

Levels of Bullying among Schoolchildren: A Field Study at Beni Saf Middle School – Ain Temouchent –

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the levels of bullying among schoolchildren. It is a field study conducted on a sample at Beni Saf Middle School – Ain Temouchent – by applying the Bullying Behavior Scale for Children and Adolescents by “Magdy El-Desouky” (2016), which consists of (40) items distributed across four (4) dimensions. It was applied to a sample of 90 pupils, following the descriptive analytical method.

This study resulted in a low level among school pupils. Finally, a set of scientific and practical suggestions and recommendations was included.

Keywords: pupil, schooling, bullying, educational institution.

Introduction:

Childhood is one of the important and vital topics in our contemporary life. It is one of the most important stages of a person’s psychological development and the basic foundation for forming and educating his personality in a sound and healthy manner, because what is built properly and soundly results in an ideal person.

The school environment plays a major role in shaping the child’s personality because this environment contains positive and negative phenomena represented in: violence, addiction, bullying, and others. Bullying behavior is considered a widely spread phenomenon in our current time, and an acquired behavior from the environment in which the individual lives. In it, the stronger person practices psychological, verbal, and physical harm, or blackmail and aggression toward an individual weaker than him in physical and mental abilities. This behavior, namely bullying, has negative effects that are reflected on all parties involved in it.

The emergence of the concept of bullying was associated with the establishment of educational institutions. However, researchers interested in social relations did not pay attention to this phenomenon and did not take it seriously, considering that what happens inside schools and among students is a kind of simple joking that does not go beyond passing teasing among peers, which appears and then soon disappears spontaneously, until “Olweus” came, specifically in (1991), to open the field for this phenomenon (Ziada, 2003: 1003). This study came to identify the reality of bullying among school pupils, specifically at Beni Saf Middle School in the city of Temouchent, by posing the following question:

What is the level of bullying among school pupils in the middle-school stage?

Study hypothesis:

Based on the question posed, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Since the first question is exploratory, it does not require a hypothesis.

2. The theoretical framework of the study:

A- Definition of bullying:

- Bullying is defined as a form of aggression that occurs when a child or an individual is continuously exposed to negative behavior that causes him pain. The bully may use direct or indirect actions to bully others. Direct bullying is an attack on others through verbal or physical aggression, while bullying may also occur through social exclusion, such as spreading rumors (El-Desouky, 2016, p. 10).

- The concept of bullying according to “Dan Olweus” includes three considerations, namely:

- **Ability:** Bullying behavior is usually carried out by a tall, physically strong child, as well as children who have their status in life and who receive reinforcement from their group and peers.
- **Continuity and distraction:** Bullying does not occur by chance, but has the feature of continuity and repetition, and this generates fear in the victim, which may remain with the child for a long time.
- **The desire to harm:** The act is intentional and aims to harm the other person psychologically and physically. (Moussa Amitouche, 2021, p. 7).

B- Common causes of bullying in schools:

✓ **Family causes:** The family environment constitutes one of the factors leading to bullying, as a result of incorrect social factors such as violence and aggression, which makes children abusive later on. Early exposure to aggression and abuse is a learned experience that helps accept the legitimacy of using abusive behaviors toward others.

✓ **Personal causes:** Bullying behavior has different motives. It may be a reckless act, or a behavior issued by the individual because of his feeling of boredom. It may also be an indicator of their anxiety, or their unhappiness in their homes, or their having been victims of bullying in the past. In addition, the victim’s psychological characteristics, such as shyness and having few friends, may make him vulnerable to bullying (Sharbat et al., 2018, p. 17).

✓ The negative effects of bullying behavior:

According to “Abu Al-Diyar,” bullying behavior can have long-term effects on the bully and the victim, and even on the school community. The following are the most important effects resulting from bullying:

- The effect of bullying on bullying victims:

Victims of bullying may have emotional, academic, and long-term behavioral problems. Children who are victims of bullying also tend to have lower self-esteem and feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and insecurity compared with other children. Children who are victims of bullying suffer greatly from psychological stress. Adolescents who are victims of bullying may, in some cases, tend toward revenge and retaliation because they have become victims, and some of them may tend to use coping strategies against bullies.

Studies have shown that victims of bullying suffer from an increase in psychosomatic symptoms, such as headache, stomach pain, feelings of sadness, and the desire for revenge and retaliation. They also suffer from anxiety, developmental disorders, low levels of psychological adjustment, lack of social support, feelings of loneliness, and hatred of school, which may lead students who are victims of bullying to think about suicide.

- **The effect of bullying on bullies:** Bullying behavior leads its perpetrators to drop out of education and to future problems. Bullying behavior is considered a strong predictor of violent and criminal behavior at the age of thirty, as it has been shown that these individuals were associated with antisocial psychopathic acts compared with their normal peers, such as property damage, fighting, theft, drunkenness, insult, and imprisonment. Studies indicate that bullying pupils represent higher percentages in alcohol and drug use (Abu Al-Diyar, 2012, p. 59).

3. Study Methodology: In line with the nature of the topic, the method followed in this study is the descriptive exploratory analytical method, relying on the questionnaire as a study tool. It consists of 40 items distributed across three (04) dimensions.

3.1. Application of the Study Tool: The questionnaire was applied to a sample estimated at 90 pupils enrolled at Beni Saf Middle School in the city of Ain Temouchent (Algeria).

3.3.1. Psychometric Properties of the Questionnaire:

-**Validity:** Internal consistency validity was relied upon by calculating Pearson’s correlation coefficient for each dimension, which ranged between 0.909 and 0.985 at a significance level of 0.01. The closer the correlation coefficient is to 1, the more valid the scale is.

B- Reliability: The reliability of the questionnaire was verified using Cronbach’s alpha. It was found that the obtained reliability coefficient ranged between 0.76 and 0.87, while the reliability coefficient for the variable as a whole was estimated at 0.971, which is high reliability.

2.3. Statistical Methods Used: The following were relied upon:

Frequencies and percentages, arithmetic mean and standard deviation, Pearson’s correlation coefficient to calculate internal consistency validity, and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

4.3. Characteristics of the Study Sample:

Table 1: Shows the distribution of the study sample.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	43	47.78%	90
	Female	47	52.22%	
Educational level	First year of middle school	52	57.78%	90
	Third year of middle school	38	42.22%	

This table represents the characteristics of the field study sample, where males and females were combined at two different educational levels.

4. Presentation of the Study Results:

Presentation of the answer to the exploratory question, which requires identifying the level of bullying among school pupils at Beni Saf Middle School in the city of Ain Temouchent (Algeria). To verify

this, the arithmetic means were calculated and compared with the hypothetical mean of the variable and its dimensions as follows:

Table 2: Arithmetic means and deviations of the dimensions of bullying.

Dimensions of Bullying	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Mean	Level
Psychological bullying	16.18	8.100	42	Low
Verbal bullying	15.97	7.433	39	Low
Social bullying	8.42	3.955	21	Low
Physical bullying	7.46	3.598	18	Low
Bullying variable	48.02	/	120	Low

This table shows the arithmetic means and hypothetical means of the dimensions of bullying based on the responses of the members of the study sample.

5. Discussion of the Results:

The results of the study indicate that the level of bullying among school pupils at Beni Saf Middle School was low, as the value of the overall arithmetic mean reached 48.02. The psychological bullying dimension ranked first with an arithmetic mean estimated at 16.18, while the verbal bullying dimension ranked second with an arithmetic mean estimated at 15.97. The social bullying dimension ranked third with an arithmetic mean of 8.42, while the physical bullying dimension ranked fourth and last with an arithmetic mean of 7.46. This is the level of bullying among school pupils in the middle-school stage. After statistical processing, we reached the conclusion that the level was low. However, what we currently observe is that bullying behavior has become one of the problems that have developed and spread in our time, especially in the school environment among pupils, in terms of aggression, whether physical, verbal, psychological, or social. Bullying may affect the victim and the entire school environment in terms of the psychological, social, and academic condition of pupils. The causes of bullying may be due to personal reasons related to the bully, such as jealousy, anger, aggression, dominance, showing strength, and frustration, as well as the surrounding circumstances, including the family and social environment, or problems of divorce between spouses. The current study contradicted the study of Frysén Pearson (2007), whose results showed that they had been exposed to bullying during their school years, and that they engage in bullying when the victims are different from them and appear different from them. The study sample also stated that it is possible to stop bullying through changes in the victim's behaviors, and for the victim to stand firmly against the bully. It can also be interpreted that bullying arises from bad peer groups that pressure victims and always try to control others.

Our study was consistent with the study of "Smith, Twemlow, and Hoover" (1999), entitled *The Effect of a Therapeutic Program with Groups of Children Classified as Bullies, Victims, and Normal Children*. The results showed the success of the program in reducing school absenteeism and improving the learning environment for bullies and their victims. It also showed that victims of bullies come from families characterized by separation, divorce, disintegration, or chaos. It indicated that bullies are victims of family violence and of bullying by a family member, and that both victims and bullies reported that negative or undesirable relationships prevailed with one or both parents. Behavioral theory also explained that bullying is repeatable if it is associated with reinforcement, and

if that response occurs, it becomes part of the individual's behavior. It may also occur through imitation and observation of others.

Conclusion:

The current study aimed to identify the levels of bullying among schoolchildren. It is a field study conducted on a sample at Beni Saf Middle School – Ain Temouchent. To achieve the objective of the study, a set of previous studies on the topic was reviewed, and the appropriate measurement tool was selected after verifying its psychometric properties.

The results showed a low level among the school pupils under study. The results were discussed in light of previous studies, and this study concluded with a set of recommendations, namely:

Suggestions and Recommendations

Through the obtained results, which include a set of suggestions, they can be summarized as follows:

- Organizing periodic training courses for teachers on how to deal with pupils' behaviors and refine them.
- Organizing awareness-raising and guidance courses and days for parents on family and social upbringing.
- Encouraging pupils to play and work collectively in order to create a spirit of brotherhood among them.

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