



## Bullying in gifted and talented children: A systematic review

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### Abstract

The objective of this study was to carry out a systematic review of the research works that have analyzed bullying in gifted and talented children. The search was conducted in psychology and education databases (Scopus), considering works from the past 14 years (2009-2022). The research method used is the systematic literature review (SLR) method; the data is analyzed qualitatively, referring to the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and data validation. The search string in this study is "bullying," AND "gifted," OR "talented," OR "children." The articles that have been selected are then mapped and codified with Nvivo 12 Pro. The results showed that gifted and talented children in early childhood institutions are more likely to be victims of bullying by their peers due to their unique characteristics and superior cognitive functions. Bullying behavior commonly experienced by gifted children takes the form of insults referring to their intelligence, comments about their appearance, or academic qualifications. Therefore, teachers play an essential role in creating a positive environment, rewarding high academic achievement, and conducting early identification. This study highlights the educational stakeholders' need to provide training or specific actions to the managers of early childhood institutions related to the prevention of bullying in gifted and talented children.

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**Keywords:** Bullying; Gifted and Talented Children; Superior Cognitive Functions; Victims of Bullying

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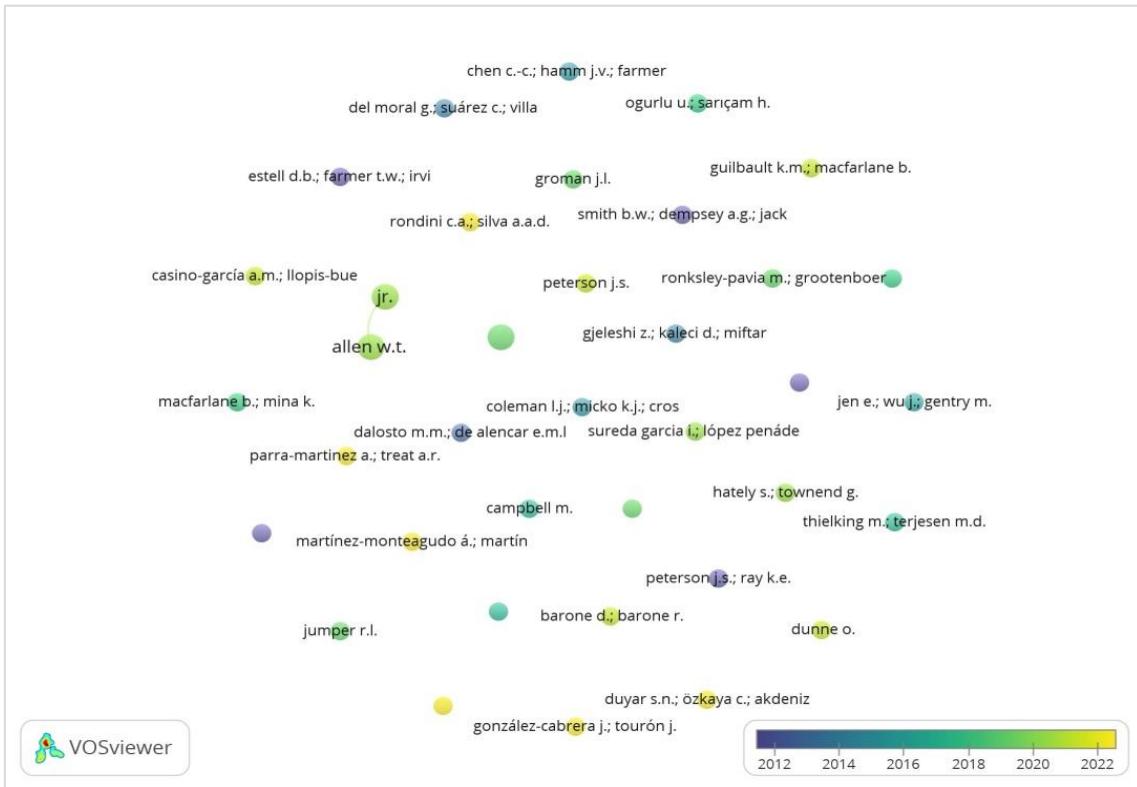
## A. INTRODUCTION

Bullying has now become a significant problem in educational institutions (Vlachou et al., 2011; Rebecca, 2023), including in early childhood education units. Deliberate and persistent bullying by individuals or groups who consider themselves more powerful causes adverse effects (Douvlos, 2019; Mahriza et al., 2021; Vlachou et al., 2013; Brank et al., 2012). Bullying in childhood consists of harmful behaviors, such as when someone intentionally hurts or tries to hurt another person through physical contact, words, or actions through various techniques, such as intentionally making vulgar body expressions or movements for a group (Saracho, 2016; Anggraeni & Muchlisin, 2023). According to other perspectives, bullying can occur in various forms, including relational, sexual, physical, and verbal abuse (Syafril et al., 2020). The characteristics of children who are vulnerable to being victims of bullying are the youngest child in school, traumatized children, obedient children, children who do not like fighting, shy children, rich or poor children, race, children whose ethnicity is looked down upon by the perpetrator, children who are talented, smart or lucky, the child's weight, a child who is misplaced at the wrong time (Ayuni, 2021).

The main issue in this research is gifted children who have intellectual progress but have yet to develop social skills fully. This variation makes them more vulnerable to bullying and isolation than children who are not considered gifted (Smith et al., 2012). Most gifted students become direct victims of bullying because gifted children appear different in the eyes of their peers. Gifted children are seen as different because they are more intellectually advanced than their peers and can attract teachers' attention (González-Cabrera Tour & Machimbarrena, 2019). Robinson (2002) suggests that gifted and talented children often struggle to thrive or interact with their peers and are vulnerable to bullying (Barone & Barone, 2021; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Moreover, gifted children prefer to work alone (Cross, 2021).

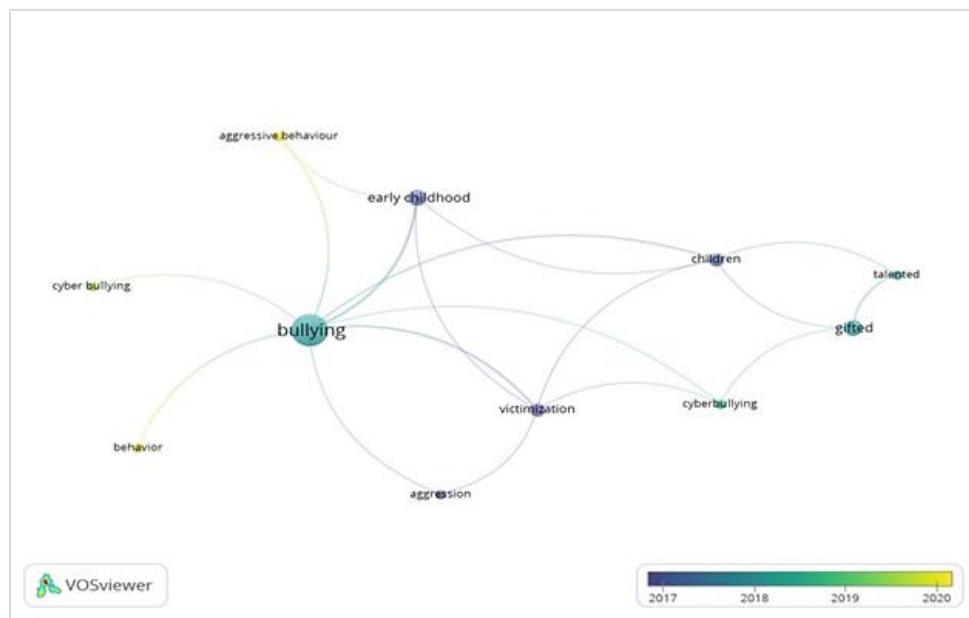
Bullying in gifted and talented children is influenced by the child's family, friends and school (Connell et al., 2015; Navarro et al., 2022; Qian et al., 2020; Yusof et al., 2020; Rigby, 2022). Bullying can occur in all groups of children, regardless of age, gender, class or religious affiliation, and one group of children theoretically vulnerable to bullying is gifted children (Jumper, 2019). Bullying can jeopardize a child's social, emotional and physical development if it continues and is not addressed. The impact is felt by the victim, the perpetrator, and those around them (Saracho, 2016; Widaningtyas, 2022).

Research on bullying has often been carried out by previous researchers, several figures who conducted research related to bullying, as shown in the following figure 1:



**Figure 1.** Figures researching bullying

Several figures have researched bullying related to gifted and talented in general elementary, middle, high school and adolescents (Reunamo et al., 2015; Charalampous et al., 2018; Vlachou et al., 2013; Ryoo et al., 2017; Martínez-monteagudo & Delgado, 2023; Peters & Bain, 2011; Peterson & Ray, 2015; Saracho, 2016a; Jumper, 2009; Allen & Jr, 2017) attribute bullying in gifted and primarily talented to interactions, the impact of parents' longitudinal style, multimethod approaches, frequency statistics and transitions of growing trends, cyberbullying in gifted and talented, gender, has a broad impact on both perpetrators and victims. Based on the Scopus database, previous research uses several keywords that refer to research on bullying and gifted children, among the keywords used by previous researchers as shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2.** Some keywords that refer to bullying and gifted children by world researchers (Scopus database)

Based on the analysis of the Scopus database that researchers conducted since January 2024, 40 studies were found on bullying in gifted and talented children worldwide. Research that links the keywords "bullying" and "gifted" and "talented" is found in several countries: the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Spain, Central Asia, and Slovakia. Research in these countries' links bullying and gifted children with bullying and children's morals, bullying and social-emotional, bullying and stress, bullying and mental health problems, bullying and cyberbullying. In Indonesia, no research examines bullying and gifted children. Studies only discuss one topic at a time without linking the two (Widaningtyas, 2022; Utami et al., 2023; Syafril et al., 2020). Based on previous research, research has yet to be found that links bullying behavior in gifted and talented children, so this research was conducted because it still needs to be researched in Indonesia. The problem in this study is that gifted children are vulnerable to being victims of bullying because they have high knowledge, appear different, have difficulty socializing with their peers, tend to like to do their work, and have physical differences (González-Cabrera Tour & Machimbarrena, 2019; Smith et al., 2012; Barone & Barone, 2021; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims to review bullying behavior in gifted and talented children.

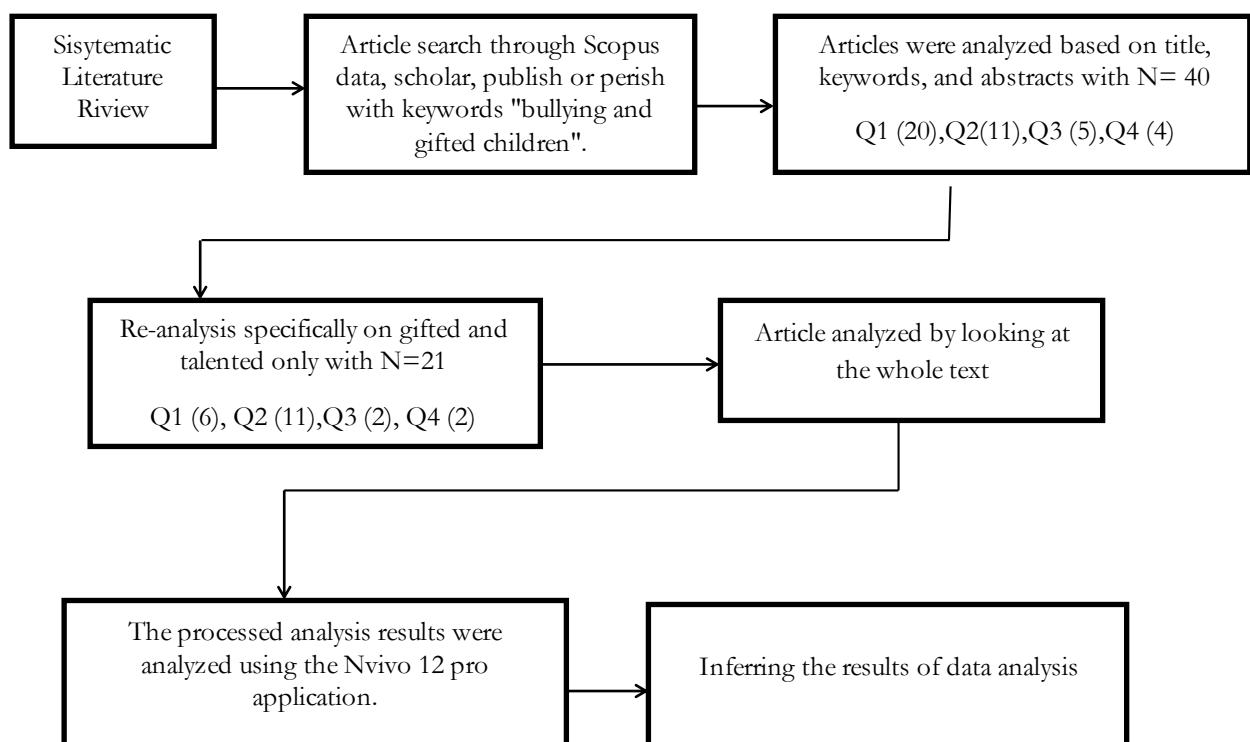
## B. METHOD

The research method uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and Nvivo 12 Pro software data analysis steps. There are four stages commonly used in data processing using NVivo software. First is the data input stage. Second is the stage of coding research data, in the form of data results from online scientific articles, data in online magazines, and the like. Third is the visualization stage or the stage of displaying schematic images of the results of the coding that has been done. Fourth is the stage of drawing conclusions based on the resulting visualization image. The design of this method is carried out by conducting a process of identifying, reviewing, evaluating and interpreting all available research.

Through the SLR method, researchers systematically review and identify journals in each process following predetermined steps (Putra & Afrilia, 2020; Triandini et al., 2019). Search strings are required for more specific searches and to avoid filtering too large numbers. The search strategy was carried out in each database, using the following combination of terms: "bullying" AND "gifted" OR "talented" OR "children." In the following process, the titles and abstracts of the articles were first examined to determine whether the research was relevant (Kerres & Bedenlier, 2020).

Data is collected by documenting all articles obtained in this literature review article. The number of articles that have been collected is 21, and all articles are obtained from international journals obtained from the Scopus database. The articles analyzed are of good quality, namely articles Q1, Q2 and so on; all articles have relevance to the topic being studied, namely bullying in gifted and talented children. The articles that have been collected are then analyzed and tabulated in a table in the form of the researcher's name, year of publication, journal name, and study results. The research results are presented as a whole about the research topic.

The data analysis used by researchers is the interactive model analysis by Milles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and data validation. Data reduction involves summarizing and focusing on the critical aspects of the research. This stage focuses on the bullying behavior of gifted and talented children. Data presentation provides a narrative overview of all information found during field research activities. Data validation is the final stage that helps researchers formulate the overall conclusion of the data to be addressed.



**Figure 3:** Research Implementation Process

The research implementation process includes the following stages: 1). Researchers searched for articles through Scopus data, scholar, publish or perish using the keywords "Bullying and Gifted Children." 2). Articles were analyzed based on titles, keywords, and abstracts, so researchers obtained 40 articles with a reputation of Q1 totaling 20 articles, Q2 totaling 11 articles, Q3 totaling five articles, and Q4 totaling four articles. 3). Re-analyzing specifically only on gifted and talented amounted to 21 reputable journals: Q1 amounted to 6 articles, Q2 amounted to 11 articles, Q3 amounted to 2 articles, and Q4 amounted to 2 articles, 4). articles analyzed by looking at the entire content of the text, 5). The results were re-analyzed using the Nvivo 12 Pro application by giving labor groups, mapping, and coding. 6). Concluding the results of data analysis.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Result

Based on the analysis of 21 article documents, findings were obtained related to bullying behavior in gifted and talented children who are seen as having high knowledge, appearing different, having difficulty socializing with their peers, tending to like to do their work, physical differences and having an obedient attitude towards their peers. Researchers use the following data sources:

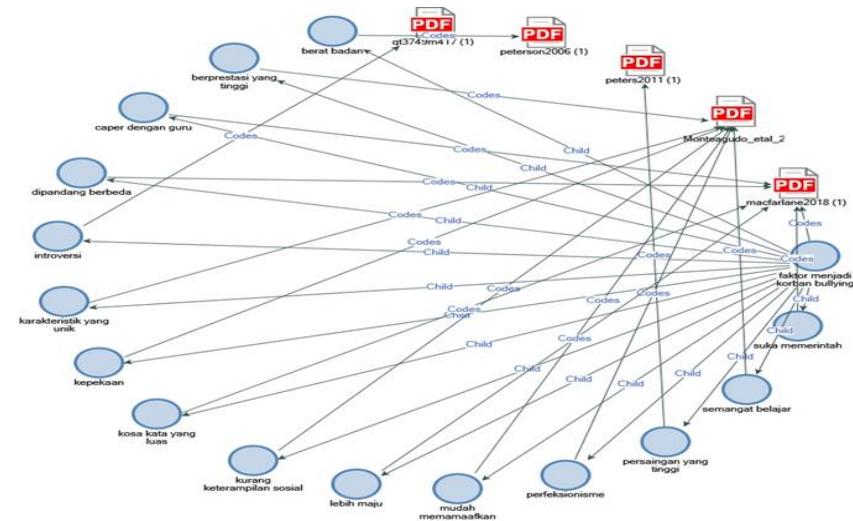
**Table 1. Data Sources**

Researcher and Year	Journal	Q	Research Results
Rachel Leah (2019)	Gifted education international	Q4	More gifted children (39.4%) told their friends they were bullied.
Pelchar and Bain (2014)	Journal for the Education of the Gifted	Q2	Grade 4 gifted children aged 9-10 years had experienced bullying—types of bullying by gender.
Jennifer Riedl Salib (2015)	W&M scholarworks	Q3	At an early age, giftedness can be an advantage in peer relationships, although gifted girls were the least liked in a study.
Jennifer L. Groman, Ph.D. (2019)	gifted Child Today	Q2	Using depth psychology, visual arts, and writing, the students constructed bullies and victims using shredded paper and wrote from the perspective of the bully and victim.
Jumper RL (2019)	Gifted education international	Q4	Gifted students who are bullied weekly are more likely to talk to adults, which is an essential consideration for families and schools because disclosures of bullying to adults from gifted students may indicate that bullying is more widespread in these children.
Bronwyn MacFarlane, PhD, dan Keri Mina, EdD (2018)	Gifted child today	Q2	Children are usually bullied because they are different in the eyes of their peers. Gifted children, in particular, may be viewed differently in different stages of development.
Angela Martinez-Monteagudo, Maria Carmen Martinez-Monteagudo, Beatriz Delgado (2021)	Aggression and Violent Behavior	Q1	Academically gifted students have a higher risk of being victimized than non-gifted students and a lower risk of being bullied;
Conolly (2018)	Journal for the Education of the	Q2	Students suffer from depression, anger, and

Estell dkk. (2009)	Gifted Jurnal of child and family studies	Q2	frustration. Gifted students are perceived by their peers as less likely to be bullied than their peers with mild disabilities.
Joaquín González-Cabrera, Juan Manuel Machimbarrena, Jessica Ortega-Barón, Aitor Álvarez-Bardón (2019)	Quality of Life Research	Q1	50.9% were involved in bullying behavior, with 39.6% being victims, 1.1% being bullies, and 10.2% being victim-bullies.
Joaquín González-Cabrera,dkk (2019)	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Q2	25.1% of students classified themselves as pure cyber-victims, 3.9% as pure cyber-bullies, and 6.6% as pure cyber-victims or cyber-bullies.
Laffan dkk. (2022)	International Journal of Bullying Prevention	Q1	55.4% reported having experienced bullying at some point in their lives. 31.3% experienced cyberbullying. 67.7% were not involved, 27.2% were victims, 3.1% were bullying perpetrators, and 2.1% were perpetrators/victims.
Uzeyir Ogurlu, Hakan Sarışam (2018)	Jurnal of child and family studies	Q2	When faced with bullying, gifted children performed worse than non-gifted students. Gifted children showed a higher average in forgiveness.
Pears et al. (2019)	Gifted Child Quarterly	Q2	Gifted children perform better academically than their peers and are considered less violent. Gifted children are perceived to be self-sacrificing, so they are often victims of bullying.
Peters and Bain (2011)	Jurnal for the education of the gifted	Q2	There was no significant difference in victimization and bullying between gifted children and children with high academic achievement.
Peterson and Ray (2006a)	Gifted Child Quarterly	Q1	67% of children reported having experienced bullying during their time at school. The lowest prevalence was in early childhood education, while the highest prevalence was in Grade 6. 28% of respondents said they had experienced bullying by peers when they were at school.
Peterson and Ray (2006b)	Gifted Child Quarterly	Q1	Victims of bullying endure it in silence, try to understand it, stop it, eventually become desperate and start to have violent ideas start having violent ideas. Their intelligence makes it easy for them to recognize bullying.
Rondini and Almeida (2022)	Journal of Child and Family Studies	Q2	Qualities and beliefs do not seem to influence gifted children to have higher victimization rates and persistence of bullying.
Ryoo et al. (2017)	Exceptional Children	Q1	There is no variation in gifted and non-gifted children's bullying experiences. Gifted children who are often labeled as victims in elementary school are likely to become perpetrators of bullying in middle school.
Sarıçam and Çetinkaya (2018)	current issues in personality psychology	Q3	Gifted children show a much higher average victimization, retaliation and bullying than non-gifted children.
Sureda Garcia et al. (2020)	Gifted Child Quarterly	Q2	To compare the characteristics of characteristics of gifted and non-gifted

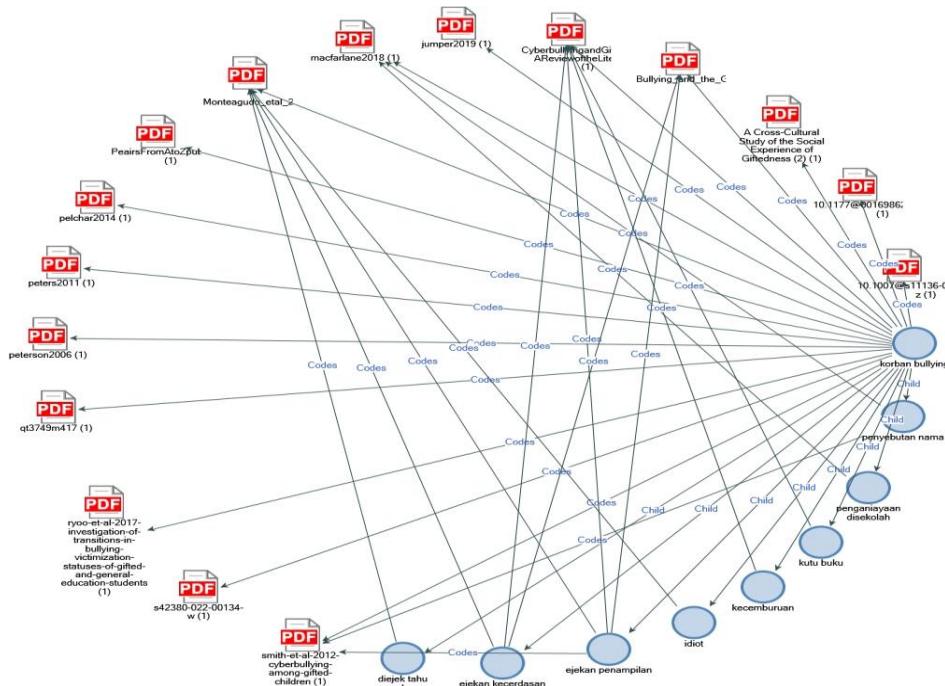
children in terms of internet addiction and cyberbullying (as victims or bullies).

The coding results produced themes about the factors that influence a person to become a victim of bullying. Influence, in this case, is defined as things that can support someone's bullying. These factors are presented in the project map in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Project map of factors for becoming a victim of bullying

The themes from the analysis of bullying behavior that occurs in gifted and talented children are shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Themes of bullying that occurs in gifted and talented children

## 2. Discussion

### a. *Gifted and talented children are vulnerable to bullying*

Perspective of the first research group showed that gifted and talented children have a higher risk of being victims of bullying due to specific characteristics of this group, such as perfectionism, sensitivity, asynchrony, high awareness of moral and ethical issues, mutual trust, strong individuality, motivation, weak internal locus of control, desire to learn or engage in academic work out of habit (Ogurlu, 2018; Sarıçam & Çetinkaya, 2018). Victimization and bullying rates are higher in gifted children and significantly lower in non-gifted children (Sarıçam & Çetinkaya, 2018). According to Cross et al. (1993), gifted children may exhibit bullying behavior when they absorb others' opinions. Delisle dan Galbraith (2002) identified eight major grievances of gifted children. One related to bullying is the ridicule of gifted children regarding their intelligence. Regarding the gender gap, girls are more likely to be victimized than boys.

The perspective of the second research group argues that academically gifted children are less likely to bully others. Their superior cognitive functioning allows them to successfully deal with emotional and social problems, which contributes to their reduced involvement in bullying behavior. Unlike non-gifted children, gifted children are seen as more prosocial and less aggressive (Estell et al., 2009; Peairs et al., 2019). In addition, it was found that gifted children who exhibit aggressive behavior do so in a more relational manner, directly demonstrating how they apply their exceptional cognitive abilities to perform such relational aggression. According to Clark (2013), gifted children exhibit several social-emotional traits that may be related to their propensity to forgive. These traits include high sensitivity, better emotional adaptability, a tendency towards idealism, high sensitivity to moral issues and values, understanding of good behavior, empathy, sensitivity to the rights and feelings of others, increased and decreased independence, conformist behavior, dominance of pushiness, and high social status (Ogurlu, 2018).

Furthermore, a third research group perspective states that gifted children have the same risk of being bullied or victimized as non-gifted children (Peters & Bain, 2011; Ryoo et al., 2017; Sureda Garcia et al., 2020). The incidence of victimization and bullying did not differ statistically significantly between the groups. 4.3% of gifted children in the sample were perpetrators of bullying, and 12.8% were victims, whereas 4.7% of the sample of gifted children were perpetrators of bullying, and 16% were victims. Similarly, there was no difference in the occurrence of bullying between boys and girls. There were statistically significant differences in the prevalence rates of aggression in both groups, as well as the transition patterns between them, but no differences were seen in bullying (Ryoo et al., 2017). In addition, it was found that children who were gifted bullies in secondary education were more likely to be identified as frequent victims in primary education (Sureda Garcia et al., 2020). Victimization was more common in the early childhood education phase (27%) and grade 6 elementary school (54%). Bullying was most common among

boys in grade 6 (54%) and decreased between grades 5-8, with girls' prevalence remaining stable at 38%-39%. Children do not report being victims of bullying (Peterson, Jean Sunde, 2006). In addition, bullying behavior by gifted children in grade 4 is much higher than that of gifted children in grade 5 (Pelchar & Bain, 2014). Connolly's (2018) research states that gifted children experience severe and long-lasting impacts from cyberbullying. However, it was found that gifted girls were worse off and more affected emotionally and academically. The main reasons for not reporting cyberbullying were control, gender, age, perceived harm, confidence, and previous reporting experience.

The findings of this study are in line with the research's results of González-Cabrera et al. (2019), who found that gifted children had been involved in various forms of bullying, victims of bullying, and perpetrators of bullying. However, gifted children had higher levels of cyberbullying and lower levels of bullying compared to other studies using general population samples. Characteristics and beliefs do not seem to influence the higher levels of victimization and bullying experienced by gifted children (Rondini & Silva, 2022). Results also show that most gifted children have experienced bullying and cyberbullying, respectively, at some point in their lives (Laffan et al., 2022).

These studies are more in line with the first perspective (more significant risk of being a victim and lower risk of being a bully (González-Cabrera Tour & Machimbarrena, 2019; González et al., 2019; Laffan et al., 2022; Pelchar & Bain, 2014; Peterson, Jean Sunde, 2006; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Connolly, 2018). It shows the tendency of gifted children to experience more bullying due to their unique characteristics. Benson (2009) emphasized the need for prevention and intervention activities; for example, providing adult mentors or peers for gifted children can help reduce their anxiety. According to Baron (2007), gifted children in schools should be grouped to help reduce feelings of social isolation or low self-esteem. Based on the results of this study, it is essential to reflect on studies that have corroborated that gifted children have a lower risk of exhibiting bullying behaviors. Their high cognitive level helps them cope effectively with social and emotional challenges, thus contributing to lower levels of involvement in bullying (Estell et al., 2009; Peairs et al., 2019).

### ***b. Bullying behavior in gifted and talented children***

Gifted and talented children are vulnerable to being bullied by their peers. Bullying behaviors that occur in gifted and talented children such as name-calling, school abuse, nerds, jealousy, idiots, appearance ridicule, intelligence ridicule, know-it-all ridicule. Bullying behaviors commonly experienced by gifted and talented children include insults referring to their intelligence, taunts about their appearance, or about their academic qualifications (González et al., 2019; Sureda Garcia et al., 2020; Groman, 2019; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Jumper, 2009; Macfarlane & Mina, 2018; Martínez-monteagudo & Delgado, 2023; Peairs et al., 2019; Pelchar & Bain, 2014; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Ryoo et al., 2017; Laffan, Slonje, Ledwith, O'Reilly, et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2012).

Clinkenbeard (2008) stated that bullying directed at gifted children starts as early as kindergarten age. Vernberg and Biggs (2010) mention that most children who are bullied are compliant, withdrawn, and exhibit low positive social behavior. There are several

submissive tendencies that they list, including believing that one is worthless and insignificant, acting involuntarily, conforming, having difficulty saying no, failing to stand up, not standing up for oneself, being rude, trying to be nice to others, even when one does not feel like it, often providing justification for minor mistakes, refraining from expressing unpleasant emotions, and failing to show leadership qualities (Ogurlu, 2018). Due to having submissive behaviors, children are more likely to be bullied than other children (Shechtman & Silektor, 2012). Gifted children are less likely to be bullied or victimized than non-gifted children (Estell et al., 2009; Peairs et al., 2019).

The facts that often occur in educational institutions demand improvements. Teachers should consider the vulnerabilities and unique characteristics of gifted children and should help them develop socio-emotional and problem-solving skills to deal with peer bullying. Mar & Garc (2019) emphasize the importance of developing emotional intelligence (recognizing and being able to express feelings or handle emotions) in this group. Therefore, in an early childhood education setting, it is necessary to go beyond the cognitive assessment of gifted children and consider the child's affective and social dimensions (TCross, 2001; Peterson & Ray, 2006). Another aspect to consider is the bullying behavior commonly experienced by gifted children, such as insults referring to their intelligence and taunts about their appearance or academic qualifications (Peterson & Ray, 2006; Peterson et al., 2006). It is necessary to create a positive school environment that accepts children's differences, including high cognitive skills and others that characterize gifted children, such as perfectionism, interest, academic achievement and others (Peterson & Ray, 2006; Ryoo et al., 2017). A positive environment can be seen by rewarding teachers' high academic performance, training teachers to ensure early identification of bullying indicators, providing them with resources to avoid conflicts that arise, and ensuring a school climate where they feel protected and authorities to report bullying. Therefore, action is needed from the educational community to incorporate elements of bullying prevention in schools and programs to improve attitudes towards gifted children and encourage the development of empathy and prosocial behavior in the school environment to avoid bullying behavior in gifted and talented children.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

Gifted and talented children are more likely to be victims of bullying because of their unique characteristics. Common bullying behaviors experienced by gifted children include teasing about their intelligence, their appearance, or about their academic qualifications. The result of bullying behavior is depression, anger, frustration, and a sense of alienation. Gifted and talented boys and girls experience similar emotional impacts. Girls experience a more pronounced impact, and some describe significant negative emotional and academic impacts, resulting in deficient grades, absenteeism, and reluctance to participate in class discussions. Teachers should, therefore, strive to create an environment that positively rewards high academic performance. Teachers can also train students on bullying indicators to avoid problems. Stakeholders are expected to include elements of bullying prevention in early childhood education units with specific programs. Hopefully, bullying behavior in gifted and talented children can be avoided.

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