

## Effectiveness of School Police Officer Engagement in Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Belgrade Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** Engagement of school police officers (SPOs) within the Serbian education system is an important element of school's cooperation with the environment in bullying prevention and intervention. However, there is a lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of SPO engagement. For this reason, this paper presents the results of a research on the current state of SPO engagement and the perception of the effectiveness of SPO engagement in bullying prevention and intervention by students and members of the Team for protection, conducted in 19 Belgrade secondary schools during 2020/2021 school year. The data on the current state of engagement were collected through observation, while the data on perceptions of effectiveness were collected through interviews with 44 members of the Team for protection and a survey of 1,526 students. In terms of bullying prevention, this research has shown that SPO engagement has the potential to be effective by achieving a deterrent effect, but only if SPOs are present at the time when the risk of bullying incidents is the highest. In terms of bullying intervention, the results indicate that although SPOs are willing to intervene, their engagement is not effective as only a small number of victims ask them for protection in bullying cases and only in 30% of cases SPO managed to help. The implication of this research refers to the need to improve the interaction between students and SPOs, primarily by strengthening SPO's educational role and providing SPOs with adequate training to perform their duties in school.

**Keywords:** bullying, school police officer, secondary schools, school security.

### INTRODUCTION

The *School Police Officer Project* in Serbia was launched in 2002 by the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of the Interior, with three specific objectives: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary objective was to increase security in schools and ensure the smooth running of the educational process. The secondary objective was to strengthen citizens' trust in the work of the police, to increase the level and quality of the safety culture in the community and to improve cooperation between citizens and the police. The

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tertiary objective was related to defining a comprehensive safety platform to improve the overall safety situation in schools and in the community (Spasić & Kekić, 2012).

School Police Officers (SPOs) in Serbia can be compared to the best researched form of school policing in the world, namely School Resource Officers (SROs) in the USA. SROs are police officers assigned to schools and have a threefold role defined by the so-called triad model, which includes teaching (educators), informal counselling, and law enforcement. SROs can educate students, teachers, and parents on a variety of topics, such as alcohol and drug abuse awareness and traffic safety. The role of informal counselling may include activities such as maintaining an “open door” policy with students, conducting counselling sessions, referring students to social services, legal aid, community services, and public health services. Finally, the role of law enforcement may include patrolling the school, handling calls to the police, making arrests, issuing citations, and developing emergency plans (Canady et al., 2012). Unlike SROs in the USA, the role of SPOs in Serbia is limited to law enforcement with an emphasis on preventative duties focused on the following: (1) collecting and analysing data on situations that threaten the safety of participants in the educational process; (2) timely notifying the superior police officer, school officials, or local community representatives of incidents that threaten safety; and (3) undertaking appropriate action to eliminate sources of threat to the safety of participants in the educational process. SPOs intervene only when it is really necessary and to protect students and school property (Milojević et al., 2017).

One of the most serious security risks for schools in Serbia is school violence, and its most widespread form is bullying. Considering the fact that bullying, due to its prevalence, duration and negative consequences, endangers the psychophysical health of students (Armitage, 2021) and in the long term disrupts the environment necessary for achieving the educational goals of the school (Laith & Vaillancourt, 2022), bullying prevention and intervention is one of the priorities in creating a safe school. The phenomenon of bullying has been systematically researched for almost half a century. Although there is no single definition, theory has identified three main characteristics that make bullying a particular form of school violence. These are: (1) the intention to harm or injure another person; (2) repetitiveness, i.e., the repetition of the violent behaviour towards the same person; and (3) the power imbalance between the person perpetrating violence and the person harmed (Olweus, 1993: 9). In the well-known classification of students' roles in bullying, students who perpetrate violence are referred to as bullies, while students who are subjected to violence are referred to as victims (Olweus, 1993). In order to prevent and intervene all forms of violence in schools, including bullying, a comprehensive model has been developed in the Serbian education system. The measures within the model are defined by a special Protocol (Pravilnik o Protokolu postupanja u ustanovi u odgovoru na nasilje, zlostavljanje i zanemarivanje, 2019) adopted by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia. Within this model, the SPO engagement is an important element of the school's cooperation with the environment in bullying prevention and intervention.

Considering that there was no research on SPO engagement in the context of bullying prevention and intervention, there was a need to conduct research on this subject. In response to this need, this paper presents research on the effectiveness of SPO in bullying prevention and intervention in Belgrade secondary schools, which was conducted as part of a larger study described in the methodology section. In this regard, the objective of the



research was twofold: (1) to assess the extent to which SPOs were engaged in Belgrade secondary schools, and (2) to assess whether and if so, how the SPO engagement contributed to bullying prevention and intervention.

## METHODS

### *PARTICIPANTS*

In accordance with the defined subject and objective of the research, it was necessary to first assess the current state of SPO engagement in a representative number of schools. Accordingly, the research was conducted in 19 schools of the Belgrade Statistical Region in 2020/2021 school year. The schools were stratified by type of municipality and by area of work: 13 schools were from urban and 6 schools from suburban municipalities, including 7 grammar schools and 12 vocational schools.

In the absence of longitudinal studies, the only way to assess the effectiveness of SPO engagement is to examine perceptions of the effectiveness. Accordingly, the primary source of data were the students and those school staff members who bear the greatest burden in dealing with the bullying problem, namely the members of the Team for protection from discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect (Team for protection). The sample included 1,526 students in grades II, III and IV and 44 members of the Team for protection, including 25 teachers, 11 pedagogists and 8 psychologists.

### *RESEARCH PROCEDURE, INSTRUMENTS AND DATA ANALYSIS*

This research was part of a larger study on the effectiveness of the bullying prevention and intervention model applied in schools in Serbia and used cross-sectional data. Data on the current state of SPO engagement were collected through observation. Based on the relevant regulations of the Republic of Serbia and good research practice in this field, a special instrument was created for conducting a larger study – *Protocol for Assessment of Physical Safety of Schools*, which is based on checklists of physical safety indicators. One of the indicators represented the state of SPO engagement and was related to the presence or absence of a particular feature, with the response options: *Yes*, *No*, and *No staff*. Data on the effectiveness of SPO engagement were collected through a survey and a semi-structured interview. The survey was used to collect data on student perceptions. The questions related to SPO engagement were part of the instrument *Bullying Questionnaire for Secondary School Students*, which was created for the purpose of the survey to assess the nature and intensity of bullying, as well as psychological safety in school. For the purposes of this research, a set of three questions was used. The first question referred to whether the victims asked someone for protection in bullying cases. The second question referred to the categories of persons the victims asked for protection. The list of categories of persons included: *teacher*, *pedagogist/psychologist*, *SPO*, *parent/guardian* and *peer*. In the context of the third question, the victims gave answers about the specific reactions of the SPO in cases when the victims asked them for protection. A semi-structured interview was conducted with the members of the Team for protection. The questions related to SPO engagement were part of the in-



strument *Guide for Interviews with Members of the Team for Protection*, which was created for the purpose of interviews related to the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention measures in school. For the purposes of this research, a set of two questions was used. Within the first question, the interviewees were asked to give their view on whether and if so, how SPO engagement contributed to bullying prevention and intervention. The second question gave the interviewees the opportunity to express their views on the main problems of SPO engagement and to suggest possible solutions to these problems. During the interview, additional questions were asked, depending on how the conversation progressed, in order to obtain clarification or a more specific and detailed answer.

Descriptive statistical techniques (normal and absolute numbers) were used to analyse the data collected through observation and survey. The Chi-square test was used as an inferential statistics technique for the additional analysis of the data collected through the survey. Statistical data processing was conducted using *SPSS 20.0* software package. The method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was used to analyse the data collected in the interviews. All methodological procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (Law and Economics) of the author's institution and accepted by the principals of each school in the sample.

## RESULTS

In accordance with the defined subject and objectives of the research, as well as the applied research methodology, the results related to the current status of SPO engagement, which were obtained through observation, are presented first, followed by the results on the perception of the effectiveness of SPO engagement, which were obtained through surveys and interviews.

The results related to the current state of SPO engagement are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Current State of SPO Engagement in the Observed Schools*

		f	%
Is an SPO engaged in the school?	Yes	16	84.2%
	No	3	15.8%
Does SPO monitor students during school breaks?	Yes	4	21.1%
	No	12	63.2%
	No staff	3	15.8%
Does SPO monitor students between two shifts?	Yes	0	0.0%
	No	16	84.2%
	No staff	3	15.8%



SPOs were engaged in the majority (84.2%) of the observed schools. At the same time, SPOs only monitored students during school breaks in 25% of schools, while they did not monitor students between shifts in any school.

When it comes to the perception of the effectiveness of SPO engagement, the results are first presented in relation to the perception of the students/victims. Of the total number of victims, 148 (43.5%) asked someone for protection, while 192 (56.5%) did not. In terms of asking specific persons for protection, most victims turned to a teacher, while the fewest of them turned to an SPO – 84 (56.8%) victims turned to a teacher, 56 (37.8%) to a school psychologist/pedagogist, 48 (32.4%) to a parent/guardian, 45 (30.4%) to a peer, while only 20 (13.5%) turned to an SPO. Based on the results of the Chi-square test, a statistically significant association was found between asking an SPO for protection and the victims' sex (Table 2). Boys were significantly more likely to ask an SPO for protection than girls. On the other hand, no association was found between asking an SPO for protection and the victims' grade (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Asking SPOs for Protection and the Victims' Sex

	Sex				Chi-square test	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%		
SPO	Yes	36	72.0%	83	93.3%	$\chi^2 = 11.745$ , df = 1, p = 0.001*;
	No	14	28.0%	6	6.7%	

Note: \*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 3.** Asking SPOs for Protection and the Victims' Grade

	Grade						Chi-square test	
	II		III		IV			
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
SPO	Yes	26	86.7%	51	89.5%	51	83.6%	$\chi^2 = 0.869$ , df = 2, p = 0.648
	No	4	13.3%	6	10.5%	10	16.4%	

Note: \*Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Of the victims who asked an SPO for protection, 10 (50%) stated that the SPO did nothing, 6 (30%) stated that the SPO managed to help them, while 4 (20%) victims stated that the SPO tried to help them but without success.



Regarding the perceptions of the members of the Team for protection, three themes were identified based on the thematic analysis of their answers, namely: *SPO contribution to solving the bullying problem*, *Problems in SPO engagement* and *Solutions to problems in SPO engagement*. The corresponding classification of codes into categories and themes and the frequency of occurrence of the codes within the themes are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Classification of Themes, Categories and Codes and Frequency of Occurrence of Codes and Categories

Themes	Categories	Codes
SPO contribution to solving the bullying problem	SPO contributes (39)	Deterrence effect (35) Perception of school safety (4)
	SPO does not contribute (8)	Engagement is only formal (5) Limited powers (3)
Problems in SPO engagement	Insufficient human resources (31)	Insufficient number of SPOs (25) There is no SPO in the school (3) SPO tasks are not clear (3)
	Non-compliance with obligations (3)	Non-compliance with obligation to be on duty (3)
Solutions to problems in the SPO engagement	Engaging more SPOs (36)	One SPO - one school (29) SPO in both shifts (5) SPO in every school (2)
	Expansion of the SPO's field of action (5)	Educational role (3) Extension of powers (2)

Within the theme *SPO contribution to solving the bullying problem*, two categories were identified, namely: (1) SPO contributes; and (2) SPO does not contribute. More than four-fifths of the Team members think that SPO engagement contributes to bullying prevention and intervention. The research recorded cases in the same school that some Team members thought that SPO engagement contributed, while others thought that it did not.

*SPO contributes.* In the narratives of the Team members who think that SPO engagement contributes to bullying prevention and intervention, the deterrent effect and the perception of school safety are mentioned as specific ways of contribution.

When it comes to the deterrent effect, two aspects are emphasized in the narratives of the Team members. On the one hand, the mere presence of SPO in certain places in the school during breaks prevents students from perpetrating bullying. This aspect can be illustrated by the following statements:

*SPO is a kind of authority for students. Therefore, they are less likely to get into conflicts when he is present.*

*He helps to raise students' awareness of control and prevention of violence escalation.*



*The mere presence of a police officer, regular monitoring and control of school premises at key time points of the school day (start of lessons, long breaks, middle of shift, and the end of afternoon shift) helps to prevent any violent situation.*

On the other hand, SPO prevents students from perpetrating bullying by timely identifying potentially problematic behaviour:

*The policeman warns the students, if necessary, so that the situation does not escalate.*

*It is obvious that he contributes, because he can recognize the violent behaviour of students and some situations that are potentially risky for the occurrence of violence.*

In terms of perceptions of school safety, Team members indicate that SPO engagement helps students feel safe at school:

*It contributes because students feel safer.*

*SPO does not contribute.* Two main reasons for such a perception can be identified in the narratives of the Team members. The first relates to the fact that SPO engagement is only formal, and the narratives of the Team members point to the practice that SPOs' presence in the school is not regular. The second reason refers to limited powers of SPOs to act in the bullying prevention and intervention. These reasons can be illustrated by the following statements:

*We have an SPO only on paper. However, he is responsible for three schools. Sometimes he shows up, leaves a contact phone, and when some bedlam happens, we as a school have already solved the problem by the time I get to him.*

*SPO has such limited powers that it's hard to believe. On the one hand he is there, but on the other, he is devalued. We had a situation here: a student wanted to hit another student with a glass bottle and the teacher held this other student behind her back and they walked slowly down the stairs while the SPO stood at the foot of the stairs and could not do anything.*

Within the theme *Problems in SPO engagement*, two categories were identified, namely: (1) insufficient human resources; and (2) non-compliance with obligations.

*Insufficient human resources.* Three specific problems with insufficient human resources are mentioned in the narratives of the Team members. The first relates to the insufficient number of SPOs. Team members point out that SPOs are often engaged in two or three schools, so they are present only during one shift. This problem can be illustrated by the following statements:

*The biggest problem is that he is present in our school, but he is on duty in three schools, so he does not cover the afternoon shift, which is the most critical.*

*The biggest problem is that one SPO cannot cover two shifts of the school day.*

The second problem arises from the fact that the school does not engage SPO at all:

*The problem is that we currently do not have SPO and we really miss him. Nobody from the police wants to do it; there are no bonuses, no extra paid tasks. It's completely irrelevant to them.*



The third problem mentioned by Team members is that the SPO tasks are not clear:

*The role of the SPO is not particularly visible because, apart from walking around, it's not clear what his job is.*

*Non-compliance with obligations.* Team members highlight a following phenomenon that they consider to be non-compliance with the obligation: SPOs are often not present in the school, and even when they are, they do not monitor and control the school premises. This phenomenon can be illustrated by the following statements:

*He does not come regularly, so he is not on duty regularly.*

*It would make more sense for the SPO to move around the school premises and the immediate vicinity of the school during his shift, and especially during the long school break, than to just sit in the school during his shift.*

Within the theme *Solutions to problems in the SPO engagement*, two categories are identified, namely: (1) engaging more SPOs; and (2) expansion of the field of SPO action.

*Engaging more SPOs.* There are three lines of suggestion in the narratives of the Team members. The first implies that an SPO should only be engaged in one school, especially during the afternoon shift:

*Engaging an SPO who would only be in our school and when the school needs him. So, one SPO in one school. He should also be available during the afternoon shift.*

The second line refers to the SPO engagement in both shifts:

*It would be good if he covers the second shift and only covers our school.*

The third line is SPO engagement in each school, i.e., including schools that currently do not have an SPO:

*Since our school does not engage an SPO, this could be changed and also help to solve the bullying problem. The mere presence of SPO in the school would be a bullying prevention measure.*

*Expansion of the SPO's field of action.* Some Team members suggest expanding the SPO's field of action in two directions. On the one hand, they suggest that SPOs should play a stronger educational role, and on the other hand, that SPOs should be given more powers in bullying interventions. These suggestions can be illustrated by the following statements:

*SPOs could from time to time educate students on issues related to alcohol and drug abuse as well as child safety in the virtual world.*

*They should be given the power to actually do something. Now they can listen to students, maybe take a statement from them in the presence of their parents if they are minors, and that's it. And if something really happens, the intervention unit comes, not the SPO.*

## DISCUSSION

The state of the SPO engagement shows that they are not present during the entire school day. This fact was identified by the members of the Team for protection as the main problem with SPO engagement. In some schools, SPOs are not engaged at all, and in most





schools, they are present only during one shift. Even then, they are not present for the entire duration of the shift because they are engaged in several schools. Furthermore, in most schools, SPOs do not patrol the entire school area and are not present during school breaks and between shifts, when students are mixed and the risk of bullying incidents is the highest. With this in mind, the members of the Team for protection suggest to increase the number of SPOs so that they are present in all schools during both shifts. Such a suggestion is not new, as it was put forward by school staff more than a decade ago (Spasić & Kekić, 2012).

After the Belgrade school shooting and the mass shooting in Dubona and Malo Orašje in May 2023, the President of Serbia announced an increase in the number of SPOs so that “in addition to security personnel, there will almost always be a police officer in the school until we reach the point within a year that he will always be in the school”. Announcing this measure, the President predicted that it would “increase safety by 99%, but also reduce bullying by 80%” (Tanjug News Agency official, 2023), suggesting that the increased number of SPOs would have a positive effect on school safety. School staff and Serbian policy makers agreed that there was a need to increase the number of SPOs in schools. However, the question arises as to whether such a measure is effective in preventing violence in schools, especially bullying. This question can be discussed based on previous experiences of the effectiveness of increased presence of SROs in schools in the USA.

First of all, quantitative research on the effects of the presence of SROs in schools is limited for three main reasons: (1) lack of publicly available administrative data on SRO personnel in schools (Sorensen et al., 2023); (2) lack of comprehensive nationwide statistics on SRO performance (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018); and (3) methodological limitations that lead to some conflicting results that can be interpreted differently (Cornell et al., 2021; Devlin & Gottfredson, 2018). Despite high levels of public funding of SROs and years of research, much remains unknown about the effectiveness of their engagement (Gottfredson et al., 2020). In this context, a recent study concludes that “we simply do not know whether adding law enforcement officers to school settings increases safety, decreases safety, or makes no difference, at least specifically to firearm violence” (Flannery et al., 2021). However, there are some studies that allow conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of the increased presence of SROs in schools. Some studies show that increased presence of SROs is effective in reducing some forms of violence, such as non-gun-related physical assaults (Sorensen et al., 2023; Theriot, 2016). In addition, the presence of SROs increased the detection of drug-related offenses (Owens, 2017; Zhang, 2019). Although positive effects of SROs in terms of reducing student gun possession were reported (Theriot, 2016), the increased presence of SROs has not prevented gun-related incidents (Sorensen et al., 2023). Most importantly for our subject, research has shown that the increased presence of SROs has no effect on bullying (Broll & Lafferty, 2018; Devlin et al., 2018; Gerlinger & Wo, 2014; Kupchik & Farina, 2016). On the other hand, the presence of SROs in schools resulted in more crimes being reported to law enforcement compared to schools without a police presence (Devlin & Gottfredson, 2018), and school records indicate that the increased presence of SROs was particularly associated with an increase in drug- and gun-related offenses (Gottfredson et al., 2020). However, it was not always possible to determine whether the effects of the presence of SROs were due to increased student misbehaviour, increased detection of misbehaviour, or improved record keeping (Cornell et al., 2021).



In terms of perceptions of the effectiveness of SPO engagement in bullying prevention and intervention, our research showed that they differed significantly between members of the Team for protection and students. More than four-fifths of the Team members perceive the SPO engagement as effective, which is consistent with the findings of previous research in Serbia showing that the majority of school staff feel safer when the SPO is present (Janković et al., 2023; Milojević et al., 2017; Spasić & Kekić, 2012). Studies on the SRO engagement in the USA show similar results (Fisher et al., 2020; Maeng et al., 2023). On the other hand, small number of victims asking SPOs for protection and the lack of adequate protection in 70% of cases indicate that students do not perceive SPO engagement as effective. Similar results were shown in a recent study from Serbia, which found that less than 13% of students always turn to the SPO in situations where unpleasant things happen (Janković et al., 2023). However, considering previous research, such results were not to be expected. Previous research in Serbia showed that students of both primary and secondary schools felt safer when SPOs were present in school (Milojević et al., 2017; Spasić & Kekić, 2012). In terms of experiences in the USA, older studies found no significant relationship between students' interactions with SROs and their feelings of safety (Theriot & Orme, 2014), but more recent studies show that the presence of SROs improves students' perceptions of safety (Curran et al., 2021; Pentek & Eisenberg, 2018).

Our research indicates that the level of interaction between SPOs and students is low, and this situation is not unique to secondary schools in Belgrade (Janković et al., 2023). The level of interaction is an important element in the effectiveness of SPO/SRO engagement, as students who have more interactions with SROs have a more positive attitude towards them (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016), especially when the SRO is in the role of an educator (Theriot, 2016). Furthermore, in schools where SROs have a teaching and counselling role, fewer non-serious violent crimes, such as assaults without weapons, were recorded (Fisher & Devlin, 2020). SPOs in Serbia also have a certain educational role. They have participated in more than 3,000 lectures in schools and more than 2,000 other educational meetings with students and school staff every year (Milojević et al., 2017). However, considering the total number of schools in Serbia, the average number of these activities is 2–3 per school per year, which is not enough to achieve the necessary level of interaction with students. A small number of members of the Team for protection recognize this fact as a problem and in this context suggest strengthening the SPO's educational role. It is important to point out that adequate training of SROs in terms of understanding and communicating with young people plays a key role in improving interactions with students (Clark, 2011; Counts et al., 2018). However, there is no organized professional training for SPOs in Serbia (Milojević et al., 2017). More than half of them did not complete any specific training, slightly more than 5% completed a certain course and about 40% attended a one- or two-day seminar (Janković et al., 2023). In addition, there are no tests to determine whether someone has certain knowledge and skills, but everything is based on the free assessment of senior police officers. Another problem is that no further specific training is provided after selection (Milojević et al., 2017; Spasić & Kekić, 2012). However, this is not only the problem for SPOs in Serbia, but also for SROs in the USA, who receive minimal training on how to understand and communicate with adolescents (Fix et al., 2021; Martinez-Prather et al., 2016).



## CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the results of this research, it can be concluded that SPO engagement has both positive and negative sides in terms of effectiveness in bullying prevention and intervention. The potential for bullying prevention through the achievement of a deterrent effect can be seen as a positive side. The deterrent effect is consistent with the main principles of deterrence theory (Maxson et al., 2005), according to which crime is deterred when sanctions are certain, swift and severe. In this context, it can be assumed that the presence of SPOs in the school would increase the rate and likelihood of these sanctions occurring. Although most members of the Team for protection think that the deterrent effect is already in place, the actual situation in this regard can only be assessed by conducting longitudinal studies. On the other hand, the negative side is the fact that SPOs are not present in the school to a sufficient extent. As they are engaged in several schools during the day, they are often not present at the time when the risk of bullying incidents is highest. When it comes to bullying intervention, the willingness of SPOs to intervene in cases where victims ask for protection can be seen as a positive side. On the other hand, there are two main negative sides in this regard – the first relates to the fact that an extremely small number of victims asked for protection and the second is that SPOs did not intervene in half of these cases. Possible reasons for this could be the generally low level of interaction between students and SPOs and the lack of adequate training of SPOs to perform their duties in school. Most members of the Team for protection are of the opinion that the main direction to solve the problem should be to increase the number and presence of SPOs in schools. After the mass shootings in May 2023, Serbian policy makers agreed with this opinion. However, such a measure in and of itself has no empirically proven potential for effectiveness.

In light of the above, the main implication of this research refers to the need to improve the interaction between students and SPOs. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen SPO's educational role, which has been empirically proven to have the potential both to increase the level of interaction with students and to prevent certain forms of school violence. It is important to point out that this role requires the skills possessed by teachers (Javdani, 2019), which is why it is necessary to provide SPOs with adequate training in terms of understanding and communicating with young people, which is currently lacking.

There are two limitations to this research. The first limitation relates to the fact that the research used a cross-sectional design, which was helpful in identifying correlations between variables but limited in drawing conclusions about causality. In this regard, longitudinal studies that collect data at multiple intervals during the school year or over multiple years are needed to clarify causal relationships. Another limitation relates to the fact that the effectiveness of SPO engagement is only concluded based on the perceptions of students and members of the Team for protection. In order to obtain more objective empirical findings, it is necessary to conduct research that involves quasi-experimental methods with a comparison group (Javdani, 2019). In fact, surveys of students in schools without SPOs would be helpful to obtain comparative data on the prevalence of bullying in schools that do not engage the SPOs.



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