

RESEARCH ARTICLE	The Phenomenon of Bullying in Educational Schools: Its Forms and Causes	
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Abstract		
This research paper aims to shed light on a major and widespread problem facing schools, families, and society as a whole namely, the phenomenon of school bullying practiced by some students at various educational levels against their peers within different educational settings. This issue has seen a significant rise in recent years due to its severe and complex impact on all aspects of a student’s life. As a result, it has attracted the attention and collaborative efforts of institutions, organizations, and even civil society in an attempt to limit its spread and mitigate its consequences for all three parties involved in this aggressive and undesirable behavior within educational and pedagogical environments. Accordingly, this paper addresses the topic by first presenting the main definitions of the term provided by researchers, and then exploring the causes, forms, and effects of bullying on the individuals involved in this phenomenon.		
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Introduction:

Childhood is one of the most crucial stages in a person's life, as it forms the foundation of one's personality with all its cognitive, psychological, physical, and social components. Therefore, it is essential for those in the child's environment to provide the care and support necessary for healthy and continuous development across all aspects of growth. However, at times, children face various obstacles and dangers that hinder their ability to live a problem-free life. Education is a fundamental right of every child in the world, and thus, it is necessary to provide an appropriate environment that allows them to acquire knowledge and skills.

Yet, the child is often threatened by a range of barriers that obstruct this right. Among the most serious and increasingly widespread problems in recent years across educational settings worldwide and at all levels is the phenomenon of bullying, which has become one of the most pressing and dangerous issues affecting students. Although its prevalence varies from one country to another, it leaves negative effects on both the bully and the victim alike. Bullying is an aggressive behavior directed toward others and manifests in various forms.

This paper seeks to explore the following key questions: What is the concept of bullying? What are its causes? What are its different forms? And what are the researcher's suggested recommendations and proposals to help limit the escalation of this phenomenon?

1- Conceptual Approach:

We will present the fundamental concepts as follows:

1.1- The Concept of Bullying:

We can enumerate several definitions of bullying as follows:

The concept of bullying is relatively modern in the educational and pedagogical field. Studies that have addressed this concept are very limited, mainly due to the difficulty in establishing a measure to distinguish behaviors that can be classi-

fied as bullying from those that occur incidentally. However, all studies that dealt with school bullying behavior agree that it is: "A behavior based on the abuse of power and authority, involving aggressive actions by an individual or a group toward another person who is weaker in strength and ability. These actions are characterized by repetition something that occurs only once cannot be considered bullying according to the concept of bullying."¹

1.2- School Bullying:

We will now present a set of definitions of school bullying as follows:

a. Linguistic definition:

"Tanammura, yatamammaru, tanammuran)" – that is, a person behaves like a tiger in character. For example, he acts like a tiger toward someone who has taken away his rights, or he attempts to scare his peers by imitating a tiger's ferocity, just as a boy may imitate a lion's strength.

b. Terminological definition of school bullying:

We present a set of scholarly definitions of school bullying:

1. **Suleiman and Al-Bilawi** define it as: "An assault by a domineering person on someone weaker, who takes pleasure in watching the victim suffer. This may cause the victim various kinds of pain."
2. **Melhem Sami Mohamed** views bullying as: "An aggressive behavior toward a person with the aim of witnessing the victim's physical pain inflicted by the attacker."²
3. **Dodge (1991)** defines it as: "Intentional and repeated assault, whether physical (such as hitting), social (such as exclusion and mistreatment), or verbal (such as name-calling), directed at others who are in a weaker position, with the purpose of instilling fear and terror in them."
4. **Farrington (1993)** defines it as: "A form of aggression that results from an imbalance of power between one student and another, or between a group of students and a group of weaker students. This behavior takes multiple forms physical, verbal, or emotional without the weaker students being able to react in self-defense."³
5. **The Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus (1994)** defines it as: "A person being subjected repeatedly and over time to negative actions by one or more individuals." He also defined negative actions as: "An intentional act by a person to harm or disturb the comfort of another person through physical contact, words, or other means."⁴
6. **Juvonen & Shuster (2003)** define it as: "Behavior that involves physical or verbal harm or humiliation in general. This behavior results from a power imbalance between two individuals, one being the bully and the other the victim. An example of bullying is when a child is called by a name that they dislike or do not wish to be called."⁵

2- The Prevalence of the Bullying Phenomenon:

Bullying is one of the widespread problems in schools, often unknown to parents especially in our societies. It has very harmful effects on its victims, most of which are psychological, although it may sometimes lead to physical harm. Therefore, bullying is considered an important subject of study due to its increasing rates over time, its use in a growing number of situations, and its proven short- and long-term consequences.⁶

A study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), which involved a global health survey of students in schools across 19 countries to determine the prevalence of bullying, showed that African countries ranked first, with bullying rates ranging from 40% to 61%. Southeast Asian countries came in second, with rates ranging from 20% to 40%. Another study conducted across 11 European countries found an average bullying rate of 20.6% among school students, with the highest rate recorded in the United Kingdom.⁷

A study in Algeria confirmed that 35% of primary school students had been subjected to bullying, according to a report by the National Center for Criminological and Social Research.⁸

Bullying has become a widespread phenomenon. According to a study prepared by the National Center for Child Health and Human Development in the United States, more than one million school students are involved in bullying, and over 160,000 students avoid attending school for fear of being bullied.⁹

Global statistics indicate that school bullying is prevalent among students at various educational levels. Approximately 15-20% of primary school students are exposed to bullying and peer violence. This rate increases among middle school students, reaching around 30%, and is approximately 10% in high schools. Statistics also show that about half of the children worldwide have been subjected to bullying at least once during their school years, with 10% of them facing organized and intense forms of violence.¹⁰

A study by Al-Bitar et al., conducted on 920 students in Jordan, found that the bullying rate was 47%. Studies in Saudi Arabia also confirm the widespread presence of bullying at various educational levels. Al-Buqami's 2009 study showed that 56% of the research sample experienced bullying in middle school in the Riyadh region. Another study by Al-Bahrain, Issa, and Al-Muneef covering Riyadh, Tabuk, Jazan, and the Eastern Province revealed that 50.9% of participants had been subjected to bullying in the month preceding the study.¹¹

The phenomenon of bullying continues to grow in size, nature, and form particularly with the rise in domestic violence against children. It now occurs at high rates around the world and has taken on epidemic proportions, spreading dangerously through modern societies. According to statistical estimates in some countries, it has been labeled the "Epidemic of Violence," a term used by the American Psychiatric Association.¹²

In another study by Al-Qahtani (2013), conducted on 1,877 intermediate school students in Riyadh, it was found that 31% of the sample had been subjected to bullying within a one-month period. Sakran's (2016) study revealed that the rates of bullying among students in primary, intermediate, and secondary education were 10.5%, 23.5%, and 11.2%, respectively making intermediate school the stage with the highest prevalence of bullying. The study also found that bullying is more common among boys than girls. Boys are more likely to engage in verbal and physical bullying, while girls tend to practice social bullying such as mockery, exclusion, and dominance. Most studies recommended the following:

1. The need to train teachers in how to address bullying using strategies linked to curricula and educational policies.
2. Emphasizing the importance of targeting intermediate schools in anti-bullying efforts, as they record the highest rates of bullying.
3. The importance of building counseling programs to treat and combat bullying in schools.¹³

Among the studies that confirmed these findings is the 2014 study by Chetibi and Boutaf, which concluded that bullying is highly prevalent in Algerian schools, leading to numerous moral and social problems. It has also caused the spread of fear, anxiety, and the emergence of more bullies. This was supported by Sharifi Hanaa's 2018 study, which showed that bullying behavior is one of the most common issues in Algerian schools and represents a serious threat that must be addressed within the school environment.¹⁴

According to statistics issued by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in collaboration with other partners, 70% of bullying incidents worldwide occur in schools. Males are exposed to bullying 70% more than females. The age group between 10 and 12 years old is the most likely to experience or practice bullying as a way to assert themselves.¹⁵

3- Participants in the Bullying Process:

Individuals involved in bullying can be classified into three main categories as follows:

A. Bullies (Aggressors):

According to Pendley (2004), bullying children can be categorized into two types:

1. **Instigator Type:** This individual lacks self-control, is driven by internal emotions that push them to bully, and shows no empathy toward the victims.
2. **Reactive Type:** This type is emotional and impulsive. They perceive non-threatening behaviors from others as provocative acts and believe their bullying is justified. Bullies often hold certain thoughts and beliefs that drive them to engage in bullying behavior.¹⁶

The bully is the central figure in the bullying cycle. He is the student who exhibits aggressive behavior toward a physically weaker peer. Such individuals tend to be controlling, aggressive, and feel self-satisfaction when causing harm to the victim.¹⁷

John (2006) presents several stereotypical models of bullying as follows:

1. **Single Bullying:** In this model, a single bully targets and harms an individual or a group. This type is very common in schools.
2. **Heterogeneous Collective Bullying:** This occurs when multiple bullies collectively target the victim. It is considered a newer form of bullying.
3. **Homogeneous Collective Bullying (Familial Pattern):** This model involves a group of individuals participating in bullying as a collective.¹⁸

B. Victims:

In the literature and studies related to bullying, victims of bullying behavior are classified into two types:

1. **Passive Victims:** They represent the majority of bullying victims. These students are non-aggressive, emotionally unstable, unable to defend themselves, socially rejected by peers, and exhibit high levels of anxiety. They often have a negative self-image, are overly sensitive, and lack social skills.
2. **Provocative Victims:** This group is a minority compared to the first type. They are less physically active, lack appeal, have poor fitness, and display a sharp temperament. They may suffer from hyperactivity, care little about their appearance or activities, and may also struggle with obesity, hearing impairment, or walking difficulties.¹⁹

C. Bystanders:

This term refers to students who are present during bullying incidents but do not actively participate. These individuals often feel guilty for failing to intervene and tend to experience intense fear. They are typically the weakest in the group, seem confused, and have low self-confidence, poor responsibility-taking, and low self-esteem. Bystanders are divided into:

1. **Bystanders Opposed to Bullying:** They observe and witness bullying without intervening due to a lack of confidence and fear of becoming future victims.
2. **Bystanders Who Participate in Bullying:** These individuals engage in bullying indirectly by cheering, blaming the victim, or directly participating in actions that harm the victim.²⁰

4- Characteristics of Bullying Participants:

Whitelock (1997) studied the traits that distinguish bullies and victims in elementary schools using a list of common characteristics consisting of 70 traits developed by researchers at Ohio University. He found that the most prominent traits of bullies include control, moodiness, and a lack of empathy for others. Nineteen traits were common among them. Victims, on the other hand, were characterized by poor social skills, self-blame for problems they experience, and fear of school. They shared 21 traits.

The study also confirmed that bullies suffer from more family problems than other children. Their parents are often preoccupied, and decisions are frequently made on their behalf. The study also showed that males are more likely to engage in direct bullying such as hitting, pushing, and kicking whereas females are more inclined to engage in indirect bullying, such as ignoring, mocking, ridiculing, and social exclusion.²¹

5- Causes of the Phenomenon of School Bullying:

Due to the seriousness of this phenomenon, numerous Arab and Western studies have examined the causes of bullying. These studies have identified several factors that can be categorized as follows:

A. Family Causes:

Frequent family problems can have a negative impact on children. Many bullies come from troubled homes and are more aggressive than others. The study by Chetibi and Boutaf (2012) identified family issues, improper upbringing, and poor communication between parents and children as among the most significant causes of bullying.

Gharib (2017) found that both bullies and their victims often live in environments of family conflict, with bullies being products of marital disputes and exposed to a conflict-driven lifestyle. Divorce and separation are also among the factors that can lead to bullying and the emergence of more aggressive individuals, especially when custody disputes deprive children of a warm family atmosphere.²²

B. Biological Causes:

Bullying students often have greater physical strength, which gives them an advantage over their victims. They may also possess certain genetic predispositions.²³

C. Technological Causes:

Technological advancements have facilitated the spread of electronic games and social media platforms, making communication between individuals extremely easy. However, this has also led to greater access to visual and audio content films, shows, and games that often feature violent scenes. Many of these games include killing, blood, and warfare, and encourage such behavior.

These types of games have become widespread among students and have a direct effect on their behavior. Most of these games portray violence as a form of strength or heroism, which causes students to become desensitized to it and, ultimately, imitate it by exercising violence against their peers in school.²⁴

D. Psychological Causes:

Bullies often exhibit aggressive and impulsive behavior toward others and seek attention from those around them.²⁵

E. School-Related Causes:

One of the main factors contributing to the spread of bullying in schools is weak supervision by principals, teachers, and supervisors particularly in schools with large student populations. Additionally, poor enforcement of school rules and weak disciplinary measures encourage students to act violently, knowing there will likely be no serious consequences.

Thus, it is vital to activate and reinforce school supervision and implement strict measures to address and reduce this phenomenon.²⁶

F. Cognitive Causes:

According to Cole and Dodge (1987), bullies tend to have cognitive biases in their thinking patterns, leading them to mistakenly believe that others have hostile intentions toward them.²⁷

6- Forms of Bullying:

Bullying occurs in various forms, with differing degrees of impact on the three main categories of participants involved, as follows:

A. Physical Bullying:

In this form, the bully uses physical force such as hitting, slapping, or coercing the victim into doing certain things.

B. Verbal Bullying:

This involves non-physical aggression, such as name-calling, insults, threats, giving offensive nicknames to victims, or mocking their ethnic or minority background.

C. Social Bullying:

The bully excludes the victim, controls their social relationships, and prevents them from participating in activities for example, rejecting their friendship or spreading rumors about them.

D. Emotional Bullying:

The bully uses threats, harassment, intimidation, humiliation, and social rejection to frighten and isolate the victim.

E. Property-Related Bullying:

The bully takes control of others' belongings by force, uses them without permission, or may destroy them.²⁸

7- Effects of Bullying:

Bullying has harmful and destructive effects not only on the victim, but also on the bully, bystanders, and the entire school environment. All three groups involved are affected either directly or indirectly. Each party may suffer from short- or long-term consequences, as outlined below:

A. Effects of Bullying on the Victim:

We can distinguish the effects on victims as follows:

1. Short-Term Effects on Victims:

Bullying causes painful and humiliating effects. Victims often suffer from distress, confusion, and a sense of misery. They lose self-respect and experience anxiety and insecurity. In some cases, victims may sustain physical injuries. Their focus and attention in the learning process may decline, and they may refuse to attend school in order to avoid bullying. The constant threat of bullying generates ongoing fear and makes it difficult for victims to form age-appropriate friendships or develop independence skills. As a result, they are more vulnerable to exploitation and may lack essential personal skills.

Many victims may also suffer from psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and abdominal pain. In extreme cases, victims may develop very low self-esteem and consider suicide as the only escape.²⁹

Some researchers believe that the most devastating effects of bullying are the ones that push students toward suicidal thoughts or even suicide itself. Many studies have linked school bullying to personal issues such as frustration, suicidal ideation, mental disorders, eating disorders, low self-esteem, sleep disorders, bedwetting, substance abuse, alcohol addiction, carrying weapons, and property destruction. Bullying is also associated with social issues, including the loss of social acceptance and difficulty in forming friendships.³⁰

2. Long-Term Effects on Victims:

Sustained bullying throughout school years can lead to long-term negative consequences that persist even years after schooling. Victims of bullying often show higher tendencies toward depression and reduced self-worth in early adulthood compared to peers who were not bullied during their school years.

Therefore, stopping school bullying is essential in order to prevent or at least reduce both the short- and long-term consequences.³¹

Some researchers argue that the negative effects of bullying impact all participants bullies, victims, and bystanders. Bullies, in particular, tend to exhibit behavioral disorders such as aggressive actions, disobedience, poor social adjustment, and antisocial behavior.³²

B. Effects of Bullying on the Bully:

Bullies are at increased risk of developing dangerous behaviors such as alcohol and drug addiction, getting into physical fights, vandalism, school dropout, early sexual activity, involvement in criminal acts or traffic violations, and becoming abusive and violent toward their future spouses or children.³³

C. Effects of Bullying on Bystanders:

Approximately 70–80% of youth who are neither bullies nor victims are also at risk of being affected by bullying. Watching classmates being mocked or physically assaulted increases their daily anxiety levels. If the school staff does not intervene to stop such behaviors, a school climate emerges where aggression is normalized and rewarded.

In such an environment, bullies may gain status and social standing, leading to the general spread of a bullying culture throughout the school. These effects range from personal psychological and health issues to the adoption and normalization of aggressive social values, ultimately shaping the broader school community.³⁴

8- Theoretical Explanations of Bullying:

Below are several theories that have been proposed to explain the phenomenon of bullying:

A. Behavioral Theory:

Proponents of this theory view bullying as an observable and measurable behavior. According to behavioral theory, aggressive behavior progresses through two stages: the first is based on the frustration–aggression hypothesis, and the second is the stage of social learning. The frustration–aggression theory posits that aggression is typically a result of frustration, and that exposure to frustrating situations leads individuals to react aggressively in various forms.

Behavioral theory suggests that the bully's behavior is reinforced by those around them such as peers and friends especially when they receive attention and gain social status among classmates. The fact that the bully obtains what they want serves as reinforcement in itself, which drives them to create and maintain bullying situations through aggression toward others. Rarely are such behaviors met with punishment from either family or school.³⁵

B. Bullying in Light of Cognitive Theory:

Psychologists have studied aggressive behaviors like bullying from early on. In cognitive theory, the focus is on how the human mind perceives specific events in the perceptual field or environment, especially in various lived social contexts and their psychological effects on the individual. This cognitive processing may lead to the development of feelings of prejudice and hatred, which then evolve into internal perceptions that drive the individual to engage in aggressive behaviors such as bullying.

Cognitive theory emphasizes treatment through cognitive restructuring equipping individuals with available facts and information about a situation to clarify their perceptual field. This process removes ambiguity or confusion, allowing the individual to become aware of the relationships between causes and outcomes.³⁶

C. Bullying in Light of Social Information Processing Theory:

This theory views bullying behavior as occurring within the context of peer groups, and therefore understanding the social framework of students who target their peers is essential to fully grasp the concept of bullying.

Researchers differ on the social skills of children who engage in bullying. Many suggest that bullies lack social skills and fail to process social information correctly. They are often unable to form accurate judgments about others' intentions and do not possess full awareness of how others perceive them.

Based on this, social information processing theory explains bullying as a result of deficits in social processing skills among children who bully others.³⁷

CONCLUSION:

Based on the above, it can be said that bullying is one of the serious phenomena that threatens our children in particular and our societies in general. Therefore, it is essential that all efforts be united and intensified in order to combat it and attempt to reduce or limit its growing spread. This includes the involvement of institutions, organizations, and civil society through awareness campaigns targeting both students and families to raise awareness about the dangers of this phenomenon.

We have concluded with a set of recommendations and suggestions aimed at protecting our children from bullying, whether it occurs inside or outside the school environment, including the following:

1. Training educational counselors in programs that teach how to protect students within educational institutions from violent, bullying, and aggressive behaviors.
2. Raising family awareness about the importance of providing ample space for discussion and dialogue among family members, which fosters respectful freedom of expression.
3. Preparing educational and awareness programs for parents on the dangers and consequences of bullying in order to reduce its spread.
4. Conducting field research and future scientific studies aimed at identifying the causes of school bullying and finding appropriate solutions to prevent this phenomenon from escalating and spreading further within the school environment.

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- ³¹ Mansour Omar Al-Otaibi, *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

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