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## **The Characteristics of Students who Become Bullies through School Bullying**

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### **1. Introduction**

Due to information that has come from various sources, we are confronted with the fact that in relation to all walks of life, aggression, terror, violence, harassment, animosity, hostility, and all forms of social deviancy are showing increasing tendencies. Individual and communal reactions evoked by different events, presumed or actual happenings, wounds, fears, and several versions of tragedies manifest themselves. All these are getting more closely interwoven into the society, creating problems in more and more countries.

The anxious search for solutions are characterized by helplessness, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, which leads to a deterioration of social, community morale and to indisposition. It is particularly true when the indicated, negative behaviour patterns infiltrate human behaviour and personality without being understood.

Nowadays, in more and more countries, the analysis of the context of cause and effect of the phenomenon, the subject-matter knowledge, the expansion of knowledge, the encouragement of purposeful action against aggression, are becoming political and social aims. The need to improve social solidarity and responsibility, and for the development of national programs, which encourage action, have become urgent tasks. It seems to be that this subject matter covertly or overtly addresses the whole society.

According to his results, Olweus (1993) divides up bullies into two groups: active aggressors and passive aggressors. Active aggressors are

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the initiators of school bullying. They are those students who harass directly. There are some students who are the harassers' friends and they take part because of courage in the harassment, but at the same time they are devoured by fear, too, because they do not want to become victims. They are termed sympathizers in the literature.

According to Olweus (1993) active aggressors fancy themselves. They are neither shy nor uncertain. On the contrary, they have too much confidence. Active aggressors are often older and stronger than their victims, which likely strengthens their self-assessment. Therefore, they consider themselves tough, dominant, hearty. The demonstration of power and the domination over others' fates are their typical characteristics.

Typical active aggressors have a great need for power and control, therefore they appear to be rude and unfriendly (Busch, 1998).

According to Korte (1999), in general, active aggressors show less empathy with their victims and they do not feel guilty.

According to Ziegler and Ziegler (1997), active aggressors are impulsive, excitable, and inflammable, and they have low frustration tolerance: the smallest provocation may cause an escalated reaction in the students; it can be a glance, a gesture or simply someone was in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

Kassis (2003) concluded that bullies are not only violent more frequently, but that they also deploy social violence more often.

Margitics et al. (2010) demonstrated that those students with an antisocial temperament may become victims through school bullying, who can be characterized by high novelty seeking, low harm-avoidance and reward dependence. Seeking danger, defiant confrontation, non-conformism, rigidity are typical of this temperament type. So they do not become victims of school bullying. If they did not initiate violence, they will always be ready to become intervening participants, and they do not remain bystanders.

Contrary to Olweus (1993), Kassis (2003) believe that active aggressors judge themselves negatively; they do not accept themselves and they are not optimistic about their future. In terms of basic cognitive and

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emotional behaviours (such as talent, confidence, tendency to depression and emotional control), the scored results were unstable.

According to Kassis' interpretation (2003), these results show that students who are particularly uncertain, tend to become aggressors because of their anger and frustration.

Dambach (2003) also believes that insults, failures and frustrations cause fear and anger in many active aggressors, and force them to hurt the weaker ones, which brings them momentary relief.

Examining the connection between the behaviour patterns of school bullying and character types, Margitics et al. (2010) found that the melancholic character type, who is characterized by low self-directedness, cooperativeness, self-transcendence experience, tends to become a victim or bully through school bullying. This character type experiences few positive emotions; his/her emotions are mainly characterized by suffering, shame and hatred. In case of school bullying, besides melancholic character types, paranoid character types might also become bullies, who can be characterized by high self-directedness, selftranscendence and low cooperativeness. This character type is characterized by a limited ability to co-operate; he or she is suspicious, tenacious, and goal-oriented. If they are not bullies, they do not remain bystanders; they tend to become intervening participants.

According to Kathleen (2007), we need to see a greater differentiation in the typology of bullies than that of active and passive bullies because there can be differences between the confident bullies and the unconfident bullies (who reflect on their actions after doing it). But perhaps uncertain aggressors signify the status of sympathizers and followers.

According to Rost (1998), bullies show themselves as strong and confident but inside they feel fear.

In our research we wanted to find an answer to the question: what kind of temperament and character traits the students have, who become bullies through school bullying and what their typical emotional reactions are.

## 2. Method

### Participants

410 people (post-primary education at elementary schools), 205 girls and 205 boys, took part in the study.

### Measures

#### **The Examination of School Bullying:**

*The Questionnaire on School Bullying* (Figula et al., 2008).

The Questionnaire on School Bullying, with its 70 'Hardly ever, Sometimes, Often, Almost always' options, reveals the phenomena of violence and harassment between pupils in everyday school life in terms of five dimensions. These dimensions are as follows:

- **Victim** (cognitive: apperception and assimilation of the insult; affective: emotional effect of the insult; physical reaction: bodily reaction to the insult; shortage of social support: refusal in the class community)
- **Bully** (physical aggression; verbal aggression; exclusion; positive profit: benefit of the assault)
- **Bystander** (keeping one's distance; fear)
- **Helper participant** (reconciling interposition; interposition appealing for help; affective: inner tension in view of the violence)
- **Intervening participant**

#### **The Examination of Family Socialization:**

We applied two different questionnaires.

*The Hungarian adaptation of Goch's Family Socializational Questionnaire* (Goch, 1998; Sallay & Dabert, 2002).

The questionnaire describes the following dimensions of family socialization:

- type of family atmosphere (rule-oriented family atmosphere, conflict-oriented family atmosphere),

- breeding target (breeding for autonomy, autonomy as a target of breeding, breeding for conformity, conformity as a breeding target)
- educational attitudes (consistent educational attitude, manipulative educational attitude, inconsistent educational attitude)
- educational style (supporting educational style, punishing educational style).

*The Hungarian adaptation of the Parental Bonding Instrument* (Tóth & Gervai, 1999).

The questionnaire has three main scales: love and care, overprotection, and restriction, applied separately to the mother and the father.

#### **Survey of Temperament and Character:**

*The Hungarian version of Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory adapted by Rózsa and his colleagues* (2005).

The main scales of the measure describe four temperament and three character dimensions:

- The temperament-scales are novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence, persistence
- The character-scales are self-directedness, cooperativeness, self-transcendence.

#### **Examination of the Differential Emotions:**

*The Hungarian version of Differential Emotions Scale* (Izard, 1971).

Izard (1971) developed the Differential Emotions Scale in order to differentiate between the basic emotions. The inventory is suitable for examining the ability of experiencing certain basic emotions as a permanent characteristic feature. With the help of a frequency scale it examines how often the basic emotions appear. Differential Emotions Scale consists of a scale identifying ten basic emotions. The questionnaire describes the following fundamental emotions:

- Trait of Interest
- Trait of Enjoyment
- Trait of Surprise
- Trait of Distress

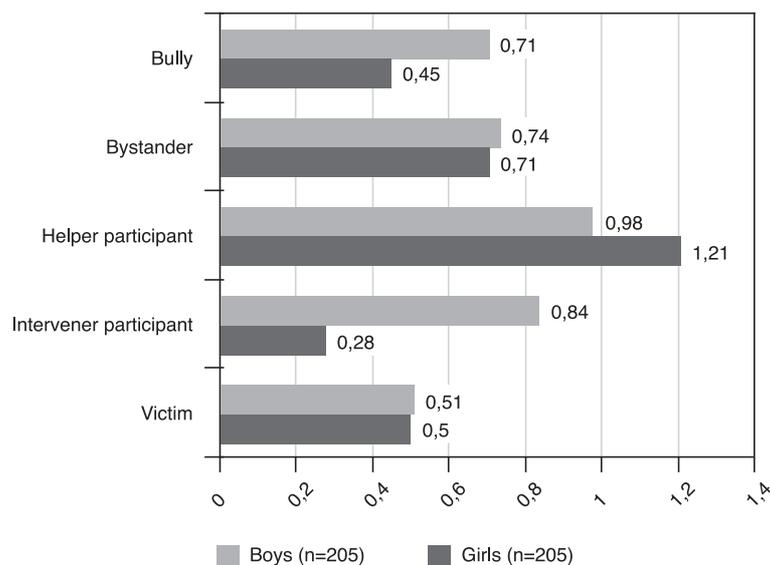
- Trait of Anger
- Trait of Disgust
- Trait of Contempt
- Trait of Fear
- Trait of Shame
- Trait of Guilt
- Trait of Anxiety

### 3. Results

#### The Structure of Behaviour Patterns on School Bullying

Comparing the scales and subscales of the Questionnaire on School Bullying with each other, we calculated the average of the values to a given statement within the tested scales and subscales. Figure 1 shows the structure of behaviour patterns in connection with school bullying.

**Figure 1. The structure of behaviour patterns in connection with school bullying**

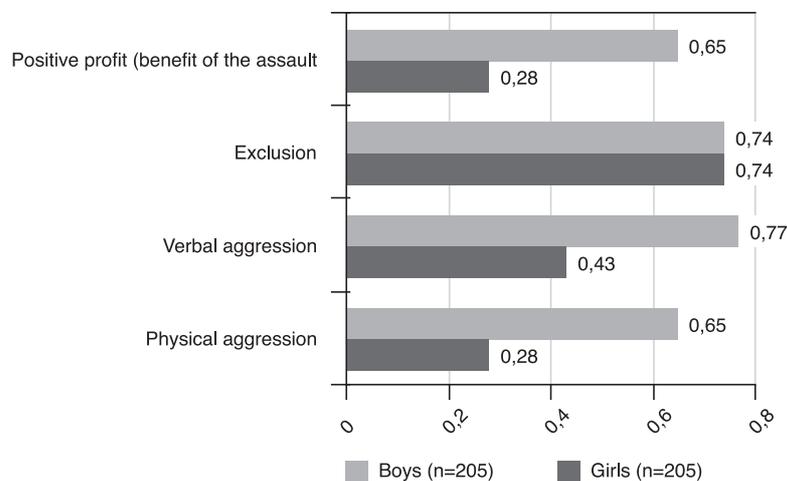


The figure shows that there are differences between girls and the boys in the structure of behaviour patterns in connection with school bullying. In this age group, the helper participant was most typical of boys; the intervener participant was the next typical. It was followed by bystander and bullying behaviour patterns. Victim behaviour pattern was the least typical of boys.

In case of the girls, from the behaviour patterns of school bullying, the helper participant was the most dominant and it was followed by the bystander behaviour pattern. Next were the victim and bullying behaviour patterns. The intervener participant was the least typical of girls.

We also examined the components (subscales) of a bullying behaviour pattern in connection with school bullying. Figure 2 shows the structure of the components of a bullying behaviour pattern.

**Figure 2. The structure of the components of bullying behaviour pattern**



In this age group there was a difference between the boys and the girls in the structure of a bullying behaviour pattern. The aggressive behaviour patterns of the boys were characterized by verbal aggression and

a willingness to exclude others; it was followed by positive profit (benefit from the assault). Physical aggression was the least typical of them.

In the case of girls, the most dominant component of the bullying behaviour pattern was exclusion, which was followed by verbal aggression. Positive profit (benefit from the assault) and physical aggression were not very typical of girls.

### The connection between a bullying behaviour pattern and the parental educational dimensions

#### The structure of parental educational dimensions

With the help of second-rate factor analysis (varimax rotation) we examined the patterns of parental educational dimensions, their underlying structure (during the study – according to general practice – not less than 0,4 (factor gravity), rotated factors were taken into account (Chart 1).

**Chart 1. Second Rate Factor Analysis  
for the Dimensions of Parental Nurturing ( $I > 0.4$ )**

Dimensions of Parental Bonding	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Rule oriented family atmosphere	0,632			
Conflict oriented family atmosphere		0,741		
Manipulative educational attitude		0,678		
Inconsistent educational attitude		0,742		
Consistent educational attitude	0,654			
Punishing educational style	0,756			
Supportive educational style			-0,474	
Breeding for conformity	0,749			
Breeding for autonomy			-0,624	
Maternal affection-care		-0,578		
Paternal affection-care		-0,658		
Maternal overprotection				0,853
Paternal overprotection				0,84438
Maternal restriction			0,887	
Paternal restriction			0,891	

The analysis arranged the parental educational dimension into four factors, which together explained 65,2% of the variance.

The first factor, which explains 24,8% of the variance, demonstrates a rule oriented family atmosphere, which is characterized by conformity as a parental educational goal, and it is associated with a punishing educational style and consistent educational attitude.

The second factor, which explains 20,3% of the variance, demonstrates a conflict oriented family atmosphere, which is characterized by conflict oriented family atmosphere, the manipulative and inconsistent educational attitude of the parents and a lack of love and care.

The third factor, which explains 11,5% of the variance, demonstrates restrictional parental treatment, which is characterized by the lack of parental support and breeding for autonomy

The fourth factor, which explains 7,9% of the variance, describes parental overprotection.

The connection between a bullying behaviour pattern and parental educational effects were revealed by linear regression analysis (stepwise method: the dependant variable was the behaviour patterns of school bullying, parental educational effects were used as a predictor). Chart 2 shows the results of linear regression analysis in case of bullying behaviour pattern.

**Chart 2. The interrelationship between Parental Rearing Effects with the Behaviour Patterns of the Bully (approved models;  $p < 0.05$ )**

Predictor	B	t	P<
<i>Women: <math>F_{total} = 16,489</math>; <math>df = 3/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Maternal affection-care	-0,198	-3,3456	0,000
Rule oriented family atmosphere	0,169	3,087	0,002
Maternal overprotection	0,149	2,274	0,022
<i>Men: <math>F_{total} = 19,418</math>; <math>df = 3/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Conflict oriented family atmosphere	0,241	3,998	0,000
Maternal overprotection	0,199	3,098	0,001
Paternal affection-care	-0,178	-3,147	0,006

In case of the girls, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from parental educational effects, showed a significant negative connection with maternal affection-care and a positive one with maternal overprotection and a rule oriented family atmosphere, which together explained 13,1% of the variance of bullying behaviour pattern.

In case of the boys, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the parental educational effects, showed a significant positive connection with a conflict oriented family atmosphere, maternal overprotection and a negative one with paternal affection-care, which together explained 17,6% of the variance of the bullying behaviour pattern.

### The connection between the bullying behaviour pattern and the temperament and character traits

The connection between the bullying behaviour pattern and temperament and character traits were revealed by linear regression analysis (stepwise method: dependant variable was the behaviour patterns of school bullying, independent variables were the certain temperament and character traits and their constituent personality traits. Chart 3 shows the results of linear regression analysis in case of a bullying behaviour pattern.

**Chart 3. Correlation between Temperament and Character Features and the Behaviour Pattern of the Bully (approved models;  $p < 0.05$ )**

Predictor	B	t	P<
<i>Women: <math>F_{total} = 17,568</math>; <math>df = 4/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Novelty seeking	0,259	3,912	0,000
Social acceptance	-0,265	-3,989	0,000
Transpersonal identity	-0,159	-2,485	0,010
Empathy	-0,179	-2,589	0,011
<i>Men: <math>F_{total} = 20,789</math>; <math>df = 3/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Novelty seeking	0,307	3,404	0,000
Cooperativeness	-0,289	-2,918	0,000
Transpersonal identity	-0,152	-2,126	0,041

In case of the girls, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the temperament and character traits and their constituent personality traits, showed a significant, negative connection with social acceptance, transpersonal identity, empathy and a positive one with novelty seeking, which together explained 25,8% of the variance of bullying behaviour pattern.

In case of the boys, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the temperament of character traits and their constituent personality traits, showed a significant, negative connection with cooperativeness, transpersonal identity and a positive one with novelty seeking, which together explained 11,9% of the variance of bullying behaviour pattern.

#### The connection between the bullying behaviour pattern and basic emotions

The connection between the bullying behaviour pattern of school bullying and the basic emotions were revealed by linear regression analysis (stepwise method: dependant variable was the bullying behaviour pattern, basic emotions were used as predictors). Chart 4 shows the regression analysis of the basic emotions according to the components of a bullying behaviour pattern.

**Chart 4. Relationship of Fundamental Emotions  
with the Behaviour Pattern of the Bully (approved models;  $p < 0.05$ )**

Predictor	B	t	P<
<i>Women: <math>F_{total} = 28,712</math>; <math>df = 2/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Disgust	0,289	5,125	0,000
Anger	0,125	2,245	0,022
<i>Men: <math>F_{total} = 19,512</math>; <math>df = 4/205</math>; <math>p &lt; 0,000</math></i>			
Anger	0,218	3,546	0,000
Guilt	-0,196	-3,745	0,000
Disgust	0,221	3,445	0,000
Contempt	0,159	2,401	0,006

In case of the girls, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust and anger, which together explained 12,6% of the variance.

In case of the boys, a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from basic emotions, also showed a significant, positive connection with disgust, anger, as well as contempt and a negative one with guilt, which together explained 20,6% of the variance.

These results indicate that the students who become bullies – without reference to gender differences – feel anger and disgust, which is associated with contempt and a lack of guilt in the case of boys.

We also examined that what the connection is between the certain components of a bullying behaviour pattern (physical aggression, verbal aggression, exclusion, positive profit (benefit from the assault)) and the basic emotions (linear regression, stepwise method: dependant variable are the components of a bullying behaviour pattern, basic emotions were used as predictors). Chart 5 shows the revealed connections with this method.

**Chart 5. Regression Analysis of Fundamental Emotions versus the Individual Components of the Bully Behaviour Pattern (approved models;  $p < 0.05$ )**

Predictor	B	t	P<
<b>PHYSICAL AGGRESSION</b>			
<i>Women: <math>F_{total}=9,556; df=2/205; p&lt;0,000</math></i>			
Anger	0,228	4,301	0,000
Disgust	0,138	2,425	0,011
<i>Men: <math>F_{total}=18,124; df=2/205; p&lt;0,000</math></i>			
Anger	0,321	5,856	0,000
Guilt	-0,191	-3,571	0,000
<b>VERBAL AGGRESSION</b>			
<i>Women: <math>F_{total}=36,532; df=1/205; p&lt;0,000</math></i>			
Disgust	0,311	6,876	0,000

<i>Men: F<sub>total</sub> = 17,235; df = 3/205; p &lt; 0,000</i>			
Anger	0,264	4,125	0,000
Guilt	-0,185	-3,348	0,000
Disgust	0,189	2,987	0,003
EXCLUSION			
<i>Women: F<sub>total</sub> = 37,458; df = 1/205; p &lt; 0,000</i>			
Disgust	0,293	5,954	0,000
<i>Men: F<sub>total</sub> = 18,127; df = 2/205; p &lt; 0,000</i>			
Contempt	0,195	3,354	0,000
Disgust	0,187	3,148	0,001
POSITIVE PROFIT (BENEFIT OF THE ASSAULT)			
<i>Women: F<sub>total</sub> = 10,157; df = 3/205; p &lt; 0,000</i>			
Anger	0,154	2,946	0,003
Contempt	0,140	2,458	0,008
Shame	-0,134	-2,657	0,009
<i>Men: F<sub>total</sub> = 17,251; df = 2/205; p &lt; 0,000</i>			
Disgust	0,278	4,589	0,000
Anger	0,218	4,018	0,000
Contempt	0,228	3,812	0,000

In case of the girls, the physical aggression component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust and anger, which together explained 6,2% of the variance.

In case of the boys, the physical aggression component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with anger and a negative one with guilt, which together explained 14,2% of the variance.

In case of the girls, the verbal aggression component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust, which together explained 10,2% of the variance.

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In case of the boys, the verbal aggression component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with anger and disgust and a negative one with guilt, which together explained 14,6% of the variance.

In case of the girls, the exclusion component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust, which together explained 7,6% of the variance.

In case of the boys, the exclusion component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust as well as contempt, which together explained 11,2% of the variance.

In case of the girls, the positive profit component of a bullying behaviour pattern that stemmed from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with anger and contempt and a negative one with shame, which together explained 8,5% of the variance.

In the case of the boys, the positive profit component of bullying behaviour pattern, from the basic emotions, showed a significant, positive connection with disgust, anger and contempt, which together explained 19,6% of the variance.

#### **4. Discussion**

In our research we wanted to find an answer to the question: what kind of temperament and character traits the students have, who become bullies through school bullying and what their typical emotional reactions are.

In terms of the background effects of family socialization, our research results show that parental overprotection – without reference to gender differences – may cause the appearance of the victim behaviour pattern of school bullying, from the components of which maternal overprotection is typical of the girls, maternal and paternal overprotection are typical of both girls and boys.

The connection among the further parental educational effects is different between the boys and the girls. In the case of boys, a bullying behaviour pattern is present in a conflict oriented family atmosphere.

Within this, the effect of a conflict oriented family atmosphere and the lack of maternal love and care is strong, which is associated with manipulative and inconsistent educational attitudes. In the case of the girls, parental love and care, especially a lack of maternal love and care, was closely related with a bullying behaviour pattern.

In case of the girls, the appearance of a bullying behaviour pattern can be caused by rule oriented family atmosphere; in case of the boys, it can be caused by consistent educational attitudes.

When examining the temperament and character traits, we found that the novelty seeking temperament trait and a lack of cooperativeness, self-detachment character traits can be in the background of becoming bullies (without reference to gender differences).

Those people who seek novelty are impulsive, like to discover new things, they are excitable and can be easily provoked to fight or escape. If these temperament traits are associated with a lack of cooperativeness (social intolerance, vindictiveness, lack of interest in other people) and controlling behaviour (self-detachment) then it is likely that the students become bullies through school bullying.

We found that novelty seeking was the most typical temperament trait of the girls. Their most typical character traits were social intolerance, vindictiveness and self-detachment. Novelty seeking was also the most typical temperament trait of the boys who became bullies. Lack of cooperativeness and self-detachment were also their most typical character traits.

These results confirm Ziegler and Ziegler's (1997) results, who found that bullies are impulsive, excitable and inflammable, which is connected with the novelty seeking temperament trait. Korte's research results (1999) can be explained by the lack of cooperativeness, according to which, in general, active aggressors show less empathy with their victims and they do not feel guilty.

Our research results, which examine emotions, show that students, who become bullies through school bullying – without reference to

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gender differences – primarily feel anger and disgust, which force them to take emotion driven actions. They direct anger in an aggressive way towards their peers. Their performance orientation can be increased. Aside from the above mentioned emotions, anger, disgust as well as contempt are also typical of the boys who become bullies and they do not feel guilty.

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**Abstract:**

In our research we wanted to find an answer to the question: what kind of temperament and character traits do students have who become bullies through school bullying, and what their typical emotional reactions are.

In the study 410 children (post-primary education at elementary schools), 205 girls and 205 boys took part. In our research we used the following instruments: the Questionnaire on School Bullying, the Hungarian adaptation of Goch's Family Socializational, the Hungarian adaptation of the Parental Bonding Instrument, the Hungarian version of Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory, and the Hungarian version of Differential Emotions Scale. The results of our research show that increased maternal overprotection as well as a rule or conflict oriented family atmosphere stand in the family socialization background of the students who become bullies through school bullying. The personality of bullies is characterized by a novelty seeking temperament, which is associated with an immature character. The emotions of bullies are characterized by feelings of anger and disgust, which force them to take emotion driven actions. They direct anger in an aggressive way towards their peers. The results of the research also revealed the major gender differences in the examined fields/areas.

**Keywords:** school bullying, socialization, typical emotional reactions

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