of view, it can be said that 16-year-old students, which is the second-highest age group examined in the study, have more technology skills overall and internet skill in particular. Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2019) write: "The fact that the 16-year-old group of the students participating in this research is older than the others and gaining more skills on the Internet can be interpreted as gaining power with these. Based on this, it can be said that bullies engage in

cyberbullying behaviors with the desire to gain power and maintain this status they have achieved" (p. 1891). In addition, when comparing cyber victimization scores, it is not possible to notice a significant difference between age groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed many aspects of people's lives, including education, professional status, shopping, and social relations. Curfews were implemented all over the world, which cause a period of social isolation. People were encouraged to stay at home, except for urgent issues that required them to go out. Schools were closed in March 2020, with students eventually being switched to online education. The internet became more accessible for students in this period. This is also thanks to technological developments and the facilitation of access to technology. That is, there were tools and services available for every budget to provide access to the internet. It can even be said that technological devices and internet services, which were considered luxury items in the first period of technological development, subsequently became a necessity and even indispensability as education and training were being carried out over the internet. In addition to participating in online classes, there has been an increase in the use of the internet for many reasons, such as doing research, preparing assignments and projects, making presentations, and accessing information resources. This situation continued after the pandemic restrictions came to an end. According to the results of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) Survey on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage in Households and by Individuals, 2021, while 90.7% of the households had access to the internet from home in 2020, this figure increased to 92.0% in 2021 (TÜİK, 2021). By 2022, 94.1% of households had access to the internet from home (TÜİK, 2022). The increase in internet access has brought with it an increase in internet usage. TÜİK (2021) reports that "Internet usage of individuals aged 16-74

was 82.6% in 2021." This figure was 79% in 2020. According to the results published by TÜİK (2022a), the rate of internet usage among individuals aged 16-74 was 85.0% in 2022.

Figure 1

Households with internet access and internet usage by individuals, 2012-2022
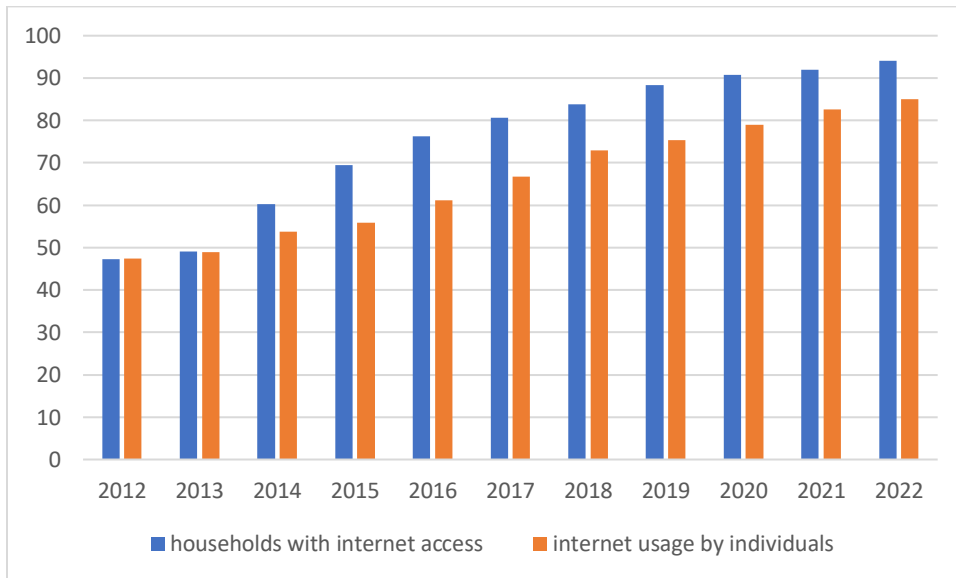
Note: The graph shows the overall increasing numbers of households with internet access and of internet usage by individuals aged 16-74 in Türkiye. Adapted from TÜİK (2022a).

Time spent on the internet

With the ease of access to the internet, students have begun to spend more time online overall. Although the increase has provided more convenience in daily life, it also brings problems. Various studies are also available related to Internet addiction, with the results revealing a significant relationship between time spent on the Internet and cyberbullying. Students who spend two hours or more a day on the Internet both engage in cyberbullying more and are cyber victims more often compared to students who use the Internet for less than two

hours a day (Bayram and Özkamalı, 2019). Thus, it can be stated that an increase in internet usage time also causes an increase in cyberbullying behaviors (Yüksel and Yılmaz, 2016 and Ünver and Koç, 2017, as cited in Sezer Efe et al., 2021, p. 471). Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2019) examined the duration of internet use in three groups, as one to seven hours a week, one to three hours a day, and more than three hours a day. They found a directly proportional relationship between internet usage time and cyber victimization. Similar to other studies, it has been revealed that as the time spent on the Internet increases, students are exposed to more cyberbullying. The group with the highest cyber victimization scores is thus the group that uses the internet more than three hours a day. There is also a significant difference between the duration of internet use and cyberbullying scores. Pekşen Süslü and Oktay (2019) write: "In the study, it can be said that as the duration of internet use increases, the scores of cyberbullying and cyber victimization increase" (p. 1892).

In line with the literature, Taştekin and Bayhan (2018), who examined cyberbullying and cyber victimization among adolescents in their study of 895 adolescents aged 14-17, found a significant relationship between the frequency of internet access and the time spent daily on the internet, and cyberbullying and cyber victimization (p. 38). As the frequency of access to the Internet and the time spent on the Internet increase, adolescents both engage in more cyberbullying and are exposed to it more often. For example, when both the perpetrator and victimization scores of students who have access to the internet two to six days a week are compared with those who have access every day of the week, the students who have daily access are both bullies and victims at a higher rate (p. 31). Similarly, the findings of the examination of the variable of daily time spent on the internet among six groups (such as 30 minutes to one hour, two to three hours, and more than three hours) reveal that the subgroup with the highest duration

(more than three hours) is the group in which the most cyberbullying is done and the most cyber victimization is experienced (p. 32).

Income level of families

Another variable present in research examining time spent on the internet related to cyberbullying is family income level. Yıldırım (2021), in his study of cyberbullying that incorporated various variables (age, gender, economic status, and time spent on the internet), states that there is a significant relationship between the economic status of the individual or the family with whom they live and the cyberbullying behaviors that they experience or exhibit. People with an income level at or below the minimum wage are both more exposed to cyberbullying and exhibit more cyberbullying behaviors compared to people with an income level above the minimum wage (p. 193). By contrast, a study by Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul (2022) states that there is no significant difference between the economic level of the family and the rate of cyber violence. Among low-, medium-, and high-income individuals, the group most exposed to digital violence, at 67.5%, was at the middle-income level. 60% of the perpetrators of digital violence were also at the middle-income level.

It is important to repeat that thanks to internet services and technological tools being provided to people of every budget, students have easier access to the internet. In other words, even if the income level of the families is low, most households have access to the internet. From this point of view, it can be considered normal that there are no noted significant differences between the rates of cyberbullying and cyber victimization and the income levels of families according to the available research.

In a study conducted with 1,864 university students, Fırat and Ayran (2016) considered economic situation as one of the variables. The variable was grouped under three subheadings:

low, medium, and high. Within the scope of the research, the income level of 86.7% of the students (1,617 people), which we can interpret as the majority, was medium, while the income level of 188 people was low and only 59 people were categorized as coming from high-income families. However, when the cyberbully/victim scale mean scores of the students were compared between the three groups, although the middle-income level was the majority, the scores of this group were found to be significantly lower than those of the other groups. To put it another way, high-income students, who were surprisingly only 3.2% of the sample, had the highest cyberbully/victim scale scores. The authors state the reason for this situation as: "With the increase in the socioeconomic level, the social cognitive level of the adolescent develops in parallel with the parents, they benefit from technology much more and they are exposed to technology much more, which affects their peer relationships and increases the level of being bullied and exposed to bullying" (p. 328).

Effects of cyberbullying – emotional, physical and academic

Another subject included in the Turkish literature on cyberbullying is the effects of cyberbullying. Siberay (2020a) writes: "Cyberbullying is a condition that can cause mental, psychological and emotional problems, regardless of age group for which it is observed. Examples of bullying, experienced especially among young people, make the lives of many young people miserable." In the literature, significant findings have revealed that both victims and perpetrators are affected by cyberbullying. Individuals experiencing cyber victimization may experience negative emotional states, such as stress, anxiety, depression, helplessness, anxiety, and sadness (Korkmaz, 2016; Taştekin and Bayhan, 2018; Fırat and Ayran, 2016). Akbıyık and Kestel (2016), examining the impact of cyberbullying on students' academic, social, and emotional states, asserted that according to the results of the research, "negative emotions such

as anger, fear, and uneasiness" increase when students are exposed to cyberbullying. In their research conducted through semi-structured interviews with 12 students, 10 stated that they were angry, eight said that they were afraid, and seven students said that they were nervous after the cyberbullying action took place (p. 851). Similarly, Baker and Tanrıkulu (2010) concluded in their study that students have higher levels of depressive symptoms when they are cyberbullied. Therefore, it can be said that cyber victims are negatively affected. Due to the fact that cyberbullying takes place in digital environments, regardless of the type (such as outing, flaming, and cyberstalking), the fact that the victimization is accessible to almost everyone on the internet may cause a longer-term impact on the lives of individuals and thus may affect their quality of life (Arıcak, 2011; Bayram and Saylı, 2013). The most common three emotions that cyber victims may feel include "anger," "anxiety," and "sadness" (Baştürk-Akca et al., 2015, p. 79).

The consequences faced by cyber victims are not limited to emotional effects. Studies reveal that there may be changes in the school lives of students who are exposed to cyberbullying. These changes include physical consequences such as absenteeism, truancy, and changing schools, as well as other consequences such as fear of going to school, having problems learning, and, as a result, a decrease in course success (Korkmaz, 2016, p. 79). Akbıyık and Kestel's (2016) research confirms the results of previous studies in national and international literature: Cyberbullying commonly causes problems in the academic life of students. According to the study, 11 out of 12 students stated that their sleep patterns were disturbed (except for student 9), 11 stated that their participation in the lesson decreased (except student 8), and 11 stated that their motivation to complete the lesson was decreased (except student 12) (p. 853). Akbıyık and Kestel (2016) write: "Students have difficulties in concentrating and studying

during the cyber victimization they are exposed to. Cyberbullying can cause victims to drop their grades and increase errors in tests" (p. 855).

In light of these findings, it can be said that cyberbullying has a negative effect on academic achievement. There is a statistically significant difference between the effects of students' internet use on academic achievement and their exposure to cyberbullying (Topcu et al., 2023). Türk and Gürkan (2019), who divided participants into three groups based on grade point average (GPA), 45-65, 66-85, and 86-100, found a significant correlation between a student's grades and being cyberbullied. This means that as the level of cyber victimization of students increases, the academic success of these students decreases. Students whose GPAs were recorded between 45-65 were the group of students who were exposed to cyberbullying the most (p. 72). In their research on which students with a GPA of 2 and above are considered successful, Fırat and Ayran (2016) found an inversely proportional relationship between students' GPAs and cyberbully/victim scale scores, that is, a negative significant relationship. Students with a low-GPA both engage in more cyberbullying and experience more cyber victimization. Consistent with the literature, students who are exposed to cyberbullying state that they feel more negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and sadness, which causes concentration problems and results in lower grades (p. 328).

Relationship between Digital and Media Literacy and Cyberbullying

Studies conducted after cyberbullying entered Türkiye's research agenda frequently examined the relationship of cyberbullying with variables such as gender, age, time spent on the internet, economic status, psychological impact, and academic effects. Digital and media literacy has been added to these variables, especially in recent studies. Media literacy was included in the curriculum by the Turkish Ministry of National Education as of the 2014-2015 academic year

(RTÜK, 2016), and the relevant details will be outlined in the next section. Studies on its

relationship with cyberbullying will be discussed below.

Gürkan et al. (2022) conducted a study with 431 high school students to examine the

relationship between cyberbullying, smartphone addiction, and media literacy, stating that

students' "cyberbullying behavior tendencies" are low. In addition, students' scores on the media

literacy scale are high (Gürkan et al., 2022, p. 1811). Findings show that the relationship between

media literacy and cyberbullying is negative, significant, and weak. The authors relate this

situation as follows: "When the relationships between media literacy levels of high school

students and cyberbullying are examined, it is thought that as the media literacy level increases

and especially high school students who gain the 'awareness and knowledge' characteristics will

not participate in cyberbullying behaviors" (Gürkan et al., 2022, pp. 1814-15). The findings also

support this statement, with the behaviour of students with high media literacy scores involving

low instances of cyberbullying (Gürkan et al., 2022, p. 1815).

In a study that included a sample of 1,178 secondary school students, Yorulmaz and

Karadeniz (2021) aimed to determine the cyberbullying/victimization status of secondary school

students. One of the variables in the study is the relationship between student awareness of the

concept of cyberbullying/victimization and digital literacy. While 578 (49.1%) of the students

were aware of the concept of digital literacy, 600 (50.9%) stated that they had no knowledge of

the concept. In other words, more than half of the students did not know the concept. The authors

underlined how serious this situation is, as well as questioning whether school administrators

perform their duties properly, as digital literacy or media literacy courses were not included in

the curriculum of the relevant schools (p. 167). The percentages of students who have mastered

the concepts of cyberbullying/victimization, or not, are as follows: 52.6% (620) of the students

knew about the concept of cyberbullying and 47.4% (558) did not. In addition, 37.7% (444) of the students knew about the concept of cyber victimization, while 62.3% (734) did not. The research findings revealed that when students' knowledge of the concept of cyberbullying and digital literacy are compared, students who understand the concept of digital literacy are more likely to exhibit cyberbullying behaviors. Similarly, students who have knowledge related to digital literacy experience more cyber victimization. The authors have interpreted from this that students who have knowledge about all three concepts can make sense of them when applying or being exposed to the related concepts. Students who are not aware of the concepts may not be able to make sense of the concepts even if they experience situations related to them. In addition, it is thought that students who experienced cyber victimization learned about the concept of digital literacy in order not to be exposed to this situation again and to be protected from it (p. 166). Similarly, it is thought that students who engage in cyberbullying may encounter the concept of digital literacy while researching or performing cyberbullying-related actions (p. 167). The importance of this research is the authors' comments regarding school administrators "not paying enough attention" to the relevant concepts.

Under the aim of producing a survey on the relationship between cyberbullying and digital literacy, Erdoğan (2021) conducted a study with 255 secondary school students (in the 5th grade). The author found a significant negative correlation between students' cyberbullying scores and digital literacy scores (p. 71). In other words, as students' digital literacy levels increase, they display a more sensitive attitude toward cyberbullying and engage in fewer cyberbullying behaviors (p. 73).

In a master's thesis, Dumanlıdağ (2019) aimed to examine the relationship between students' cyberbullying/victimization levels and their critical internet literacy levels, with a

sample of 400 high school students. The thesis evaluates the students' levels of related variables (cyberbullying, cyber victimization, and critical literacy) on a 5-point scale. The research determined the students' critical literacy level was 3.01, which was described as medium. It was determined that 91% of the students had low-level and 9% had moderate-level cyberbullying behaviors. There were no students in the high-level cyberbullying group. When the cyber victimization scores were examined, it was determined that the students were exposed to cyberbullying at a "medium" level, with a score of 2.3. When the research findings are analyzed holistically, there is no significant difference between students' cyberbullying/victimization levels and their critical internet literacy scores. However, the researcher states that his expectation is that as the level of critical literacy increases, in line with the literature, students will be exposed to less cyberbullying. The researcher explained the interpretation of this situation as: "It is thought that the low level of cyberbullying/victimization of the students and their moderate level of critical literacy for the internet are effective in this result" (p. 72).

Models of Research on Cyberbullying

The majority of theses and the research from the national literature that are mentioned in this study were carried out with the quantitative research method (Bayram ve Özkamalı, 2019; Güçlü and Çam, 2022; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021; Yıldırım, 2021; Çiftçi, 2019; Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul, 2022). Researchers first identify the variables related to the subject, then examine the variables independently from each other, before forming and testing their hypotheses across the variables. Many researchers state that they prefer the quantitative research method because of their statistical results and mention that these studies will contribute to filling gaps in the literature, as there are relatively few studies on cyberbullying in the literature. This thesis has been written with the belief that these opinions are correct. At the same time, the aforementioned

researchers go one step further, mentioning the contribution of quantitative research before mentioning the limitations of these studies. Researchers claim that they were unable to perform in-depth analyses and that the accuracy of the answers could be debated (Erdoğan, 2021; Gürkan et al., 2022; Çiftçi, 2019). Çiftçi (2019) writes: "As the survey questions are aimed at determining the cyberbullying levels of the students; Although the names of the students were not taken, the students refrained from answering the survey questions for fear of being uncovered" (p. 34). In addition, Türkiye has many different regions (seven), which contribute to different cultures and a considerable population. According to TÜİK 2022 data, the population of Türkiye is over 85 million (TÜİK, 2022b). Gürkan et al. (2022) mention the importance of research conducted "comparatively, sociologically, and culturally" for reflecting events (p. 1816). Erdoğan (2021) carried out research in the "Central Anatolia Region," which is one of the seven regions. The researcher emphasizes that such research can be performed with broad participation throughout Türkiye by writing that "the relationship between digital literacy and cyberbullying can be examined on a larger sample by taking samples from all regions" (p. 73).

On the other hand, there are also qualitative studies, albeit relatively few. In order to examine the academic, social, and emotional effects of cyberbullying on students, in one study 12 students were interviewed through a semi-structured interview, which lasted an average of 13 minutes (between 10 and 16 minutes) (Akbıyık and Kestel, 2016). One of the researchers works at the school from which the 12 students were selected. The researcher states that he knows the selected students intimately, carries out the interviews himself, and creates a "comfortable and safe" environment during the interviews (p. 847). Thus, students can express themselves more easily. In addition, the choice of the qualitative method allowed the effects to be examined in depth (p. 846).

Dinç Kırlı (2020) incorporated a structured interview technique in research with 11 high school students that examined the prevalence of cyberbullying according to age and gender variables, and its various effects on students. Interviews were held with the students for 20 to 25 minutes on a voluntary basis (p. 27). The research found no significant difference between the age and gender variables and the rates of cyberbullying (p. 37). Students exposed to cyberbullying stated that they feel negative emotions such as fear, uneasiness, nervousness, and sadness, while students who were not exposed to cyberbullying stated that they would be psychologically affected and feel negative emotions if they were exposed to it. Finally, students stated that they are also affected socially and academically. According to the data obtained from the students, students who exhibit cyberbullying behavior may have difficulties in establishing family-friend relations and may face low academic success (p. 37).

Alyakut (2017) conducted interviews with 10 university students that lasted an average of 50 minutes, examining their views on cyberbullying. According to the research findings, all of the students knew about the concept of cyberbullying and exhibited cyberbullying behaviors. On the other hand, some students did not consider the aforementioned behaviors within the scope of cyberbullying (p. 357). Alyakut (2017) writes: "While most of the students stated that no one was harmed by these behaviors, they were engaged in these behaviors to have fun or to get what they wanted, it was observed that they were unaware of the sad consequences of the issue" (p. 357). The study also found that all the interviewed students had been exposed to cyberbullying. Students are most frequently exposed to "virtual stalking" and "virtual harassment." It has been determined that cyberbullying has serious effects, including: "deterioration in social relations," "being away from school," "anger," "academic failure," "depression," and "suicide." Although suicide is the least felt emotion among the mentioned negative effects, one student stated that

they attempted suicide, took a break from school, received psychiatric treatment in the hospital for a while, and left the place where they lived (p. 356). It can be said that this study is very important in showing how serious an impact cyberbullying has on individuals.

In this final part of the literature review, studies on cyberbullying in Türkiye are included. To summarize, although cyberbullying first came into the Turkish academic agenda in 2007, not much work has been done in the subsequent years. On the other hand, there has been a noticeable increase in research in the last six years. The definition and types of cyberbullying are mentioned in most of the research that has been conducted on the topic. It can be said that concept integrity has been ensured by the frequent naming of the concept as "cyberbullying." In addition, cyberbullying has been examined in connection with various variables. Such variables include gender, age, economic status, time spent on the internet, and the effect of cyberbullying on students. Most of the research has been carried out using the quantitative research method. With the numerical findings obtained from the quantitative studies, these studies are important in revealing the frequency of cyberbullying. Moreover, it has been observed that the number of students exposed to cyberbullying has increased in recent years. Although relatively few in number, qualitative studies also contribute to the literature. With qualitative research, it is possible to obtain many different results, such as understanding the conceptual perspectives of the people who are the subject of the research and seeing the processes they experience. This fills another important gap in the literature.

Studies of the Policies on Cyberbullying in Türkiye

A thesis comparable to the purpose of this study, examining the policies implemented in Türkiye on cyberbullying, could not be found in the present literature. Thus, it can be said that not much research has been carried out to this effect. Several studies evaluated one of the

projects carried out by the MEB (for example, the FATIH Project). The following section will review these few available studies, where the policy examples created by the MEB will be detailed. It is thus appropriate to mention a few theses that have indirectly covered the subject.

A section of Kiraz's master's thesis titled "The Effects of New Threat Perceptions on Türkiye's Security Policies in the Context of Cyber Security" (2021) is on "Cyberbullying and Creating Anti-Bullying Policies" (pp. 55-61). In this section, Kiraz (2021) defines cyberbullying and discusses the causes and effects of cyberbullying. However, the researcher made use of few references and generally made suggestions by presenting his own ideas and comments on what needs to be done on the subject. In a table, the suggestions were collected into three groups: "Advice to Children or Subjected to Cyberbullying," "Suggestions to Families," and "Suggestions to Institutions." Each group received 12 suggestions; 36 suggestions being presented in total (pp. 60-61). Cyberbullying is discussed very briefly in the study, with no information about the policies made.

Adıkutlu (2019) examined the sociological and theoretical factors behind widespread bullying in Turkish schools and the unexpected results of these changes, despite the changes in the legislation, touching on eye-opening points in the context of "school bullying." The researcher discusses the projects that have been supported technically and financially by both national and international organizations. He writes: "Policies on children's rights and violence against children have been relatively in line with global policy standards" (p. 105). However, when compared with international standards, it is mentioned that the legislative changes and pilot project implementations did not meet expectations and there was no reduction in school bullying within the big picture of violence. The contribution of Adıkutlu's research to the national literature on school bullying and the international literature cannot be discussed due to the thesis

being written in English. However, due to the fact that the main focus of the thesis is school bullying, very few suggestions related to cyberbullying were present.

CHAPTER 3: POLICIES ON CYBERBULLYING IN TÜRKİYE

This section examines curricula, projects, activities, and practices prepared and supported by the Ministry of National Education (MEB), various other ministries, and institutions and organizations, within the scope of policies on cyberbullying in Türkiye, taking them in chronological order.

Although programs related to cyberbullying that use the name directly have been carried out in the last five years, it can be said that activities which include the concept indirectly have been on Türkiye's agenda since the early 2000s. The first of these programs relates to media literacy, which is a concept related to cyberbullying that has been on the agenda and put into practice in Türkiye.

Media Literacy in Türkiye

Media literacy, a concept that is highly related to the concept of cyberbullying, was first discussed in a "Communication Council" held in Türkiye in 2003. The council was organized by the RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) and supported by the General Directorate of Press and Information and the TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation). Within the scope of this discussion, "the addition of a media literacy course to the primary and secondary education curriculum, which will raise the awareness of children and young people" was suggested. Work continued with the "Violence Prevention Platform," which was held in 2004 with representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and universities; the issue was then transferred to the MEB. A pilot study was carried out with the "Primary School Elective Media Literacy Curriculum" accepted for the 2006-2007 academic year, which involved preparing the "Media Literacy Course Curriculum and Teacher's Guide" with the cooperation of

the Ministry of National Education Board of Education and Discipline, RTÜK experts, and academicians in the field of communication. This course then began to be taught in five cities selected by the MEB. As of the next year (2007-2008 academic year), it was included in the curriculum as an elective in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades (RTÜK, 2016).

The studies continued systematically and regularly in the following years, with a "new Media Literacy Curriculum" eventually being developed. Learning materials prepared within the scope of the program were included in the curriculum for the 2014-2015 academic year, with media-literacy subjects then starting to be covered (RTÜK, 2016). Currently, the media literacy course is taught at different levels, at different grade levels, and in different types of schools. At the same time, the concept of "cyberbullying" in the current program is included within the subjects of the "Media Literacy" course, which mentions the name of the concept directly. Details of this course are given in the following pages under the heading "Second Level (7th and 8th grades) – Media Literacy Course."

Although the term "cyberbullying" has only recently been included in the topics of the media literacy course in recent curriculum studies, the concept has already been discussed and examined through the programs from the mid-2000s onward, albeit in an indirect way. Within the scope of this course, students can come to understand the responsibilities they have when using technology, the internet, and social media (Yıldırım and Kardaş, 2017). Students who are active on the internet and consider their ethical values protect themselves against dangers such as cyberbullying on the one hand, while, on the other hand, they can become conscious of the fact that they should not exhibit borderline criminal behaviors to the other party in their online interactions (Alyakut, 2017). The programs also teach that they should approach every piece of information or news they encounter on social media wisely (Kutlu, 2018). This is also true for

parents who have received media literacy education, who can identify these behaviors when their children are first exposed to cyberbullying or if their children exhibit these behaviors, thus teaching the child how to behave and guiding them accordingly (Özmen, 2018).

As evident from the above, this media literacy course has become a necessity for both students and adults to teach them how to use the internet safely. The key point here is that it is essential for new media literacy issues to enter the Turkish education system, and the implementation of this policy in Türkiye, like the similar versions in different countries, is a very important step in preventing cyberbullying. The findings of the studies given under the title of "The Relationship between Digital and Media Literacy and Cyberbullying" in the previous chapter reveal that there is a negative relationship between students' media literacy level and cyberbullying (Gürkan et al., 2022; Erdoğan, 2021; Dumanlıdağ, 2019). In contrast, Yorulmaz and Karadeniz (2021), in their study in which they concluded that more than half of the 1,178 secondary school students who had an average age of 12 did not have digital literacy, commented that school administrators "do not show due diligence" (Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021, p. 167). Based on this interpretation, it can be deduced that these students are at the secondary-school level, and the institutions where these students are located are the institutions responsible for teaching the media literacy course. This deduction leads to a further observation that political reluctance may lie behind "not showing due diligence." While raising awareness about cyberbullying, the actors of the issue should not only be the trio of teachers, students, and parents, but should also expand to include school administrators, and these actors should work to develop a common understanding. As can be seen, the attitude of school administrators can result in both a failure to implement the curriculum (that is, the failure to cover the relevant subjects)

and serious repercussions for students, in terms of lack of not only academic knowledge, but also knowledge of a context that can affect their lives.

A Brief Summary of the Structure of the Turkish Education System

In the Turkish education system, the concept of cyberbullying is currently taught at different levels, in various classes, within the scope of various courses, and in different units. First of all, it would be appropriate to take a brief look at the structure of the education system in Türkiye in terms of understanding the general system, because there are many types of schools and therefore different curriculum content in the transition between levels. In addition, schools are also divided into groups according to different variables, such as the quality of education they provide, opportunities, and infrastructure.

The education system in Türkiye consists of 12 years of compulsory gradual education (MEB, 2012). This system is called 4+4+4 and began to be implemented in 2012-2013. The first level is the primary school level that lasts four years (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades). The first four years of public school are compulsory and free of charge for all male and female students who have reached the age of five before the end of September in the given year. Depending on the parents' request, students have the right to attend paid private schools. The second level is the secondary school level, which also lasts four years (5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades). Students are not subjected to any exams during the transition to this level. At this level, schools are divided into two categories. All students can go to public secondary schools, either free of charge or paid privately, or, depending on the parents' choice, to *imam hatip* (preacher) secondary schools. When comparing general secondary schools with the *imam hatip* schools, the contents of compulsory courses are the same across both, though there are differences in elective courses. *Imam hatip* secondary-school students are able to take elective courses on religious subjects. The

last stage is the high school stage and also lasts four years (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades). At this level, schools are grouped according to different types. Students are subjected to an examination system called the LGS (High School Entrance System). This exam is not mandatory. There are high schools where students who did not take the exam or who have failed the exam may attend. High school types include science high schools, Anatolian high schools, vocational and technical Anatolian high schools, social sciences high schools, Anatolian *imam hatip* high schools, fine arts high schools, and sports high schools (MEB, 2012).

Apart from the mentioned types, there are schools/institutions that serve under the name of "special education" for unique or disabled students. Depending on the type and degree of the disability, the 4+4+4 education system may also be compulsory for students in this group. Examples of individuals included in this group are gifted or special students, mentally handicapped students, visually impaired students, and students with language and speech difficulties (MEB, 2012).

Curriculum Studies on the "Computer"

Türkiye has attached great importance to catching up to the information age in many fields, including education, and has allocated a serious budget for this issue. In order to not lag behind the times, catching up with rapidly developing technologies has been for many years on the agenda of the Turkish education system, which wants to provide a higher-quality education and has implemented many projects in pursuit of this aim. In 1998, a protocol was signed between the MEB and the World Bank. The Basic Education Project was started with $600 million received as part of this protocol. Under the project, computer hardware and software were purchased, and "7188 information technology classes were established in 5802 primary schools" (Akbaba-Altun, 2004, as cited in Henkoğlu and Yıldırım, 2012, p. 27). This project

continued until 2006, with a total of 20,000 computer laboratories being established over the course of the project.

The first introduction of the concept of the computer into the curriculum of Türkiye came in 1998. In the MEB's curriculum update that year, the Primary Education Elective Computer Course (4th-8th Grades) began to be taught as an elective course and included basic computer concepts starting from the 4th grade. These courses aimed to disseminate computer literacy, with topics such as how to turn the computer on and off, information about computer parts, and producing text pieces on a word processor program. The name of this elective course was changed in 2006, and it became included in the curriculum as "Primary Education Computer Course (1st-8th Grades)." Changes were made again in 2010 and 2012, and the name, content, and learning outcomes of the course were renewed. After 2012, while the "Information Technologies" course became compulsory for some grade levels, it continued to be applied as an elective for other grade levels (Gecitli and Bümen, 2020). As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the course called "Information Technologies and Software Course" is currently included in the curriculum. The concept of cyberbullying, which is the subject of the thesis, is taught in different classes within the Information Technologies and Software Course Curriculum, as will be explained in the next section.

Current Curriculum Studies on Cyberbullying by the MEB

The concept of cyberbullying is directly or indirectly included in the current curriculum at various levels and in the content of different courses.

First Level (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Grades)

Five themes were determined in the Information Technologies and Software Curriculum for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of primary education. One of these themes is "Ethics and Safety." When the objectives of the Ethics and Safety theme are examined, the concept of "cyberbullying" is not directly mentioned. However, the following learning outcomes are indirectly related to cyberbullying and students thus come into contact with the concept from the first stage of their education:

- Recognizes the need to respect the rights of others in the use of technology.

- Explains what behaviors may disturb others while using the Internet by giving examples.

- Realizes the ethical rules to be followed while using the Internet.

- Realizes that the identities used on the Internet may be fake.

- Realizes that transactions made on the Internet and user information are recorded.

- Discusses the negative situations that may arise in situations where he/she shares personal information about himself/herself and others.

- It expresses what kind of information should be kept confidential while using the Internet.

- One understands that one must take responsibility when using technology. (MEB, 2018a, p. 12)

The outcomes of the Ethics and Safety theme are not limited to those listed above. However, with the above list, students may realize that they need to respect the other party while using the internet as they do in face-to-face environments, and that if they use negative words, these behaviors can be seen as bullying behaviors by the other party. At the same time, they may realize that there may be a possibility of bullying against them (for example, a fake account can be opened on their behalf that can impersonate them). Although the subject of cyberbullying is

not included in the curriculum as an individual topic, students nevertheless have begun to be informed about the basics of the related concepts.

Second Level (5th and 6th Grades)

When it comes to the second level, there are many similarities with the first level. The name of the compulsory course for the 5th and 6th grades of secondary school, which is two hours a week, is again the Information Technologies and Software Course. Both grades have five themes, as in the primary school counterpart, with one of the themes again being "Ethics and Safety." However, unlike the first level, the learning outcomes for the two grades are stated separately in this curriculum.

In the objectives of the Ethics and Safety theme for the 5th grade, the concept of "cyberbullying" is again not named directly. However, similar to the first stage, some objectives can be considered related to cyberbullying:

- Respects the rights of others online.

- Recognizes the situations to be encountered as a result of the violation of ethical principles.

- Realizes that digital identities may not reflect reality.

- Realizes that digital shares are permanent and leave traces behind. (MEB, 2018b, p. 12)

It can be said that acquaintance with the concept of cyberbullying, which began at the first level, has been consolidated with the aforementioned outcomes for the 5th grade. The student can learn how to speak and behave in a way that respects the other person as in face-to-face environments, and can learn to respect others, even though there is anonymity in cyberspace. In addition, with the awareness that what they do online will leave traces, students can take

responsibility for their writing (comments, etc.) and actions. Further, with the traces left behind related to negative situations, students may conclude that they may be committing a crime.

When examining the 6th-grade Ethics and Safety outcomes, it can be seen that cyberbullying is directly mentioned by name. The outcomes related to the concept as well as those including the name of the concept are as follows:

- Explains the concept of cyberbullying and discusses the precautions that can be taken for protection.

- Explains what cybercrimes are and summarizes the relevant laws.

- Develops measures and strategies that can be taken against cybercrimes. (MEB, 2018b, p. 16)

Although the concept of cyberbullying has been indirectly mentioned many times before they reach the 6th grade, students encounter the concept's name directly for the first time in this curriculum. Although cyberbullying is basically considered a type of bullying, the concept has a multifaceted and complex structure. While there may be places where cyberbullying intersects with in-school bullying, there are also times where it differs from the latter. Moreover, there may be points where these types of bullying come into contact with each other and where types merge or intertwine. In light of this information, based on observations about the complex structure of the concept, it can be concluded that mentioning the concept of cyberbullying in the learning outcomes is very important for students to gain consciousness and awareness. Discussing the concept by name can ensure that students do not encounter unknown and variable situations, allowing them to perceive the concept in a concrete way whenever they encounter it on social media or in the other digital environments they use.

Moreover, encountering the different names used for the concept of cyberbullying in the Turkish literature brough various questions to mind, including: "What exactly is the concept?" and "Are the similar nouns used interchangeably or are they concepts that have different or similar aspects to each other?" These questions in turn raised doubts about the scientific nature of both the concept and the studies that have discussed it. The emergence of such complexities in the adult mind raises the possibility that this situation may also apply to children. For this reason, it is important for students to encounter the concept of cyberbullying with its proper name.

Second Level (7th and 8th Grades)

In examining the curriculum of the 7th and 8th grades, which are the last two years of the second level, two different curricula were found: the Information Technologies and Software Course and the Media Literacy Course.

Information Technologies and Software Course

The primary education program that is valid for both types of schools (public or private secondary school and *imam hatip* secondary school, where religious education is given more priority) is the previously mentioned Information Technologies and Software Course. However, unlike the program from the 1st to the 6th grades, the relevant course is included in the curriculum as an elective for 7th and 8th grades for two hours a week. The 7th-grade curriculum has four themes, one of which is Ethics and Safety. While cyberbullying is not mentioned in the learning outcomes of any theme, some of the achievements in the Ethics and Safety theme are related to cyberbullying:

- Discusses ethical and unethical behaviors in the use of information and technology.

- Discusses the individual and societal effects caused by privacy and safety problems. (MEB, 2018c, p. 12)

Similarly, 8th graders have four themes, with Ethics and Safety not included among them. Unlike the other classes that have a passive relation to cyberbullying, there is a new theme in the 8th-grade curriculum: Communication, Research, and Collaboration. This theme has two topics: Social Media and Web Journals. Some of the social media achievements can be considered related to cyberbullying:

- Explains the ethical values to be considered in the process of using social media.

- Explains the problems in the use of social networks.

- Provides solutions to the problems encountered in the online communication process. (MEB, 2018c, p. 14)

Media Literacy Course

The second curriculum for Grades 7 and 8, which is valid for both school types, is the Media Literacy course. The first point to note here is that this lesson is exclusive to either 7th or 8th graders. The course can be taken as an elective in either of these two grade levels, but not both. Five learning areas have been determined for the course. One of the learning areas is Media as Information Source. The concept of cyberbullying is directly mentioned in the explanation of an outcome of this learning area. The relevant achievement and its explanation are as follows:

- Recognizes the obstacles to accessing accurate and reliable information.

  Agnotology, trolling, cyberbullying, not knowing what to look for, getting lost, echo chamber effect, stereotypes, prejudices etc. barriers can be recognized. (MEB, 2018d, p. 14)

Another learning area is "Media as Participation Environment." Three of the achievements of this learning area are related to cyberbullying:

- Fulfills individual/social responsibilities while accessing, following and producing media content.

  Ethics, privacy, copyright and intellectual property, personal security, correct use of language, etc. issues can be addressed.

- Exercises their rights while accessing, following and producing media content.

- Acts sensitively to media content that they like or deem problematic.

  Relevant persons and institutions (media producer, audience representative, reader representative, editor, RTÜK, etc.) can be provided to convey their thoughts. (MEB, 2018d, p. 13)

Third Level (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Grades)

There are different types of high schools in Türkiye (such as, Science High Schools, Social Sciences High Schools, and Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools). The curriculum is determined according to high school types. Here, high schools will be divided into two categories, vocational high schools and other high schools. In Vocational and Technical High Schools, whose aim is to "raise expert individuals who will ensure the continuity of society and qualified intermediate staff needed at every level of production" (MEB, 2020, p.1), students can choose one of the relevant high school types according to the profession to which they aspire and take courses in the direction of this chosen profession. There are various fields of focus among the high schools in this category. For example, students who want to progress in the field of painting and music can choose a Fine Arts High School, while students who want to improve

themselves in the field of physical education and sports can choose a Sports High School. Another field is the field of Information Technologies. There are compulsory computer courses as well as elective computer courses in this field where vocational courses covering current issues related to computers are taken.

Vocational and Technical High Schools - Information Technologies Field - (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Grades)

Students who attend the information technologies departments of Vocational and Technical high schools take courses such as Turkish language and literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and geography, which are described as "general," in the same way as students do in other high schools. When students are in the 11th and 12th grades, the curriculum differs from the classes given to students at other high schools, with vocational courses taken intensively. There are two hours of "Social Media" class per week in the 11th and 12th grades. This course is an elective. The following learning outcomes of this course are related to cyberbullying:

- While using social media, they share in accordance with ethical rules within the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms.
- They use social media by taking into account the responsibilities of legal rules without hiding identity.
- Protects themselves against cyber violence while using social media. (MEB, 2020, p. 39)

When examining the outcomes of the lessons in all classes for this level, it was noticed that the only lesson that could be related to cyberbullying was the "Social Media" class. Third-

level students who do not take this elective course will not have taken a course with an outcome related to cyberbullying.

Other High Schools (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Grades)

In high school types other than vocational and technical high schools, the education program that includes subjects related to computers is called the Computer Science Course. The focus of the program is "complete problem solving and programming" (MEB, 2018e, p.14). The program consists of two courses (the First Course and Second Course) and is taught as an elective for two hours per week. It does not need to be taken at a particular grade level. Students have the right to choose the courses at the grade level they wish. However, the point to be noted here is that the student must take the first course before taking the second one. In other words, the student cannot choose only the second course at any grade level. There is, however, no obligation to choose the second course after choosing the first one. For example, a student can take the first course in 9th or 10th grade. If they wish, they do not have to take the second course. However, if they desire to take the second course, the student can take it in any of the following grades. The first course has three units, which are all covered during the selected year. The first of the units is "Ethics, Safety, Society." As stated in the focus of the program, the curriculum for this course focuses on programming. Only five hours of the course, which is a total of 72 hours a year, is reserved for the "Ethics, Safety, Society" unit, with only one of the outcomes of this unit being related to cyberbullying. The achievement and explanation are as follows:

- Questions the necessity of ethical principles when using information technologies and the Internet.

It is emphasized that social moral rules are also valid in communications in

virtual environments. (MEB, 2018e, p.16)

The second course of the education program also consists of three units. However, in this course, students can only take one or two units. The technical infrastructure of each school is different, and the quality of the infrastructure and the teachers may not be sufficient. Should this be the case, a group meeting is held in line with the infrastructure of the school or the qualification of the course teacher, and one or two of the three units are taught in line with the decision taken at the meeting. The entire second course is devoted to programming. The units are "Robot Programming," "Web Based Programming," and "Mobile Programming." All three units are devoted to technical issues, with no outcomes being related to cyberbullying, either directly or indirectly.

Projects and Activities Related to Cyberbullying in Türkiye

In recent years, a series of campaigns, practices, and projects involving the concept of cyberbullying have been implemented, both at the national level and as a result of the cooperation of international companies with government agencies.

The Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) is behind a significant part of these activities. The BTK, which is equipped with very broad powers and is an "independent administrative authority," is the institution that regulates and supervises the information and communication sector in Türkiye (Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu, 2017). Founded on January 27, 2000, the institution adopted its current name on November 10, 2008. Below are the BTK activities related to cyberbullying.

BTK activities

Internet Information Notification Center

One of the first projects carried out by the BTK was the establishment of an internet information reporting center. The Center was established in accordance with Law No. 5651 and is online on the website https://www.ihbarweb.org.tr/ as of November 23, 2007. Within the scope of the law, there is also "Regulation of Broadcasts on the Internet and Fighting Against Crimes Committed Through These Broadcasts" (İhbarWeb, 2020). Acts that contribute to one or more of the nine different types of behaviour that constitute a crime under various laws are reported in the publications made on the website or on the internet. For example, Article 84 of the Turkish Penal Code, No. 5237 is about encouraging, inciting, or assisting suicide and carries a prison sentence of two to five years. In case the suicide is not just attempted but occurs, there is a prison sentence of four to 10 years (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 29). If broadcasts made on the internet lead people to commit suicide, they may constitute a crime, and can be reported under "directing to suicide," which is one of the nine different behaviour types.

There is no type directly related to cyberbullying among the nine different crimes identified. However, it may be possible to expose a person to cyberbullying and thus direct them to these nine crimes, and, in such a case, the perpetrator can be reported. Topics that may be associated with cyberbullying include "suicide," "child sexual abuse," "obscenity," and "prostitution" (especially encouraging children).

Another important feature of the İhbarWeb website is that it is introduced to students within the scope of the curriculum. One of the achievements in the 6th-grade Ethics and Safety theme in the Information Technologies and Software Curriculum, which is compulsory for two

hours a week for the 5th and 6th grades in secondary school, is: "Develops measures and strategies that can be taken against cybercrimes." In the explanation section for this objective, "Information is given about the Internet Information Notification Center" (MEB, 2018b, p. 16).

The "GüvenliWeb" (SafetyWeb) Website

The GüvenliWeb website was launched in May 2008 in order to raise awareness about the safe use of the internet among individuals of all age groups. The site is divided into two main sections: "Conscious Use of the Internet" and "Safety on the Internet." The section about Safety on the Internet includes technical issues, such as viruses, spyware, password security, internet banking, wireless networks, and modem security. The Conscious Use of the Internet section includes technical issues, such as parental control tools, but also focuses on raising ethical awareness through such topics as internet ethics, digital citizenship, and rights, laws, and responsibilities on the internet. There are 10 sub-pages in this section, one of them being cyberbullying. On the cyberbullying page, there is basic information about the concept (a definition, types, and ways to protect it), as well as separate downloadable booklets (in PDF format) for young people, families, and educators about combating cyberbullying, videos explaining the concept, and samples as to how to report cyberbullying for those who are exposed to or witness it (GüvenliWeb, 2017a).

This site is remarkable for its vast resources on the topic. There are presentations, brochures, reports, and even samples of petitions that can appeal to individuals of all ages and professions, providing guidance when necessary. For instance, there is an example of a petition on the site in which the relevant articles of law are included in order to guide a person who believes that their personal rights have been violated, for dealing with a person who "demands a decision to block access with the removal of the content" (GüvenliWeb, 2022).

Cyberbullying Awareness Campaign

The BTK and Samsung Electronics Türkiye cooperated and organized a promotional meeting on November 30, 2017 to start a campaign named "Awareness Campaign Against Cyberbullying." The campaign slogan, "Don't Be a Cyberbully, Be Aware!" was used in advertisements. The aim of the campaign is to raise social awareness (among students, parents, and teachers) and to promote the conscious use of technology. With this aim in mind, the campaign operates in two branches, namely digital and educational. The concept of cyberbullying has been introduced in 20 selected schools within the educational branch. Under the digital branch, a social media campaign was launched on December 13, 2017, with the slogan "Don't be a cyberbully" and hashtag "#BeAware" ("siber zorba olma" #FarkınaVar) (GüvenliWeb, 2017b).

Mobile Safe Internet Truck

Another project carried out by the BTK is the mobile secure internet truck. As the name suggests, this is a real (not figurative) truck that tours schools in many regions and cities of Türkiye. As stated above, Türkiye consists of seven regions, with the people of each region not living under the same socio-economic conditions. The country has students who were born and raised in families that can be described as having high living standards and have advanced technological equipment, as well as students who have had limited contact with technology. Based on this reality, the truck aims to increase students' awareness by introducing technological developments and opportunities to students from low economic backgrounds, while at the same time, talking about the risks of technology and the internet to all students. The truck began its service in 2018 and has visited many schools; it continues to ensure that students "interact directly and consciously with new technologies" (GüvenliWeb, 2019). The truck has three main

sections. The first and third sections, which include Augmented Reality Glasses, 3D printers, and mBot robots, fall under the technological bracket. Students are able to personally experience such cutting-edge devices. The second section includes a seminar where BTK experts discuss the conscious use of the internet (Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu, 2023; GüvenliWeb, 2019). Regarding cyberbullying, which is the main subject of this thesis, the remarkable point here is that while information about the truck is given on the BTK website and seminars are mentioned, the concept of cyberbullying is mentioned separately while explaining the goal of raising awareness about the conscious use of technology and internet in the seminars. It can be surmised that a special importance is attached to this concept, which is especially evident by the use of the term "cyberbullying" directly.

FATIH PROJECT (*Fırsatları Artırma ve Teknolojiyi İyileştirme Hareketi*)

The FATIH Project is titled "Movement to Increase Opportunities and Improve Technology"; the acronym is formed from the Turkish equivalent of these words. The FATIH Project, which is the most comprehensive and the largest-budgeted project carried out by the MEB and supported by various ministries, was launched in 2011 with the aim of "providing equal opportunities in education and training and improving the technology in our schools." Based on this goal, schools are equipped with various information technology tools, such as broadband internet access, wired internet access, and an interactive smart board for every school and classroom. This equipment is to ensure that "more sense organs will be addressed in the learning-teaching process" (Fatih Projesi, n.d). One of the project's first concrete goals is to equip 620,000 classrooms in all pre-schools, primary, and secondary education institutions with smart boards by establishing the necessary infrastructure system. Another goal is to provide tablets to every teacher and to every

student from the 5th grade onward (Ekici and Yılmaz, 2013, p. 324). The project has five main components:

1. Provision of Hardware and Software Infrastructure

2. Provision and Management of Educational e-Content

3. In-Service Training of Teachers

4. Ensuring Conscious, Secure, Manageable and Measurable Use of IT

5. Effective IT in Curriculum Usage. (Fatih Projesi, n.d)

Among these components, in-service training programs for teachers are important. Such training includes various sections, "the content of which was developed by a committee of academics" (Ekici and Yılmaz, 2013, p. 326). Some of the training programs are conducted face-to-face, while others are carried out remotely. The primary purpose of this in-service training is to support teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in using the relevant technological equipment. Second is the section on "Internet ethics, school bullying, and cyberbullying," which includes the concept of cyberbullying directly as well as related concepts. As such, this MEB curriculum is not only intended for students, parents, or the general public, but also for teachers. The program is equipped with up-to-date information about cyberbullying. The fact that the MEB keeps the related concepts on its agenda, is constantly engaged with the concept, and attempts to inform people of all ages and professions (here, teachers) about the concept reveals the importance it attaches to the concept.

SİBERAY PROJECT

Siberay a project that contributes to various ministries, such as the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Directorate of Security, and the

Department of Combating Cybercrime, as well as various institutions and organizations that are experts in their fields and can produce solutions on the subject. Although the project has many goals, the main goal is to increase the awareness of individuals of every age group about safe internet use (ShiftDelete.Net, 2021). The project addresses all segments of society, such as parents, NGOs, public institutions and organizations, individual users, and students. Within the scope of the project, information is provided on many subjects, such as cyberbullying, digital rights and responsibilities, digital games and game choices, digital security, digital ethics, digital privacy, and health in the digital environment. The Siberay website features online and offline training programs, activities, and workshops that are organized on related topics (ShiftDelete.Net, 2021).

It can be understood that the name "cyberbullying," which is among the subjects featured on the site, has a special importance within the scope of the project, by observing the three promotional videos on the Siberay website. The first is a video titled "What is Siberay?" and provides general information about the Siberay project. The second is the "Introductory Film of the Department of Combating Cybercrime of the General Directorate of Security." The third is titled, "Siberay to Say Stop Cyberbullying Together!" This last is a public service ad describing cyberbullying (Siberay, 2021). Although information is provided about the main topics mentioned above on the website and there are various narrative videos on the pages under each of the headings, the fact that there is a video on cyberbullying featured on the main introduction page of the website reveals how important the Siberay project believes the concept of cyberbullying to be.

Secondly, another of the goals of the project, in its own words, is as follows: "This project ... combats habits that harm individuals and society, cyberbullying and all kinds of

cybercrime before the action occurs" (Siberay, 2020b, p. 12). Based on this goal, Siberay officers, as part of the General Directorate of Security, not only provide information on cyberbullying on the Siberay website, but also visit schools throughout Türkiye and organize seminars on the concept for students, parents, and teachers. For example, on January 24, 2023, a presentation titled "safe and conscious internet use, digital literacy and cyber security, cybercrime, and cyberbullying" was produced by Siberay officials for the students and teachers at Tekirdağ Mehmet Serez Social Sciences High School. The purpose of the presentation was to inform students about related issues and carry out awareness-raising activities. In addition, the Cyber Security Club, which had been previously established by the school, organized a "Best Digital Poster" competition with the theme of Cyber Security. A total of 616 students participated in the competition, and the Tekirdağ Provincial Police Chief presented the award to the winner of the work himself (Siberay, 2023a).

The Siberay Project is the focal point of the activities and workshops given by Siberay officers in various public institutions and organizations. In other words, after introducing the Siberay Project in the relevant institutions, Siberay officers provide training on issues such as technology addiction, digital literacy, and cyberbullying. In addition, Siberay officers also participate in activities carried out under different themes. For example, officials participate in book fairs, science festivals, robotic coding competitions, kite festivals, and technology fairs organized throughout Türkiye, opening stands at such activities, distributing brochures, and attempting to raise awareness of cyberbullying among all segments of society, with a primary focus on students (Siberay, 2023b). The agenda of combating crimes of great importance, such as cyberbullying, is kept active with such events. According to the "News" page of the Siberay website, where it provides information about the activities it has introduced and participated in

throughout Türkiye, as of the beginning of 2023, Siberay had carried out 17 activities as of June 12, 2023, and these activities had taken place approximately once a week (Siberay, 2023b).

It is important to note here: Earthquakes with 7.7 and 7.6 magnitudes occurred in Türkiye on February 6, 2023, centered in Kahramanmaraş. Nearly 100,000 citizens died, and millions of people were left homeless. Then, on February 20, earthquakes with magnitudes of 6.4 and 5.8 occurred again in the same region. Thereupon, it was published in the Official Gazette that the President had declared a state of emergency for a period of three months in the provinces surrounding the epicenter due to the heavy loss of life and the destruction (T.R. Resmi Gazete, 2023). This tragic event not only disrupted the flow of everyday life, but also caused the activities of institutions such as Siberay to be stopped, cancelled, or postponed. This may be the reason behind Siberay not publishing an activity in March 2023 on the "News" page of their website.

Further evidence of the importance Siberay gives to the issue of cyberbullying is the participation of a Siberay officer in the "Consumer Diary" program broadcast live on TRT Radio 1, one of the national radio stations of the TRT, as part of the program of awareness-raising activities about risks, threats, and crimes in the cyber world. During their speech on crimes, the officer provided information about cyberbullying (Siberay, 2023c).

The Siberay project aims to appeal to all segments of society, with various studies conducted to this effect. However, since children have the most potential to be negatively affected by the online community, communicating with children is one of the main objectives of the project. Siberay incorporates many communication methods for this purpose, including the previously mentioned seminars given by Siberay officers, as well as face-to-face communication and written communication in the form of prepared brochures. The project also uses visual

communication, with a protocol being signed between the Department of Combating Cybercrime and the TRT that included the production of public ads and cartoons (ShiftDelete.Net, 2021). The TRT has a channel called TRT Çocuk (Kids) that produces broadcasts which appeal to children, and under the signed protocol, a cartoon called "Team: SİBERAY" is broadcast on TRT Çocuk every Saturday as of May 14, 2022 (Siberay, 2022). In the article on the subject on Siberay's website, the following is written:

> Together with TRT Çocuk, "Team: SİBERAY." It aims to increase the achievements in these areas through awareness-raising and entertaining content for children on topics, such as safe internet use, technology addiction, cyber risks and dangers, beneficial and harmful aspects of the digital world, cyberbullying, perception of reality in the virtual environment, and time management in the cyber world. (Siberay, 2022)

In the continuation of the news, the following is written about the content of the cartoon:

> Hakan, Selvi, and Umut, who met at the school's computer club, encounter problems related to the cyber world in each new episode. While embarking on adventures in the cyber world to solve the problems of both themselves and their friends... they gain important information about the online world and learn to protect themselves from the dangers in the virtual environment (Siberay, 2022).

In conclusion, policies related to cyberbullying, and their support by various ministries, institutions, and organizations, especially the MEB, have been reviewed and detailed in this chapter. Careful attention has been given to outlining these programs in a chronological fashion. The media literacy courses that are taught in pilot schools were introduced first. Next, the

Turkish Education system was explained, detailing the courses, course content, and content objectives in the current curriculum that directly or indirectly relate to cyberbullying. Finally, the non-school projects and activities related to cyberbullying being carried out in Türkiye were presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 4: SANCTIONS ON CYBERBULLYING

This section will discuss the Turkish concept of cyberbullying and administrative sanctions imposed by the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education (MEB), as well as reflect on the conceptual approach to bullying- or cyberbullying-related criminal offenses (such as "Sexual Harassment," "Threats," and "Blackmail") as set out in the Turkish Penal Code.

Administrative Sanctions

While the phenomenon of traditional bullying is well understood, given that physical harm from bullying can be tangible, the notion of cyberbullying remains not very well understood in Türkiye. Harm from cyberbullying is almost always intangible and psychological (Gati, Tenyi, Tury, and Wildmann, 2002 as cited in Shariff, 2009, p. 44; Englander et al., 2017; Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021), taking the form of sexual harassment, racist slurs, and intersectional offences that are rooted in misogyny and patriarchy (Livingstone et al., 2011; Shariff, 2017; Le Vu Phung, 2020, p. 28; Korkmaz et al., 2021).

Regardless of a person's physical location, offensive forms of online bullying and technology-facilitated violence (another definition for cyberbullying) can reach millions of spectators on the internet very quickly (Yaman and Peker, 2012; Davis et al., 2015; Vaillancourt et al., 2016; Myers and Cowie, 2019; Dinç Kırlı, 2020). Moreover, it is difficult to remove offensive content from the internet, which can affect the reputations of victims throughout their lives (Berne et al., 2019; Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021). Although both national and international literatures (Grigg, 2010; Campbell et al., 2012; Bayram and Saylı, 2013; Gallagher and Dunsmuir, 2014; Khong et al., 2019; Myers and Cowie, 2019; Pekşen Süslü and Oktay, 2019; Karakuş and Turan, 2021; Yıldırım, 2021) emphasize that individuals from all age groups who

use technological devices can both exhibit and experience cyberbully behaviours, research has shown that cyberbullying is frequently most experienced among school-age individuals (Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul, 2022). Due to various reasons, such as being exposed to traditional bullying, having low self-confidence, and not knowing who they are yet, students are more able and likely to bring these negative feelings online with the motive of taking revenge from the other party (Korkmaz, 2016). For this reason, cyberbullying is most often experienced among students.

Ministry of National Education Circular Letter No. 2006/26

The General Directorate of Special Education Guidance and Counseling Services of the MEB prepared a circular letter on "Preventing Violence in Schools" in 2006 (MEB, 2006). Some of the determinations in the circular letter and the decisions taken are important in terms of both bullying and cyberbullying. One of the remarkable findings is as follows:

> It is understood from the information sent to our Ministry in recent days and the news in the visual and written media that incidents such as violence, aggression, and bullying have increased, especially in our schools. The importance of protective and preventive studies is increasing in order to ensure that students can attend educational institutions in an environment of trust and to achieve the desired success from the education system. (MEB, 2006, p. 1)

With this determination made by the ministry, the Turkish government is clearly aware of the seriousness of violence becoming widespread in schools and has developed new decisions and sanctions. The circular continues with the following decision:

> In our Ministry: With the participation of education-training offices and related support units, an upper board will be established to carry out secretariat services, by the General

Directorate of Special Education Guidance and Counseling Services. The Board meets in July every year. The Ministry will coordinate the central units and prepare the central action plan. (MEB, 2006, p. 1)

In the circular, the formation, structure, duties, and responsibilities of the central units affiliated with the aforementioned Supreme Council are underlined. The units affiliated to the Supreme Council are grouped under five headings and the duties and responsibilities of each are listed one by one. The five titles are the Provincial Directorate of National Education, Guidance and Research Center Directorate, School/Institution Directorate, Guidance Teacher / Psychological Counselor, and Teachers (MEB, 2006). With this circular, the MEB initiated efforts to take necessary measures to prevent negative actions by assigning duties to all hierarchical units, that is, from top to bottom, in the face of increasing "events such as violence, aggression, and bullying" in schools. The question remains as to whether they understand "schools" to include communications between students and teachers that can result in cyberbullying online, as well as whether that context is considered to be part of the attention that needs to be paid to bullying in schools (Shariff, 2017).

Regulations of the Ministry of National Education in Türkiye

All public institutions and organizations have duties to prevent cyberbullying before it occurs and to impose sanctions on the scale of harm inflicted on the victim in the event that it occurs (Pearce et al., 2011; Karaman and Ünsal, 2017; TBV, 2020). Undoubtedly, schools are counted among such institutions as well (Willard, 2007 as cited in Kiriakidis and Kavoura, 2010; Tomşa et al., 2013; Pelfrey and Weber, 2015). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Turkish education system is divided into three stages in the 4+4+4 system, primary education, secondary education, and high school education. The first eight-year period (from the 1st to the 8th grade) is

considered the primary education stage, while the last four years (from the 9th to the 12th grade) is the high school education stage.

Regulations for the Primary Education Stage

For the primary education stage, the MEB issues regulations "in order to regulate the procedures and principles regarding the duties and functioning of public and private, pre-school, and primary education institutions in accordance with the general purpose and basic principles of Turkish National Education" (Mevzuat, 2014, p. 1).

The eighth chapter of the regulation for primary education institutions published in the Official Gazette dated 26.07.2014 is reserved for the "Evaluation of Student Behaviors." Article 55 of this chapter is on "Sanctionable Behaviors," which are divided into three sections: "Warning Sanction," "Condemnation Sanction," and "School Change Sanction." Among the sections, there is no article that mentions the concept of cyberbullying directly by name. In the first sanction ("Warning Sanction"), there are no articles that may be related to cyberbullying.

Among the behaviors that require a "Condemnation Sanction" within the scope of Article 55, those that may be related to cyberbullying are:

- Recording or broadcasting audio or video without permission in a way that violates personal rights, through IT tools or social media. (Mevzuat, 2014, p. 19)

Among the behaviors that require a "School Change Sanction," those that may be related to cyberbullying are:

- To bully, insult, slander, threaten, or harass others, or to incite others to such behavior.

- To use violence and to attack, to organize, or to incite such actions against school administrators, teachers, and other staff and friends inside and outside of the school. (Mevzuat, 2014, p. 19)

Regulations for the Secondary Education Stage

The regulations published by the MEB in the Official Gazette dated 07.09.2013 for secondary education institutions list the aim of regulating the "procedures and principles regarding education, training, management and operation in public and private formal secondary education institutions" (Mevzuat, 2013, p.1). The tenth part is reserved for the "Provisions Regarding Student Behaviors, Awards and Discipline" (p. 45), which is divided into various sections in itself.

The First Section of The Tenth Part in Regulation for the Secondary Education Stage

Article 157 in the first section of the tenth part covers "the rules to be obeyed by students and the behaviors expected from students." Although it does not directly mention the concept of cyberbullying, it can be surmised that the following items are related to cyberbullying:

- Using information tools and social media for personal, social, and educational benefits.
- IT tools and social media: not to use them for harmful, divisive, destructive, and violent purposes that are incompatible with the general moral rules of society; students are expected to not assist in their production, possession, and transportation. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 45)

The following wording that may be related to cyberbullying in Article 158 for the protection of students includes taking necessary measures by cooperating with parents or families and other relevant institutions and organizations:

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- Protection of students from pornography, exposure, sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and all kinds of negative behavior

- Protection of students against gossip, bullying, threats, teasing, and all kinds of insulting nicknames so that they are not physically and mentally harmed by the environment, school staff, and other students. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 46)

The Third Section of The Tenth Part in Regulation for the Secondary Education Stage

"Behaviors and actions that require disciplinary punishment" in the third section of the tenth part, which includes the subject of "Discipline," are determined. Article 164 in the third section is divided into four punishments: "condemnation," "short-term suspension," "changing schools," and "extraction from formal education" (dismissal of the student from the institution). In Article 164, the only item in "Behaviors and acts that require disciplinary punishment" related to cyberbullying is:

- Using information tools in violation of the procedures and principles determined by the teachers' board. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 47)

Some items in "Acts and behaviors that require a short suspension from school for 1-5 days" relate to cyberbullying:

- Insulting verbally or sharing the insult aimed at school administrators, teachers, employees, students, and other people in educational environments, directly by behavior or through social media and provoking others to such behaviors, including threatening these people.

- Sharing, distributing, or posting on walls and other places political, ideological, obscene, or prohibited writing, materials, documents, and the like; to use information tools, school equipment, and add-ons for these purposes.

- Harming education and training activities, individuals, and institutions through information tools or social media.

- Taking, recording, or sharing images of school administrators, teachers, employees, and other students without permission. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 48)

Likewise, some of the items in the "acts and behaviors that require the punishment of changing schools" are related to cyberbullying:

- To prevent education and training or to cause serious physical and moral harm to people through information tools or social media.

- Harassing with words and behaviors, slandering individuals, friends, and school staff, and provoking or forcing others to these behaviors, including sharing or spreading these acts via social media. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 48)

Finally, the following items listed under "Behaviors that require expulsion from formal education" are related to cyberbullying:

- To create, reproduce, disseminate, or trade audio, verbal, written, and visual content that is divisive, destructive, and immoral and which encourages violence via IT tools or social media.

- To torment a person or persons for any reason whatsoever, to torture or encourage torture, sexual abuse, and to commit acts that are criminalized by the laws in this regard. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 49)

These regulations, published by the MEB for the first 12 years of the education process, were published in the Official Gazette in 2013 and were put into effect in 2014. However, between 2014 and 2023, the MEB made changes and improvements to the relevant regulations in order to follow the current technical and educational innovations (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 59). To provide a concrete example that may be related to cyberbullying, the regulation related to the secondary education level and was put into effect in 2013 featured an article regarding "acts and behaviors that require a short-term suspension," which was first written as:

- Mobbing, insulting, and slandering people or friends with words and behaviors or inciting others to such behaviors. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2013)

However, by 2022, the scope of this article had been expanded to include the current technological framework:

- Insulting school administrators, teachers, employees, students, and other people in educational environments verbally, by behavior or through social media, sharing the insult, inciting others to this behavior, and threatening these people. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 48)

The articles specified in the relevant regulations, duties, and sanctions make it clear to students, administrators, and teachers that if students exhibit cyberbullying behaviors, there are sanctions such as reprimand, expulsion from school, and even dismissal from the school as a result of such behavior. The regulations appear to be silent regarding sanctions against teachers who might engage in some form of online harassment, such as sexual harassment, toward students.

The statutes highlighted above were written with the expectation that administrators and teachers would ensure they familiarized themselves with the regulations, and that they would be aware and conscious of what sanctions or preventative actions were required of them. Unfortunately, as is common even in Western countries such as Canada, the US, and the countries of Europe, school administrators and teachers are rarely provided with effective training or education regarding their legal obligations, or in fact, student rights and responsibilities. These aspects are also largely absent from the articles highlighted above. There appears to be little flexibility regarding sanctions or requirements for due process and procedural fairness (see Busby, 2017, Shariff, 2017). The fact that administrators and teachers do not have up-to-date technical and technological knowledge within the scope of the protection of students may cause a supervisory gap. As a result, it is possible for cyberbullying behaviours, and thus victimization, to increase. This concern is addressed in the recommendations section of this thesis.

Legal Dimensions

Law No. 5237

The current Turkish Penal Code in Türkiye was adopted on September 26, 2004. This law, as part of the new Turkish Penal Code (TCK) numbered 5237, was published in the Official Gazette on October 12, 2004 and was subsequently put into effect on June 1, 2005 (Mevzuat, 2004). There is no independent "informatics or cybercrime law" in the TCK. For this reason, when criminal behaviours occur in the cyber environment, these crimes are handled as "traditional crimes committed through electronic networks" (Yıldırım and Kaplan, 2021, p. 308).

In addition, cyberbullying is not "regulated as an independent crime type" (Maviş, 2021, p. 2476). In other words, there is no definition of crime or legal article that uses the term "cyberbullying" directly. However, many actions that are included in the law and contain criminal elements are related to cyberbullying. This is not necessarily problematic. Cyberbullying comprises a variety of actions and offences. Western definitions of bullying and cyberbullying have often been too limited, which does not allow for the diversity of offenses that they can include. For example, while the non-consensual distribution of intimate images is rarely thought of as cyberbullying, the circulation of such images on social media can lead to significant amounts of shaming and cyberbullying, resulting in some teenagers eventually committing suicide (Alyakut, 2017; Shariff, 2017; Myers and Cowie, 2019; Zaborskis et al., 2019). Consider briefly, the following Articles of the TCK:

Sexual Harassment: Article 105 of the TCK, which is included in the Offenses Against Sexual Immunity, covers crimes of sexual harassment. The penalty for such a crime is "three months to two years imprisonment or a judicial fine. If the act is committed against a child, sentence is imprisonment from six months to three years." In addition, the Law was amended in 2014, with the following being added to the second paragraph of Article 105: "In case the crime is committed ... by taking advantage of the convenience provided by the mail or electronic communication means ... the penalty to be imposed according to the above paragraph is increased by half" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 40). In sexual harassment, which is one of the common types of cyberbullying, the perpetrator can sexually harass the victim (such as sending photos of their own genitals or offering sexual intercourse), and can also use photos of the victim (shameful, humiliating, and/or nude) without their consent, for instance by taking photographs of the victim in inappropriate situations (in the bathroom or while dressing) or sharing those that

have already been taken, or sharing photographs of a victim which were consensually, albeit privately, shared with a person electronically, without the consent of the victim (Lenhart, 2007 as cited in Shariff, 2009; Alyakut, 2017; Mishna et al., 2018; Myers and Cowie, 2019;). Maviş (2021) mentions that this situation can be evaluated within the scope of sexting, one type of cyberbullying, and that "in such cases, the act is punished more severely" (p. 2484). Moreover, with the use of photos that contain nudity, embarrassment, or humiliation by the perpetrator as a weapon against the victim, other criminal acts such as threatening or blackmailing the victim may occur.

Threat: Article 106 of the TCK, in the section titled "Offenses Against Freedom," is a crime of threat (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 40). By using electronic means, "disturbing/threatening the victim is an important form of cyberbullying and can be punished under the TCK" (Maviş, 2021, 2482). In flaming, which is one of the types of cyberbullying, the parties can threaten each other during the discussion/fight and it is possible that the cyberbullying will be punished if threats occur.

Blackmail: According to Article 107 of the TCK, "the person who forces someone to do or not to do something that is illegal or not liable, or to gain an unfair advantage" is held responsible for the crime of blackmail (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 41). For example, after taking inappropriate, humiliating, or embarrassing photos or videos without the consent or knowledge of the victim, the perpetrator may blackmail the victim by saying that these photos or videos will be shared on social media. This situation can be taken one step further and combined with the sexual harassment crime mentioned earlier. The perpetrator can thus also commit sexual harassment by using the photo or video footage they have obtained for blackmail purposes

against the victim. In summary, within the scope of cyberbullying, the perpetrator is punished for behaviours exhibited through blackmail.

Disturbing the peace and tranquility of people and persistent pursuit: Article 123 of the TCK restricts harassment; when translated from Turkish, it reads that disturbing the peace and tranquility of others (what in the West is defined as "harassment") is illegal. The wording used is about when someone is "insistently" disturbing the peace:

> Harassing a person just for the purpose of disturbing their peace and tranquility: In case of making phone calls, making noise, or doing any other unlawful act for this purpose, the perpetrator is sentenced to imprisonment from three months to one year upon the complaint of the victim. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, 2004)

Since then, the following addition, published in the Official Gazette on May 27, 2022, has been added to the relevant article (Article 123/A):

> Persistent pursuit: The perpetrator, who causes a serious disturbance to a person or causes them to worry about the safety of themselves or one of their relatives, by following them physically or trying to contact them by using telecommunication and communication tools, information systems, or third parties, is sentenced to imprisonment from six months to two years. (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 45)

Persistent harassment is very much a form of cyberbullying. Cyberstalking, which is also a form of cyberbullying, is a crime under this law. The perpetrator may be punished as a result of persistently following the target person by using informatics (i.e., social media) tools. There is a possibility that this type of crime can be combined with other crimes (such as threats, blackmail, and/or harassment).

Insults: In to Article 125 of the TCK, criminal liability is imposed for "... a person who attacks the honor, self-respect, and dignity of a person by insulting [them]" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 46). In an amendment made in 2005, an addition was made to the article of the law, which reads: "In case of open insult, the penalty is increased by one sixth" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 46). Flaming, a type of cyberbullying, can be given as an example here. This type of cyberbullying involves a perpetrator provoking their victim into an argument. The insults, threats, and blackmailing expressions used during the discussion between the two occur in written form. Moreover, with the legal updates to the TCK, the offense of "insult" is subject to increased penalties in cases where there are spectators on social networks, that is, when such insults are distributed publicly. Moreover, the crime of insult can be combined with the crime of disturbing the peace and tranquility of people in Article 123. The relevant articles of law confirm that these forms of cyberbullying are punishable by law with incremental sentences based on the context and seriousness of each insult or harassment.

Offenses Against Private Life and the Secret Area of Life: The ninth section of the Turkish Penal Code (starting with Article 132 and ending with Article 140) is devoted to "Offenses against Private Life and the Secret Area of Life" (Mevzuat, 2004, pp. 48-50). Since the actions in the ninth section of TCK include more than one type of offence, the relevant laws are explained as follows:

Article 132, Violation of the confidentiality of communication:

The person who violates the confidentiality of the communication between persons... A person who illegally discloses the content of the communication made with him/her without the consent of the other party, is punished with imprisonment from one year to

three years. If these disclosed data are published through the press and broadcast, the same penalty will be imposed. (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 48)

This article of law is closely related to Outing, one of the types of cyberbullying, and the perpetrator can be held criminally responsible (Maviş, 2021, p. 2485).

Article 133, Listening and recording of conversations between individuals:

"The person who unlawfully discloses the data obtained by recording the non-public conversations between individuals... Publishing this disclosed data through the press and broadcast…" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 48). This article of law, which is similar to the previous article, appears to be related to cyberbullying. If the act of recording and disclosing interpersonal conversations is carried out with electronic devices, this crime can be directly associated with cyberbullying.

Article 134, Violation of the privacy of private life:

"Anyone who violates the privacy of people's private lives is punished with imprisonment from one year to three years" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 48). In the continuation of this article, it is stated that "secrecy is increased by one-fold if the images or sounds are recorded, a prison sentence will be applied in case of disclosure, and the same penalty will be applied if the disclosure is published through the press and broadcasting" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 49). A person who performs the actions in this article may cause more than one crime by combining their actions with other criminal activities. If the perpetrator commits these acts with electronic devices, cyberbullying may appear as a punishable crime.

Article 135, Recording of personal data:

"Anyone who unlawfully records personal data is sentenced to imprisonment from one year to three years" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 49).

Article 136, Unlawfully giving or acquiring data:

"Anyone who unlawfully gives, disseminates, or captures personal data to another person is sentenced to imprisonment from two years to four years" (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 49).

In terms of Article 135 and Article 136, in general, some of the items appear to be related to each other. Maviş (2021) provides Masquerading, one of the types of cyberbullying, as an example here. In masquerading, the perpetrator illegally records and seizes the personal data of the victim and then shares this data as if they were the victim. Again, under Western definitions, this might be considered a form of cyberbullying depending on the content of the records illegally seized. It could also involve libel or defamation (Sezer and Tunçer, 2021; Maviş, 2021).

Other Related Articles of Law

In addition to actions designated as crimes under Turkish law, a range of other offences also fall under the category of cyberbullying as the concept is understood in Canada:

> Article 158, Qualified fraud (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 55); Article 213, Threat to produce fear and panic among the people (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 71); Article 214, Provocation to commit a crime (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 71); Article 216, Inciting the public to hatred and enmity through potential humiliation (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 72); Article 217/A, Publicly disseminating misleading information (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 72).

The Seventh Section of the Turkish Penal Code is reserved for Offenses Against General Morality. If crimes in this section are committed with communication technologies, cyberbullying behaviours are included in these designated crimes and sanctions are imposed. This could include:

Article 225, Indecent acts (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 75); Article 226, Obscenity (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 75); Article 227, Prostitution (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 75).

The Tenth Section of the Turkish Penal Code is devoted to Crimes in the Field of Informatics. There are four articles in this section, most of which relate to offences in the use of technologies and information systems rather than cyberbullying:

Article 243, Entering the information system (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 82); Article 244, Blocking, disrupting, destroying, or changing data (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 83); Article 245, Misuse of bank or credit cards (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 83); Article 246, Implementation of security measures on legal persons (Mevzuat, 2004, p. 84).

Consequently, it is clear that while there is no specific legal definition of "cyberbullying" in Turkish law, many of the diverse offences are comprehensively covered under the TCK. A challenge exists in educating teachers and administrators about the need to be aware of these legal obligations and engage in preventative educational approaches that sensitize students to the legal risks of engaging in any or a combination of such online offences.

Law No. 5651

The benefits of technological developments all over the world have also facilitated offensive online communication. The classical offences included in Türkiye's criminal laws have moved onto the internet. Online crimes have increased internationally at an exponential rate. With the rapid progress of social media and now AI, the lawmakers worldwide have had to catch

up to address the blurred legal lines that have emerged as a result of rapidly spreading forms of communication (Kılınç, 2016, p. 583; Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021). In this respect, Türkiye is no less behind in specifically addressing cyberbullying than many countries. In fact, by updating its regulations to address the broad range of offenses that can be carried out online with descriptions that are traditionally understood as being of face-to-face offences, the Turkish government has at least covered most aspects of what is known in the West as cyberbullying.

In keeping with most countries, Türkiye has also turned its attention to addressing the legal responsibilities and community standards of online platforms. For example, according to Mevzuat (2007), Türkiye adopted Law No. 5651, on Regulating Broadcasts on the Internet and Combating Crimes Committed Through These Broadcasts on May 23, 2007 (Mevzuat, 2007). According to Mevzuat (2007), this law is important because it regulates the legal obligations and responsibilities of content providers, social media, and internet platforms globally (Mevzuat, 2007, p. 1).

Although there is no direct mention of cyberbullying in these statutes, they impose various obligations on electronic environments where cyberbullying takes place. Article 8 places a responsibility on the online platforms to ensure that content is removed or blocked if there is sufficient suspicion of the following impacts on users:

Article 8, Decisions to remove and block access to the content:

It is decided to remove the content and/or block the access regarding the publications made on the internet and the content of which there is sufficient suspicion that it constitutes the following crimes:(13)

a) In the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 dated 26/9/2004;

1) Suicide (Article 84),

2) Child sexual abuse (Article 103, first paragraph),

3) Facilitating the use of drugs or stimulants (Article 190),

4) Supply of substances hazardous to health (Article 194),

5) Obscenity (Article 226),

6) Prostitution (Article 227),

7) The offenses of providing a place and opportunity for gambling (Article 228).

b) Offenses included in the Law on Crimes Committed Against Atatürk, dated 25/7/1951 and numbered 5816.

c) (Annex: 25/3/2020-7226/32 art.) Offenses included in the Law on Arranging Betting and Games of Chance in Football and Other Sports Competitions, dated 29/4/1959 and numbered 7258. (Mevzuat, 2007, p. 6)

While criminal liability is established in accordance with Law No. 5237 for those who commit acts within the scope of cyberbullying, such as sexual abuse of children, obscenity, or prostitution, Article 8 of Law No. 5651 paves the way for victims to challenge the online platforms to remove offensive content if they are cyberbullied or sexually harassed. This law also has another impact: The Internet Information Notification Center, which is one of the activities of the BTK mentioned above, was established in accordance with the Law No. 5651. The Center's website https://www.ihbarweb.org.tr/ has been online since November 23, 2007 (İhbarWeb, 2020). There are nine different titles on the website for the nine different offences of Article 8 of the Law No. 5651 listed above. Persons who have suffered from the mentioned

crimes in broadcasts made on the internet can request removal of the content by making a complaint through the Website.

Article 9, Unpublishing the content and blocking access:

...Real and legal persons, institutions and organizations claiming that their personal rights have been violated due to the content of the broadcast on the Internet, may apply to the content provider, or in case of not being able to reach it, to the hosting provider, and request the removal of the content by warning method, or directly apply to the magistrate to remove the content and/or block the access. (Mevzuat, 2007, p. 10)

Article 9/A (Annex: 6/2/2014-6518/94 art.):

Denial of access to content due to privacy: "Persons who claim that their privacy has been violated due to the content of broadcasting on the Internet may request the implementation of the measure of blocking access to the content by applying directly to the Authority" (Mevzuat, 2007, p. 12).

Article 9 and the addition made to it in 2014 are related to Article 134 of the TCK, No. 5237 (Violation of the privacy). The victim who has been exposed to cyberbullying by having their private life violated in the electronic environment can complain about this offence under Article 134, No. 5237 and can apply for the removal of the content with Article 9, No. 5651. Maviş (2021) provides "happy slapping," a type of cyberbullying, as an example within the scope of Article 134 of the TCK. Happy slapping is a type of cyberbullying that is common among young people in which the bully slaps the victim, and the situation is videotaped. Thousands of people are able to witness the moments when the victim is humiliated by this video being uploaded to electronic media by the bully or other people (Maviş, 2021, p. 2487). If the

victim complains, this situation can be evaluated as a violation of private life and the cyberbully can be punished, and the images of the moments when the individual becomes a victim can be removed from the internet (Mevzuat, 2007).

Items that may be related to cyberbullying are highlighted above. The remaining articles of Law No. 5651 are devoted to the obligations and responsibilities of the relevant providers, such as "Administrative structure and duties" or "Regulations."

The amendments made to Law No. 5237 and their enforcement under Law No. 5651 were an important turning point in Turkish law as it relates to the context of cyberbullying. With these new laws and regulations, the path has been paved for users of the internet and social media to bring claims against online platforms and against perpetrators. Kilinc (2016) explains this situation as follows:

> With the Law No. 5651, it is aimed to take the necessary preventive measures to protect the family, children, and young people from … the contents of the publications that encourage bad habits, by the abuse of electronic communication tools, including the internet, in accordance with the aforementioned provisions of the Constitution. In other words, this law aimed to prevent serious and grave attacks against children, youth, and families in the electronic environment. (p. 584)

In conclusion, cyberbullying is a multidimensional phenomenon that is reflected in many aspects of the victim's life. Cyberbullying is a concept that requires administrative sanctions and has a legal dimension due to the changes in mental states that it can produce, such as depression and anxiety, which can be experienced by all age groups when exposed to cyberbullying. The

literature review section of this thesis mentions this negative emotional impact, as well as its effects, which can lead to physical consequences, such as decline in academic achievement and dropping out of school. In Türkiye, along with the regulations published by the Ministry of National Education for primary and secondary education levels in 2013 and 2014, administrative sanctions have been applied to the concept of cyberbullying, although the name is not used directly. Sanctions for elementary school children are less harsh than those for high school students because the content of online bullying by high schoolers can often include sexual harassment, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, sexism, and racism. The nature of these offenses requires stronger sanctions and consequences. When such crimes are committed in the cyber environment in Türkiye, they are conceptualized by law makers as traditional crimes committed in the electronic environment. While criminal responsibility often falls on the perpetrators of these acts, Article 18 and its regulations also place increased responsibility on the online platforms that have for many years allowed such offensive content to be distributed without taking any actions to prevent or reduce it. Now, under Law No. 5651, individuals exposed to cyberbullying can request the removal of cyberbullying content.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF TURKISH POLICIES ON CYBERBULLYING

This chapter will analyze the studies on cyberbullying in Türkiye that were mentioned in the literature review as well as the policies detailed in the previous chapter. While doing this, the main subjects will be how cyberbullying is perceived in Türkiye and what kind of equivalents the concept of cyberbullying has. The policies that are implemented based on this perception will be evaluated, with a focus on how much these policies depend on theory. Finally, this chapter will discuss whether theory and practice have progressed evenly alongside each other, as well as to what extent they overlap, what kind of results the policies have, and how effective the results have been.

Perception of Cyberbullying in Türkiye through Turkish Literature Review

In the second chapter of this study, which was the Literature Review, studies on cyberbullying in Türkiye were presented. The history of Türkiye's research on the concept of cyberbullying is not very old. The first Turkish research on the concept was conducted by Baker and Kavşut in 2007. The first study written in English was carried out a year later, by Arıcak et al. (2008). Relatively few studies have been carried out in the years following this early research: Between 2008 and 2015, 35 theses and 246 academic studies were carried out (see Table 1 and Table 2). It can be argued that the concept of cyberbullying has found a greater place within the research agenda of Turkish academia from 2016 onward, with the frequency of research gaining momentum since then (see Table 1 and Table 2).

The quantitative research method has been used in the majority of theses and academic articles written on cyberbullying in Türkiye. Altunok et al. (2021) examined 128 theses as part of their research on postgraduate theses on cyberbullying published between 2010 and 2020. The

findings of the study reveal that among these theses, the research method used was: "82.71% quantitative, 9.02% qualitative, and 8.27% mixed" (Altunok et al., 2021, p. 63). In another study, Güngören et al. (2018) examined the structural features of graduate theses published between 2008 and 2016. There are several points to be made regarding Güngören et al.'s (2018) research. First, in parallel with Altunok et al.'s (2021) study, according to Güngören et al.'s (2018) results, the majority of theses were carried out using the quantitative research method: 73 of the 97 dissertations examined were carried out with quantitative (75.25%), five with qualitative (5.15%), and 19 with mixed (19.58%) methods (Güngören et al., 2018, p. 10).

Second, the following note should be made about why the research methods of theses and articles made in Türkiye are mostly quantitative. In Güngören et al.'s (2018) research archive, researchers used the term "virtual bullying" as the subject of their theses. When searching the theses in the database, it was found that the words "virtual," "cyber," and "bullying on the internet" were used (Güngören et al., 2018, p. 5). Considering that Güngören et al.'s (2018) research was conducted during the period when cyberbullying was not a popular topic in the academic agenda of Türkiye (2008-2016), it can be understood that the nomenclature of "cyberbullying" was not yet fully realized at that time. This was when the concept of cyberbullying was just beginning to enter Turkish academia. Because cyberbullying was a new concept and different names were being used to describe cyberbullying between 2008 and 2016, the perception of cyberbullying in Türkiye had not been fully developed. The lack of an academic consensus may have affected the perception of the importance and seriousness of the concept, especially regarding younger students (Yaman and Peker, 2012; Tomşa et al., 2013; Bergersen and Varma, 2020; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021). Students who did not know about cyberbullying due to conceptual confusion were unable to predict which behaviors would fall

under the scope of cyberbullying even if they encountered it on the Internet. Thus, they were also unaware of the severity of the situation and that there may be administrative and legal sanctions, causing some student to not be able to make sense of their experiences when they were exposed to cyberbullying (Alyakut, 2017; Dikmen and Tuncer, 2017; Korkmaz et al., 2021). The perception of cyberbullying has become more concrete in Türkiye in recent years, with consensus being reached on the name of the concept (which is frequently "cyberbullying"), especially after 2016.

Returning to the examination of the frequency of research methods used in cyberbullying studies, Horzum and Ayas' (2017) study stands out. They analyzed 50 academic articles that were written between 2007 and 2015. Out of 50 articles, 43 (86%) were conducted using quantitative research, three with qualitative methods (6%), three as a literature review (6%), and one with a mixed (2%) research method (Horzum and Ayas, 2017, p. 7). Explaining this situation, Horzum and Ayas (2017) write the following: "In the use of more quantitative methods in research; The reason why cyberbullying is a new subject and researchers working on this subject want to reach results faster" (p. 10).

Quantitative studies on cyberbullying, which are new in the academic agenda of Türkiye, are very important for the Turkish literature in many aspects. Firstly, their contribution to the literature is significant, by making an unknown concept known (Güngören et al., 2018). Moreover, quantitative studies provide detailed findings on the relation of cyberbullying to many variables, its prevalence, and how it is perceived in Türkiye (Horzum and Ayas, 2017). Thus, the manner in which cyberbullying is perceived by the population can be understood. Thirdly, such studies have revealed how important and serious the subject can actually be, with many quantitative studies conducted on cyberbullying under various similar names (see the increase of

number of studies in Türkiye about cyberbullying in Table 1 and Table 2; Güngören et al., 2018).

Quantitative studies in Turkish contribute a lot to the field because they can provide suggestions and clues that will contribute to solutions for cyberbullying, which has become a major social problem that it must be solved (Bayram ve Özkamalı, 2019; Çiftçi, 2019; Güçlü and Çam, 2022).

In addition to the studies mentioned above, there are many studies on cyberbullying that draw attention to the importance of qualitative research in both the national and international literature (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006 as cited in Yaman and Peker, 2012; Akbıyık and Kestel, 2016; Navarro and Serna, 2016; Alyakut, 2017; Dennehy et al., 2020; Dinç Kırlı, 2020; Meter et al., 2021; Yıldızaç and Demir, 2021; Mishna et al., 2022). With the methods used to collect data in qualitative studies, "it is possible to determine experiences, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, comments, mental perceptions, and reactions" (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005, as cited in Alyakut, 2017, p. 351). However, in parallel with studies by Altunok et al. (2021) and Horzum and Ayas (2017), several qualitative theses and articles on cyberbullying in Türkiye were found while preparing this thesis. Although their number is relatively small, the existing qualitative studies offer a significant contribution to the field. For example, among the findings of Alyakut's (2017) qualitative study, which examines the opinions of university students on cyberbullying, important clues have been provided about how the concept of cyberbullying is perceived in Türkiye; the importance, seriousness, and consequences of the negative situations experienced by those exposed to cyberbullying; as well as the policies implemented. This can be summarized by the following:

> It was determined that all of the students had knowledge about cyberbullying and exhibited cyberbullying behaviors. However, it was determined that some students did not qualify these behaviors as cyberbullying. While most of the students stated that no

one was harmed by these behaviors, and that they acted in order to have fun or to get

what they wanted, it was observed that they were not aware of the sad consequences of

the issue. (p. 357)

Although the findings obtained through qualitative research have added depth to the

subject rather than generalizing it, Alyakut's (2017) research results, similar to the quantitative

research results in the literature, have revealed the perception of cyberbullying in Türkiye quite

clearly. Many students do not believe that the other party is affected by the negative behaviors,

which they enact for reasons such as "having fun" and without being aware of the effects (Ryan

et al., 2011; Çubukçu and Dönmez, 2012; Mura et al., 2017; Özmen, 2018). In this context, the

second important point of Alyakut's (2017) research is that it reveals the serious levels the effects

of cyberbullying can reach in Türkiye. The literature review of the present thesis discussed the

most common effects of cyberbullying (such as decreased academic performance, stress, and

anger). Although rare, there are also cases that have resulted in suicide in Türkiye. A female

student in Alyakut's (2017) sample stated that she attempted suicide as a result of cyberbullying,

received treatment in the hospital for a long time, and ultimately left the city where she had lived

(p. 358). It is important to carry out qualitative research specific to this topic in Türkiye in order

to show the emotional states and physical consequences of being exposed to cyberbullying.

Another finding of Alyakut's (2017) research is as follows: "It has been stated that state

institutions are not informed about the legal regulations made on the subject, but it is necessary

to take deterrent measures" (p. 359). Participants stated that they were not aware of the legal

regulations around cyberbullying. Although there are projects, practices, and new laws developed

by the Turkish Government related to cyberbullying and additional articles added to existing

laws, all of them are quite recent (see RTÜK, 2016; see additions to the articles of law made in

recent years such as 2022 under the heading, "Legal Dimension and Administrative Sanctions of the Ministry of National Education" in the 4th chapter of this thesis). Many have only been put into effect in the last few years. Although the reason for the research results can be linked to the recency of these developments, that is, by suggesting that students were not aware of the legal regulations, the state should have reached more people, especially students. A problem that can have life-threatening consequences, such as suicide, affects not only the individuals who are cyberbullied, but also the entire society (Yaman and Peker, 2012; Hamid et al., 2021; Maviş, 2021). In light of these impacts, the relevant institutions, especially the Ministry of National Education (MEB), have not reached students actively and quickly enough. As seen in the "Siberay" and "FATIH" projects, the MEB works with Turkish state institutions and organizations, such as the General Directorate of Security, the BTK, and Gazi University, as well as the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Development, TUBITAK, and various ministries, receiving financial, technical, and humanitarian support from these institutions through in-service training. To combat cyberbullying, which is a multidimensional problem, the MEB must come together with these institutions and establish a vision by looking at the problem with an integrated perspective, which they have attempted to do. While it is unquestionable that these programs will be beneficial in the long run, it is also clear that more initiatives are needed in the short run (Adıkutlu, 2019).

The reflections of students' ignorance of the legal regulations found in Alyakut's (2017) research can also be seen in the academic agenda. As a result of research carried out at the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center for the purpose of writing the present thesis, 207 theses on cyberbullying were found, with none of them being written in the field of Law. Academic articles on the legal dimension of cyberbullying are relatively few and have only been

written in the last few years. A considerable amount of reliable data can be obtained through studies carried out using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. Students' attention will be drawn to the subject more with studies carried out on the legal dimension of cyberbullying by using the aforementioned research methods. By realizing that cyberbullying has a legal dimension, students may begin to form a perception of themselves as potential criminals or victims of crime (Baştürk-Akca et al., 2015; Dinç Kırlı, 2020; Maviş, 2021). At this point, it is very important for the MEB to successfully implement this perception with its practices and policies. With the analyses that can be made using the considerable amount of data that would be obtained by such studies, it would be possible to bridge the gap between the inconsistency of practice and theory, an overlap that has not yet been fully realized (Adıkutlu, 2019).

Another conclusion from the Literature Review of the present thesis is that the academic approach to the policies developed on cyberbullying is quite weak. Until now, there has not been a thesis covering the policies developed and implemented against cyberbullying in the academic agenda of Türkiye. In addition, although there are a few academic studies on the MEB's projects, the number of these works remains insufficient. Studies on policies will not only contribute to the academic community, but the scientific information obtained from the results will also provide objective clues to policy makers as they further develop the present theory and practice of regulations.

Analysis of Implemented Policies and Concept of Cyberbullying across Policies

The research mentioned in the literature review of the present thesis has shown that cyberbullying has become a serious problem in Türkiye. In many studies, the percentage of those who are exposed to cyberbullying and cyberbullying is more than 20 percent (Arıcak et al., 2008; Baker and Tanrıkulu, 2010; Bayram and Saylı, 2013; Eroğlu et al., 2015; Taştekin and Bayhan,

2018; Korkmaz et al., 2021; Rodop et al., 2022). However, when comparing the research, it is not possible to claim objectively that the number of students who are cyberbullied and the number of cyberbullies are constantly increasing (Dumanlıdağ, 2019; Gürkan, 2022; Gürkan et al., 2022; Oğuz-Özgür and Özkul, 2022). In the same way, even with the policies developed and updated, it is not possible to talk about a continuous decline in both groups either.

Although the issue of cyberbullying has been brought onto their respective agendas by the ministries and related institutions within the state who have presented the knowledge to individuals of all ages through various activities, it cannot be said that the perception of individuals from all age groups, from children to adults, of the concept of cyberbullying has become fully developed. For example, in Alyakut's (2017) study, all of the students stated that while they know what cyberbullying is, they do not know that there are legal regulations related to cyberbullying. On the other hand, the results of a countrywide study by Korkmaz et al. (2021) on cyberbullying are striking. Their findings were that 55% of the participants had no idea about the concept of cyberbullying is. In addition, one-third of the participants were exposed to at least one of the types of cyberbullying included in the questionnaire. In other words, the participants witnessed examples of the concept despite some of them not knowing what it was. In this case, considering that they cannot fully describe the events they were exposed to, the rate of their victimization is likely to increase (Korkmaz et al., 2021). The results of the study of Korkmaz et al. (2021) are important for the following reasons. First of all, the issue of cyberbullying is still not fully perceived across the country. While individuals might take an action in electronic media, the awareness of which of these actions are included in the scope of bullying and which are not has not been settled. Although the way individuals perceive the actions they exhibit and the actions exhibited toward them, and the methods they develop when a negative behaviour is

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exhibited toward them, are specific to individuals, it can be said that this situation is parallel to the general social consciousness (Serin, 2012; Adıkutlu, 2019; Duman, 2019). From this point of view, it can be said that there is a general lack of perception and awareness of cyberbullying on a national level. Of course, considering Türkiye's geographical structure (seven different regions) and population (over 85 million), it would be natural to see differences between the participants in Korkmaz et al.'s (2021) study and between the studies conducted on a nationwide scale. The ability of individuals across regions to access technology is also not the same. The level of economic development and technological infrastructure of the western parts of Türkiye is higher compared to the eastern parts. There are also cultural differences between regions. However, despite all these differences, the lack of familiarity with the concept, especially in the younger age groups, that is, in the student group, puts the policies implemented by the Ministry of National Education into question.

As has been detailed in the curriculum part of this thesis, "Media Literacy," which is one of the courses that directly or indirectly teaches cyberbullying in Türkiye, began to be taught in selected schools in the 2006-2007 academic year. In the following years, it was included in the curriculum as optional and then compulsory for all schools. The student age group should thus have a decent grasp of the concept of cyberbullying. As a result of both media literacy and ethics and safety themes in the Information Technologies and Software Curriculum, students are expected to have at least knowledge about the concept. The fact that they do not thus raises doubts as to what extent the curriculum has been implemented.

Kutlu's (2018) findings in his master's thesis on the setbacks experienced in the implementation of the media literacy course are quite striking. First, during interviews with seven media literacy course teachers and three school administrators, two school administrators

said that it was unnecessary to ask questions about the media literacy course and to conduct research on this subject (Kutlu, 2018, p. 71). Moreover, these two administrators did not accept to be interviewed (Kutlu, 2018, p. 71). Second, according to the school administrators who were interviewed, media literacy is not a separate discipline like mathematics; this perception causes some administrators to not pay attention to the media literacy course (Kutlu, 2018, p. 75). Third, the careless approach of school administrators to the media literacy course has also affected the students. Students have been shown to not be interested in this course (Kutlu, 2018, p. 75). Fourth, the theory and practice are incompatible with each other for the media literacy course. That is to say, because the media literacy course is in the curriculum, it should be taught. This course is theoretically available and should be an elective for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Students have the right to choose the media literacy course at any grade level (6th, 7th, or 8th). However, the school administration has added the media literacy course as if it is a compulsory course to the annual lesson plan of only 8th-grade students, who are forced to take it (Kutlu, 2018, p. 83). However, Kutlu (2018) concluded that problems remain in the practice of implementing the course (p. 86). In the media literacy course, five out of seven teachers do activities on the subjects of other courses instead of meeting the requirements of the media literacy course. For example, some of these teachers allow students to take practice tests for the high school exam (LGS) (Kutlu, 2018, p. 79). In addition, since students do not show interest in the media literacy course due to the careless approach of school administrators (Kutlu, 2018, p. 75), the two teachers (out of seven) who were trying to teach the media literacy course according to its requirements had quite a hard time (Kutlu, 2018, p. 80). Kutlu's (2018) research findings reveal that school administrators and teachers do not fulfill their duties and responsibilities related to the media literacy course.

Similar to Kutlu's study (2018), Yıldırım and Kardaş (2017) stated that school administrators and students are indifferent to the media literacy course (p. 377). Yıldırım and Kardaş (2017) likewise concluded that the media literacy course is not seen as a "necessary" course by the school administration (p. 378).

Yorulmaz and Karadeniz (2021) identify the most interesting finding of their study as: "…56.1% of the students are not aware of the concepts of cyber violence, 47.4% of cyberbullying, 62.3% of cyber victimization, and 50.9% of digital literacy" (p. 167). The research was conducted with 1,178 secondary school students with a near-equal distribution of students in each grade (5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade) of the secondary school level. In other words, the research included students who had compulsory courses covering cyberbullying. However, it was seen that students' ignorance of concepts related to cyberbullying remained quite high. Yorulmaz and Karadeniz (2021) stated that digital literacy/media literacy courses are not included in their school curriculum and at the same time, school administrators "do not show due diligence" (p. 167). This finding reveals that school administrators do not fully fulfill their duties and responsibilities regarding cyberbullying education.

The duties, authorities, and responsibilities of school principals are listed in the 2013 Secondary Education Institutions Regulation published by the MEB (Mevzuat, 2013). These include two items:

- b) Ensure that teachers' board and branch meetings are held in order to prepare unitized annual plans. They receive the united annual plan for the courses from the departments before the start of the academic year, examine it, approve it by making changes when necessary, and return a copy of it.

- ç) Establish boards, commissions, and teams in order to produce and develop education and training activities effective and efficient and to find solutions to problems. They approve the decisions taken at the meetings, put them into practice, and notify the higher authority when necessary. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 25)

Since 2013, this regulation has been updated with many changes, additions, and corrections. However, despite the fact that the MEB develops the regulations it has prepared with the aim of following the innovations in parallel with the world by making comprehensive and detailed strategic improvements in terms of articles "b" and "ç" above, the MEB does not have qualified human resources in line with the objectives of the regulations. As can be seen from Yorulmaz and Karadeniz's (2021) study, school principals do not fulfill their duties in accordance with these articles. Within the scope of the curriculum, courses related to cyberbullying are not included in the annual plans. For this reason, students remain unaware of the concepts related to cyberbullying. It can thus be concluded that the seriousness and importance of the concept of cyberbullying is still not fully perceived at different levels of the education system (such as, school administrators, teachers, and students).

One of the problems regarding how the concept of cyberbullying is perceived in Türkiye is that school principals do not include lessons that may be related to cyberbullying in the curriculum, and therefore students are unaware of the concept. Another is that school administrators themselves have little or no knowledge of the concept. The findings of Serin's (2012) doctoral thesis with a large-scale number of participants, including students (4,291), school administrators (727), and teachers from different branches (916), reveal that only "53.2% of the school administrators and 47.6% of the teachers have heard of the concept of 'cyberbullying' before, and 58.7% of the administrators and 58.3% of the teachers know the

definition of this concept" (Serin, 2012, p. 105). Another finding of the study is that when asked whether they do a preventive study against cyberbullying, 48.3% of the administrators stated that they did preventive work, while 51.7% did not, and 34.6% of the teachers stated that they did, while 65.4% did not (Serin, 2012, p. 107).

Another study by the same researcher in which Serin (2019) investigated the "Cyberbullying Awareness Levels of High School Administrators," shows that: "68.5% of school administrators have heard of the concept of 'cyberbullying' before" (p. 80), "53.1% of school administrators know the definition of cyberbullying, [and] 46.9% of them do not know the definition of cyberbullying" (Serin, 2019, p. 81). The results of these two studies conducted in 2012 and 2019 reveal that the awareness of school administrators about cyberbullying did not changed much in the intervening seven years. Considering that the policy steps taken by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) against cyberbullying for 2012 were just beginning, it can be considered normal that there was a lack of knowledge about cyberbullying in the findings of the study at this date. However, considering the additions of elective and compulsory courses to the curriculum that had been made seven years later, as well as the regulation and legislative changes and the updated and additional laws, it can be seen that school administrators did not carry out awareness activities that would have increased their knowledge and awareness of the concept of cyberbullying. Again, this situation causes concern over the extent to which the administrators fulfill their duties and responsibilities as specified in the MEB regulations.

Another article in the Secondary Education Institutions Regulation of the Ministry of National Education is as follows:

- m) It ensures that research is carried out in order to increase efficiency, quality, and continuous development in education and training and management, and to prepare and implement projects for improvement in these subjects. (Mevzuat, 2013, p. 25)

In line with this article, it can be argued that within the education system, school administrators are among the people responsible for improving the quality of education. In line with the research data, it is seen that school administrators do not keep themselves updated on the current risks (cyberbullying) that face the students and can cause serious consequences (low academic success, depression, and suicide) as they work to increase the quality of education. Moreover, they do not improve themselves related to these points (Serin, 2012, 2019). The MEB has a responsibility in this context: It should question whether it adequately carries out the in-service training it has implemented with the support and incentives it receives from institutions such as the BTK. It is not easy for either students or school administrators to encounter a situation different from the one they are accustomed to, and even to face something new, which is a risk and a situation that can lead to negative consequences (Kaştan and Kaştan, 2016; Karayaman, 2021). The topic of cyberbullying, which requires more research in Türkiye regarding the legal, academic, and curricular components, is at a point where cooperation is required at all levels. In order to foster an individual and social perception of cyberbullying, school administrators must change their attitudes and participate more, as cooperation can increase students' understanding of cyberbullying.

It was mentioned above that one of the policies developed by the MEB on cyberbullying was to add this phenomenon directly or indirectly to the curriculum. This is a very important step in terms of the formation and development of students' perceptions of the topic (Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021; Gürkan et al., 2022). However, during the first years the computer course was

included in the Turkish curriculum (as an elective course in 1998) and for a long time afterward (as of the 2018-2019 academic year), ethical and safety themes were not included in the curriculum (Fidan, 2016). Rather, there was an aim to establish and improve computer literacy by dealing with technical issues, which was obviously necessary at the time. However, it can be said that there was also an incomplete skill acquisition. While students are acquainted with the concept of "the computer," it is necessary to teach students how they should behave toward the other people using them and how they should behave in the face of risks that may occur, while laying the foundation of the concept of the computer (Duymaz, 2013; Fidan, 2016).

A further criticism of the curriculum is that, within the scope of the ethics and safety course, subjects related to cyberbullying are only covered in very few courses, such as one or two hours during the entire academic year. To what extent is it possible for the student to understand the concept and draw attention to its legal dimension during this period? It is quite insufficient to allocate only one or two hours of lectures per year for the expected gains to occur (Campbell, 2019). Policies that began in the year 1998 for the computer course and progressed and developed with applications such as the FATIH project are very important steps in terms of showing the importance that the Ministry of Education attaches to the subject (Fatih Projesi, n.d; Ekici and Yılmaz, 2013). However, the MEB also needs to identify deficiencies and problems in practice, such as insufficient course hours, and implement remedial solutions.

Cyberbullying, which is a form of violence committed in the virtual environment, is a complex concept with many dimensions (Maviş, 2021). Since this concept has entered the agenda and practices of the MEB in recent years, it is not possible to make definitive statements about whether it is perceived by individuals or to what extent and how it is perceived (Dikmen and Tuncer, 2017; Korkmaz et al., 2021; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021). The relatively few

available academic resources reveal that there is a lack of information about cyberbullying at almost every level of education (student, teacher, administrator, and parent) (Alyakut, 2017). The MEB continues its systematic policies in parallel with the developments of the world without slowing down. The practices developed by the MEB to reach students from all age groups are undoubtedly essential steps. At the same time, the MEB draws attention to the legal dimension of the situation with the works it has done in cooperation with the security forces, such as the Siberay Project. Nevertheless, many students, and even school administrators and teachers, are not familiar with the concept of cyberbullying (Korkmaz et al., 2021; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021). While developing curricula for students, the MEB should also subject school administrators and teachers, which it supports with in-service training, to a stricter follow-up process. In schools, the curriculum determined by the MEB is generally followed, and no exceptions are made (See Mevzuat 2013, 2014). However, as seen in the study findings, school administrators do not always follow the curriculum properly (Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021). The subject of cyberbullying, which is currently taught in only a few lessons, cannot find a place for itself in the curriculum due to the fact that the curriculum is not followed, causing gaps between theory and practice. As a final point on the matter, there is also a gap found in the political framework. Academic studies in areas such as law and politics, as well as departments such as education, health, and psychology, need to take place more by using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE WEST AND TÜRKİYE IN THE WAY THE CYBERBULLYING IS UNDERSTOOD

In this last chapter, which is intended to complete the thesis, a comparison will be made between Türkiye and the West on the perception of cyberbullying. It will analyze whether there are similarities and differences between the two understandings and the policies implemented, in which aspects Türkiye is ahead of the West, in which aspects it has deficiencies, and what can be done to catch up with the West in line with the deficiencies by presenting suggestions.

Studies on Cyberbullying in Türkiye and the West

There are very few studies in either Turkish or English comparing Türkiye and various countries on the perception of cyberbullying in the national and international literature. According to the findings of a meta-analysis study conducted with samples taken from all over the world (Europe, America, Japan, and more), when internet penetration rates are compared, Türkiye is behind the European countries and the US. Despite this lag, the prevalence of cyberbullying in Türkiye is close to that of Europe (Kowalski et al., 2014 as cited in Vazsonyi et al., 2017, p. 1156).

Within the scope of the EU Kids Online project, whose main aim is to increase the knowledge of European children and their families about the risky use of the internet and to encourage children to be in safer online environments, a report was prepared by directly interviewing European children aged 9-16 from 25 countries, including Türkiye (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 11). The findings show that when countries are compared, the two countries with the lowest rates of home internet use are Türkiye and Belgium (both 33% compared to an average of

49%) (p. 21). When children's digital literacy and safety skills are compared, Türkiye is among the four countries with the lowest rates (p. 27). The report also examined the levels of both online and offline bullying to which children are exposed. The children of Türkiye and four other European countries were noted as being the least exposed to traditional bullying (p. 62). The reflections of this situation are also seen in online bullying. According to the rate of exposure to online bullying, where the average was listed at 6%, Türkiye is second from the last with 3% (p. 63). In other words, when compared to the other 24 European countries, fewer children are exposed to cyberbullying in Türkiye than all but one. When families' usage levels of "parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites" were analyzed, Turkish parents came in fourth place (p. 114). When children were asked whether their families restrict them on the internet, the children who felt most restricted are from Türkiye (p. 116). When the rates of "children who would like their parent(s) to take more interest in what they do online, and parents who think they should do more, by country" are examined, Türkiye ranks in the top three (p. 120). When comparing the rates of children who are exposed to one or more online risks by other children every day, Türkiye has the lowest rate, being significantly below the average (p. 139). While the average is 60%, Türkiye is about 32%. The second country is 50% (p. 139).

A report by Livingstone et al. (2011), known as "the Livingstone Study," provides very important findings about 25 countries, including Türkiye. The first point that should be made before mentioning these findings is that the Livingstone Study took place over 10 years ago. It should be taken into account that some data has absolutely changed since then. According to the first of the research findings, the rate of internet usage in Türkiye is the lowest compared to the other 24 countries. This finding may not reflect the current situation in 2023. There has been a great increase in internet usage in Türkiye in the last 10 years (TUIK, 2022). Figure 1 and the

ratios mentioned in the literature review chapter reveal a more recent image of Turkish internet usage, showing that Türkiye today has similar internet usage rates to other European countries. However, this similarity does not apply to children's digital literacy and safety skills. The findings of the literature review reveal that these skills are still low or close to low in Türkiye (Livingstone et al., 2011; Yıldırım and Kardaş, 2017; Aslan et al., 2019; Güneş and Atabay, 2019; Aksu Bektaş and Alver, 2020). In European countries, these concepts are taken more seriously and integrated into the education system (Ryan et al, 2011; Livingstone et al., 2011). The other sections of the present thesis show that there is a serious lack of knowledge about related concepts at every step of the education system in Türkiye (school principal, teacher, student, and parent) (Serin, 2012, 2019; Aksu Bektaş and Alver, 2020; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021).

As a result of the ratio of students' exposure to cyberbullying, the Livingstone Study has suggested that Türkiye is the country with the one of the lowest rates of cyberbullying (Livingstone et al., 2011, pp. 62-63). Children in Türkiye also have the lowest rate of online risk exposure by other children (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 139). It can be surmised that these two findings are related to the internet usage rate. According to the first finding, Turkish children used the internet the least (Livingstone et al., 2011). In the Livingstone Study, less internet use resulted in less exposure to risk. Considering that the rate of internet use is increasing today, the risks and exposure to cyberbullying for Turkish children are thus likely also affected by these conditions and have most likely increased to approach European rates.

The Livingstone Study's finding that Turkish families use parental control is promising (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 114). More conscious parents mean more conscious children. This is also a critical step in the protection of children online. Therefore, although Turkish children may

feel constrained (Livingstone et al., 2011, pp. 116-7), the next finding showed that children actually want their parents to be more involved with them online (p. 120). Families also stated that they need to be more involved (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 120). These are very promising findings. Although their digital literacy levels are not high, the fact that children state that they need family support and protection on the internet shows that they have taken a step toward developing that literacy; indeed, both children and parents are open to regular and competent training given to them (Livingstone et al., 2011). The research findings discussed in many parts of the thesis are a concrete example of this deficiency (Livingstone et al., 2011; Serin, 2012, 2019; Yıldırım and Kardaş, 2017; Aslan et al., 2019; Güneş and Atabay, 2019; Aksu Bektaş and Alver, 2020). Thus, attention should be drawn to the need for improved education and teacher training. Findings regarding the lack of information on cyberbullying are an indication of the necessity for education that highlights the forms of cyberbullying, the legal risks for children, and the obligations of administrators and teachers according to Turkish law. Although it is not a very recent study, the Livingstone Study, which compares European countries, is important in drawing attention to the deficiencies in Türkiye.

Another study, the "Turkish-Italian Study," comes from Mura et al. (2017), who discuss how Turkish and Italian university students understand cyberbullying. As the study was written in English, this Turkish-Italian study also drew the attention of international scholars to Türkiye. At the same time, it appealed to Turkish scholars with the extended Turkish abstract on the last three pages of the study (Mura et al., 2017, pp. 91-3). In addition to the findings of the Turkish-Italian Study, it is also important to focus on the point of the language used in writing the study. Despite the differences (Mura et al., 2017, p. 83) between Türkiye, located at the intersection of the Middle East and Europe, and Italy, a Westernized country within Europe, Mura et al. (2017)

mention that both countries have "common cultural elements" (p. 92). This is because they are both located in the Mediterranean and have some historical similarities (p. 87). According to the findings of this study, one of the similarities between the two countries is the commonness of cyberbullying (Mura et al., 2017, p. 92). Another similarity is that behaviours such as "mean/threatening emails/texts and prank calls" are common features of cyberbullying as it occurs in both countries (Mura et al., 2017, p. 85). In contrast, the most important difference between the two countries is how cyberbullying is perceived. Behaviours such as online gossiping and private message publication (Mura et al., 2017, p. 85), which are among the types of cyberbullying, are common among Italian students, with this situation being perceived by Italian students as "a very bad situation" (Mura et al., 2017, p. 86). Prank calls and identity theft behaviours are commonly exhibited among Turkish students, while Turkish students interpret these situations as jokes (Mura et al., 2017, p. 86). In other words, although Italian students commonly exhibit cyberbullying behaviours, Italian students describe this situation as "bad." It can be claimed that Turkish students, on the other hand, do not perceive the seriousness and sensitivity of the situation because they see it as a "joke."

Unlike Mura et al. (2017)'s study, although many scores between countries are similar to each other, Palladino et al. (2017) examined the similarities and differences in the perception of severity of cyberbullying among four countries (Estonia, Italy, Germany, and Türkiye). Participants were given a set of 128 scenarios. The scenarios had one or more of five criteria: intentionality, repetition, imbalance of power, public vs. private, and anonymity. Four types of cyberbullying behaviors were also typified in the scenarios: written-verbal, visual, exclusion, and impersonation. While evaluating the perceived severity of students' cyberbullying through scenarios, Palladino et al. (2017) write: "Turkish adolescents generally report higher scores in

almost every factor compared to the other countries" (Palladino et al., p. 9). In other words, the group that takes the related scenarios more seriously was shown to be the Turkish students. Turkish students perceived the negative effects of cyberbullying more and also had a higher sensitivity to the attack (p. 9). The researchers stated that they focused on the differences between the countries rather than cultural differences (p. 10). For this reason, it is not possible to make a comparison between cultures of the four studied countries. However, the study of Palladino et al. (2017) is quite promising because the factors defining cyberbullying were found to be consistent across the four countries (Palladino et al., 2017, p. 9).

The Political Perspective in Cyberbullying Studies on Türkiye and the West

The findings of Palladino et al. (2017) are also promising from a policy perspective. The literature review of this thesis supports the position that the finding that the factors that define the severity of cyberbullying are perceived similarly in different countries is to be taken into account when countries develop policies and laws at the national and international level. Considering that there is no consensus on and universal definition of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, similarities in student responses to cyberbullying between the four countries point to an important step in the development of global policy relating to prevention and responses to cyberbullying.

Mura et al.'s (2017) finding that some behaviors within the scope of bullying and cyberbullying continue to be perceived as jokes in Turkish culture, can be seen as an important cultural difference. Students perceive name calling, making fun of physical features (Turan et al., 2008, as cited in Çubukçu and Dönmez, 2012, p. 50), pulling hair, and pushing and shoving (Çınkır and Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2003, as cited in Çubukçu and Dönmez, 2012, p. 50) as jokes and engage in them to upset the targeted individual(s). Although anti-bullying and cyberbullying

scholars in the West (Bemiller and Schneider, 2010; Shariff, 2009-2017; Mishna et al., 2009, Özmen, 2018; Odenbring and Johansson, 2021; Shariff et al, 2022) have drawn significant attention to the fact that personal insults cannot be considered as "jokes," the scholarship has perhaps not caught up in Türkiye. It is important for universities and schools to raise awareness of this fact.

As mentioned in the Turkish literature review in the previous section, the concept of cyberbullying is still not fully understood by Turkish students. While there are students who are completely unaware of cyberbullying (Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021), there are also students who do not know the details of cyberbullying despite hearing about it. That is to say, there are students who say that they have heard about cyberbullying but also consider some behaviors that fall under its umbrella to be jokes (Çubukçu and Dönmez, 2012; Mura et al., 2017). Without appropriate education and awareness among educators and parents who explain the forms of bullying and cyberbullying to their children, students will continue to believe their behavior is simply a "joke." Even some parents and comedians in the West have not understood the damage and negative impact such insults, exclusion, and offences can have on the lives of their victims (Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021; Shariff et al, 2022).

While legislative changes have begun to take place, the risks and responsibilities of breaching such legislation needs to be explained to the public, especially teachers, parents, administrators, and students (Arıcak, 2015, Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021). As part of a range of public educational initiatives, policy makers need to include activities to help the public understand that there are meaningful differences between "jokes" and "violence."

A Comparative Analysis: Canada and Türkiye

One of the rare studies in the literature is that of Ryan et al. (2011), which is a comparative analysis of Türkiye and Canada (the "Canadian-Turkish Study"), in which the authors examined preservice educators' perceptions of cyberbullying. The findings of the study indicate that teacher candidates from both countries accept cyberbullying as a problem that affects children (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 9). As another similarity, the researchers write the points on which the participants of both countries agree: "…school policies should be in place, as well as training for teachers and the curriculum should deal with cyberbullying... classroom activities and school-wide activities should be in place to deal with cyberbullying" (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 9). In addition, the research findings reveal that the Turkish participants believed they could accomplish these aims, whereas the Canadian participants gave a negative response to coping with cyberbullying (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 10). However, participants from both countries stated that university teacher preparation programs do not prepare them for the fight against cyberbullying (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 10).

The Canadian-Turkish Study is important for a few reasons. First, in the years when the study was launched, the subject of cyberbullying had begun to be taught in the curriculum in Canada (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 4). According to Naimi (2012), the province of Ontario, where the Canadian-Turkish study was conducted, and the province of Quebec were the first two provinces to develop legislation to address bullying and cyberbullying. Both terms are also included in their respective Education Acts (National Assembly, 2012; Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012 as cited in Naimi, 2012, p. 15). Bill 56 was adopted on June 12, 2012, following its introduction by the Quebec Minister of Education on February 12, 2012. The objective of Bill 56 was to encourage Quebeckers to engage in preventing and responding to bullying and cyberbullying within school contexts. Special attention is drawn to the aims of Bill 56 because

this thesis will conclude by comparing them to policies implemented in Türkiye, before addressing the gaps in implementation. They are:

- to define the responsibilities and duties of students, parents, school staff, school principals, governing boards, school boards and the student ombudsman. This is now regarded as a collective and shared responsibility

- to require that every public and private educational institution adopt and implement an anti-bullying and anti-violence plan

- to require that every school principal set up an anti-bullying and anti-violence team and designate a school staff member to coordinate its work. (Bill 56, n.d.)

Since the objectives of this thesis do not include analyzing the prevalence of cyberbullying in relation to the policies implemented in Canada, whether it has decreased or how successful the policies are, the current status of Bill 56 in practice will not be discussed. Instead, it is more suitable to highlight the multidimensional approach of Bill 56 to the phenomenon of violence in schools. It gives responsibility to the stakeholders who are involved in the education system in some way (teachers, administrators, and parents) by guiding them to assume their responsibilities to educate and keep children safe.

Secondly, Canada was one of the first countries to have comprehensive legislation to address cyberbullying. Currently, the Public Safety Canada section of the official website of the Canadian government, publishes a list of which offences within Canada's Criminal Codes include forms of cyberbullying. Depending on the cyberbullying activities, the behaviors that may cross the line to constitute a crime or become legal offences are listed as: Sharing intimate images without consent, Criminal harassment, Uttering threats, Intimidation, Mischief in relation to data, Unauthorized use of computer, Identity theft Extortion, False messages, indecent or

harassing telephone calls, Counselling suicide, Incitement of hatred, Defamatory libel, Public

incitement of hatred, and Offence against the person and reputation (Canada, 2023). For

example, the revised Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) Article 162 deals with sharing

intimate images without consent, with the perpetrator being sentenced to up to five years in

prison (Branch, 2023).

Legal and Policy Analysis for Canada and Türkiye

Legal and policy practices against cyberbullying began in Canada in the early 2010s. In

the field of education, regulations were made simultaneously with statutory laws. Based on the

difference between answers given by pre-service teachers from the two countries in the

Canadian-Turkish Study, Canadian pre-service teachers appeared more confident that they could

cope with cyberbullying than the Turkish pre-service teachers (Ryan et al., 2011). It is possible

that Canadian pre-service teachers take cyberbullying more seriously than Turkish pre-service

teachers because of their earlier exposure to national and provincial scholarship and pre-service

training about cyberbullying.

Unlike the Turkish teachers in Arslan's (2015) study, who did not care about violence at

school, in the Canadian-Turkish Study, Canadian pre-service educators approach the situation

seriously, rather than accepting it as a routine part of their daily life. Cultural differences are

most probably the reason for this. In some Middle Eastern cultures and countries, violence or

corporate punishment continues to be used to discipline children (Akmatov, 2010; El-Gilany and

Amr, 2010; Haddad et al., 2011; Seleem and Amer, 2020). As Adikutlu (2019) observes, in many

environments, "violence in the school mirrors social attitudes, including the still frequent

perception of violence as a legitimate and needed form of child discipline" (Adıkutlu, 2019, p.

2). In other words, the phenomenon of general violence enters the lives of children at a young age in the family and is applied as a disciplinary method.

This can have the effect of normalizing violent responses and communication for the child as they grow. According to a study by Durmuş and Gürgan (2005), 70.9% of student participants stated that they know friends who intentionally damage school items for arbitrary reasons or because it makes them feel relaxed (Durmuş and Gürgan, 2005, as cited in Arslan, 2015, p. 2). Arslan (2015) writes: "The tendency to view violence against objects and animals as aimless and innocent is common in Türkiye" (p. 2). In other words, the student who rehearses the violence by applying it to himself in the family can first apply it to objects and then to individuals, with this situation eventually being perceived as normal. Violence, which is settled and naturalized within individuals by cultural codes, may be seen as "normal" in the future and may cause the phenomenon to not be approached with sufficient seriousness. It is therefore possible to argue that the difference between Canadian teacher candidates and Turkish teacher candidates stems from these cultural differences. Corporal punishment has been banned in Canada for at least 30 years, except with "reasonable force" under Section 41 of the Canadian Criminal Code. This section has been highly controversial over the years but by and large, corporal punishment by parents or teachers is most often seen in Canada as child abuse (Elgar et al., 2018; Stewart-Tufescu, 2023). In the eyes of Turkish teachers, some forms of verbal or physical violence may be regarded as a routine of daily life and not taken seriously enough. The research findings, in which Arslan (2015) interviewed 430 teachers to "understand the dynamics of violence in their schools," revealed that 79.77% of teachers do not care about students who are prone to or involved in violence and do not care about violence at school (Arslan, 2015, p.15).

In the previous section, it was mentioned that the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB) had prepared a circular on "Preventing Violence in Schools" in 2006 (MEB, 2006). As in the example of Quebec's Bill 56, the MEB has called many actors (like school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers) to duty, with the duties of these units being detailed as part of adopting a collective approach to the prevention of violence in schools in Türkiye (MEB, 2006). Although the MEB is aware of the seriousness of the situation with its relevant policies and takes important steps toward precautions, not every category of actors (e.g., school administrators; See Yıldırım and Kardaş, 2017; Kutlu, 2018; Yorulmaz and Karadeniz, 2021) fully fulfills its duties. The results of the careless or apathetic approaches of teachers and administrators toward traditional violence at school manifest themselves as cyberbullying in electronic environments.

Conclusion

As a result of the above, the cyberbullying situation among students in Türkiye is alarming, as it is an increasing problem around the world. Traditional violence has carried itself over to virtual environments with the development of technology and the internet. The findings of current research, which has gained momentum in the national academic agenda in recent years, show that cyberbullying has become widespread in Türkiye.

It is hopeful that in Türkiye, in parallel with the world, various ministries and state institutions and organizations, especially the MEB, have begun to take responsibility. By adding the expression "electronic media" to current law articles, the internet is now covered by laws, with policies being developed and implemented and regulations being seen as necessary. Along with the developments in the world, sometimes similar and sometimes new projects have been produced and continue to be produced.

On the other hand, "legislative and institutional developments which failed to produce a meaningful transition in the policy and implementation landscape" (Adıkutlu, 2019, p. 10) have caused some gaps. Because of administrators who are not adequately equipped or educated to carry out their responsibilities as seriously as they should, the curriculum and legislative policies in their schools is not understood or implemented at the level it should be. In fact, the concept of violence itself is generally considered "normal" in the country. Many students, teachers, and administrators still do not have a grasp of the concept of cyberbullying, and therefore, students cannot learn the relevant concepts as the curriculum is not being fulfilled.

It is very important to draw attention to the legal dimension of the issue, in that the MEB works in partnership with the General Directorate of Security in Türkiye. Accelerating such activities and advancing them to cover the whole of Türkiye may enable all individuals in the education system to realize the seriousness of the issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the scholarship and analysis in the present thesis, a set of recommendations has been developed within the framework of the academic research, Turkish policies, and the policies and laws of other countries that have been examined here.

- **<u>Academic recommendations</u>**: Since this thesis reviewed whether Türkiye has informed policies on cyberbullying, the first recommendation is to suggest further studies that examine the extent of the implementation of the policies and legislation in Türkiye, as well as the development of educational programs and public legal education relating to cyberbullying. Existing quantitative and qualitative studies on cyberbullying provide the foundation for additional and expanded studies within Türkiye such that it is sensitive to the differences between regions, such as education, culture, and politics.

- **<u>Recommendations for Ministry of National Education (MEB) policies and the Curriculum</u>**; While questioning the "normal" acceptance of violence (online and offline) for individuals, it is also necessary to look at the bigger picture. In the grand scheme of things, the extent to which policies about children in Türkiye are child-friendly should be reviewed. It should be questioned how the general perception of violence (online and offline) is perceived on the basis of policies.

- Especially when developing a policy for children related to a sensitive issue such as cyberbullying, the subject should be approached with a large team that includes experts from such fields as psychology, the security forces, computer teachers, and school principals. In fact, this situation should be taken a step further and the opinions of the children should be listened to, as "Children and youth can engage in developing policy models" (Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021, p. 49).

- The MEB in Türkiye should keep its policies up to date and ensure that they are implemented. In particular, it should follow up on the in-service training for school principals more strictly. It should be mandated that every school principal and teacher should attend seminars and in-service trainings on the subject. School principals and teachers should not disrupt these training programs and should keep their knowledge up to date.

- Conferences on cyberbullying should be organized for parents every semester. Thus, parents' awareness and knowledge of the concept should be increased.

- The subject of cyberbullying should be included in the curriculum at every grade level in accordance with the age levels of the students.

- The duration of the course in which the cyberbullying theme that is already present in the curriculum is covered should be increased.

- For school management, school principals must implement the curriculum completely.

- School principals should be in frequent contact with the security forces, and in case of a serious incident, the security forces should be contacted immediately.

- School principals should also prepare a "school-specific action plan" (Arıcak, 2015, p. 97). Considering the geographical conditions of Türkiye, each school should have its own action plan, so that when cyberbullying occurs, intervention studies can be carried out in a way that is suitable for the people of the region.

- Every school should establish its "team" (Arıcak, 2015, p. 97). Whether cyberbullying is prevalent or not, a team should be established that includes guidance counselors, computer teachers, principals, and vice principals.

- The aforementioned team (Arıcak, 2015, p. 97) should periodically apply a cyberbullying scale prepared in accordance with the general Turkish culture to the students. Thus, it should enable the "detection of the current situation" of cyberbullying incidents at school (Arıcak, 2015, p. 98). In the event of cyberbullying, the student (both victim and perpetrator) should be supported, because perpetrators are often victims of other types of violence (Yaman and Peker, 2012).

- In the event that students are exposed to cyberbullying, not only at school but also outside of school, which would be known by communicating frequently with parents, the student should be approached with a collective understanding.

- The difference between the concepts of "violence" and "jokes" should be internalized by the students and cultural codes should be clearly drawn. Students should be made aware that some of the behavior that is seen as a joke is actually a form violence.

- In terms of the legal dimension, the expression of cyberbullying itself can be added to the relevant law articles. Additionally, every individual should be informed about their legal rights.

- The person who is exposed to cyberbullying should never feel that "there will be no solution" or wonder "who will deal with it." These individuals should seek their rights by resorting to legal means.

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