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Teacher Practices Aimed at Preventing School Bullying: A Comparative Analysis of Lithuania and Norway

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates similarities and differences in Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying a whole-school approach anti-bullying programme. The quantitative data was collected from 1576 teachers from 99 schools in Lithuania, and 82 teachers from 13 schools in Norway that have implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP). The comparative analysis of the study results indicates that Norwegian teachers are slightly more active in working with the OBPP on the school and individual levels, as well as in working with the programme in general. The study reveals that female teachers are more active than male teachers on the classroom and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme, and that primary education teachers are more active than lower secondary education teachers on the classroom level of the OBPP. The implications of teacher practices aimed at preventing bullying by applying the OBPP are discussed, and limitations of the current study emphasised.

Keywords: *school bullying, school bullying prevention, whole-school approach anti-bullying programme, Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme*

Introduction

Globally, the definition of school bullying is explicated in research conducted by Olweus (1993, p. 9), who stated that "*a pupil is being bullied or victimised when he or she*

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is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other pupils". This definition is recognised in both Lithuania and Norway and considered a serious and systemic problem that requires complex and multifaceted prevention (Thornberg et al., 2018).

Many researchers (e.g., Deluca et al., 2019; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Yoon et al., 2016) claim that teachers play a crucial role in school bullying prevention and intervention. Some studies have investigated how teachers intervene in bullying incidents (e.g., Burger et al., 2015; Yoon & Barton, 2008; Yoon et al., 2016). Few studies have examined teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying a whole-school approach anti-bullying programme (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). Consequently, focusing not solely on teacher responses to bullying incidents, but also taking into account their entire bullying prevention practices will contribute to the further development of a comprehensive approach to school bullying prevention.

Factors affecting school bullying prevention operate on different levels. A holistic view of school bullying and its prevention have largely been investigated and explained in light of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST). Applying EST as a theoretical framework to the current study, the comparative analysis of school bullying and preconditions for school bullying prevention make clear that both phenomena can be explored on multiple levels, all of which are interconnected; if an activity is initiated on any one level, the effects radiate to the other levels.

This study therefore investigates teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying a whole-school approach, anti-bullying programme in schools in Lithuania and Norway within the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST. Socioeconomic, cultural, educational, and legal factors regarding the prevention of school bullying are explored indirectly as part of the macrosystem of each country. The scope of the study also includes teacher practices within the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP) and some individual teacher characteristics.

Prevalence of school bullying in Lithuania and Norway

On a global scale, the prevalence of school bullying varies considerably. Although some studies have found a decreasing tendency in the prevalence of exposure to bullying, from 24.4% in 1994 to 4.9% in 2018 in a case from Denmark (Due et al., 2019), the phenomenon and its prevention still calls for more research.

The most recent large-scale quantitative survey conducted by the World Health Organisation on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) using an anonymous self-report classroom-based questionnaire in 45 countries, showed that Lithuania continues to have a high percentage of pupils who are bullied in the 11-year-old, 13-year-old and 15-year-old age groups, while Norway ranks much lower than the HBSC average. An overview of the prevalence of bullying victimisation compared to the HBSC average is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of HBSC data on the prevalence of being bullied at school at least twice in the past few months: Lithuania, Norway and the HBSC average (2018)

COUNTRY	AGE OF PUPILS 11 (%)		AGE OF PUPILS 13 (%)		AGE OF PUPILS 15 (%)	
	GIRLS	*BOYS*	*GIRLS*	*BOYS*	*GIRLS*	*BOYS*
Lithuania	26	29	31	32	21	26
Norway	7	6	5	6	2	3
Average	11	12	10	11	8	8

Source: HBSC [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children]. (2020). ***Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being***. In J. Inchley, D. Currie, S. Budisavljevic, T. Torsheim, A. Jåstad, A. Cosma, C. Kelly, Á.M. Arnarsson, & O. Samdal (Eds.), *Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. International report*. Volume 2. Key data. Copenhagen: WHO. Downloaded from 9789289055017-eng (1).pdf

The prevalence of being bullied within the three age groups shows decreasing tendencies in Norway and the HBSC average. In Lithuania, the highest prevalence of being bullied is in the 13-year-old age group and lowest in the 15-year-old age group. More boys than girls are bullied in all age groups in Lithuania on average, with the exception of the 15-year-old age group, where the prevalence of being bullied is equal between girls and boys. However, slightly more girls than boys are being bullied in the 11-year-old age group in Norway. The HBSC study suggests that the prevalence of being bullied is different across age groups and gender, although the findings are not straightforward. Nevertheless, the data originating from the HBSC study, largely confirms the results of previous research that boys are involved in bullying, as both those who bully and those who are bullied, at higher rates than girls (e.g., Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Pellegrini et al., 2010). The HBSC study also indicates that school bullying varies with age, yet other studies report contradictory findings. The results of some studies indicate that bullying victimisation decreases with age as pupils progress in their schooling (e.g., Batsche & Knoff, 1994), whereas other studies (e.g., Hymel & Swearer, 2015) show that bullying peaks during middle school (12 to 15 years of age) and tends to decrease by the end of secondary school. However, research suggests that bullying increases during school transition periods (i.e., between primary and middle school and between middle and secondary school), as youths negotiate new peer groups and use bullying as a means to achieve social dominance and peer affiliation in the new social context (e.g., Pellegrini et al., 2010).

The results of the HBCS study raise the question as to why there is a huge gap in the prevalence of being bullied between Lithuania and Norway. A partial explanation might be found by examining school bullying prevention on different levels of the EST.

Lithuania and Norway within a macrosystem context

In terms of the macrosystem, it is possible to compare a number of socioeconomic factors that could create a favourable climate for school bullying or, conversely, minimise the probability of school bullying in Lithuania and Norway. A study on social inequality and exposure to school bullying, conducted by Due et al. (2019), reveals that school

bullying is most prevalent among pupils from lower socioeconomic groups. Moreover, a previous study, conducted by Due et al. (2009), indicates that adolescents who attend schools and live in countries where socioeconomic differences are larger are at higher risk of being bullied. This result confirms the HBSC findings that pupils in Lithuania are at higher risk of being bullied than pupils in Norway.

Neither the socioeconomic situation nor cultural characteristics of Lithuania and Norway were surveyed directly in the current study, however, a number of socioeconomic conditions in these two countries are briefly presented and compared. Firstly, there are large economic disparities between the two countries. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parties was 82 in Lithuania and 155 in Norway in 2018 (Eurostat, 2018a). Moreover, the employment rate in the 15–64 year age group in the fourth quarter of 2018 was slightly lower in Lithuania (72.9%) than in Norway (74.9%) (Eurostat, 2018b). In terms of life expectancy in absolute value at age 65 as a factor of society's wellbeing, significant disparities were also observed. In Lithuania, the value was 14.5 for men and 19.7 for women, while in Norway it was 19.4 for men and 21.7 for women. Nevertheless, Lithuania had the highest tertiary education attainment level in the 30–34 year age group in EU28 (57.6%) (2018) (Eurostat, 2018c), while this level was slightly lower in Norway (50.6%). Moreover, the rate of early leavers (18–24 years) from education and training was lower in Lithuania (4.6%) than in Norway (9.9%) in 2018 (Eurostat, 2018d). In sum, Norway had better economic and social conditions, while Lithuania had a higher level of education indicators.

When comparing the developed and implemented policies and procedures to prevent school bullying in Lithuania and Norway, there are a number of differences in school bullying legislation. As provided for in paragraph 49 of the *Law on Education* of the Republic of Lithuania (L.R. Seimas, 2011), the teacher must ensure the pupil's safety and a quality education, respect the pupil as a person and not violate the pupil's legitimate rights and interests (L.R. Seimas, 2011). Moreover, changes have been made to Lithuanian legislation and since 1 September 2017, every learner must participate in a consistent and long-term preventive programme (L.R. Seimas, 2016). Consequently, all schools are required by law to implement and adopt a whole-school approach preventive programme, justified by empirical findings that have consistently confirmed that whole-school approach anti-bullying programmes in schools, classrooms and on the individual level, along with the involvement of parents and the wider community, are best suited to prevent or counteract the processes of school bullying (e.g. Limber et al., 2018; Olweus 1993, 2001, 2005, 2010; Smith, 2014; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009, 2011).

In Norway, the Education Act (1998, §9a-1) defines the general requirement that all pupils in primary and secondary schools have the right to a positive physical and psychosocial environment that promotes health, wellbeing and learning. The Norwegian Education Act (1998, §9a-3) also elaborates on how schools should actively and systematically work to promote a good psychosocial environment. In sum, Lithuanian and Norwegian legislation prescribes responsibility to educational institutions and

their employees to ensure a safe learning environment for pupils, but uses different models to achieve this goal. Implementation of anti-bullying programmes has been established politically and financially in Lithuanian schools, while the Education Act (1998, §9a) provides this assurance to Norwegian schools or municipalities.

Finally, there is a significant time gap regarding implementation of the whole-school approach anti-bullying programme in the two countries. In Norway, the Bergen anti-bullying project (later renamed the OBPP) was launched in 1983 as part of a national campaign against bullying in schools, initiated by the Norwegian Ministry of Education (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 2005; Olweus & Limber, 2010). The results of the empirical evaluation of this project showed a marked reduction in pupil self-reporting of bully/victim problems. In the 1983–1984 evaluation, the relative reduction in the rate of pupils bullied was 62.0% (from 10.0% to 3.8%) and the reduction in the rate of pupils bullying was 33.0% (from 7.6% to 5.1%) after eight months of interventions (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 2005; Olweus & Limber, 2010). In Lithuania, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania initiated implementation of the OBPP in 2008. During the first year of implementation, the number of pupils bullied in the first cohort (13 schools) decreased by 20.46%. Moreover, from 2008 to 2013, the number of pupils bullied from the first cohort decreased by nearly half (45.21%) (SPPC, 2013).

Whole-school approach anti-bullying programme as a mesosystem factor

The OBPP did not evolve as part of the school culture, but rather was developed in Norway and has since been adopted in schools in Norway, Lithuania and a few other countries (e.g., Iceland, Sweden, U.S.). In the current study, OBPP implementation and enforcement in Lithuania and Norway is linked to the mesosystem because on this level, both pupils, parents, and teachers cooperate with each other within the programme.

The primary goals of the OBPP are to reduce existing school bullying, prevent the development of new school bullying problems, and achieve better peer relations at school (Olweus, 1993). The OBPP is built on four key principles: 1) the main goal is to make school a safe and positive learning environment in which adults display warmth, positive interest and engagement, 2) there are clear boundaries for unacceptable behaviour, 3) there is a consistent use of non-physical, non-hostile but negative sanctions when rules are broken and, finally, 4) adults at school (and ideally at home) act with authority and are positive role models (Olweus, 1993, 2001; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Olweus & Limber, 2010). These principles have been translated into a number of specific measures on the school, classroom, individual and, in some contexts, community levels (Olweus, 1993, 2001; Olweus & Limber, 2010). OBPP measures on the school level consist of participating in staff meetings in which school bullying-related issues are discussed, participating in the Study and Supervision Group (SSG) in order to promote a whole-school approach to addressing bullying, organising and evaluating the Olweus survey results, playground supervision, and developing a holistic strategy and

procedures/routines. OBPP measures on the classroom level include implementing and enforcing general class rules against bullying, classroom management, organisation of Olweus class meetings, implementing specific Olweus measures, and collaboration with parents. Meanwhile, OBPP measures on the individual level include actions taken on suspicion of bullying, intervention into bullying incidents, organisation of confrontational conversations with pupils involved in bullying and/or their parents, and follow-up on bullying cases. The teachers are directly involved in the implementation and enforcement of the programme (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003).

Teacher practices to prevent school bullying as a factor of the microsystem

The microsystem provides prohibited, encouraged and/or restricted opportunities for intellectual and social development through progressively more complex interaction in the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A school can therefore be regarded as a microsystem in which many factors that are unique to the school contribute to school bullying prevention. One of these factors may be teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying.

Hong and Espelage (2012, p. 318) indicate that bullying prevention and intervention programmes are likely to show promising results if they include ecologically based components: (1) parent training/meetings, (2) improved playground supervision, (3) classroom management, (4) teacher training, (5) classroom rules, (6) a whole-school bullying policy and (7) cooperative group work.

Meanwhile, Gaffney et al. (2021) identify that a whole-school approach, anti-bullying policy, classroom rules, information for parents, informal peer involvement, work with bullied pupils, co-operative group work, and mental health approaches are significantly correlated with larger mean effect sizes for bullying perpetration outcomes in schools. Informal peer involvement and information for parents were significantly correlated with larger subgroup summary effect sizes for bullying victimisation in schools.

Teacher individual characteristics and school bullying prevention

A review of the academic literature highlights that teacher sociodemographic factors are important for understanding their practices aimed at preventing and intervening in school bullying (Boulton, 1997; Burger et al., 2015; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Olweus, 1993; VanZoeren & Low, 2018; Veenstra et al., 2014; Yoon et al., 2011; Yoon & Bauman, 2014; Yoon et al., 2016). The likelihood of a teacher intervening in bullying is influenced by a number of individual factors, such as the perceived seriousness of bullying, the teacher's level of empathy towards the pupil being bullied and the teacher's efficacy beliefs (e.g., VanZoeren & Weisz, 2018), confidence (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2007), personal experience (e.g., Yoon & Bauman, 2014) and the demographic factors of gender and age (e.g., Burger et al., 2015; Green et al., 2008).

When it comes to gender, Boulton (1997, p. 231) recognised that both female and male teachers generally have negative attitudes towards bullying and towards pupils

who bullied other pupil(s) and are generally sympathetic towards pupils who are bullied. Female teachers, however, express significantly more negative attitudes towards bullying than male teachers, although the difference is not considerable (Boulton, 1997). Later studies (e.g., Bauman et al., 2008; Burger et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2011) also confirm that female teachers are more likely to take action in a bullying incident. The findings of Burger et al. (2015) on teachers from Austria and South Germany, Yoon et al. (2011) on teachers from South Korea and Bauman et al., (2008) on teachers from the U.S., all report that female teachers are more likely than male teachers to work with pupils who bullied. Green et al. (2008) found that female teachers are more likely than male teachers to rate bullying situations as dangerous.

When it comes to teaching grade, there is an assumption, that primary education teachers spend much more time with pupils and are more focused on social-emotional learning, while lower secondary education teachers are more focused on subject teaching and share responsibility with other teachers to secure the development of a positive learning environment in the classroom. However, no studies were found that address differences in school bullying prevention in primary and lower secondary education. The current study therefore aims to fill this gap.

The Present Study

In the current study, teacher practices within the OBPP were investigated on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme. The items involving teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying measures were constructed on the basis of the *OBPP Implementation Manual*, *OBPP Manual for School Staff* and *OBPP Quality Assurance System Document*. The differences in the prevalence of school bullying in Lithuania and Norway, as well as the macrosystem differences in the two countries discussed above enable us to make assumptions about existing differences between Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. Moreover, based on previous research on teacher gender and school bullying prevention, the current study also aims to explore whether or not there are any significant national differences in teacher practices within the OBPP and in teacher gender/ teaching grade.

Therefore, the following three hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant national difference between Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers and their practices aimed at preventing school bullying when applying the OBPP.

Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant gender difference between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying when applying the OBPP.

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant difference between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying when applying the OBPP depending on teaching grade (primary or lower secondary education teacher).

Method

Participants

Institutions responsible for the implementation of the OBPP, namely the Center of Psychology and Special Pedagogy in Lithuania and the Norwegian Research Centre AS, provided a list of Olweus schools (147 and 83 schools, respectively). All 147 Olweus-certified schools and schools that had completed the implementation process in Lithuania by December 2016 were invited to participate in the study, and 99 of them agreed. Meanwhile, the number of Olweus schools in Norway was limited through a probability (random) sampling technique, as this was a follow-up study. Following a two-stage cluster sampling during the first stage of the selection, 13 Olweus schools were randomly selected. During the second stage of selection, only those primary and lower secondary education teachers who worked within the OBPP and had the main responsibility for the securing a safe and good learning environment in the class, and who were referred to as contact teachers in Norway, were selected from the randomly selected 13 Olweus schools for the study.

A total of 1576 out of 1772 contact teachers in Lithuania and 82 out of 278 contact teachers completed an online self-assessment questionnaire. The response rate of teachers in Lithuania was 88.94% and in Norway, 29.5%.

Teacher age in the Lithuanian sample ranged from 23 to 72, with a mean age of 47.96 years (SD = 8.59), while teacher age in the Norwegian sample ranged from 25 to 64, with a mean age of 44.91 years (SD = 9.91). The teaching experience of the Lithuanian sample varied from one to 50, M = 24.21, SD = 9.61 and, in the Norwegian sample, from 2 to 40, M = 17.32, SD = 9.10. A few other characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

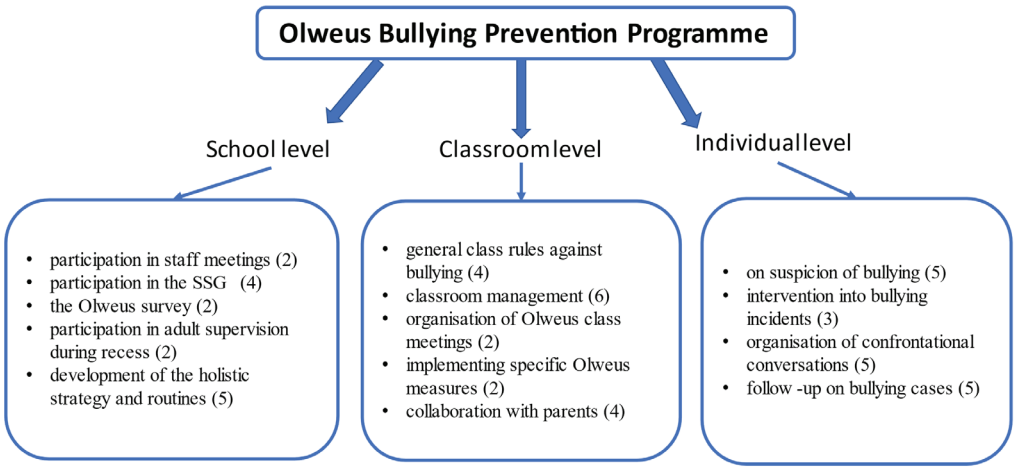
Table 2: Characteristics of the participants

VARIABLES	LITHUANIA		VARIABLES	NORWAY	
	n	%		*n*	%
Gender			*Gender*		
Male	75	4.8	Male	19	23.2
Female	1501	95.2	Female	63	76.8
Educational background			*Educational background*		
Higher non-university bachelor	90	5.7	Higher non-university bachelor	42	51.2
University bachelor	1002	63.6	Higher non-university master	9	11.0
University master	447	28.4	University bachelor	2	2.4
PhD	2	0.1	University master	6	7.3
Other	35	2.2	Other	23	28.0
Teachers' qualification			*Teachers' qualification*		
A teacher	147	9.3	A teacher	2	2.4
A senior teacher	727	46.1	A senior teacher	74	90.3
A teacher supervisor	681	43.2	A lector	6	7.3
A teacher expert	21	1.3			
Teaching educational level			*Teaching educational level*		
Primary education	570	36.2	Primary education	68	82.9
Lower secondary education	1006	63.8	Lower secondary education	14	17.1

Measures

Teacher practices within the OBPP were investigated by identifying the following measures, provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Teacher practices within the OBPP and number of items.



The responses to each item were estimated on a 5-point Likert scale, with response options varying from *I do not do it* to *I do it very actively*. The alpha coefficient of the internal reliability of the OBPP measures for the Lithuanian sample on the school level was .94 (N of item 15; *M* = 3.50, Skew = .12, Kurtosis = -.31), classroom was .94 (N of item 18; *M* = 3.96, Skew = -.50, Kurtosis = .98), and individual was .95 (N of item 18; *M* = 3.95, Skew = -.46, Kurtosis = 1.04), where *SE* of Skew = .06 and *SE* of Kurtosis = .12 for all variables. While for Norwegian sample, .80 (*M* = 4.01, Skew = -1.10, Kurtosis = 1.84), .78 (*M* = 3.96, Skew = .03, Kurtosis = -.71), and .91 (*M* = 4.32, Skew = .09, Kurtosis = -.99), respectively, where *SE* of Skew = .27 and *SE* of Kurtosis = .53 for all variables. The alpha coefficient of internal reliability in all scales was higher than .7, suggesting that all items in all three scales measured the same underlying attribute.

Procedures

In the current study, a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design was applied. The study was carried out using a quantitative survey approach, by which data was anonymously collected through a standardised online self-administered questionnaire in March to June 2017 in Lithuania and January to February 2018 in Norway using Questback.

The researcher aligned the study with the statutory codes of ethics and carried out the professional ethical judgments and procedures of the study in accordance with the regulations of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). Permission to conduct the study was obtained and the researcher's obligations to the NSD were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Data analysis

The results were analysed using the IBM SPSS-27 version. A descriptive analysis of the study and independent samples t-test were used to examine the differences between

two independent samples (Pallant, 2016), namely between Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP. The Cohen's d was used for the effect size statistic, by which .2 indicated a minor effect, .5 a medium effect and .8 a significant effect (Pallant, 2016). To simultaneously test the effect of two independent variables (country and gender as well as country and teaching grade) on the dependent variable, a two-way between-groups analysis of variance was carried out. General assumptions for applying parametric techniques were verified. Normality was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and although this assumption was violated, the rule that large enough sample sizes (e.g., 30+) should not cause any major problems was applied. Homogeneity of variance was tested by conducting Levene's test for equality of variances as part of the t-test and analysis of variance analyses (Pallant, 2016).

Results

Differences in teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying and their country

An independent samples t-test was used to compare teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme for Lithuanian and Norwegian samples. The results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme for Lithuanian (n = 1576) and Norwegian (n = 82) samples

LEVELS OF THE OBPP	LITHUANIA		NORWAY		*t*	*df*	*p*	*COHEN'S D*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
School level	3.50	.71	4.01	.48	−9.06	100.05	.000	.7
Classroom level	3.96	.53	3.96	.36	.01	100.35	.992	.52
Individual level	3.95	.55	4.32	.39	−6.04	1656	.000	.54
Whole programme	3.80	.52	4.10	.32	−7.93	103.94	.000	.51

Note: The data violated the assumption of equal variance for teachers' practices at the school, classroom and all levels of the OBPP, therefore an alternative t-values when equal variances not assumed has been presented.

An analysis of means of teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP revealed that Norwegian teachers more actively prevent school bullying by applying the OBPP than Lithuanian teachers. Lithuanian teachers are the least active in practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school level of the OBPP, while Norwegian teachers are the most active in their practices aimed at preventing bullying on the individual level and the least active on the classroom level of the OBPP. An independent samples t-test indicated significant differences in the scores for Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers in their practices on the school and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme. Norwegian teachers are therefore more active in their practices within the OBPP aimed at preventing school bullying on

the school and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme. Effect size statistics showed medium effects.

Furthermore, five measures on the school and classroom levels and four measures on the individual level were analysed using an independent samples t-test in order to clarify which measures teachers used actively and which ones less actively. The results are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom and individual levels of the OBPP for Lithuanian (n = 1576) and Norwegian (n = 82) samples

LEVELS OF THE OBPP	LITHUANIA		NORWAY		*t*	*df*	*p*	*COHEN'S D*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
School level								
Participation in the staff meetings	3.72	.84	4.16	.32	-10.68	148.74	.000	.82
Participation in the SSG	3.61	.82	3.90	.63	-3.94	95.84	.000	.81
Organisation and evaluation of Olweus-survey	2.92	1.10	3.87	1.00	-7.71	1654	.000	1.09
Adult supervision	3.73	.87	4.43	.51	-11.67	107.16	.000	.85
Development of the holistic strategy and procedures/ routines	3.48	.76	4.00	.60	-7.53	95.14	.000	.75
Classroom level								
General class rules	4.20	.54	4.18	.39	.39	98.09	.699	.53
Classroom management	4.10	.49	4.17	.36	-1.48	97.75	.141	.48
Organisation of the Olweus class-meetings	3.84	.92	3.61	.77	2.26	1656	.024	.92
Specific Olweus measures	3.76	.68	3.93	.66	-2.17	1656	.030	.68
Collaboration with parents	3.65	.75	3.61	.72	.53	1656	.598	.75
Individual level								
On suspicion on bullying	3.91	.59	4.33	.48	-6.41	1656	.000	.59
Intervention into bullying incidents	4.17	.55	4.59	.45	-6.93	1656	.000	.55
Organisation of confrontational conversations	4.02	.61	4.26	.48	-3.54	1656	.000	.61
Follow-up of the bullying cases	3.80	.66	4.23	.45	-8.22	99.96	.000	.65

Note: The data violated the assumption of equal variance for teachers' participation in the staff meetings, participation in the SSG, adult supervision and in the development of the holistic strategy and procedures/ routines at the school level, teachers' general class rules, classroom management at the classroom level as well as teachers' follow-up of the bullying cases at the individual levels of the OBPP, therefore an alternative t-values when equal variances not assumed has been presented.

An independent samples t-test indicated significant differences in the scores of the Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers for all measures on the school and individual levels of the OBPP and two measures on the classroom level of the OBPP. Effect size statistics showed medium effects of teacher practices on the suspicion of bullying and their interventions in bullying incidents, slightly higher than medium effects of teacher practices in developing a holistic strategy and procedures/routines on the school level

of the OBPP, applying specific Olweus measures on the classroom level, organising confrontational conversations and following up on bullying cases on the individual level of the OBPP. Finally, the significant effects were obtained for teacher practices with regard to participation in staff meetings and SSG, organising and evaluating adult supervision and organising the Olweus survey on the school level and organising the Olweus class meetings on the classroom levels.

Norwegian teachers participate more actively than Lithuanian teachers in staff meetings and SSG, in organising and evaluating the Olweus survey, in adult supervision, in the development of a holistic strategy and procedures/routines on the school level of the OBPP and in applying specific Olweus measures on the classroom level of the OBPP. Nevertheless, an analysis of the mean ranks showed a number of similar tendencies: both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are most active in adult supervision during recess (highest mean rank) and least active in the organisation and evaluation of the Olweus survey (lowest mean rank) on the school level of the OBPP. Both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers actively participate in staff meetings (second rank), but Lithuanian teachers prioritise participation in SSG, while Norwegian teachers prioritise the development of a holistic strategy and procedures/routines (third rank).

Norwegian teachers are more active than Lithuanian teachers in responding to a suspicion of bullying, intervening in bullying incidents, organising confrontational conversations and following up on bullying cases on the individual level of the OBPP. An analysis of the mean ranks revealed that both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are most active in intervening in bullying incidents (highest mean rank) and least active in following up on bullying cases (lowest mean rank) on the individual level of the OBPP. Lithuanian teachers are more active in postvention (i.e., organisation of confrontational conversations), while Norwegian teachers are more active in prevention (i.e., on suspicion on bullying) (second mean rank).

Lithuanian teachers organise the Olweus class meeting on the classroom level of the OBPP more actively than Norwegian teachers. However, Norwegian teachers use specific Olweus measures (Olweus rules against bullying and Olweus bullying circle) more actively than Lithuanian teachers. An analysis of the mean ranks indicated that both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers actively work to establish and maintain general class rules (highest mean rank) and provide sufficient classroom management (second mean rank). However, they are least active in collaborating with parents (lowest mean rank).

Differences in teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying and their country, gender, and teaching grade

In order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP and teacher gender, as well as teaching grade, a comparative study was carried out. The *country* variable was also included for checking whether there is a statistically significant difference between Lithuanian and Norwegian female and male teachers, and Lithuanian and Norwegian primary and lower secondary teachers. A two-way ANOVA, which simultaneously tests the effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent

variable, was conducted. However, it was not possible to identify any interaction effect because independent variables had only two groups (Lithuanian and Norway; female and male; primary and lower secondary teacher). The results of teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP and country and gender are presented in Table 5, while country and teaching grade are shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Means, standard deviations and two-way ANOVA statistics for teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme and the country and gender

VARIABLE	LITHUANIA (*n* = 1576)		NORWAY (*n* = 82)		EFFECT	*F* RATIO	*p*	η^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
School level					C x G	.23	.180	.001
Female	3.52	.71	4.03	.46	C	41.16	<.000	.024
Male	3.19	.69	3.97	.58	G	3.62	.057	.002
Classroom level					C x G	1.39	.238	.001
Female	3.97	.53	3.99	.37	C	2.02	.156	.001
Male	3.65	.51	3.85	.29	G	9.79	.002	.006
Individual level					C x G	.04	.847	.000
Female	3.96	.55	4.37	.39	C	29.01	<.001	.017
Male	3.75	.49	4.18	.37	G	6.38	.012	.004
Whole programme					C x G	1.146	.285	.005
Female	3.82	.51	4.14	.32	C	29.66	<.001	.018
Male	3.53	.48	4.00	.33	G	8.25	.004	.001

Note: C = country, G = gender.

Table 6: Means, standard deviations and two-way ANOVA statistics for teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme and the country and teaching grade

VARIABLE	LITHUANIA (*n* = 1576)		NORWAY (*n* = 82)		EFFECT	*F* RATIO	*p*	η^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
School level					C x T	.31	.580	.000
Primary education	3.51	.67	4.04	.48	C	19.90	<.000	.012
Lower secondary education	3.50	.73	3.91	.53	T	.48	.488	.000
Classroom level					C x T	.10	.755	.000
Primary education	4.08	.46	4.00	.36	C	1.90	.168	.001
Lower secondary education	3.89	.56	3.76	.31	T	7.88	.005	.005
Individual level					C x T	.86	.354	.001
Primary education	3.98	.55	4.36	.38	C	13.72	<.000	.008
Lower secondary education	3.93	.55	4.16	.41	T	2.34	.126	.001
Whole programme					C x T	.51	.474	.000
Primary education	3.86	.48	4.14	.32	C	8.86	.003	.005
Lower secondary education	3.77	.53	3.94	.32	T	3.40	.065	.002

Note: C = country, T = teaching grade.

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of country and teacher gender, as well as country and teaching grade, on teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme. The interaction effects between country and gender, as well as between country and teaching grade groups, were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, when for controlling *country* variable, some statistically significant differences were obtained between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying and gender/ teaching grade. Female teachers were more active than male teachers within the OBPP on the classroom and individual levels as well as whole programme. Meanwhile, primary education teachers were more active than lower secondary education teachers within the OBPP on the classroom level.

Discussion

The current study revealed that Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying differ significantly on the school and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme. In general, Norwegian teachers are more active than Lithuanian teachers in their practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP. Although Lithuanian and Norwegian legislation prescribes the responsibility to ensure a safe learning environment for pupils to educational institutions and their employees, better economic and social conditions as well as longer experience in implementing the OBPP in Norway could explain more activity in teacher practices to prevent school bullying. This result also somewhat explains the differences of the prevalence of school bullying in Lithuanian and Norway obtained in the HBSC study and in general confirms the findings of other studies, acknowledging that teachers play an important role in the prevention of, and the intervention in, school bullying (e.g., Yoon & Barton, 2008; Yoon, et al., 2016).

Further, some similarities and differences were observed in Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. On the school level, both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are most active in adult supervision during recess, with adults intervening decisively when bullying is observed or suspected and reporting bullying incidents. Teachers' awareness of the importance of effective supervision systems during recess in order to prevent school bullying is in line with the previous findings, which confirm that effective supervision during recess and lunch time (Olweus & Limber, 2010) and/or improved playground supervision is considered effective in reducing the rates of bullying others (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009, 2011). Furthermore, both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers indicated participation in staff meetings in autumn and spring semester as the second most active OBPP measure on the school level. During those meetings, teachers summarised how well the OBPP had been implemented or had been effective at the school and evaluated experiences from the bullying prevention work during the school year as regards goals, results achieved and any changes/improvements. However, even though Olweus and Limber (2010, p. 130) acknowledged the regular use of an anonymous questionnaire

survey as one of the most important measures of the OBPP at the school level to create awareness and involvement among staff, pupils and parents and collect information on bullying, both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers indicated that they are least active in the organisation and evaluation of the Olweus survey. Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of OBPP implementation at schools in both countries, this measure should be strengthened.

The research results show that Norwegian teachers prioritise following up on OBPP procedures and routines on suspicion of bullying, i.e., intervening when bullying and other forms of offensive speech and unacceptable behaviour occur and active involvement in developing a holistic strategy for school bullying prevention, more than participating in SSG. That there is a significant association between the development of a holistic whole-school strategy and policy for anti-bullying work and a reduction in bullying perpetration, has been confirmed by several studies (Gaffney et al., 2021; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Meanwhile, Lithuanian teachers prioritise participation in SSG, during which bullying issues are the main topic of discussion, extensive knowledge of the OBPP is gained, various possible solutions to bullying problems via, for instance, role playing and practical methods in a safe environment are tried out and teachers can share experiences and views and learn from each other's experiences. Teacher training is considered an effective measure for reducing bullying rates in schools (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). The purpose of participation in the SSG at schools is that such participation contributes to the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to create and sustain a safe school environment (Olweus & Limber, 2010), so this measure can be assumed to be equivalent to teacher training. Several researchers (e.g., Hong & Espelage, 2012; Olweus, 2001; VanZoeren & Weisz, 2018) have recognised teacher training as an inherent measure of a whole-school approach to anti-bullying programmes. Moreover, the establishment of SSG at schools is an important tool in the effective communication and implementation of the OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Finally, the study by Yoon et al. (2016, p. 110) suggests that teacher training should go beyond the information level and should help teachers to better understand pupil social dynamics and group processes, along with specific practical strategies for addressing bullying and victimisation. Consequently, further research should investigate whether teacher training remains on the information level or includes the training level.

Based on these findings it can be said that Lithuanian teachers should strengthen cooperation with and coordination of the OBPP in the development of the holistic strategy and procedures/routines, while Norwegian teachers should strengthen participation in the SSG in order to enable larger effects of school bullying prevention.

On the individual level, Norwegian teachers are also generally more active than Lithuanian teachers. However, some similar tendencies were observed among Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers on the individual level of the OBPP that deserve closer analysis. Both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are most active in intervening in bullying incidents, notifying school administration about bullying and safeguarding and helping pupils who have been bullied in the bullying situation. Consistent

with previous studies (e.g., Bauman et al., 2008), the results of the current study show that the majority of teachers are willing to immediately intervene and stop the bullying. The findings of previous researchers indicate that teacher interventions in bullying situations vary considerably and that different strategies are used (Smith, 2014, p. 156). Furthermore, both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are least active in following up on bullying cases, by which teachers need to arrange new meetings with pupils who bully others and the pupil who has been bullied until the teachers are absolutely convinced that the bullying has stopped. Additionally, they need to provide sufficient information to and frequently involve parents, initiate further sanctions if the bullying does not cease and, finally, document all work done in the bullying case. It is likely that if teachers were to improve their practices in following up on bullying cases, there would be fewer severe and long-lasting bullying cases in schools.

Assisting pupils who are frequently bullied may require both short- and long-term interventions. Short-term interventions entail addressing specific incidents of bullying, while long-term interventions involve building confidence and averting the probability of future victimisation (Crothers & Kolbert, 2010, p. 540). Norwegian teachers are more active in response to a suspicion of bullying than in organising confrontational conversations. The findings of previous research have shown that teachers still struggle to detect bullying and rarely implement effective strategies in response to bullying when it is detected (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2007; Veenstra et al., 2014). However, the results of the current study do not indicate which measures teachers actively applied on suspicion on bullying. Therefore, more detailed analysis is needed in order to determine whether teachers' interventions to prevent bullying are limited to having conversations with pupils believed to be involved in bullying, or that teachers actively plan and implement systematic observations of behaviours that may evolve into bullying, observe pupils' social relations in groups, confer with colleagues if they notice something unusual and contact parents/guardians of bullied pupils in order to provide and obtain more information.

Meanwhile, Lithuanian teachers are more active at dealing with the consequences of bullying incidents than actively responding to a suspicion of bullying. This result is in line with the results of the study by Dake et al. (2003) in which teachers were found to prioritise reactionary (short-term) follow-up measures over preventative (long-term) measures. Olweus and Limber (2010) indicate that serious talks with pupils who are bullied and pupils who bully, serious talks with the parents of the pupils involved, and the development of individual intervention plans are obligatory and effective follow-up measures of the OBPP on the individual level. A few previous studies (e.g., Boulton, 1997; Dake et al., 2003) show that having a serious talk with pupils who are bullied and pupils who bully when a situation arises is the only bullying-related activity that most teachers undertake. Therefore, more detailed analysis is required in order to find out whether teachers set limits and control confrontational conversations with pupils who bully others, present evidence and documentation on bullying, demand that pupils who bully others should immediately stop bullying, schedule

a new meeting after a day or two, as well as inform about follow-up meetings with and without parents.

On the classroom level, teacher practices to involve parents in school bullying prevention deserve special attention. The OBPP emphasises that parents also play an important role in working with schools, supporting anti-bullying initiatives and liaising with schools if they have concerns about a child's behaviour. Several studies confirm the importance of parents' involvement in school bullying prevention. In the meta-analysis by Ttofi and Farrington (2011), parent training information meetings or teacher-parent meetings were associated with a more effective whole-school approach anti-bullying programme. In the follow-up meta-analysis by Gaffney et al. (2021), the information for parents' component was significantly associated with larger effect sizes for school bullying perpetration and victimisation outcomes. The analysis of the results of the current study shows that both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are least active in keeping parents or legal guardians well-informed about the school's preventive and problem-solving bullying prevention work during at least one group or class parent meeting each year.

Nevertheless, both Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers are most active on the classroom level of the OBPP in following well-established rules of behaviour and routines in class and exerting authoritative leadership characterised by a combination of kindness, caring and strength. Several researchers (e.g., Hong & Espelage, 2012; Yoon & Barton, 2008) have pointed out that proper classroom management is crucial to the prevention of school bullying and the development of a positive school climate. A recent Canadian study conducted by Konishi et al. (2017, p. 16) establishes that pupils who perceive greater fairness and clarity of rules are less likely to be engaged in bullying behaviour. Gaffney et al. (2021) also confirm that classroom rules contribute to a reduction in school bullying perpetration. Moreover, Gaffney et al. (2021) also identify that informal peer involvement (e.g., class/group discussions or role-playing activities) are significantly correlated with larger mean effect sizes for bullying perpetration and bullying victimisation outcomes in schools. However, Norwegian teachers prioritise the use of specific Olweus measures over the organisation of Olweus class meetings, while Lithuanian teachers had opposite priorities. The results of the current study show that those measures should be strengthened in both Lithuanian and Norwegian schools.

Nevertheless, when controlling for the *country* variable, some statistically significant differences have been obtained between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying and gender/ teaching grade. Female teachers are more active than male teachers in applying measures of the OBPP on the classroom and individual levels as well as whole programme. Thus, the current study supports the findings of previous studies, that female teachers are more likely than male teachers to prevent and intervene in bullying incidents (Bauman et al., 2008; Boulton, 1997; Burger et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2016). Meanwhile, primary education teachers are more active than lower secondary education teachers within the OBPP on the classroom level. No studies were

found to support or reject this finding. However, it could be assumed that primary education teachers are more concerned about their role as a class leader and are willing to put more effort into exerting an authoritative class management and to prevent school bullying than lower secondary education teachers. Additional studies are needed to support or reject this assumption.

Conclusions and Methodological Considerations for Future Research

The results of the current study confirm that there is a statistically significant difference between Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers and their practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP (*Hypothesis 1*). In general, Norwegian teachers are more active in their practices within the OBPP on the school and individual levels as well as whole programme aimed at preventing school bullying. The finding of previous studies that teachers are key persons in stopping and preventing bullying (e.g., Bauman et al., 2008; Burger et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2016) may also be applied in both the Lithuanian and Norwegian context. The result of the current study also confirms that there is a statistically significant gender difference between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying within the OBPP (*Hypotheses* 2). Female teachers were more active than male teachers on the classroom and individual levels of the OBPP as well as whole programme. Furthermore, *Hypothesis 3* is only partly confirmed, since a statistically significant difference between teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying by applying the OBPP and their teaching grade has been obtained only on the classroom level, where primary education teachers were more active than lower secondary education teachers. However, no differences were obtained between female Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers or between male Lithuanian and Norwegian teachers or between Lithuanian and Norwegian primary education and Lithuanian and Norwegian lower secondary education teachers in working with the OBPP on the school, classroom, and individual levels of the OBPP as well as the whole programme.

The results of the current study reveal only general trends and some similarities and differences between Lithuanian and Norwegian teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. However, the differences in group sizes (e.g., gender and teaching grade) and the huge difference in the response rates between the Lithuanian and Norwegian samples might affect the results of the current study. It should be stated that teachers are different persons with different backgrounds and experience; thus, it is important to conduct further research on how teachers' sociodemographic characteristics might influence school bullying and its prevention. This research should be conducted within the context of sociodemographic factors and the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) EST.

Overall, the current study contributes to the further development of anti-bullying policy in Lithuania and Norway by shedding light on the significance of sufficient economic and social conditions in order to assure successful implementation of a whole-school approach anti-bullying programme, as well as the need for consistent, ongoing,

and systematic teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. However, the current study provides only descriptive data about teachers' activity regarding application of the main measures of the OBPP. Further research should go into more detailed analysis of what is within those measures, how they are implemented and should focus on exploring the quality of the implementation of each measure of the OBPP. Finally, when it comes to implications on the practical level, the current study provides an overview over measures of the OBPP which should be strengthened in schools.

The current study has a number of limitations. Firstly, teacher self-reports were used as the only data source in the current cross-sectional study. Involving pupils and parents and conducting a longitudinal study might therefore be beneficial for future research on teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. Secondly, analysis of each item on the school, classroom and individual levels of the OBPP could provide more specific indications of not only the intensity, but also the quality of OBPP measures. Consequently, this may help to strengthen teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying. For example, there is a difference between teachers limiting Olweus class meetings to the communication of knowledge about bullying, and teachers using scenarios and role-playing as effective methods to demonstrate and address various bullying processes among pupils. Thus, in order to develop a more comprehensive view on teachers' practices to prevent school bullying through whole-school approach anti-bullying programmes, additional comparative research in countries other than Lithuania and Norway is needed. Despite these limitations, it is assumed that the current study contributes to research about teacher practices aimed at preventing school bullying, more specifically by indicating measures that could be strengthened in order to reduce school bullying incidents and develop a safe learning environment in schools.

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