Bullying Among Secondary School Students: A Field Study In Tizi Ouzou

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Abstract:
This study sought to investigate the prevalence of bullying among secondary school students and explore gender differences in bullying behaviors. A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a bullying scale consisting of 43 items, categorized into four dimensions: verbal bullying, social bullying, physical bullying, and property damage. After confirming the psychometric properties of the scale, it was administered to a sample of 100 male and female students. The statistical analysis revealed a high prevalence of bullying behavior among the participants, with no significant gender differences observed in the occurrence of bullying.

Keywords: Bullying; School Bullying; Secondary Education.

Introduction

Bullying is widely regarded as one of the most severe and pervasive behavioral issues in educational settings. It manifests in various forms, including physical, verbal, sexual, and cyberbullying. This issue arises when an individual or a group of students harasses a peer through direct or indirect means. The phenomenon involves three primary parties: the bully, who engages in aggressive actions; the victim, who endures these actions; and the bystanders, who witness the events without intervening.

The consequences of bullying are profoundly negative, particularly for the victim, leading to persistent fear, heightened anxiety, social isolation, diminished self-esteem, and poor academic performance, in addition to a range of other psychological and social impacts.

The occurrence of bullying is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including social, psychological, and educational dimensions. Social factors, such as inadequate parental supervision or family instability, contribute to the prevalence of bullying. Psychological factors, such as a need for self-validation or feelings of inferiority, also play a critical role.

Additionally, school-related factors, such as the absence of deterrent policies or insufficient supervision by administrators and teachers, exacerbate the problem. Addressing and mitigating bullying requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders. Families must take an active role in monitoring their children's behavior and instilling values of respect and tolerance. Schools, in turn, are responsible for implementing robust anti-bullying policies and providing psychological and educational support.

Moreover, the media can play an influential role in raising awareness about the dangers of bullying and its adverse effects on individuals and society. Combatting this issue necessitates

an integrated and comprehensive strategy that fosters a safe and supportive educational environment for all.

1. Problem Statement

Few can forget the distressing experience of being subjected to insults, verbal abuse, physical attacks, or derogatory remarks by a peer, whether at school, in the workplace, or elsewhere. Such incidents, whether directly experienced or witnessed, remain prevalent in schools, public spaces, transportation systems, and even in media representations. This widespread phenomenon of violence, in all its forms, transcends age, gender, community, and religion. It is a global issue, present in both developed and developing societies.

For instance, the "World Health Report 2000" reported that violence led to 199,000 deaths among adolescents, equating to an average of 565 child or adolescent deaths per day due to violent behavior (Sharifi, Hanaa, 2018: 1024). This alarming issue is driven by a variety of factors, including social, cultural, psychological, and economic aspects. As such, it represents a complex challenge that demands a comprehensive and integrated response to address it effectively.

Bullying is regarded as a form of violence and is defined as "an aggressive behavior that involves physical or verbal harm or humiliation, leading to an imbalance of power between two parties, where the first party is labeled the bully, and the second party is labeled the victim" (El-Dosouki, 2016: 12).

This phenomenon has been a subject of research since the 1960s, with initial studies conducted by Olweus. The focus on bullying intensified in the 1970s following tragic incidents in a Scandinavian country, where three adolescents took their own lives as a result of peer bullying.

In the 1980s, Japan became a focal point of bullying research, with studies revealing that one-third of middle school students had been victims of bullying. By the early 2000s, bullying emerged as a critical area of concern and research in countries such as the United Kingdom, Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand (El-Dosouki, 2016: 06).

Initially, bullying was seen as a form of innocent teasing between children that would quickly dissipate. However, what began as unwanted teasing by the victim gradually escalated into a more harmful pattern of behavior (Maghar, 2022: 262).

Bullying, in general, is defined as behavior stemming from an imbalance of power between two parties, where one is the bully and the other is the victim. This behavior may involve physical harm, verbal abuse, and humiliation (Al-Sobhin, & Al-Kada, 2013: 08). Bullying manifests in various forms, including cyberbullying, sexual bullying, physical bullying, and verbal bullying.

School bullying is one of the most damaging forms of bullying, with long-term negative effects on both the school environment and individual students. It is defined as a series of intentional, harmful actions carried out by one or more students with the aim of repeatedly and continuously harming another student. These actions can take various forms, such as

verbal abuse (threats, reprimands, or insults) or physical harm (hitting, pushing, or kicking). Bullying may also be non-verbal or non-physical, such as using offensive facial expressions, making inappropriate gestures, or deliberately isolating the victim from the group and refusing to interact with them (Al-Kahtani, 2013: 117).

Thus, bullying can be defined as the deliberate and repeated verbal, physical, or emotional harm inflicted on a student by a peer or a group of peers with the goal of isolating or rejecting the victim. From these definitions, it is evident that school bullying occurs in a context of power imbalance. The bully is typically stronger, more popular among peers, and driven by a desire to dominate, often with an inflated sense of self-worth.

In contrast, the victim is typically physically weak, shy, socially isolated, and lacking in friends. The victim often suffers from low self-esteem, a persistent sense of failure, and ongoing feelings of fear and anxiety. The third group consists of bystanders or neutrals, who witness the events without intervening.

School bullying has detrimental effects on all involved, particularly the bully and the victim. Both parties experience significant psychological, emotional, and mental consequences. These effects include frustration, boredom, insecurity, and difficulty concentrating due to distracted attention, all of which negatively impact academic performance. Numerous studies have corroborated these findings.

For instance, a study by Abu Al-Diyar (2012) found that bullies experience severe academic underachievement. Similarly, a study by Abdel Wahab Maghar (2021) concluded that higher levels of school bullying are associated with a noticeable decline in academic performance.

Bullying is a pervasive issue within educational institutions, occurring both inside and outside the school premises, though it is particularly prevalent within the school environment. School grounds, including hallways, restrooms, and classrooms, are among the most common locations where bullying takes place (Abu Al-Diyar, 2012: 94).

This problem affects all educational stages, from primary to secondary levels. The growing prevalence of bullying has drawn considerable attention from researchers, leading to numerous studies aimed at understanding the underlying causes, identifying its consequences, and developing strategies to mitigate its impact.

Among these studies is that of Ibtisam Radi Hadi (2021), which focused on school bullying among middle school students. The researcher utilized a bullying scale consisting of 48 items and applied it to a sample of 450 students. The findings indicated the presence of bullying within the sample group. Similarly, Abdel Wahab Maghar's study (2022) assessed the extent of school bullying among first-year middle school students. Using a descriptive methodology, the researcher administered a bullying scale to a sample of 105 students, with statistical analysis revealing a high prevalence of bullying among the participants.

Another relevant study by Ghofran Abdel Karim Hadi (2018) explored the differences in bullying levels among middle school students in the Al-Qadisiyyah Directorate of Education. A random sample of 60 students, aged 13 to 15, was selected, and the results showed a high level of bullying among the sample.

Additionally, a study by Shukos, Molano, and Podleski (2009) examined the relationship between social, emotional, and environmental factors and bullying behaviors in schools. The study sample included 53,316 students from 1,000 schools in Colombia, with the findings indicating high levels of bullying among the participants.

Based on the findings of these studies, the current research aims to address the following questions:

- What is the level of bullying among secondary school students?

- Are there gender differences in bullying behaviors among secondary school students?

2. Hypotheses:
- To answer these research questions, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- The level of bullying among secondary school students is high.

- There are no significant gender differences in bullying among secondary school students.

3. Objectives of the Study:

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine the level of bullying among secondary school students.

- To examine gender differences (male vs. female) in bullying among secondary school students.

4. Study Significance:

The importance of this study lies in:

- Raising awareness about a highly concerning phenomenon within educational institutions, which can undermine the achievement of the goals these institutions strive to accomplish.

- Drawing the attention of the educational community to this issue and encouraging the implementation of necessary measures to reduce bullying.

- Enriching the educational field with scientific studies, particularly field-based research.

5. Definition of Key Concepts:

- **Bullying:** A form of conflict between two individuals who are unequal in power, where one party or group targets a weaker individual who is unable to defend themselves. This conflict can manifest in physical or psychological forms (Randall, 1997: 24).

- **School Bullying:** A form of verbal, physical, or psychological abuse that is deliberate, intentional, or repetitive, aimed at causing harm or damage to others (El-Dosouki, 2016: 10).

- o **Operational Definition:** School bullying refers to the intentional and repeated harm inflicted on others, which may be verbal (e.g., insults), physical (e.g., hitting), or psychological (e.g., threats). It is assessed through students' responses on a bullying scale.

- **Secondary Education:** The stage following middle school, during which students progress after successfully completing middle school exit exams. It lasts for three years and enables students to advance to university upon passing the baccalaureate exam.

6. Scope of the Study:

6.1. Human Scope:

The study sample consists of 100 students, including 41 male and 59 female students, distributed across three grade levels (first, second, and third years of secondary school) for the 2022/2023 academic year.

6.2. Geographical Scope:

 The study was conducted in a secondary school located in Tizi Ouzou, Algeria.

6.3. Temporal Scope:

The study was conducted in April 2023.

7. Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

7.1. Theoretical Framework of Bullying:

Bullying is a widespread phenomenon that occurs in various contexts, such as within the family, on the streets, and in schools. It is regarded as one of the most serious behavioral issues, given its numerous negative consequences. Bullying is characterized as aggressive behavior directed at others in a deliberate and repetitive manner.

It occurs when an individual or group targets another individual or group, inflicting verbal, physical, social, electronic, psychological, or sexual harm. The victim is often in a weaker position (Assim & Ibrahim, 2017: 456).

7.1.1 Forms of Bullying:

Smith (2001) identified four main forms of bullying:

- **Emotional Bullying:** This form involves threatening behaviors, insults, mockery, and humiliation.

- **Physical Bullying:** It includes actions like pushing, hitting, intentionally bumping into the victim, or stealing, particularly school supplies or personal belongings.

- **Sexual Bullying:** This form involves harassment or inappropriate comments of a sexual nature.

- **Racial Bullying:** It includes gestures, slurs, insults, or verbal attacks on another's ethnicity, religion, or social status.

7.1.2 Characteristics of Bullies and Their Victims:
A. Characteristics of Bullies:

Bullies often display several traits, including:

  - A tendency to use power and aggression when interacting with others.

  - A desire for dominance and control.

  - A need to subjugate others.

  - Engagement in threats, authority abuse, and boasting.

  - Impulsiveness, anger, and a volatile temperament.

B. Characteristics of Victims of Bullying:

Victims of bullying generally exhibit various characteristics, including:

  - Social isolation and a lack of friends.

  - Social anxiety and a sense of insecurity.

  - Anxiety, sensitivity, and shyness.

  - Low self-esteem and poor academic performance.

7.1.3 Related Previous Studies:

- **Study by Fatima Zahra Chtibi & Ali Boutaf (2014):** This study, titled "The Reality of Bullying in Algerian Schools," involved a sample of 120 students from various levels of middle school. Using a questionnaire, the study assessed the extent to which students experienced bullying, the different forms it took, its sources, and its impact on both victims and bullies. The results indicated that bullying was widespread within the school environment (Boukhit & Ketfi, 2021).

- **Study by Salah Hassan Mohamed Al-Amari (2019):** This research aimed to explore the phenomenon of school bullying among primary school students, focusing on prevention and treatment. A descriptive-analytical approach was employed, with data collected through a questionnaire. The statistical analysis revealed that bullying was prevalent among primary school students.

- **Study by Khawla Abdelrahim Ghanim (2020):** This study, which focused on bullying in public schools, used a descriptive-analytical method. A random sample was selected, and a questionnaire was administered to assess school bullying. The findings revealed a moderate level of bullying among the participants, with statistically significant differences in bullying levels between male and female students.

- **Study by Khaled Ali Abdel-Samia Hussein et al. (2021):** This study examined the relationship between school bullying and self-esteem among first-grade students in basic education. The sample consisted of 210 students aged 9 to 12 years. The results showed a significant statistical relationship between bullying behavior and self-esteem, with male students exhibiting higher levels of bullying.

- **Study by Ghania Ayb & Salah Lallouche (2023):** This study aimed to assess the level of school bullying among middle school students. The sample included 122 students from middle schools in Algiers. Statistical analysis indicated a low level of bullying among the sample group.

- **Study by Asiya Allawi & Khawla Chaib (2023):** This study explored bullying levels among secondary school students, involving 200 participants. The findings revealed a low level of bullying, with statistically significant differences between the bullying levels of male and female students.

- **Study by Shukos, Molano, & Podleski (2009):** This research focused on the relationship between social, emotional, and environmental factors and bullying behavior in schools. The study sample comprised 53,316 students from 1,000 schools in Colombia. The results showed elevated levels of bullying, particularly among male students.

- **Study by Ozur, Totan, & Ank (2011):** This study aimed to investigate the relationship between participation in bullying and self-efficacy, social efficacy, and emotional efficacy among Turkish middle school students. The study sample included 721 students, and the results indicated that males were more likely to engage in bullying behaviors (Al-Amari, 2019).

8. Research Methods and Tools

8.1. Research Method:

Given the nature of this study, the descriptive method was considered the most appropriate. According to Wallon, "the descriptive method is a form of organized scientific analysis and interpretation that aims to describe a specific phenomenon or problem, quantify it by collecting data, and analyze the phenomenon or problem in depth" (Malham, 2006: 370). The goal of the study is to assess the levels of school bullying among secondary school students and explore any gender differences in bullying behaviors.

8.2. Study Sample:

- **Sample Selection Method:** The sample was selected using a random sampling technique. According to Boulag (2009: 15), "a sample is a part of the population, representing the whole." A convenience sampling method was employed, meaning participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate.

- **Sample Size and Characteristics:** The study sample consisted of 100 secondary school students for the 2022–2023 academic year, with the following gender distribution:

Table (01): Distribution of Sample Members by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	41	41.00%
Female	59	59.00%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

The table above shows that the sample includes 59 female students (59.00%) and 41 male students (41.00%).

8.3 Research Tool:

8.3.1 Description of the Scale:

In this study, the **Bullying Scale** was used, consisting of a total of 43 items, which are divided into four dimensions:

- **Verbal Dimension**
- **Social Dimension**
- **Physical Dimension**
- **Property Damage Dimension**

Response Method:

The scale can be administered either individually or in groups. Participants are asked to mark an (X) in the box that corresponds to their behavior.

The responses are based on the following five options:

- **Never Happens:** scored 5 points
- **Occasionally Happens:** scored 4 points
- **Occurs to Some Extent:** scored 3 points
- **Frequently Happens:** scored 2 points
- **Occurs Very Frequently:** scored 1 point

The scores are calculated after the participant answers all the items. A score of **215** represents the maximum score on the scale, while **43** represents the minimum or lowest score.

Table (02): Levels of Bullying Severity Based on Scores

Score Range	Interpretation

43 to 100	Low Bullying
101 to 158	Moderate Bullying
159 to 215	High Bullying

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

8.3.2 Psychometric Properties of the Bullying Scale:

To assess the psychometric properties of the scale, we tested it on a pilot sample of **40** secondary school students.

1. Reliability:

We assessed the reliability of the bullying scale using two methods: Cronbach's Alpha and Split-Half Method.

A. Cronbach's Alpha:

The results of Cronbach's Alpha for the overall scale and its dimensions are shown in the following table:

Table (03): Cronbach's Alpha Reliability for Bullying Scale

Scale & Dimensions	Verbal Dimension	Social Dimension	Physical Dimension	Property Damage Dimension	Overall Scale
Number of Items	12	14	11	6	43
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	0.952	0.941	0.953	0.916	0.985

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

As shown in Table (03), the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the entire bullying scale was 0.985, with individual values of 0.952 for the verbal dimension, 0.941 for the social dimension, 0.953 for the physical dimension, and 0.916 for the property damage dimension. These values indicate a high level of reliability, suggesting that the scale is both suitable and dependable for use in the primary study.

B. Split-Half Method:

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between the odd-numbered and even-numbered items of the bullying scale, along with the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient to adjust for test length. The results are shown in Table (04) below:

Table (04): Split-Half Reliability of the Bullying Scale

Category	Mean	Variance	Alpha	Pearson's Correlation	Spearman-Brown
Group 1	4.388	1.399	0.967	0.868	0.930
Group 2	4.463	1.435	0.980		

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the odd and even items was 0.868, which indicates high reliability for the scale. Furthermore, after applying the Spearman-Brown formula to adjust for test length, the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.930, a statistically significant and high value. This further supports the scale's reliability for use in the main study.

2. Validity:

To determine the validity of the scale, we focused on the internal consistency method.

2.1 Internal Consistency of the Scale:

We calculated the correlation coefficients between each item and its respective dimension, as well as between each dimension and the total score of the scale. The results are presented in the following tables:

    A.   **Internal Consistency of Items with the Verbal Dimension:**

Table (05): Item-Total Correlation for the Verbal Dimension

Item	Verbal Dimension	Overall Bullying Scale
7	0.845**	0.818**
9	0.773**	0.743**
10	0.786**	0.752**
11	0.825**	0.842**
12	0.774**	0.727**
22	0.788**	0.787**
26	0.889**	0.898**
34	0.873**	0.800**
35	0.807**	0.765**
40	0.787**	0.763**
41	0.807**	0.780**
42	0.808**	0.799**

Verbal Dimension	**1.000**	**0.971**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

The correlation coefficients for the verbal dimension ranged from **0.773** to **0.889** for individual items, with the overall scale correlation ranging from **0.727** to **0.898**. These values indicate very high correlations at the **0.01 significance level**, demonstrating strong internal consistency and validity for the verbal dimension of the bullying scale.

Table (06): Item-Total Correlation for the Social Dimension

Item	Social Dimension	Overall Bullying Scale
1	0.849**	0.780**
2	0.915**	0.872**
4	0.828**	0.777**
8	0.784**	0.730**
14	0.628**	0.643**
15	0.849**	0.881**
18	0.477**	0.413**
9	0.461**	0.394**
23	0.744**	0.734**
25	0.855**	0.881**
33	0.849**	0.880**
36	0.732**	0.725**
38	0.774**	0.825**
43	0.731**	0.763**
Social Dimension	**1.000**	**0.982**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

The correlation coefficients for the social dimension ranged from 0.461 to 0.915 for individual items, with the overall dimension correlation reaching 0.982, indicating very high internal consistency and validity.

Table (07): Item-Total Correlation for the Physical Dimension of Bullying

Item	Physical Dimension	Bullying Scale

3	0.719**	0.754**
5	0.822**	0.863**
16	0.756**	0.684**
17	0.726**	0.643**
21	0.806**	0.843**
27	0.895**	0.857**
29	0.905**	0.861**
31	0.851**	0.887**
32	0.907**	0.849**
37	0.815**	0.833**
39	0.794**	0.799**
Physical Dimension	**1.000**	**0.978**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

As shown in Table (07), the correlation values for the items in the physical dimension range from 0.719 to 0.905, with item-to-scale correlation values ranging from 0.643 to 0.887. All of these correlation values are very high at the 0.01 significance level, suggesting excellent reliability for the physical dimension of the bullying scale.

Table (08): Item-Total Correlation for the Property Damage Dimension of Bullying

Item	Property Damage Dimension	Bullying Scale
6	0.943**	0.933**
13	0.765**	0.769**
20	0.729**	0.697**
24	0.822**	0.810**
28	0.903**	0.843**
29	0.899**	0.861**
30	0.917**	0.869**
Property Damage Dimension	**1.000**	**0.969**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

As shown in Table (08), the correlation values for the items in the property damage dimension range from 0.765 to 0.917, with item-to-scale correlation values ranging from 0.769 to 0.933. These values, all of which are very high at the 0.01 significance level, indicate a high degree of internal consistency for this dimension.

B. Internal Consistency of the Scale Dimensions:

Table (09): Correlation Between Dimensions and the Overall Bullying Scale

Dimension	Verbal Dimension	Social Dimension	Physical Dimension	Property Damage Dimension	Overall Bullying Scale
Verbal Dimension	1.000	0.934**	0.922**	0.914**	0.971**
Social Dimension	0.934**	1.000	0.946**	0.936**	0.982**
Physical Dimension	0.922**	0.946**	1.000	0.961**	0.978**
Property Damage	0.914**	0.936**	0.961**	1.000	0.969**
Overall Bullying Scale	0.971**	0.982**	0.978**	0.969**	1.000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

As seen in Table (09), all the dimensions of the bullying scale are strongly correlated with the overall bullying scale, with correlation values ranging from 0.914 to 0.971 for the verbal dimension, 0.946 to 0.982 for the social dimension, and 0.961 to 0.978 for the physical and property damage dimensions. All of these correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level, demonstrating that the bullying scale has very high internal consistency and is highly reliable for use in the primary study.

2.2. Construct Validity (Self-Validity):

To assess the self-validity of the scale, we calculated the square root of Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted in 0.992. Given that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.985, this represents a very high level of validity, confirming that the scale is robust and well-suited for the research. This suggests that the bullying scale is not only reliable but also valid for measuring the intended construct.

8.4 Statistical Methods Used:

Statistical methods are an essential aspect of any research process, providing a foundation for analyzing data and drawing conclusions. For this study, a variety of statistical techniques were employed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. These techniques included:

- Frequencies

- Percentages
- T-tests for differences
- Cronbach's Alpha
- Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

9. Presentation of Hypotheses Results and Discussion:

9.1.1 Presentation of Results for the First Hypothesis:

The first hypothesis proposed that there are high levels of bullying among secondary school students. To test this hypothesis, we calculated the t-value for a single sample, using the theoretical mean derived from the number of items on the bullying scale and the average of the response options.

Given that the scale consists of 43 items and the average of the five response options is 3, the theoretical mean was calculated as follows: **43 × 3 = 129**.

Table (10): Bullying Level According to the t-value Calculation

t-value	Significance Level (sig)	Theoretical Mean	Calculated Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Freedom
23.51	0.000	129	198.02	29.35	99

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

Table (11): Frequency Distribution of Bullying Levels

Bullying Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low (43-100)	3	3.00
Medium (101-158)	4	4.00
High (159-215)	93	93.00
Total	100	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on APSS outputs.

As seen in Table (11), the majority of students (93%) reported high levels of bullying. Only 3% of the students showed low levels of bullying, and 4% exhibited moderate levels. These findings provide strong support for the hypothesis, confirming that bullying is prevalent among secondary school students.

From Table (10), we observe that the t-value is 23.51, with a significance level of 0.000, which is well below the significance threshold of 0.05. Additionally, the calculated mean is 198.02, which is significantly higher than the theoretical mean of 129. These results suggest that the bullying level in the sample is indeed high. Furthermore, Table (12) shows that 93% of the

participants scored between 159 and 215 on the bullying scale, further indicating the high incidence of bullying behavior in the sample.

2.1.9. Discussion of the First Hypothesis Results:

The first hypothesis proposed that secondary school students would exhibit high levels of bullying behavior. Upon testing this hypothesis, we calculated the t-value for a single sample, which was found to be 23.51, with a significance level of 0.000. This value is significantly smaller than the critical significance threshold of 0.05, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

The theoretical mean was 129, while the calculated mean was 198.02, indicating a substantial difference. Moreover, we found that 93% of the students scored within the high bullying range (between 159 and 215), further supporting the hypothesis that bullying is indeed a prevalent issue among secondary school students.

The school environment could be one of the key factors contributing to the development of bullying behaviors. As an educational institution created by society in collaboration with families, schools are designed to prepare individuals for life's challenges, helping them learn to adapt to and coexist with the ever-changing world. Schools are expected to be places not only for academic learning but also for the growth of social and emotional values. However, in some cases, the school environment may inadvertently become a breeding ground for violence and bullying due to a variety of social and organizational factors.

One significant factor could be the school's management style. In certain situations, schools may adopt a laissez-faire or disorganized approach to handling rules and regulations, leading to a breakdown in internal discipline. For instance, policies regarding tardiness or unexcused absences might not be consistently enforced, or there may be leniency in applying dress code policies. When these standards are not upheld, some students may feel that adhering to school values is unimportant, which can contribute to the rise of negative behaviors such as bullying.

Additionally, the provocative behaviors of some teachers and administrators can indirectly contribute to the spread of bullying. When educators or administrators fail to understand students' needs or use harsh or inappropriate methods of handling situations, students may feel threatened or vulnerable. This can lead to aggression toward their peers, as students may use bullying as a way to regain a sense of control or to cope with their feelings.

Overcrowded classrooms are another factor that can contribute to bullying. In these situations, teachers find it difficult to manage student behaviors effectively, making it easier for bullying incidents to occur. Overcrowding creates a tense and challenging environment, where it is harder for teachers to monitor individual student behavior closely. This often leads to a deterioration in the overall classroom atmosphere, further facilitating negative behaviors like bullying.

Moreover, the academic pressure resulting from long and intensive academic programs can place significant stress on students, leading to anxiety and emotional distress. These feelings can, in turn, foster aggressive behaviors like bullying. Some students may find it difficult to

cope with the pressure of schoolwork, leading them to act out aggressively toward their classmates as a way of managing their emotions.

Finally, traditional teaching methods remain one of the significant contributors to bullying. When teaching approaches focus solely on academic knowledge without addressing social and emotional skill development, students may feel undervalued or disconnected. This lack of social-emotional learning creates an environment where bullying can easily thrive. Positive social interactions among students are a critical part of school life, and when these interactions are not properly nurtured, negative behaviors like bullying are more likely to develop.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the school environment plays a pivotal role in the development of bullying behavior, particularly when it lacks adequate organization and fails to consider the psychological and social well-being of students. To mitigate this phenomenon, a comprehensive effort is required from all involved parties: the school administration, teachers, students, and their families. Additionally, it is crucial to develop a school environment that promotes cooperation, mutual respect, and social awareness (Al-Sobhin & Al-Kada, 2013).

Another significant factor contributing to the emergence of bullying behaviors is the influence of the media and communication channels, often referred to as the "Fourth Estate." Through news outlets, programs, movies, and TV series that feature scenes of violence, bullying, killing, beating, and verbal abuse, the media has a profound impact on society, particularly on children and adolescents. The behaviors of media heroes and characters, who often engage in bullying and aggressive actions, are frequently imitated by youth, who are exposed to them daily through television, the internet, and social media.

The impact of these violent scenes is considerable in shaping the behaviors of young people. Children and adolescents tend to imitate these actions in their everyday lives, mistakenly believing that what they see on screen is a normal or socially acceptable behavior. Repeated exposure to such scenes can desensitize them to violence and increase the likelihood of replicating these behaviors in real life.

Moreover, the lack of content regulation or adequate awareness about the effects of such media materials may lead to the normalization of violent and bullying behaviors in the minds of youth. In many media programs, heroes are depicted as using bullying as a means of gaining power or achieving personal goals. This portrayal can encourage young people to adopt these aggressive behavioral patterns in their daily interactions.

These conclusions are supported by various studies, such as those by Shokus, Molano, and Budelski (2009), Ghofran Abdel Karim Hadi (2018), Ibtisam Rady Hadi (2021), and Abdelwahab Maghar (2022). These studies have found elevated levels of school bullying among secondary school students.

A similar result was observed in the study by Mohamed Ahmed Abu Sahoul and others (2018), which focused on secondary school students in Khan Younis, Palestine. On the other hand, a study by Cherifi Hanaa (2018) titled "Analysis of Bullying in Algerian Schools" showed

a moderate level of school bullying among the study sample. Meanwhile, the studies by Asiya Allawi and Khawla Chaib (2023) and Ayb Ghania and Lallouche Saleh (2023) confirmed the presence of low levels of bullying among their study samples.

9.2.1 Results of the Second Hypothesis:

The second hypothesis stated that there would be no differences in school bullying among secondary school students based on gender. To test this hypothesis, we performed an independent sample t-test at the significance level of 0.05. The results are shown in the table below:

Table (12): Statistical Significance of Differences in School Bullying Scores by Gender

Gender	Sample Size	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated Significance Level (sig)	Accepted Significance Level (0.05)	Significance
Males	41	197.43	33.31	0.164	98	0.870	0.05	Not Significant
Females	59	198.42	26.55					

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

In the second hypothesis, we anticipated no differences in bullying behavior between male and female students. As shown in the table above, the t-value was 0.164, with a significance level of 0.870, which is greater than the accepted significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, there is no statistical significance, meaning there are no differences in school bullying behavior based on gender among secondary school students.

9.2.2 Interpretation of the Results of the Second Hypothesis:

In the second hypothesis, we assumed that there would be no differences in bullying behavior between male and female students in secondary education. To test this hypothesis, we conducted an independent samples t-test, and the results showed that the t-value was 0.164, with a significance level of 0.870, which is greater than the accepted significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates that there are no differences in bullying behavior between male and female students.

This result can be interpreted through the age and developmental stage that both male and female students are experiencing. This period is marked by significant physical and psychological changes, accompanied by both internal and external pressures. During this transitional phase, many adolescents feel stressed and anxious due to the substantial changes occurring in their bodies and minds, which can impact their behavior. For some, aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, may emerge as a way to cope with these transitions and pressures.

Adolescents in this age group often face challenges related to developing their personal and social identities. They also grapple with various psychological factors, such as anxiety about

their physical appearance or their ability to adapt to hormonal changes. At times, they may feel helpless or lack control over their lives, which could drive some to express these feelings through aggressive behaviors like bullying.

Moreover, during adolescence, individuals seek ways to interact with their peers and prove their strength or superiority. They may view bullying as a way to assert dominance or feel powerful in the presence of others. In some cases, this behavior might reflect the psychological struggles they face at this stage, such as low self-esteem, internal conflict, or an inability to express emotions constructively.

In adolescence, both boys and girls strive to achieve independence and assert their opinions and choices without interference from others, especially their families, even if these choices are negative or misguided. They may resort to bullying as a way to assert control and demonstrate their awareness to themselves and those around them.

During this time, adolescents also seek to assert their existence by defying family rules and regulations. For example, they may associate with friends disapproved of by their families or rebel against school rules. In some cases, they may engage in bullying as a way to show their ability to challenge the system and reject authority. Additionally, the aim of bullying might be to gain attention, especially from the opposite sex, as it is perceived as a symbol of strength and control.

This behavior can also be explained by the concept of reinforcement, a key element in behavioral theory regarding the acquisition of behaviors. In this context, everything that an individual encounters in their surrounding environment, whether male or female, is automatically repeated. If the environment is saturated with bullying behaviors, the individual is likely to repeat those behaviors, especially if they receive reinforcement from others.

In adolescence, when any behavior, whether positive or negative, is met with encouragement or admiration from peers, the individual is more likely to repeat the behavior because it boosts their self-esteem and sense of pride. If they engage in bullying and are accepted or praised by their peers, they feel desired and appreciated, which acts as a type of reinforcement that encourages them to repeat the behavior.

Furthermore, the surrounding environment, whether at home or at school, can play a significant role in reinforcing these behaviors. In the absence of adequate social or guidance support, or when there are external environmental pressures, bullying may become a coping mechanism to deal with psychological stress or a way to gain attention from others.

The cause of bullying may stem from individuals feeling frustrated due to their inability to meet the expectations and aspirations of their parents. This includes goals such as choosing a specific field of study or achieving high academic performance. Failure to meet these goals, often due to limited abilities or resources, can lead to feelings of frustration.

According to the Frustration-Aggression Theory developed by Miller, Robert Sears, and others, there is a proposed connection between frustration and aggression. When a person is prevented from achieving a goal that is important to them, they experience frustration, which

leads to aggressive drives that may trigger harmful behavior toward others (Al-Dasoufi, 2016: 32-33).

A similar result was found in the study by researcher Mousa Amitouch (2021) on a sample of students in secondary education, and in the study by Asiya Alawi and Khawla Chaib (2023), which aimed to examine the level of bullying among secondary school students.

Furthermore, studies by Schuckus, Molano, and Boudelski (2009), Ghofran Abdel Karim Hadi (2018), and Ibtisam Radi Hadi (2021) also found significant gender differences in school bullying, with males exhibiting higher levels of bullying. Additional studies, including Olweus' Study (1991), Searaz Study (2002), Katami and Al-Sarayra Study (2009), and Solberg's Study (2007), conducted on 5,171 students in Norwegian schools, also showed that males engaged in bullying more frequently than females.

These findings were further corroborated by Jarradat's Study (2008) on a sample of students in Jordan. These studies explained that males are more inclined toward aggressive behaviors due to their physical build, making them more likely to engage in bullying, whereas females, with their generally smaller build and fewer friends, tend to be victims.

Conclusion:

This study focused on the phenomenon of bullying among secondary school students, a problem that has been rapidly spreading. It is not limited to a specific age group or educational stage but affects all ages and levels of education (elementary, middle, and high school). The causes of this phenomenon are diverse, including physiological, psychological, social, and factors related to the family, school, media, or peer group influences.

The results of this study indicated a high level of bullying among the majority of the sample (93%). It also revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in bullying behavior based on gender. These findings align with many previous studies, whether local, Arab, or international, confirming the widespread nature of school bullying and its serious implications. This makes it crucial for all sectors of society to come together to combat this phenomenon.

To address this issue, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop guidance programs aimed at reducing school bullying.
- Instill ethical education principles in students at home and school, emphasizing cooperation and tolerance.
- Organize informational and advisory sessions about school bullying.
- Provide psychological and social support to victims of school bullying.

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