A METHOD OF SHARED CONCERN IN ADDRESSING BULLYING: A RESTORATIVE APPROACH

O MÉTODO DE PREOCUPAÇÃO COMPARTILHADA NO ENFRENTAMENTO DO BULLYING: UMA ABORDAGEM RESTAURATIVA

EL MÉTODO DE PREOCUPACIÓN COMPARTIDA PARA ABORDAR EL ACOSO ESCOLAR: UN ENFOQUE RESTAURATIVO

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the Shared Concern Method (SCC), developed by Anatol Pikas, as an effective approach to overcoming bullying in schools. Given the complexity of this phenomenon and its moral nature, this study argues that effective interventions—which involve all participants in the group dynamic—should address the root of the problem, not just its consequences. The theoretical study was conducted through a literature review and thematic analysis focused on the principles of SCC and its empirical efficacy. The research demonstrates that traditional punitive methods are ineffective because they fail to repair damage and restore the well-being of all involved. In contrast, evidence shows that SCC aligns with the perspective of positive coexistence and is a fundamental premise of public policies to combat violence. It is concluded that the Shared Concern Method is an urgent pedagogical necessity for overcoming bullying. Rather than merely paying off past debts, it establishes itself as a learning opportunity for the future, acting as a powerful tool for restoring a sense of hope to those involved. Therefore, its implementation requires investment in teacher training, adherence to its principles, and faithful implementation to consolidate a culture of peace in the school environment.

KEYWORDS: Bullying. Shared Concern Method. Intervention Strategies. School.

RESUMO: O presente artigo analisa o Método de Preocupação Compartilhada (MPC), desenvolvido por Anatol Pikas, como uma abordagem eficaz para a superação do bullying no ambiente escolar. Dada a complexidade desse fenômeno e considerando sua natureza moral, este estudo defende que intervenções eficazes — que envolvem todos os participantes da dinâmica de grupo — devem atuar na raiz do problema, e não apenas em suas consequências. O estudo teórico foi conduzido por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica e análise temática focada nos princípios do MPC e em sua eficácia empírica. A pesquisa demonstra que os métodos punitivos tradicionais são ineficazes, pois não estabelecem a reparação dos danos e o restabelecimento do bem-estar de todos os envolvidos. Em contrapartida, as evidências mostram que o MPC se alinha com a perspectiva da convivência positiva, sendo um pressuposto fundamental das políticas públicas para o enfrentamento às violências. Conclui-se que o Método de Preocupação Compartilhada é uma necessidade pedagógica urgente para a superação do bullying, pois, em vez do mero pagamento de dívidas do passado, ele se estabelece como uma possibilidade de aprendizagem para o futuro, atuando como um instrumento potente para resgatar o sentido de esperança dos envolvidos. Desta forma, sua aplicação exige investimento em formação dos educadores, adesão aos seus princípios e fidelidade na execução para a consolidação de uma cultura de paz no ambiente escolar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Bullying. Método de Preocupação Compartilhada. Estratégias de Intervenção. Escola.

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza el Método de Preocupación Compartida (MPC), desarrollado por Anatol Pikas, como un enfoque eficaz para superar el acoso escolar. Dada la complejidad de este fenómeno y considerando su naturaleza moral, este estudio argumenta que las intervenciones eficaces, que involucran a todos los participantes en la dinámica grupal, deben abordar la raíz del problema, no solo sus consecuencias. El estudio teórico se realizó mediante una revisión bibliográfica y un análisis temático centrado en los principios del MPC

y su efectividad empírica. La investigación demuestra que los métodos punitivos tradicionales son ineficaces porque no establecen la reparación de los daños ni la restauración del bienestar de todos los involucrados. Por el contrario, la evidencia muestra que el MPC se alinea con la perspectiva de la convivencia positiva, premisa fundamental de las políticas públicas para abordar la violencia. Se concluye que el Método de Preocupación Compartida es una necesidad pedagógica urgente para superar el acoso escolar, ya que, en lugar de simplemente saldar deudas pasadas, se establece como una oportunidad de aprendizaje para el futuro, actuando como un poderoso instrumento para restaurar la esperanza en los involucrados. Por lo tanto, su aplicación requiere inversión en la formación docente, adhesión a sus principios y una fiel ejecución para consolidar una cultura de paz en el entorno escolar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Acoso escolar. Método de Preocupación Compartida. Estrategias de intervención. Escuela.*

Introduction

We live in times of schooling without walls. This observation reveals that the complexity of human relationships in society permeates the school environment, bringing with it numerous challenges such as bullying, cyberbullying, intolerance, social exclusion, prejudice, and many other coexistence-related problems that find spaces for expression within schools. These issues compromise students' moral and emotional development. Alongside these challenges, indiscipline, incivility, and rule-breaking are also part of daily school life, often undermining relationships and the school climate—not necessarily due to their severity, but because of the frequency and intensity with which they occur. This scenario becomes even more critical when considering the emotional suffering that affects the lives of children and adolescents, in addition to extreme attacks on schools, which highlight the urgency of rethinking school practices.

It thus becomes essential to implement strategies that address the root causes of these problems rather than merely their consequences, preventing emotional suffering from being neglected and escalating. Studies indicate that, in the absence of intentional work focused on school coexistence—through preventive, interventive, and promotive actions aimed at fostering healthier and more positive relationships, and without adequate training for educators—these problems intensify, and the school environment becomes increasingly hostile (Tognetta; Vinha, 2010). Among these challenges, bullying stands out as one of the cruelest forms of violence.

This phenomenon—although less frequent than other coexistence-related problems—is a manifestation of violence with multifactorial causes. It is characterized by intentional acts of intimidation and aggression among peers, repeatedly directed at a target who, in turn, feels devalued in front of an audience that either witnesses the situation or becomes aware of the humiliating experience to which the victim is subjected (Olweus, 1993; Del Barrio, 2003; Fante, 2005; Tognetta, 2005). It involves a power imbalance that has serious consequences for all those involved.

In recent studies, researchers from the Group of Studies and Research in Moral Education (GEPEM), which we coordinate[3], have identified significant relationships between bullying and emotional suffering, as well as between bullying and the sense of belonging. Our research shows that individuals involved in bullying situations—whether as targets, perpetrators, or bystanders—experience greater emotional suffering when compared to those

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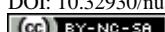
not involved in situations of intimidation. Similarly, we found lower levels of school belonging among all those involved in bullying, indicating a problem related to how these boys and girls perceive themselves in relation to others, regardless of the role they occupy in bullying situations (Bomfim, 2025). Other investigations have already demonstrated the extent to which boys and girls, as well as perpetrators of bullying, morally disengage, revealing that justice, tolerance, and respect are values to which they show lower adherence. At the same time, victims of bullying who are more morally engaged suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of future expectations (Tognetta; Rosário, 2013; Bomfim, 2025).

In an effort to overcome this violent manifestation, several approaches have been adopted. According to studies such as that by Rigby and Johnson (2016 *apud* Rigby, 2017), direct sanctions—namely the use of punishments or consequences in accordance with school rules after bullying occurs—are the most commonly used by educators. However, as Piaget (1932) argues, when sanctions are expiatory, they do not enable the development of moral autonomy or students' awareness. This understanding is supported by the study by Rigby and Johnson (2016), which revealed that direct sanctions do not reduce bullying and are less effective than restorative practices.

The principles of Piagetian theory lead us to understand that the role of the school is to foster the development of moral autonomy by seeking strategies that promote awareness, reparation, and accountability, rather than mere obedience to rules. For interventions to be truly effective, it is necessary to reach the root of the problem, which reinforces the search for protocol-based methods such as the Shared Concern Method.

In light of the above, this article analyzes the Shared Concern Method (SCM) as an approach that enables the confrontation of bullying in the school environment. It is argued that the method can promote the development of students' moral autonomy, as its principles are grounded in dialogue, awareness-raising, the development of empathy and respect, the understanding of one's own value and that of others, accountability, and the reparation of harm. Accordingly, the study analyzes and describes the foundations and steps of the method, highlighting its formative potential.

Methodology

This study adopts a bibliographic review as its methodological strategy, recognizing it as a fundamental approach for in-depth engagement with established fields of knowledge, while also enabling the identification of specific gaps within the topic under analysis.

According to Gil (2017), this approach provides an overview of existing knowledge and helps identify areas that still require further investigation. In this study, it enabled a survey of existing knowledge regarding the phenomenon of bullying and the outcomes of the Shared Concern Method.

For the development of this study, data collection was conducted using academic databases such as SciELO, the CAPES Theses Database, and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. Keywords such as "bullying," "intervention strategies," "school," and "Shared Concern Method" were used. Articles and books that discuss the effectiveness of interventions for bullying were selected, with the aim of conducting an in-depth analysis of the SCM.

A qualitative analysis was applied to the collected material, which was thematically organized according to the following axes: the ineffectiveness of punitive sanctions, the moral principles underlying the SCM, and empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the method.

Theoretical framework for understanding the shared concern method

Bullying as a phenomenon to be understood

Understanding bullying goes beyond the observation of behaviors. As a moral phenomenon—expressed through acts of disrespect, low empathy, and lack of compassion—its origins are directly linked to intrapersonal issues, that is, to the constitution of the individual's personality, which is marked by the persistent pursuit of being perceived as having value. Understanding its aspects does not mean denying that the phenomenon is also a group process and, therefore, must be examined from social and cultural perspectives as well (Tognetta; Vinha, 2010).

As a group practice (Salmivalli, 2010), bullying occurs in the presence of bystanders, and intentional aggressions are always directed at a target who, in turn, feels of lesser value than their peers (Olweus, 1993; Fante, 2005; Tognetta; Vinha, 2010). In most cases, targets do
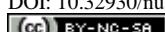
not react to aggression, feel submissive, and lack peer bonds (Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, 2012). However, the literature also identifies provocative targets who, unlike passive ones, actively react to aggression, albeit ineffectively, which increases their exposure (Tognetta, 2020). It is therefore essential for schools to be attentive to this distinction, as provocative targets, due to their reactions, are often not recognized as victims, masking their need for support. Consequently, a deep understanding of the phenomenon is indispensable to ensure that all those involved receive appropriate support and intervention. Within this complex dynamic, perpetrators recognize the vulnerability of targets and intimidate them by focusing on specific physical or psychological characteristics, thereby evidencing a power imbalance.

Perpetrators of bullying lack moral sensitivity and seek to maintain a status of power in their relationships with peers (Salmivalli, 2010). Another common characteristic among perpetrators is moral disengagement—a process through which they justify their actions, absolve themselves of guilt, shift responsibility for their behavior onto others, and dehumanize the victim. Victims, in turn, are vulnerable, struggle to respond to aggression, blame themselves, and feel deprived of value (Tognetta *et al*., 2015).

The moral dimension of bullying extends to all those involved, including bystanders, who are, in fact, not morally disengaged (Tognetta, 2013). This explains why some defend the target and feel guilt for not speaking out, while others refrain from acting out of fear of becoming targets themselves or because they do not know how to intervene—not because they agree with the dynamics of intimidation (Obermann, 2011; Salmivalli; Voeten, 2004). However, this dynamic can be transformed when trust, care, and mutual respect are embedded in the school culture, encouraging bystanders to act in defense of targets (Tognetta *et al*., 2015).

The role of schools and legislation in Brazil

Recognition of the impacts of this phenomenon—which affect student well-being and school safety—has led to changes in Brazilian legislation. The Anti-Bullying Law (Law No. 13,185/2015), enacted in November 2015, made preventive actions and the promotion of a culture of peace in schools mandatory (Brazil, 2015). In 2018, this law was incorporated into the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB). However, in response to growing concern about extreme violence, Law No. 14,811 was enacted in January 2024, criminalizing bullying and cyberbullying by incorporating them into the Penal Code.

Numerous international and national studies have shown that relying exclusively on punitive measures in cases of school bullying is largely ineffective. Research by Smith (2014) indicates that sanctions such as suspension, expulsion, or severe reprimands do not produce lasting behavioral change in perpetrators, nor do they repair the emotional and social harm suffered by victims.

This is because punitive logic tends to reinforce feelings of hostility, stigmatization, and revenge, without fostering the socioemotional competencies required for healthy coexistence. A report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) on violence and bullying in schools worldwide also confirms that harsh disciplinary measures do not have a significant positive impact on reducing violence. On the contrary, schools that invest in a positive school climate, student participation, and conflict mediation strategies show lower rates of bullying and better student well-being.

Moreover, systematic reviews indicate that the most successful anti-bullying programs are those that integrate the entire school community—teachers, students, and families—and invest in preventive and restorative strategies rather than relying solely on sanctions (Ttofi; Farrington, 2011). These programs demonstrate consistent reductions in bullying rates, whereas exclusively punitive practices show no significant effect.

Law No. 14,811, enacted in January 2024 by the federal government, emerged as a direct response to episodes of extreme violence that have occurred in Brazilian schools in recent years. Among other measures, this legislation defines bullying and cyberbullying as crimes, conveying to the public the message that such practices cannot be minimized, as they have devastating effects on children, adolescents, families, and school communities (Brazil, 2024). The law therefore delivers a clear societal message: the problem is serious, demands accountability, and cannot be tolerated.

However, it is important to understand that society and the school occupy distinct positions in this process. In society, when an act is classified as a crime, the logic of punishment applies: those responsible must answer before the justice system, bearing the consequences of their past actions. The justice system operates through sanctions and legal reparations, which are necessary for social protection.

The school, by its very nature, is not organized according to a judicial logic; its role is formative and educational. This means that, when faced with situations of bullying, the institution has the responsibility to welcome, intervene, and foster ethical and civic values in students. In the school context, the goal is not punishment, but the possibility of change, the

restoration of relationships, and the construction of a different future. The school's responsibility is to create conditions in which all students learn the rules of respectful coexistence grounded in empathy and solidarity.

Thus, while society applies the law to punish past actions, the school invests in education and in the hope of transformation. It is within this space of coexistence, dialogue, and mediation that opportunities emerge for children and adolescents not only to overcome conflicts, but also to become individuals capable of building more just and humane relationships in the present and in the future.

Studies such as that of Rigby (2012) show that direct sanctions—punishments and consequences applied in accordance with school rules—do not reduce bullying and are significantly less effective than restorative practices. This finding was also evidenced in a U.S. study by Sherer and Nickerson (2010), which surveyed 213 school psychologists and found that punitive approaches are perceived as ineffective by most professionals, despite being widely used as an intervention strategy. The persistence of this traditional approach highlights educators' difficulty in abandoning the need to identify and punish those at fault, rather than adopting strategies aimed at resolving the situation through reparation and accountability.

According to Piaget (1932), this form of sanction, which causes students to suffer in order to pay for their mistakes through fear, is based on power and coercion and undermines the teacher–student relationship. Consequently, it generates feelings of revolt, anger, injustice, and often a desire for revenge. Bullying is a phenomenon that typically occurs beyond the view of authorities, and punishment may intensify intimidation and aggression, leaving the target even more vulnerable.

The role of the school is to create the conditions necessary for the development of moral autonomy (Piaget, 1932). To achieve this, the strategies adopted must prioritize reparation, accountability, and awareness-raising, moving away from the mere teaching of obedience to rules. As Rigby (2011) reminds us, effectiveness lies in strategies that encourage students to develop more empathetic and constructive ways of relating to their peers.

Within this context, the school stands out as an environment with a clear educational responsibility. It is a privileged space for the formation of ethical individuals who are capable of recognizing and attributing value to themselves and to others.

Aligned with this formative principle, the Shared Concern Method (SCM), developed by Anatol Pikas, is a non-punitive approach that encourages collaboration and empathy among all those involved in bullying, promoting collective responsibility in the search for solutions. In
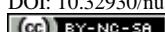
light of this, we now turn to a closer examination of this intervention proposal for addressing bullying.

The shared concern method

Anatol Pikas, a psychologist and researcher, developed the Shared Concern Method with the aim of overcoming group bullying in the school environment. In developing this method, Pikas (2002) started from the premise that bullying is a group process in which everyone plays a role: perpetrators, targets, and bystanders. Perpetrators act intentionally and feel stronger than their targets, deriving pleasure from intimidation; this sense of pleasure and power unites them around a common denominator. However, this constant pursuit of power masks the perpetrators' fear of failing to meet peer expectations. Therefore, it is not only the pleasure of aggression, but also the group dynamics that empower them to engage in bullying. For this reason, the Pikas Method recognizes that all those involved in a bullying situation need support.

Pikas starts from the premise that, as a group problem, bullying is collectively reinforced, with those involved feeling more empowered to act. For this reason, in order to resolve a group-based problem, it is necessary to re-individualize the process and only then share it again. Based on this rationale, Pikas structured his method as follows: first, individual meetings are held with each person involved in the situation; subsequently, after awareness has been fostered and each participant has been individually engaged, the solution is shared collectively.

Although the Shared Concern Method was developed by Anatol Pikas, its application has been adapted by other researchers, such as Ken Rigby in Australia and Alison Duncan in Scotland. For the purposes of this study, the step-by-step description of the method is based on Pikas's original formulation, combined with adaptations developed in Brazil by GEPEM through intervention protocols and formative guidelines (Tognetta, 2020). The use of these protocols supports core principles of the method: promoting awareness, self-knowledge, self-regulation, reparation, and accountability among students in situations of bullying.

Preparation and action plan

The selection of the professional who will conduct the interventions is of critical importance and must be made before the stages of the method begin. This educator should have an established relationship with the students, sufficient time to dedicate to all phases of the process, and, above all, appropriate training to carry out the intervention. The effectiveness of the method depends directly on the preparation and commitment of this professional (Picas, 2002; Rigby; Griffiths, 2011; Tognetta, 2020).

Another important aspect to consider prior to the interviews is the careful selection of the environment in which the dialogue will take place. To ensure that conversations occur in a safe and confidential manner, the setting must be free from possible interruptions. The arrangement of chairs, for example in a circle, helps create a more welcoming atmosphere and facilitates dialogue and the establishment of a bond between the mediating educator and the student (Tognetta, 2020; Pikas, 2002).

Before initiating the intervention in a bullying case, it is essential to carefully verify the available information about the situation. In many instances, there is uncertainty as to whether what is occurring can indeed be characterized as bullying. Such caution is necessary because bullying is most often a silent and concealed problem. Precisely for this reason, it is essential that the professional seek information about what has been happening to the victim, even if it is not possible to fully grasp the entire scope of the situation.

The prior collection of information serves two important purposes. First, it helps to understand the context, as victims may deny or minimize what has occurred due to fear, shame, or difficulty in expressing their suffering. Second, it serves as a strategic resource during interviews—both victims and perpetrators may deny the situation when confronted, and it is at this point that previously collected concrete facts and data become indispensable. They allow the process to be guided not solely by the immediate accounts of those involved, but also by evidence that supports the intervention.

Thus, initial investigation and information gathering are fundamental steps to prevent the intervention from being weakened by possible denials, ensuring protection for the victim and providing the pedagogical process with the necessary rigor (Tognetta, 2020).

In Brazil, we have developed intervention protocols to record the information collected and the origin of the problem. The purpose of this information gathering is not to identify or judge those at fault, but to understand the situation and identify those involved so that they can

be supported and guided. This process—carried out through conversations with teachers and other school staff, as well as through individual meetings with students without disclosing names—allows the situation to be clarified from multiple perspectives. After this stage of detection and contextual analysis, the first measure is to protect the target, as investing in the victim's safety is one of the core principles of the method (Tognetta, 2020; Pikas, 2002).

Individual interviews

A collective intervention involving perpetrators, targets, and bystanders may place the target at even greater risk, given that one of the defining characteristics of bullying is the imbalance of power. For this reason, the intervention plan of the Shared Concern Method begins with individual interviews, deliberately breaking the group dynamic. The aim is to establish dialogue with each person involved, starting with the perpetrator or suspected perpetrator. The approach is non-investigative and avoids attributing blame (Pikas, 2002), with the purpose of building a relationship of trust. The professional should use nonjudgmental language, such as: "I am concerned about [the target]. What have you noticed about them?".

The next step is for the educator to describe the target's suffering to the perpetrator and to request their collaboration in seeking a solution, with the goal of fostering empathy and a sense of responsibility. The mediating teacher may ask questions such as: "What do you think you could do to help them feel better and to bring this situation to an end?" It is important that the perpetrator understands that the suggestions offered must aim at repairing the harm caused and restoring the environment, always prioritizing the well-being of everyone involved. Still within the individual interviews, it is essential that students are encouraged to reflect on their actions. The perpetrator of bullying is interviewed first (if there is more than one perpetrator, each is interviewed individually), because at the end of this interview they are expected to define what they will do to repair the problem. In other words, by the conclusion of the individual interview, the perpetrator must present a clear commitment regarding how they will repair or restore what was damaged and how they will address the harm caused to the victim. During the interview with the victim, they will be asked whether they accept the commitment to reparation assumed by the perpetrator.

In the same way, dialogue subsequently takes place with the target. The teacher reinforces their commitment to providing support and to strengthening the student. The professional may begin the conversation by saying: "I would like to talk with you. I have learned
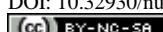
that some situations have been occurring that have not been good for you. I can imagine how upsetting this has been. I would like to understand how you are feeling. We can help you without exposing you."

Below, in Table 1, a synthesis is presented of the questions and objectives that guide this phase of the Shared Concern Method.

Table 1 – Questions and objectives of the individual interviews in the Shared Concern Method

Who participates?	Questions	Purpose
Perpetrator/ Suspected perpetrators of peer intimidation	"I would like to talk with you about something that is happening with (name of the target). I have learned that… (describe the problem). What do you know about this? What have you noticed about them?" "What do you think you could do to help them feel better and to bring this situation to an end?" Or: "I would like to talk with you because I have learned that you are involved in some problems with (name of the target). Could you tell me what is happening?" "Have you noticed any difficulties that she/he may be facing?" "What do you think might be contributing to this discomfort?" "How would you feel if you were in her/his place?" "What could you do, from now on, to improve this situation?" "What attitudes of yours do you think you could change so that she/he feels more respected?" If the student remains silent: "It seems that you are not ready to talk right now. Perhaps it would be better for you to return to your classroom or get some water and come back when you feel able to talk, but please understand that we need to discuss this today." If the student denies involvement in the situation: "I understand that you are saying you have nothing to do with this, but let me explain what happened… and (name of the target) has been feeling very upset about it." If the student indicates that they were involved: "Oh, you were present in the situation… So, what are you going to do to resolve this problem?" If the student blames the target: "I can imagine how this upset you and made you feel angry. I am sorry that we did not talk about this at the time, and I want to agree with you that, if this happens again, you can ask for my help. However, at this moment, (name of the	To listen to what the student has to say (without judgment) and to help them reflect on how the harm caused can be repaired and how the problem can be resolved. At this stage, the objective is to reflect on and record the initial proposals.

	target) is feeling very distressed, and we need to address this. This moment is for us to talk about this problem."	
Target	"I would like to talk with you because I have learned that some situations are occurring and are not doing you any good." "I can imagine how upsetting this has been. I would like to understand how you are feeling." "We can help you without exposing you." "Did you know that we can do a great deal to improve this situation?" "What do you think you can do on your part? Do you need my help? How can I help you?" "Do you feel safe here at school?" "What has been happening that has made you feel sad or uncomfortable?" "Would you like to tell me how this has affected you?" If the student is a provocative target: "What has been happening to you? How do you feel? What do you do when you are attacked?" "I realize that your behavior also needs to change, as you are following an ineffective path in seeking acceptance. What can you do on your part?".	To create a space for listening, care, and trust. To help the target think about how to seek help in an assertive manner and to understand that they can also take action to help resolve the situation (especially in cases of a provocative target).

Source: Tognetta (2020).

Follow-Up interviews and group resolution

After the individual interview stage, the process continues with follow-up interviews, which consist of brief meetings with each person involved. The purpose is to monitor the solution proposals suggested by the students, demonstrating that the school is attentive to and committed to addressing the situation. In these meetings, the mediator may ask questions to perpetrators such as: "Hello, how are things going? Were you able to put into practice what we agreed upon?" This is because, in addition to proposing how they will repair their mistake directly with the target at the end of the individual interviews, the perpetrator of bullying may also have committed to making changes in their daily behaviors. In conversations with the target, the mediator may ask: "I would like to know how you are doing. Have you noticed any change in attitudes? Are you feeling better?" (Tognetta, 2020; Pikas, 2002).

There is no fixed limit to the number of follow-up interviews; they may occur as many times as the educator coordinating them deems necessary, according to the needs of both perpetrators and targets. Most importantly, these interviews should provide a space for learning what these boys and girls still need to develop: enabling the victim of bullying to learn how to protect themselves, recognize their feelings, name them, and value themselves; and allowing the perpetrator of bullying to learn to recognize the other's pain, develop empathy, and become sensitive to the differences that exist among people.

In Brazil, we have considered these interviews as strategies that promote awareness among those involved in bullying situations. For this reason, we have developed formative needs protocols that allow targets, perpetrators—and, in the classroom context, bystanders—to engage in self-assessment. These are brief forms in which students are invited to rethink their daily actions, which often place them in the roles of perpetrators, victims, or passive or reinforcing bystanders of bullying (Tognetta, 2020).

Once the previous stages have been successfully completed, students are invited to participate in the group resolution stage. The aim is to reach a final agreement that promotes the well-being of all and resolves the situation autonomously and without coercion (Pikas, 2002). In this context, the professional must carefully prepare the environment and support the target to prevent embarrassment in front of those who engaged in intimidation; it is recommended that the target sit next to the professional.

It is essential that, after this meeting, the mediating teacher continues to monitor the situation and maintain contact with those involved. This need for continuity and follow-up is

one of the core principles of the method, as Pikas (2002) emphasizes that each subsequent phase depends on the success of the previous one, and the process is only concluded when the objective is achieved—that is, when the bullying ceases.

Bystanders and families: what should be done?

As bullying is considered a social phenomenon that involves the entire class (Salmivalli *et al.*, 1996), bystanders play a relevant role in these situations. Often, perpetrators receive support from members of the group, which fuels the dynamics of power and intimidation. Beyond the preventive and interventive actions carried out with the class, it is essential to offer bystanders opportunities to reflect individually on their role in situations of peer intimidation (Tognetta, 2020). It is important that this self-assessment be carried out at different moments so that students can assess their progress or identify aspects that need improvement.

Similarly, it is essential for the school to provide the families of the students involved with formative and supportive spaces, strengthening the strategies proposed by the school to overcome this form of violence. The use of formative needs protocols also supports this partnership.

Discussion

The analysis of the MPC reinforces the principle that overcoming bullying requires an approach different from a punitive one, grounded in pedagogical and restorative strategies that align with the school's responsibility to educate for the holistic development of students.

In this context, the Pikas Method is supported by the foundations of the National Common Core Curriculum, with the aim of promoting the development of competencies such as responsibility, empathy, cooperation, dialogical capacity, and conflict resolution. Likewise, its principles are consistent with the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB), which provides for the integral development of children and adolescents.

In contrast to a punitive approach, the MPC promotes the construction of healthy relationships and the development of a culture of peace (Rigby & Griffiths, 2011; Pikas, 2002). This approach gained legal support with the amendment to the LDB (Law No. 13.663/2018), which now requires the implementation of preventive actions and the promotion of a culture of peace within the school environment. This requirement is consistent with the perspective of

Rigby and Slee (2014), who argue that preventive measures should invest in building a positive school climate, thereby reducing the occurrence of bullying.

The tension between the punitive role of society and the formative function of the school is a key issue for understanding the effectiveness of the MPC. Laws establishing the Program to Combat Systematic Intimidation (Law No. 13.185/2015) and criminalizing this practice (Law No. 14.811/2024) represent important steps in addressing bullying and other forms of violence in schools. However, the school's role must focus on promoting students' integral development rather than administering criminal justice.

The ineffectiveness of punitive approaches, evidenced by studies such as those by Rigby and Johnson (2016 *apud* Rigby, 2017) and by Scherer and Nickerson (2010), finds a response in the principles of the MPC. These studies demonstrate that direct sanctions are significantly less effective than restorative practices, underscoring the importance of approaches that foster reflection and reparation of harm rather than obedience driven by fear.

What distinguishes the MPC from other restorative practices is precisely its individualized intervention strategy. While mediation or restorative circles promote direct collective interaction among perpetrators, targets, and peers, the MPC intervenes with those involved separately (Pikas, 2002). Considering that bullying is a group phenomenon sustained by cohesion and the power status of perpetrators, focusing on individual interviews disrupts group dynamics, fostering accountability, reflection, and reparation rather than reinforcing the cycle of intimidation that collective mediation might intensify (Rigby; Griffiths, 2011).

Therefore, the MPC can be characterized as a restorative approach, given its emphasis on accountability and reparation for the harm caused, rather than containment through punishment, which does not promote ethical action toward others.

A study conducted by Rigby and Griffiths (2011) in Australia analyzed the application of the MPC in seventeen bullying cases. Reports from targets indicated that the situation improved and that, during follow-up interviews, perpetrators began to treat them with greater respect and care. In the same vein, interviews with perpetrators showed that their involvement in resolving the situation contributed to positive self-perceptions as they repaired the harm caused to the target. Moreover, in 95% of the cases, they acknowledged the suffering of the targeted student. Finally, all professionals who applied the MPC stated that they would use the method again in cases of peer victimization.

These results corroborate research conducted in 25 Australian schools, in which Rigby (2017) examined the effectiveness of the MPC based on teachers' evaluations. That study

analyzed several factors, including the use and effectiveness of different bullying intervention methods. The findings indicated that the MPC was among the most highly rated approaches, outperforming direct sanctions and mediation. Although the study identified the MPC as one of the least frequently used intervention methods in schools, its outcomes were significantly positive.

The effectiveness of the MPC is also evidenced by the Sheffield study conducted in England by Smith *et al*. (2004). In that research, the interventions employed were successful in two-thirds of the cases, a result reflected in above-average reductions in incidents of peer intimidation.

The MPC further demonstrates its effectiveness through its application in various international programs, including those implemented in Spain, Finland, Australia, and England (Rigby, 2005). The author emphasizes that the MPC is grounded in a solid theoretical framework and has proven successful in reducing bullying when mediated by well-trained professionals.

According to the studies reviewed, the MPC emerges as an effective approach to reducing school bullying and, because it is non-punitive, it is capable of promoting lasting change (Rigby; Griffiths, 2011). Conversely, the complexity of the method presents certain challenges, such as the time required to implement its stages and the need for specialized training. The quality of the intervention may be compromised by limited time within the school context, which hinders full implementation. Faithful application of the MPC is essential to its effectiveness, creating a critical constraint, as it requires an investment that schools are often unable to make.

Pikas (2002) highlights that the effectiveness of the MPC is related to intervening with the perpetrator of bullying without punishment or blame, which helps to break negative behavioral cycles. Group dynamics shift as a result of the bond established between the professional and the students. As noted by Rigby and Griffiths (2011), the MPC is considered more complex than other intervention approaches; therefore, professional training is crucial to its success.

Another relevant aspect of the MPC concerns family involvement. It is essential for schools to communicate with families about the preventive and intervention actions planned to address this form of violence, clarifying when families will be invited to the school and ensuring that they receive support and guidance on how to respond to bullying situations.
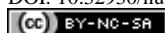
In summary, the analysis shows that the success of the MPC does not stem from a simple intervention technique to overcome bullying, but rather from its deep alignment with the school's formative role and with moral development. This is due to its restorative purpose, grounded in dialogue, accountability, reparation, and the opportunity to cultivate moral values such as respect, empathy, and compassion for others—who are also human—within shared coexistence.

Final considerations

Empirical evidence from international studies confirms that the MPC is effective in reducing bullying and highlights the school's fundamental formative and pedagogical role. Furthermore, its principles are aligned with the educational policy documents that guide education in the national context.

Based on this analysis and on an understanding of bullying as a moral problem, the MPC emerges as an approach more consistent with students' holistic development. The method represents a paradigm shift from traditional disciplinary approaches. Its objective is not to assign blame or impose expiatory sanctions that may intensify the problem, but rather to foster shared concern and collaborative problem-solving, motivated by the well-being of everyone in the school environment. It is a tool that values dialogue and active listening, enables self-regulation and moral awareness, and transforms bullying dynamics by promoting healthier relationships.

Despite its potential, the complexity of the method must be acknowledged. Studies indicate that its effectiveness is linked to the quality of professional training, the time allocated, and fidelity of implementation, as well as to the combination of preventive measures—which contribute to the development of a school environment marked by healthy and respectful relationships—and intervention measures—such as the use of the MPC—to promote change in group dynamics. These actions allow perpetrators the opportunity to repair the harm they have caused, develop moral sensitivity, and take responsibility for their actions; enable targets to recognize their own worth and express their feelings, learning to position themselves in situations of intimidation; and help bystanders learn the value of moral indignation and feel confident to act in contexts of aggression and intimidation. In addition, family engagement—guided by the school—fosters a sense of support and empowerment, strengthening partnerships grounded in an understanding of the principles that sustain this work.

As demonstrated in this study, the fundamental purpose of school intervention is not to make children and adolescents cease aggressive behaviors out of fear of punishment or coercion, but rather to enable them to do so because they have developed the capacity to reflect on their own worth and on the worth of others.

In this way, the present article reinforces that the Method of Shared Concern is not merely a viable alternative, but an urgent pedagogical necessity. It is recommended that educational institutions—supported by public policies—invest in the continuous professional development of their staff, ensuring the time and fidelity required for implementation. This is an essential pathway for schools to advance in their role of building a culture of peace and fostering the moral development of children and adolescents.

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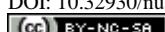
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