

Bullying Victimization of Faculty of Theology Students Regarding Their Religious Thought and Lifestyles: A Mixed Method Study (The Case of Selçuk University Faculty of Theology)*

Sümeýra BİLECİK KARACAN

Assoc. Prof., Selcuk University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Religious Education, Konya/Türkiye
sumeyrabilecik@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8351-6923>

Rüveyda ÇINAR

Res. Assist., Selcuk University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Sociology of Religion, Konya/Türkiye,
ruveydacinar@selcuk.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4026-2342>

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Abstract

Bullying can be defined as the intentional targeting of an individual or group by another individual or group, usually based on a power imbalance, causing physical, emotional or psychological harm in a continuous and repeated manner. Bullying can occur not only among individuals, but sometimes in groups or institutions, and is reproduced through dynamics shaped by social structures, cultural norms and power relations. In this context, bullying manifests itself in different forms depending on the age and developmental level at which it occurs, and the form and place where it is practiced. Although there are many studies on bullying in the literature, it is seen that these studies are mostly conducted on pre-university students, and that studies on bullying experienced by university students are quite limited. In addition, there is no study on the nature of bullying that university students are subjected to in terms of their religious thoughts and lifestyles. Therefore, this study aims to examine the bullying victimization of Faculty of Theology students regarding their religious thoughts and lifestyles and its consequences using explanatory sequential design, a mixed method design. In the quantitative dimension of the study, the questionnaire on bullying victimization regarding religious thoughts and lifestyles developed by the researchers was applied to a sample group of 390 people selected from the research population of Selcuk University Faculty of Theology. After the quantitative data were analyzed, the issues that needed to be explained were determined and the qualitative data of the study were collected through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative dimension of the study consisted of 15 students who stated that they were bullied in the faculty. It is thought that the data obtained from the research will serve as a guide to develop strategies to combat bullying in higher education institutions and to improve support mechanisms for the psychosocial needs of students.

Keywords: Religious Education, Bullying, Religious Thought, Lifestyle, Theology.

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İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Dini Düşünce ve Yaşam Biçimlerine İlişkin Zorbalık Mağduriyetleri: Bir Karma Yöntem Çalışması (Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Örneği)*

Sümeýra BİLECİK KARACAN

Doç. Dr., Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Bölümü, Din Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, Konya/Türkiye
sumeyrabilecik@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8351-6923>

Rüveyda ÇINAR

Arş. Gör., Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Bölümü, Din Sosyolojisi Anabilim Dalı, Konya/Türkiye
ruveydacinar@selcuk.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4026-2342>

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Öz

Zorbalık, genellikle güç dengesizliğine dayalı olarak bir bireyin ya da grubun başka bir birey ya da grubu kasıtlı şekilde hedef alarak, sürekli ve tekrarlayan biçimde fiziksel, duygusal veya psikolojik yönlerden zarar vermesi olarak tanımlanabilir. Zorbalık, bir kişi ya da grubun zayıf ya da savunmasız olan bir diğerine karşı korku, stres, özgüven kaybı gibi olumsuz duygusal sonuçlar yaratacak şekilde, korkutma, dışlama, alay etme, tehdit etme, hakaret etme veya fiziksel saldırılarda bulunma biçiminde kendini göstermektedir. Zorbalık, yalnızca bireyler arasında değil, bazen gruplar veya kurumlar düzeyinde de ortaya çıkabilmekte ve sosyal yapıların, kültürel normların ve güç ilişkilerinin şekillendirdiği dinamikler üzerinden yeniden üretilmektedir. Bu bağlamda zorbalık, ortaya çıktığı yaş ve gelişim düzeyi, tatbik edildiği şekil ve mekana göre farklı biçimlerde tezahür etmektedir. Tezahür ettiği yaş, bağlam ve biçimden bağımsız olarak zorbalık, mağdurları üzerinde olumsuz psikososyal etkiler bırakmaktadır. Literatürde zorbalık üzerine pek çok araştırma bulunmakla birlikte bu çalışmaların daha çok üniversite öncesi öğrenciler örneğinde yürütüldüğü, üniversite öğrencilerinin uğradıkları zorbalığa ilişkin çalışmaların da oldukça sınırlı olduğu görülmektedir. Buna ek olarak, üniversite öğrencilerinin dini düşünce ve yaşam tarzları özelinde uğradıkları zorbalık ve mahiyetine yönelik bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Buradan yola çıkılarak bu çalışmada, İlahiyat Fakültesi öğrencilerinin dini düşünce ve yaşam tarzına yönelik zorbalık mağduriyetleri ve bunun sonuçlarının, karma yöntem tasarımı açıklayıcı ardışık desen ile incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın nicel boyutunda Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi araştırma evreninden seçilen 390 kişilik örneklem grubuna, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen dini düşünce ve yaşam tarzına yönelik zorbalık mağduriyeti anketi uygulanmış, nicel veriler analiz edildikten sonra açıklanmasına ihtiyaç duyulan hususlar belirlenerek, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler aracılığıyla araştırmanın nitel verileri toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın nitel boyutu, fakülte içerisinde zorbalığa uğradığını belirten 15 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmadan elde edilen verilerin, yükseköğretim kurumlarında zorbalıkla mücadele stratejilerinin geliştirilmesi ve öğrencilerin psikososyal ihtiyaçlarına yönelik destek mekanizmalarının iyileştirilmesi için yol gösterici olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Eğitimi, Zorbalık, Dini Düşünce, Yaşam Tarzı, İlahiyat.

Atıf

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Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying, which has a literature history of nearly fifty years, gained its modern academic interest in the 1970s with the study of Dan Olweus and was shaped by these studies.¹ According to Olweus' definition, bullying is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon characterized by deliberate, repetitive and aggressive behaviors which involve a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim.² In terms of its basic elements, the intentionality aspect of bullying includes intentional acts that aim to harm the victim.³ It is a critical factor that distinguishes bullying from other forms of aggression, as it contains the psychic and psychological basis of aggressive behavior. On the other hand, as a recurrent phenomenon that establishes a power imbalance relationship between the victim and the perpetrator to the extent that it makes it difficult for the victim to defend himself/herself, bullying also expresses a context in which 'power is systematically abused'.⁴

As a complex phenomenon that varies in terms of type, prevalence, age range, gender and risk factors, bullying is commonly addressed as verbal, physical, social/relational (psychological) and cyber bullying.⁵ Depending on the context, bullying is classified as school bullying, workplace bullying (mobbing), domestic bullying and social (mass) bullying, based on the place where it is practiced. According to the targeted elements, it is categorized as gender-based bullying, race/ethnicity-based bullying, bullying against individuals with disabilities and identity-based bullying (sexual orientation, anti-minority and anti-immigrant, etc.).

The discipline of educational sciences deals with the phenomenon of bullying, which can be classified around many factors, in the context of age and developmental periods. This is aimed at understanding the relevant developmental dynamics patterned around bullying, developing bullying prevention and intervention strategies, ensuring the establishment of a healthy and prosperous environment in educational institutions, and minimizing the long-term psychosocial effects of bullying on individuals.⁶ In this regard, bullying is discussed in the literature within the framework of early childhood (preschool, 0-6 years), late childhood (primary school, 6-12 years), adolescence (secondary school and high school, 12-18 years) and adulthood (higher education, 18+ years) periods. In the pre-school early childhood period, bullying is generally observed as physical bullying and direct aggression such as pushing, hitting and physically violating space.⁷ In the late childhood period, which corresponds to the primary school period, in addition to the physical bullying seen in the pre-school period, verbal bullying, social exclusion and spreading gossip are common among school-age students.⁸ During adolescence, which refers to the secondary school and high school periods, bullying is seen in the forms of social bullying, cyber bullying and relational bullying. In addition, gender-based bullying, social exclusion and verbal bullying are frequently seen among adolescents, especially among female students.⁹

Finally, it is known that more factors are involved in the bullying process among students in higher education, which also constitutes the sample of this study, compared to other periods. The bullying faced by adult actors in this period is important in that it is indirect, carried out through less visible methods, and is extremely difficult for victims to detect.¹⁰ The most common types of bullying experienced by university students in higher education are social exclusion and discrimination, public direct and indirect verbal bullying, and cyberbullying. Social exclusion and discrimination manifest themselves in the form of students being ignored, excluded from groups, discredited, and isolated by other students or faculty members.¹¹

¹ Susan Limber et al., "Dan Olweus (1931–2020)", *International Journal of Bullying Prevention* 5/3 (2023), 179-180.

² Lisa Hellström et al., "Definitions of Bullying", *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Bullying* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2021), 2-21.

³ Peter K. Smith, "Bullying: Definition, Types, Causes, Consequences and Intervention", *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 10/9 (2016), 519-532.

⁴ Ersilia Menesini - Christina Salmivalli, "Bullying in Schools: The State of Knowledge and Effective Interventions", *Psychology, Health & Medicine* 22/1 (2017), 240-253.

⁵ Baki Duy, "Teachers' Attitudes Toward Different Types of Bullying and Victimization in Turkey", *Psychology in the Schools* 50/10 (2013), 988.

⁶ Amanda B. Nickerson, "Preventing and Intervening with Bullying in Schools: A Framework for Evidence-Based Practice", *School Mental Health* 11 (2019), 19-24.

⁷ Chad A. Rose et al., "Peer Reactions to Early Childhood Aggression in A Preschool Setting: Defenders, Encouragers, or Neutral Bystander", *Developmental Neuropsychology* 19/4 (2016), 246-254.

⁸ Shinya Fujikawa et al., "Bullying Across Late Childhood and Early Adolescence: A Prospective Cohort of Students Assessed Annually from Grades 3 to 8", *Academic Pediatrics* 21/2 (2021), 344-351.

⁹ Jing Wang et al., "School Bullying Among Adolescents in the United States: Physical, Verbal, Relational, and Cyber", *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45/4 (2009), 368-375.

¹⁰ Carol M. Walker et al., "An Exploratory Study of Cyberbullying with Undergraduate University Students", *TechTrends* 55/2 (2011), 35.

¹¹ Irma Ramos Rodríguez, "Violence, Bullying and Academic Performance in Higher Education Students", *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 8/2 (2021), 194-197.

Cyberbullying, on the other hand, is carried out through digital environments, various social media tools, e-mail and messaging applications, and technological uses.¹² These acts of bullying can be directed at the victims' appearance, worldview, personality, socioeconomic status, social relationships and beliefs. The type of bullying experienced due to religion and worldview is complex and related to psychosocial factors, as it depends on how individuals rationalize and legitimize the phenomenon of religion. Therefore, it should not be ignored that religious affiliation can turn into an ideological type of bullying by feeding prejudices based on ethnic and religious identity.¹³ Accordingly, bullying based on religion or worldview includes discriminatory, hostile or oppressive behaviors towards religious identity or practices (worship) and has been reported together with religious discourses in higher education.¹⁴ Mocking behaviors that are deemed inappropriate and incompatible with individuals' religious identities, imposing a certain cultural norm by using force,¹⁵ and trying to change individuals' lifestyles, beliefs and identities (sexual orientation or religious) through religious discourses¹⁶ can also be described as ideological bullying¹⁷ in the sense that they aim to use force directly against constructed identities and to demonstrate power relations.

This implicit and complex structure of bullying experienced in higher education not only negatively affects the psychosocial development of adults, but also leads to psychological disorders such as social anxiety and depression, and directly affects learning and success motivation, leading to low academic performance.¹⁸ Bullying can be much more visible and felt especially in structures where people from diverse social and cultural patterns come together such as universities. Furthermore, in a social group where differences are visible and subject to power relations, the existence of super-identities constructed especially around the "phenomenon of religion" or the presentation of the institutional structure itself as a "religious institution" leads to the fact that the phenomenon of bullying is handled in a rational context, ignored and takes on a covert nature. In this context, this study aims to determine the nature and consequences of bullying victimization experienced by students at the Faculty of Theology, an institution that provides higher religious education. Within the framework of this purpose, it is thought that by thoroughly examining the intentional, repeated and aggressive behaviors resulting from power imbalances between bullying victims and perpetrators, and the marginalization and discrimination situations that students encounter in academic and social environments, it can contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and supportive environment in academic and social environments. The study is limited to the population of Selçuk University Faculty of Theology students and the students attending the faculty in the 2024-2025 academic year selected by the multiple sampling method within this population, and the data collection tools developed by the researchers consisting of the questionnaire on bullying victimization and semi-structured interview form regarding the religious thoughts and lifestyles of the students of the Faculty of Theology. Considering these aims and limitations, the following problems are sought to be answered in the study:

What are the cases of being subjected to bullying directed towards the religious thoughts and lifestyles of Faculty of Theology students?

Does the bullying victimization of the students show a significant difference according to the variables of gender and grade?

What is the nature of the bullying experiences that the students are exposed to and in what themes do they manifest in?

How does the bullying that the students are exposed to affect their lives, their perspectives on religion, religious education and profession?

¹² Constantinos M. Kokkinos - Nafsika Antoniadou, "Cyber-Bullying and Cyber-Victimization Among Undergraduate Student Teachers Through the Lens of the General Aggression Model", *Computers in Human Behavior* 98 (2019), 61.

¹³ Wade C. Rowatt - Rosemary L Al-Kire, "Dimensions of Religiousness and Their Connection to Racial, Ethnic, and Atheist Prejudices", *Current Opinion in Psychology* 40 (2021), 86-91.

¹⁴ Musbah Shaheen et al., "Religious Coercion on Public University Campuses: Looking Beyond the Street Preacher", *Journal of College Student Development* 63/1 (2022), 69-84.

¹⁵ Sachi Edwards, "Distinguishing Between Belief and Culture: A Critical Perspective on Religious Identity", *Journal of College and Character* 19/3 (2018), 201-214.

¹⁶ Peter A. Newman et al., "Pray That God Will Change You: The Religious Social Ecology of Bias-Based Bullying Targeting Sexual and Gender Minority Youth—A Qualitative Study of Service Providers and Educators", *Journal of Adolescent Research* 33/5 (2018), 523-548.

¹⁷ Andreian Yusup et al., "Identity Politics & Power Relations Against Sexual Violence in Religious Higher Education Environment", *Jurnal Paedagogy* 10/3 (2023), 831.

¹⁸ Rodríguez, "Violence, Bullying and Academic Performance in Higher Education Students".

1. Method

1.1. Research Model

This study was conducted with mixed method design in which quantitative and qualitative data are used together and the explanatory sequential design, which is a mixed method. This design, while revealing the general results related to the subject under study, allows explaining how these results are formed, supporting the quantitative data obtained with detailed information in the context of personal experiences and explaining the outputs obtained in more depth.¹⁹ Since this study aimed to examine the nature and consequences of bullying victimization in the context of religious thoughts and lifestyles of the students of the Faculty of Theology, it was thought that quantitative or qualitative methods alone would not be able to meet the needs, and therefore, mixed method and explanatory sequential design were preferred.

1.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

In the quantitative dimension of the study, the population of the study consists of 809 students studying at Selçuk University Faculty of Theology in the academic year 2024-2025. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in sample selection. Firstly, each grade level was accepted as a cluster with the cluster sampling method. Then, 390 students were selected from these clusters with the simple random method and constituted the sample of the study. The characteristics of the students participating in the quantitative dimension of the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Group and its Characteristics

		N	%
Gender	Female	295	75,6
	Male	95	24,4
Grade	1	87	22,3
	2	81	20,8
	3	117	30
	4	105	26,9
Education Type	Normal Education	290	74,4
	Evening Education	100	25,6
Total		390	100

In the selection of participants in the qualitative dimension of the study, the contact form attached to the end of the questionnaire form was used to reach students who had been victimized by bullying and wanted to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted with students of different gender, grade level and education type among the volunteer students who left their contact information on this form. Creswell (2017) recommends that in qualitative studies, the data collection process should be terminated when it is seen that no new characteristics emerge with the collection of new data, that is, when the data reaches saturation.²⁰ Accordingly, the data collection process was terminated when it was determined that the data reached saturation, and the qualitative dimension of the study was completed with 15 students. The characteristics of the students who participated in the qualitative dimension of the study are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Participants in the Qualitative Dimension of the Study

Participant Code	Gender	Grade	Education Type
P1	Male	2	Normal Education
P2	Male	2	Evening Education

¹⁹ John Creswell, *Karma Yöntem Araştırmalarına Giriş*, trans. Mustafa Sözbilir (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2021), 39.

²⁰ John Creswell, *Araştırma Deseni Nitel, Nicel ve Karma Yöntem Yaklaşımları*, trans. Selçuk Beşir Demir (Ankara: Eğiten Kitap, 2017), 189.

P3	Female	4	Normal Education
P4	Female	3	Normal Education
P5	Female	3	Normal Education
P6	Female	4	Normal Education
P7	Female	3	Normal Education
P8	Female	3	Evening Education
P9	Female	4	Normal Education
P10	Female	4	Evening Education
P11	Female	4	Evening Education
P12	Female	4	Normal Education
P13	Female	4	Normal Education
P14	Male	2	Normal Education
P15	Female	4	Normal Education

1.3. Data Collection Tools

In this study, quantitative data were collected through the bullying victimization questionnaire on the religious thoughts and lifestyles of the students studying at the Faculty of Theology developed by the researchers, and qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview forms.

While developing the bullying victimization questionnaire regarding the religious thoughts and lifestyles of the Faculty of Theology students, the literature on the subject was reviewed and a draft questionnaire consisting of 20 items was prepared accordingly. The draft form was presented to the opinions of four field experts, and based on the suggestions received from the experts, three items were added to the form, resulting in the final version of the questionnaire consisting of 23 items. The item statements were carefully designed to include the acts of bullying regarding the understanding of religion, lifestyle, and the appearance of students as a reflection of these. The statements in the items were presented with the options 'Never (1)', 'Rarely (2)', 'Sometimes (3)', 'Often (4)' and 'Always (5)'. Before the questionnaire was put into practice, a pilot application was carried out with 50 participants, and the final application was started after the opinions of the students participating in the pilot application were taken on issues such as comprehensibility of the items and clarity of the expressions regarding the items.

In the interviews conducted to explain and enrich the quantitative data, demographic information including age, grade and type of education was obtained from the participants. Then, questions were asked about how they encountered bullying words and actions in the faculty, what the event or thought that made them think that this victimization was related to religious understanding, views and attitudes, how this experience affected their lives and perspectives on the field of theology and the profession. When necessary, probing questions were used during the interviews to support the participants to express the nature and consequences of their experience more clearly. Before the semi-structured interviews were implemented, 4 expert opinions were consulted and the questions to be asked to the participants were arranged in line with the suggestions.

Before the questionnaire and interviews were conducted, ethics committee approval was obtained from Selçuk University Faculty of Theology Scientific Ethics and Evaluation Board with the decision dated 13.09.2024 and numbered E-49313121-900-829903.

1.4. Data Collection and Analysis

In the explanatory sequential design preferred in the study, the aim is to start the study with the quantitative phase and to conduct a qualitative study in the second phase to explain the quantitative results.²¹ Therefore, quantitative data were first collected in the study. In the qualitative phase, the second phase of the study, the quantitative data were analyzed and the results of the analysis were examined to determine which results would be explored more deeply and which questions could be asked to the participants. Following this, qualitative data were collected and analyzed, and inferences were made about how the qualitative results explained the quantitative results. Then, the integrity of the obtained quantitative and qualitative data was evaluated and the results were reached.

The quantitative data of the study were analyzed using SPSS 25.0 program. Since it was not possible to analyze the total score²² in the data collection tool developed as a questionnaire, the mean scores of the items were taken one by one. Skewness and kurtosis values were analyzed before deciding on the tests to be conducted on the relationship between the items and the variables. The mean skewness value of the items is ,547 and the mean kurtosis value is -,363. The fact that skewness and kurtosis values are in the range of ± 1 indicates normal distribution.²³ Therefore, parametric tests were preferred in the study. While analyzing the difference between gender, which is a two-group variable, and the items of the questionnaire, t-test was applied, and ANOVA test was applied for the grade level, which has more than one group variable. The source of the difference between the groups in the ANOVA test was analyzed with Scheffe, one of the post-hoc tests.

In the collection of qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researchers and the interviews were recorded after obtaining permission and consent from the participants. After the interviews were completed, the data were transcribed and subjected to content analysis. The aim of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data.²⁴ In this direction, similar data were brought together within the framework of certain concepts and themes. After the data were coded, themes were created and organized. The data pointing to the same phenomenon were gathered together and themes were formed. While interpreting the findings, the participant statements representing the relevant themes were quoted and interpreted.

Expert opinions were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and interview form, and necessary arrangements were made accordingly. In addition, cross-coding was used in the analysis of qualitative data. Data codes were created separately by two researchers, and consistency was ensured between the codes, increasing reliability in the analysis of qualitative data.

2. Findings and Interpretations

2.1. Findings on the Nature of Bullying Victimization and Its Relationship with Some Variables

The mean scores of the items in the questionnaire about the bullying victimization of the participants regarding their religious thoughts and lifestyles and the statistics on whether the questionnaire items show significant differences according to gender and grade variables are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Statistics Regarding the Bullying Victimization Questionnaire of the Faculty of Theology Students' Religious Thoughts and Lifestyles

Items		Mean	Variables	
			Gender	Grade
			p	p
1	I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged.	2,07	,691	0,49
2	There are times when I feel obliged to hide my views about religious teachings from my friends.	1,42	,120	,174

²¹ Creswell, *Karma Yöntem Araştırmalarına Giriş*, trans. Mustafa Sözbilir, 38.

²² Konstancja Densley et al., "Evaluation of the Social Participation Questionnaire in Adult Patients with Depressive Symptoms Using Rasch Analysis", *Quality of Life Research* 22 (2013), 1987-1997.

²³ Soleman H. Abu-Bader, *Using Statistical Methods in Social Science Research: With a Complete SPSS Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 140-143.

²⁴ Remzi Kınal, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2010), 189.

3	I have difficulty balancing my religious views with my academic life.	1,59	,000	,517
4	I am afraid to express my religious views in class presentations and assignments.	1,59	,311	,904
5	I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me.	1,81	,002	,004
6	I am labeled as heretic because of my religious views.	1,20	,000	,975
7	I act as if I support views I disagree with in order to avoid being bullied.	1,39	,002	,464
8	I feel ostracized because I freely express my views.	1,46	,007	,268
9	I fear that if I express my views freely in class, I will be subjected to injustice.	1,46	,004	,014
10	My views on religion are judged for being too traditional.	1,43	,064	,578
11	Faculty members prevent me from expressing my views on religious issues.	1,18	,023	,206
12	I am criticized because of the people I follow/read.	1,35	,000	,208
13	I am humiliated because of my ideas about religion.	1,18	,001	,463
14	I am judged on the conformity of my lifestyle to religious principles.	1,58	,001	,256
15	My friends find my religious lifestyle different.	1,43	,000	,051
16	My lifestyle is not seen as appropriate for the age by my friends.	1,39	,001	,506
17	I was subjected to physical violence because my behavior was deemed inappropriate.	1,10	,008	,784
18	I have difficulty reflecting my religious understanding in the way I want within the faculty (in classrooms, canteens, libraries, etc.).	1,26	,000	,550
19	I have difficulty fulfilling my religious duties in the way I believe in the faculty.	1,16	,000	,257
20	I do not feel safe when I act the way I believe and think in the faculty.	1,28	,002	,529
21	I am criticized because of my clothing style.	1,52	,342	,448
22	I feel that I am prejudiced because of my appearance.	1,63	,471	,344
23	I think that the mindset adopted throughout the faculty imposes a certain clothing style.	1,91	,681	,029

The highest score that students can get from the items related to bullying victimization is 5 and the lowest score is 1. When Table 3 is examined in this context, it can be said that bullying victimization is at a low level throughout the faculty, based on the fact that the item with the highest mean score is (\bar{x} = 2.07). The item with the highest mean score is as follows: 'I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged' (\bar{x} = 2,07). The second item with the highest mean is: 'I think that the mentality adopted throughout the faculty imposes a certain clothing style.' (\bar{x} = 1.91). This item is followed by the item 'I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me.' (\bar{x} = 1.81).

When the items with the lowest mean in the bullying victimization questionnaire are examined, it is seen that the item 'I was subjected to physical violence because my behavior was deemed inappropriate' ranks first ($\bar{x}= 1,10$). It is followed by the item 'I have difficulty fulfilling my religious duties in the way I believe in the faculty.' with a mean of ($\bar{x}= 1.16$) and the item 'Faculty members prevent me from expressing my views on religious issues.' ($\bar{x}= 1.18$). The fact that the item related to bullying involving physical violence within the faculty was the item with the lowest score in the questionnaire is considered as a positive situation in the context of faculty students not exhibiting physically violent behaviors.

When the items with the highest and lowest averages in the questionnaire are analyzed, it is seen that the items with the highest scores in the questionnaire are those expressing that students hesitate to participate in academic discussions due to the fear that their understanding of religion may be judged, that the mindset adopted throughout the faculty creates an imposition on their clothing styles and that the common thought patterns in the faculty put pressure on students. On the other hand, as understood from the lowest items, students do not face any obstacles in fulfilling their religious duties in the faculty and they are not prevented by the faculty members from sharing their thoughts on religious issues and their views reflecting their understanding of religion. The students state that they hesitate to participate in academic discussions or that the prevalent mindset in the faculty puts pressure on them.

While analyzing the variables through the answers given to the questionnaire, it is not technically correct to obtain a total score in a data collection tool developed in the form of a questionnaire. Therefore, it was analyzed one by one whether the items in the questionnaire showed a significant difference according to gender and grade variables.²⁵ As a result, it was found that all items except items 1, 2, 4, 21, 22 and 23 showed a significant difference according to gender. Items 1, 2 and 4, in which there was no significant difference according to gender, indicate that students are afraid of sharing their views on religion and religious teachings and expressing them in class presentations and assignments, while items 21, 22 and 23, in which there was no significant difference according to gender, indicate that students are subjected to bullying about their appearance and clothing preferences. However, when the seventeen items with significant differences were examined, it was seen that male students' scores regarding bullying victimization were higher in all items. Accordingly, the hesitation to share their views on religion and religious teachings and to express them in class presentations and homework does not lead to a significant difference in terms of gender. From this point of view, it can be said that the participants have similar opinions on this issue.

It was analyzed whether there was a significant difference in the bullying experienced by the students according to their grade level. Items 1, 5, 9 and 23 in the questionnaire showed a significant difference according to grade level. The first item, in which there is a significant difference, indicates not participating in academic discussions due to the fear that one's understanding of religion will be judged, and there is a significant difference between grades 1-2 and 3 in this item. The mean of the item is ($\bar{x}= 1,92$) for first graders, ($\bar{x}= 1,90$) for second graders and ($\bar{x}= 2,24$) for third graders. A significant difference was found between grades 1-2, 3 and 4 in the fifth item, which is 'I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me.' According to this item, the mean of first graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,46$), second graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,81$), third graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,92$) and fourth graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,95$). The ninth item expresses students' concerns that they will be subjected to injustice if they freely express their opinions in class, and there is a significant difference between the 1st-4th grades. The mean score of the first graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,24$), the fourth graders is ($\bar{x}= 1,64$). In the twenty-third item, which is expressed as 'I think that the mindset adopted throughout the faculty imposes a certain clothing style', there is a significant difference between the 1st graders and the 3rd and 4th graders. According to this item, the mean score of the first graders is 1.64, the third graders is ($\bar{x}= 2,04$), and the fourth graders is ($\bar{x}= 2,09$). When the items with significant differences according to the grade level and the source of the difference are examined, it is seen that the mean scores of the items related to bullying victimization increase as the grade level increases.

Although it was determined that bullying victimization was at a low level in the sample in the quantitative part of the study, the presence of students who stated that they were bullied in various contexts made it necessary to explain the nature and consequences of this victimization with qualitative data. The themes obtained from the interviews regarding the subject matter and nature of students' bullying victimization and their frequency of repetition are shown in Table 4.

²⁵ Densley et al., "Evaluation of the Social Participation Questionnaire in Adult Patients with Depressive Symptoms Using Rasch Analysis", 1992-1994.

Table 4: Themes Obtained from the Interviews on the Nature of Students' Bullying Victimization

Theme	Number of Students Expressing Views on the Theme
Bullying Regarding Relationships with the Opposite Sex	10
Bullying Regarding Clothing Style and Appearance	8
Bullying Regarding Religious Thoughts and Lifestyles	5

In the interviews regarding the bullying experienced at the faculty, it was observed that the bullying victimizations of the students who were bullied were grouped under three themes. It is noteworthy that the most frequently repeated theme among bullying victimizations was about relationships with the opposite sex. One of the participants shared her experience on this subject as follows:

"In my opinion, a girl and a boy can meet as normal friends. But according to my friends, this is very wrong. The mother of a male friend of mine from the fourth grade was ill and passed away. He was trying to retake a lot of classes, and I tried to help him. I provided my friend with the notes for the classes he failed. My female friends criticized my efforts to help him, saying, 'Can a girl and a boy be so close in the faculty of theology? A girl and a boy cannot be friends; anyone who says that is lying.'" (P8).

The issue of bullying in communication with the opposite sex is of the same nature for male and female students. One of the male students who participated in the study expressed his opinion on this issue as follows: "There is a lot of gossip among the girls at the faculty, and I really don't like it. Even greeting a girl friend becomes a reason for gossip." (P14)

As seen in the participant statements, bullying behaviors in communication with the opposite sex manifest as gossiping and making negative criticisms. Bullying applied to students who communicate with the opposite sex does not differ according to gender.

The second theme that emerged in the interviews on the nature of bullying at the Faculty of Theology was 'bullying regarding clothing style and appearance'. Bullying behaviors in this regard manifest in the form of harassment, exclusion and gossip with sarcastic remarks due to clothing style. One of the participants, who stated that she had been bullied for a long time because of her headscarf style, described her experience as follows:

"When I was in the first grade, I used to wear accessories, and because of that, they criticized me. At first, their stares made me uncomfortable and made me feel bad, and later on, they started intervening verbally and excluding me. For example, one day I wore a hat. They made dismissive comments like 'What's that hat for?' Even though I didn't stay much at the faculty, they looked at me with mocking eyes. I am in the third grade now and they still continue to bully me, they don't communicate with me, we don't talk at all" (P7).

The same student stated that she was also physically bullied with the following statements: "During the exam, the teacher asked us to pass the optical forms from front to back. The friend in front of me threw the optical form on the ground while handing it to me, and I got really hurt" (P7).

One of the students stated that the bullying she was subjected to because of her clothing style or appearance escalated into aggressive attitudes as follows:

"I say something in class, they respond as if they are attacking me. I think it is because of my clothing style and my talkative nature. The profile they want is for you to be like them, meaning if you are different, you have to become like them. The girls in the abayas want to be the dominant group at school, but I usually don't listen to them and end up arguing." (P3)

There are students in the faculty who think that such attitudes towards clothing style are related to strictly adhering to certain norms. One of these students explained this situation as follows:

"I wear makeup, I do it lightly. But according to them it's too attention-grabbing and attracts the attention of boys. To them, mine attracts attention, but I have friends who wear a hijab, if you look at them, only their eyes are visible, and they put mascara on their eyes. From my point of view, that is more attention-grabbing, but to them, mine is worse. I have friends who use mascara because only their eyes are visible. But to them, if their dresses are long enough, meaning if they wear long headscarves, they think they have done the right thing and consider what they do as correct." (P8)

Items 21, 22 and 23 in the questionnaire on victimization of bullying against religious thought and lifestyles indicate bullying against clothing style. When the mean scores of these items are examined, the

item 'I am criticized because of my clothing style' has a mean score of (\bar{x} = 1.52); the item 'I feel that I am prejudiced because of my appearance' has a mean score of (\bar{x} = 1.63) and it is seen that the mean scores obtained from these items are among the items with high scores in the questionnaire. Item 23 ('I think that the mindset adopted throughout the faculty imposes a certain clothing style') is the second item with the highest mean score in the questionnaire. The qualitative findings explain the quantitative findings seen in the items above.

Another theme that emerged in the context of the nature of bullying victimization within the faculty was 'Bullying Victimizations Regarding Religious Thought and Lifestyles'. One of the students who expressed an opinion on this issue explained his experience as follows:

"A few times I have tried to get into a debate on religious issues, particularly on issues I didn't agree with in religion, especially concerning Hadiths. I no longer engage in such discussions at school. I don't communicate with friends gathered in various religious groups and factions, they are already in their own world. Since everyone thinks their own practices are right, I don't argue with them. If the lecturers say things that validate these religious groups' views, I prefer to remain silent rather than respond. I just say, 'May Allah guide them,' because nothing will change even if I explain. When they start defending their own truths, I feel like I am considered godless." (P2).

In the quotation, the student stated that he gave up on his comments about religion in the process because he believed that the other person's views would not change. Similarly, another student stated that those who think differently from their classmates are marginalized and excluded as follows:

"I don't do it, but some of our friends are inclined to marginalize others. They have formed their perception of God so rigidly in their minds that when they see someone different from themselves, they say, 'The conception of God in our minds is like this, and you don't fit into it; therefore, you can't be a servant, you're incomplete, you're half...' And that's when the exclusion, marginalization, or character judgments begin." (P8)

As stated by the participant coded P2 in the qualitative findings, the issue of not participating in academic discussions due to differences in religious understanding appears in the bullying victimization questionnaire with the statement 'I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged', which has the highest mean score. Another item that points to attitudes such as pressure and exclusion caused by differences in thought and understanding about religion is the item 'I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me'. This item is the third item with the highest mean score in the questionnaire and points to the issue explained by the participant coded P8. At this point, participant opinions explain the nature of the quantitative data. It can be said that there are many students who have a certain religious mindset and understanding of religion in the faculty, and among them there are students who exclude and judge students who do not think like them.

Another participant expressed her discomfort with the criticism of actions that are normal for her as follows: "I suggested going to live music with my friends, and they replied, 'Come on, stop being silly, it's late at night,' and they looked down on such things. Going somewhere to listen to music is considered a big sin for them." (P8)

As seen in the example, the participants prefer to behave differently and distance themselves on the grounds that the choices they make in their daily lives are judged by their friends. This can be considered as a precaution taken by students against bullying. The 14th and 15th items in the questionnaire applied in the study address this issue and it is seen that the mean of the item 'I am judged on the conformity of my lifestyle to religious principles' is (\bar{x} = 1.58) and the mean of the item 'My friends find my religious lifestyle different' is (\bar{x} = 1.43).

In line with the data obtained from qualitative interviews, when the nature of bullying victimization is examined, it can be said that bullying is carried out among peers, not by faculty members or faculty staff. In addition, it is seen that bullying is more intense in the theme of relationships with the opposite sex and clothing style rather than thoughts and ideas. It is thought that this may be related to more concrete issues such as communication with the opposite sex or clothing style.

2.2. Findings Regarding the Consequences of Bullying Victimization

In the study, the frequency and nature of bullying victimization among the Faculty of Theology students and its results were discussed in the interviews and the following themes were reached.

Table 5: Themes and Codes Obtained from Interviews Regarding the Consequences of Students' Bullying Victimization

Themes	Frequency of Views Regarding the Theme	Codes	Frequency of Views Regarding Code
Consequences on Religious Attitude, Thought and Religious Education	42	Perspective on Religious Education and Theology	9
		Orientation to Religion and Worship	7
		Attitudes and Preferences Towards Profession	7
		Corporate Identity and Sense of Belonging	7
		Hiding Religious Understanding - Avoiding Discussions	3
		Changing Attitudes and Behaviors	8
Psychosocial Consequences	26	Psychological Effects	9
		Social Isolation	6
		Decreased Motivation to Attend School	6
		Normalization and Acceptance of Bullying	5

The consequences of bullying that the students of the Faculty of Theology are exposed to in terms of religious thought and lifestyles were examined under two main themes, “Consequences for Religious Attitude, Thought and Religious Education” and “Psychosocial Consequences”, and specific codes were created within these themes.

The bullying experienced by the students in the faculty negatively affected their perspectives on religious education and theology. The participant coded P10 exemplified this, saying:

“Before coming to the Faculty of Theology, I thought that theologians were very pious, all-knowing, and always doing everything in the most correct way. However, after coming to the faculty and seeing them in the classroom, I realized that, based on people’s thoughts, clothing, and actions, this perception was not accurate. My perspective on the Faculty of Theology and theologians has changed.”

Bullying experiences within the Faculty of Theology negatively affected not only the individuals’ perspective on the field of Theology as an institution, but also their perspective and attitudes towards religion and worship. For example; “I was already staying at the Qur’an course, reading the Qur’an, and praying for a while. After their attitudes, I didn’t feel very close to the Qur’an. I became estranged from religion, my teacher, and the people here as well.” (P7) It is understood from the statement that negative feelings towards the people who commit bullying are actually directed towards religion and worship, and this has behavioral consequences that even lead to distancing from worship.

Some of the students who were subjected to bullying stated that after these experiences, they became undecided about their choices to work in the field of religious education and religious services. In addition, a student who expressed his views by associating his experiences at the Faculty of Theology with the institutional structure regarding his career choices expressed this situation as follows:

“I will not be happy at all if the place I work has an environment like here. That is why I do not want to work at the Directorate of Religious Affairs at all. I cannot experience the pressure I see here for the rest of my life, I cannot bear it. If I work at the Presidency of Religious Affairs, there will be people in abayas around me, and I will have bad experiences like I did here” (P3).

It was determined that the sense of belonging of students who were exposed to bullying at the faculty was also damaged. The statement of one of the participants; “I did not feel that I belonged here due to the environment of the Faculty of Theology, I feel very alienated” is an example of this. The failure to develop a sense of belonging stems from the bullying they experience within the faculty. The development of this

feeling is prevented by actions such as exclusion and marginalization, leading to the isolation of the individual from the environment.

Hiding one's ideas about religion and not engaging in discussions on this issue can be considered both a result of bullying and a precaution taken to avoid being bullied. The following statement of a participant is examples of this situation:

"I avoid getting involved in religious debates because my religious views are a bit different from those of the people here, so I try not to get involved at all. I don't really know how these people understand and practice their religion. To avoid dealing with them and getting into verbal arguments, I don't engage in discussions." (P5).

The students who avoid expressing their thoughts and interpretations about religion in order not to be bullied in the faculty claim that there is a structure of thought adopted by most of the students in the faculty and that their own thoughts are contrary to it. The participant coded P6 expresses this situation as follows:

"In general, they have a mindset, they never go beyond their own mindset and oppose those who do. For example, when the professor is lecturing, there are times when I should say, 'Professor, could there be a mistake here? I don't think it's like that' but most of the time, I stay silent and try not to draw attention. The reason is that I think I would stand out suddenly."

This situation was measured with items 1, 2, 4 and 9 in the questionnaire and as a result, it was observed that this issue was pointed out in the first item, which had the highest average score ($\bar{x}= 2,07$) among the items evaluated out of 5 points and which was expressed as 'I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged'. When quantitative and qualitative data are considered together, it can be said that the basis of students' behaviors such as expressing their thoughts about religion and avoiding participating in academic discussions is their anxiety about being bullied.

In the study, it was determined that students not only hide their thoughts but also change their attitudes and behaviors accordingly because they are afraid of being bullied. The participant, who doesn't communicate with his girlfriend when he meets her outside in order not to encounter bullying within the faculty stated his situation as follows: "My girlfriend and I don't communicate at school. We don't hang out together or appear in public at school because we might be criticized... So far, the only place we are afraid and hesitant to meet is school. We are even afraid to look at each other so that no comments are made." (P2). Similarly, there are students who change their clothing style due to the fear of being bullied. One of these students stated the following:

"When I came to school, I stopped wearing ripped jeans and cut my nails. During the Qur'an lessons, while I was following the verses of Qur'an with my hand, the teacher's eyes were always on my nails. This created psychological pressure on me. That's why I tried not to attract attention during this process. I thought I was criticized because I attracted attention, because I seemed different to them." (P6)

Bullying is a phenomenon that has negative psychological effects on individuals regardless of its nature. In this study, the students who were bullied in different ways stated that they felt intense sadness and worthlessness after being victimized by bullying. For example: "... I feel excluded and worthless when I come here" (P7).

Within the faculty, bullying regarding clothing style, relationships with the opposite sex or religious thoughts and lifestyle manifests itself in the form of cutting off communication or excluding from peer groups. In the interviews conducted on the consequences of bullying, it was determined that students who are exposed to bullying tend to isolate themselves socially. For example; "I learned, like learned helplessness, that I shouldn't approach them anymore, so I don't get too close. I come to class on my own, and I leave directly without talking to anyone." (P7). It can be said that students who were excluded from their peer groups or were not communicated with, distanced themselves from their friend groups by their own choice after these experiences.

Bullying victimization is not only limited to social isolation, but also negatively affects students' motivation to continue school. The following statement from one of the students who expressed this view is an example of this situation: "... I didn't come to school at all in the second semester, I didn't even take the exams, I inadvertently hindered my academic progress, preventing me from advancing to the next grade... Their attitude caused me to be absent, to drop out of school, to question my existence in the department, to feel like I don't belong and to fail the class" (P7).

Another result of bullying is normalization and acceptance of bullying behaviors. The participant coded P4 said: "I actually normalized this kind of bullying. When I was bullied, I chose to normalize it

completely. Therefore, instead of getting upset and ruining my day, I think about forgetting it and not remembering it again" (P4) and expressed the situation of accepting the bullying and remaining unresponsive as normalization.

Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of this study, which examined the nature and consequences of bullying that students were exposed to due to their religious thoughts and lifestyles in the sample of Selçuk University Faculty of Theology, it was found that the bullying victimization of the students was at a very low level in terms of quantitative data, considering that each item was evaluated on a maximum 5-point questionnaire, but the experiences of the bullied students were united under similar themes in the interviews. In Willis' study on parochial school students, less than 1 percent of the students stated that they were exposed to long-term bullying. Although no significant relationship between bullying and religiosity was found in Willis' study, Willis states that a religion-based curriculum may have an effect on bullying. This finding and interpretation is consistent with the results of our study.²⁶ According to the results obtained from the quantitative data, the highest score (\bar{x} = 2.07) students received from the bullying victimization questionnaire belongs to the first item; "I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged". This item is followed by the statement "I think that the mindset adopted in the faculty imposes a certain clothing style" (\bar{x} = 1.91) and the item "I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me." (\bar{x} = 1.81). Based on this, it can be said that a group dynamic is formed by students with similar thoughts in the Faculty of Theology and bullying is applied to peers who are not considered to be suitable for the dynamics of this group. The questionnaire items were analyzed one by one according to gender and grade level variables, and as a result, it was concluded that the gender variable showed a significant difference with all items except six items (1, 2, 4, 21, 22 and 23). The study conducted by Giovazolias and Malikiosi-Loizos in Greece also shows that male university students face more bullying than female students.²⁷ Similarly, in the study conducted by Kocaşahan, 11% of female students were victims of peer bullying, while this rate was found to be 15.5% for male students.²⁸ In this study, the light of the data obtained from qualitative interviews, it was determined that especially female students normalized and ignored the bullying behaviors they were exposed to thanks to the support mechanism provided by the friend group they were in. Therefore, it can be said that the fact that female students meet their belonging needs from the relevant groups that reflect their religious thoughts and lifestyles can be mentioned as a preventive function of bullying victimization. On the other hand, male students experience bullying victimization more than female students as they are less socialized and less adaptive to in-group dynamics.

In the analyses regarding whether the grade level showed a significant difference in the bullying experienced by students, it was determined that items 1, 5, 9 and 23 showed a significant difference and the mean scores obtained from the related items increased as the grade level increased. In Özkal's study with university students, the finding that the students who were most exposed to bullying were 4th grade students also supports this view.²⁹ Although it is thought that tolerance and understanding should develop as the grade level increases in students who are educated with a religion-based curriculum and bullying acts should decrease in this direction, it can be said that certain group norms are formed within the faculty as the grade level increases and bullying acts increase accordingly. When the grouping dynamics were examined, it was seen that the themes and codes in which students were exposed to individual bullying were the main factors determining group dynamics. In line with the qualitative interviews, it was determined that the students who were bullied moved away from the circle of friends who exposed them to bullying and joined another group of friends who had their own religious thoughts and lifestyles. Thus, students who were victims of bullying preferred to take part in the friend groups they formed with students who were bullied as a result of similar actions. This shows that during the time spent in the faculty, students' individual bullying experiences are replaced by participating in bullying behaviors as a group or being victimized as a group.

In the interviews conducted within the scope of the study, it was seen that the most frequently repeated theme within the nature of bullying experienced in the faculty was in the context of relationships with the opposite sex. It was determined that students who communicate with the opposite sex were bullied in the form of being ostracized by their peers, gossiped about, and exposed to negative criticism with

²⁶ Matthew Adam Willis, *The Relationship Between Religiousness and Bullying Among Parochial High School Students in the Southeast* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, Doctoral Thesis, 2015), 100.

²⁷ Theodoros Giovazolias - Maria Malikiosi-Loizos, "Bullying at Greek Universities an Empirical Study", *Bullying Among University Students Cross National Perspectives*, ed. Helen Cowie - Carrie-Anne Myers (New York: Routledge, 2016), 110-126.

²⁸ Nurhayat Kocaşahan, *Lise ve Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Akran Zorbalığı ve Sanal Zorbalık* (Balıkesir: Balıkesir University Institute of Social Sciences, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2012), 61.

²⁹ Uğur Ümmiye Özkal, *Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasında Zorbalık ve Zorbalığın Psikolojik Sorunlarla İlişkisi* (Ankara: Ankara University Institute of Educational Sciences, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2011), 60.

sarcastic remarks. The fact that students of different genders and grade levels expressed their opinions on this theme shows that there is no differentiation in this regard. The second most frequently repeated theme in the qualitative interviews was bullying regarding clothing style and appearance. The mean score of the 21st item, 'I am criticized because of my clothing style', was (\bar{x} = 1.52); the twenty-second item, 'I feel that I am prejudiced because of my appearance', has a mean score of (\bar{x} = 1.63) and the item 'I think that the mindset adopted in the faculty imposes a certain clothing style' has a mean score of (\bar{x} = 1.91). Considering that the items with high average scores in the questionnaire point to this issue, it can be said that the qualitative findings support the quantitative data. Another theme that emerged in the views regarding their experiences of bullying victimization was bullying related to religious thoughts and lifestyles. Students who expressed their views on this issue stated that they were bullied because their thoughts and lifestyles related to religion were seen differently by their peers. This finding obtained from the qualitative data supports the statement with the highest mean score, 'I hesitate to participate in academic discussions for fear that my understanding of religion may be judged' and the third item with the highest mean score in the questionnaire, 'I feel that common thought patterns throughout the faculty put pressure on me.' It also explains the items 'I am judged on the conformity of my lifestyle to religious principles.' (\bar{x} = 1.58) and 'My friends find my religious lifestyle different.' (\bar{x} = 1.43).

Although the nature of bullying among the students of the Faculty of Theology varied, it was observed that the bullying acts exhibited were gossiping, harassment with sarcastic words, and bullying through exclusion. Sinkkonen et al. also found that the most common bullying acts among university students were social bullying such as exclusion and discrimination, followed by verbal bullying such as gossiping, teasing, and name-calling.³⁰ Similar results were found in Özkal's study, it was determined that 17% of university students were bullied, and when this was analyzed according to the dimensions of bullying, it was stated that students were mostly subjected to ideological bullying, which manifests itself in ways such as thinking differently in terms of politics and religion, being excluded and oppressed due to their value judgments. This type of bullying was followed by exclusion, physical bullying and rumor spreading.³¹ These findings support the findings of this study.

It was observed that the bullying victimization experienced by the students of the Faculty of Theology had negative effects on their religious attitudes, their thoughts about religion and their perspectives on religious education. Bullying negatively affected students' perspectives towards the Faculty of Theology and the profession, which was generalized to their orientation towards worship. Students who are bullied have low level of institutional belonging. In addition, it was determined that students, in order not to be bullied within the faculty, stay away from discourses that reflect their understanding of religion, do not participate in academic discussions and even change the attitudes and behaviors they exhibit in their daily lives in the faculty.

In this study, it was observed that bullying victimization had a negative impact on their psychosocial situations. Following bullying victimization, psychological effects that manifest themselves with feelings such as intense sadness and worthlessness, social exclusion or social isolation such as isolating oneself from peer groups are among these situations. It was also observed that students' motivation to continue school decreased. In addition, some students tended to accept bullying and submit to it. Esquivel et al. stated that bullying leaves negative effects on the emotional, academic and social areas during the university period, that students who are exposed to bullying may experience symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, which will negatively affect their academic performance and may lead to difficulties in students' establishing social relationships and adapting to the university environment.³² The findings of these studies support the findings of this study.

There are measures that can be taken in cooperation with the school, parents and the social environment to prevent bullying among university students. In order to prevent peer bullying among university students, it is suggested to form peer support groups among volunteer students, to provide counseling support to bullied students, to develop policies against bullying and to apply legal sanctions, and to address the issue in cooperation with parents.³³ Religious education and moderation, as well as strengthening religious tolerance and human values, can play an important role in combating bullying by

³⁰ Hanna-Maija Sinkkonen et al., "Bullying at A University: Students' Experiences of Bullying", *Studies in Higher Education* 39/1 (2014), 153-165.

³¹ Özkal, *Üniversite Öğrencileri Arasında Zorbalık ve Zorbalığın Psikolojik Sorunlarla İlişkisi*, 56.

³² Francisco Alonso Esquivel et al., "Emotional Impact of Bullying and Cyber Bullying: Perceptions and Effects on Students", *Revista Caribeña de Ciencias Sociales* 12/1 (2023), 367-383.

³³ Carrie Anne Myers - Helen Cowie, "How Can We Prevent and Reduce Bullying Amongst University Students?", *The International Journal of Emotional Education* 8/1 (2016), 109-119.

providing a harmonious educational space.³⁴ In addition to these suggestions, since it is thought that the students of the Faculty of Theology, who receive higher religious education, should have adopted the culture of tolerance, which is very important in Islam, it may be suggested that cognitive and emotional education support be provided to shape their approaches towards peers with different clothing styles, religious understanding and behavior away from bullying and within the framework of tolerance.

It is recommended that similar studies to this one, which aims to examine the bullying victimization of theology faculty students in terms of the nature and consequences of bullying, be conducted on students from different theology faculties as well as those studying in various faculties of different universities. In this way, different statuses of bullying can be evaluated across diverse samples, and efforts to minimize bullying in higher education may be enhanced.

³⁴ Nafsyah Rizka Fitria et al., "The Role of Religious Moderation in Overcoming Bullying and Cyberbullying", *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Dan Agama* 5/1 (2024), 25.

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