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| <p><b>Issue web link</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p><a href="https://imcra-az.org/archive/385-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-11-vol-8-2025.html">https://imcra-az.org/archive/385-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-11-vol-8-2025.html</a></p>                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p><b>Keywords</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Preventive social work; university bullying; student welfare; psychosocial intervention; institutional prevention; Algerian higher education; social responsibility; academic safety.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Bullying within the university setting has emerged as a growing social and educational concern that threatens the psychological well-being, academic engagement, and moral integrity of students. This paper explores the preventive role of social work practice in mitigating bullying behaviours in Algerian universities through a sociological and institutional lens. It examines how the preventive approach in social work can serve as a sustainable strategy for reducing the prevalence of both traditional and cyber forms of bullying that manifest among university students. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology to investigate the causes, forms, and effects of university bullying—ranging from verbal harassment and social exclusion to online aggression—and to assess how proactive social work practices can address these challenges. Central to this inquiry is the hypothesis that the preventive model of social work, when systematically integrated into university structures, enhances collective awareness, fosters empathy, and strengthens the institutional culture of respect and safety. Key findings indicate that the preventive approach enables early detection of bullying patterns, facilitates multi-level interventions involving students, faculty, and administrative staff, and promotes a culture of open communication and accountability. By reinforcing values of social responsibility, counselling mechanisms, and participatory engagement, social work practitioners play a crucial mediating role between university actors and the students affected by violence. This study therefore contributes to the advancement of applied social work theory by providing a framework for institutional prevention programs, educational counselling units, and peer-support systems within higher education. It concludes that the preventive role of social work is indispensable for cultivating inclusive, humane, and psychologically secure learning environments.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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## Introduction

The study of student-related problems in higher education is an important issue, particularly in light of the changing social, educational, economic, and technological conditions. The life situations that university students face have given rise to numerous social problems, often resulting from dysfunctions within socialization institutions such as the family, school, and others.

Among these problems is **bullying behavior**, which negatively affects the educational environment that includes various actors—students, faculty members, and university administration—and has an adverse impact on students' performance. This phenomenon has become increasingly widespread in university settings, calling for more in-depth research on university bullying.

As a negative behavior, bullying has severe and far-reaching consequences. Victims often suffer from **social effects** such as isolation, withdrawal, and social exclusion, as well as **psychological effects** like stress, anxiety, and sleep or eating disorders, which may even lead to tragic outcomes such as suicide. Furthermore, bullying has a significant impact on students' **academic performance**, leading to lower achievement and academic disengagement.

Consequently, university bullying has attracted considerable attention at the global, Arab, and local levels in terms of research and investigation. However, studies focusing on university bullying remain limited compared to those addressing school bullying.

Despite the existence of regulatory mechanisms such as laws and disciplinary councils, bullying behavior continues to increase, with its forms evolving from **traditional bullying** to **cyberbullying** as a result of technological advancements. This form of bullying often occurs in secrecy, away from the supervision and control of university authorities.

Therefore, this research paper seeks to propose an **accompanying mechanism** to support the university's role in reducing bullying within the academic environment through the **practice of social work** and the adoption of the **preventive approach** as an effective strategy for combating bullying.

## 1. Research Problem

The university represents an inclusive environment that plays a vital role in preparing qualified individuals and serving society. It also contributes to reinforcing social and cultural values such as intellectual freedom, tolerance, and opposition to all forms of violence and discrimination within the academic setting. In the past, bullying at the university level was rarely reported—except for isolated incidents of mockery. However, in recent years, cases of bullying and power abuse have increasingly emerged within universities, posing a serious threat to students' psychological and social well-being.

Foreign and Arab studies indicate that this phenomenon has been growing in recent years. For example, **Emma D. Harrison (2022)** found that bullying in higher education shares similar characteristics with bullying in schools and workplaces, as well as with sexual harassment. The study recommended addressing issues of power and

inequality within anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, while ensuring the presence of clear guidelines and information to prevent and reduce bullying in universities.

Similarly, **Tay (2023)** examined the nature of interpersonal interactions that students perceive as bullying within higher education. The study revealed that bullying behaviors are often intertwined with everyday social interactions, making them difficult to recognize, report, or address. Students also indicated that a lack of awareness regarding anti-bullying structures and mechanisms, coupled with weak deterrence due to non-transparent enforcement of rules, contributes to the persistence of the phenomenon.

At the Arab level, **Elsayed (2021)** investigated the relationship between cyberbullying and intellectual security among university youth, identifying indicators of the social worker's role in enhancing intellectual security and combating cyberbullying among university students.

Accordingly, bullying can be defined as the infliction of harm—physical, psychological, emotional, or verbal—on an individual or group. It also includes moral and physical threats, often occurring within power-imbalanced relationships. In the university environment, where daily interactions among students are frequent, this phenomenon often remains **unspoken**, as victims tend to avoid reporting due to shame or low self-confidence. Consequently, victims may remain silent, withdraw, and isolate themselves from peers.

In this context, universities bear a significant responsibility in addressing bullying, which requires collaboration with **social work practitioners**. Their role focuses on working with individuals and groups, observing student behavior, and identifying bullying patterns. Social work practice allows the implementation of **preventive and therapeutic programs** aimed at reducing bullying through proactive support and intervention to address university bullying problems.

Based on the above, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the preventive role of social work practice in reducing bullying behavior among university students?
- What is meant by bullying, and what are its types and effects?
- What is meant by social work practice, what are its components and objectives, and what role does the preventive approach play in social work practice within the university environment to reduce bullying?

## 2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in highlighting the role of **social work practice** in protecting university students from manifestations of bullying—a phenomenon that has recently become widespread among students. University students are increasingly exposed to various forms of bullying, including verbal assaults, threats, harassment, and intimidation, which often extend beyond verbal abuse to **physical, social, and symbolic violence**.

The importance of this research also stems from clarifying the role of **social work practice within the university environment**, particularly through the intervention of the **social worker**, who plays a crucial preventive role in protecting and supporting bullied students and in correcting the behavior of bullies.

Moreover, this study represents a **scientific contribution** to the field of social work practice by applying the **preventive approach** to reduce bullying within the university setting. It also proposes a **conceptual framework** for implementing preventive social work strategies through coordinated efforts among university administration, faculty members, and social workers.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the preventive role of social work practice in reducing bullying behavior within the university environment.
- To define the concept of bullying, its types, causes, and effects.
- To explore preventive approach strategies in social work practice.
- To determine the role of the social worker in addressing the phenomenon of bullying in the university context.
- To propose a **model for reducing bullying** in the university environment.

#### • 4. Definition of Concepts and Terms Related to the Study

##### • Role:

“It is the pattern of behavior expected by the group from an individual who occupies a certain position within it. This behavior distinguishes the individual from others who occupy different positions.” (*Atiya, 2001, p.31*)

• **Operational Definition of the Preventive Role:** It refers to the efforts and actions undertaken by the social worker to prevent the occurrence of problems within the university environment, particularly bullying behavior.

• **Social Work:** According to the *Dictionary of Social Work Terms*, social work is defined as: “Processes aimed at bringing about various social changes among individuals, groups, and communities within the framework of the profession’s principles and theories, carried out by professional social workers.” (*Hamed, 2012, p.213*)

• Arlien Johnson defines the profession of social work as: “A profession performed for people with the purpose of helping them as individuals or groups to establish satisfying relationships and achieve levels of living consistent with their desires and capabilities, in harmony with the goals of society.” (*Abu Bakr, 1974, p.199*)

• **Operational Definition of the Social Work Profession:** Efforts provided to members of society to help them adapt and achieve a better level of functioning within their social environment.

• **Social Worker:** A social worker is a professional practitioner of social work who has received academic and professional preparation through formal education in social work and has acquired a body of knowledge from related social sciences. The social worker also undergoes field training in social institutions to develop the necessary professional skills. Personal attributes required of a social worker include good health, emotional stability, moral integrity, and a pleasant appearance. (*Alyan, 2015, p.40*)

• It can thus be said that the social worker is the professional responsible for practicing social work, equipped with scientific knowledge and practical skills to assist individuals, groups, and communities within specialized institutions.

• **University Bullying:** Before defining university bullying, it is necessary to first define *bullying* in general.

• **Definition of Bullying:** According to Behsnaoui and others, “It is behavior through which physical, psychological, or emotional harm or harassment is inflicted by a bully on another weaker individual for any reason, and in a repetitive manner.” (*Ali, 2015, p.8*)

• Another definition states: “It is aggressive behavior aimed at causing harm to another person—psychologically, verbally, or physically—where the individual engaging in such behavior holds power over the victim.” (*Boumachta, 2021, p.155*)

• Accordingly, bullying can be defined as a form of aggressive behavior manifested in a power-based pattern of domination by an aggressor over a victim, resulting in psychological, physical, or emotional harm.

• **University Bullying** refers to the abuse directed by a student toward others in various forms, including verbal insults, mockery, physical attacks, or harassment based on body image or physical disabilities, and placing another student in an embarrassing or humiliating situation in front of peers. (*Al-Rubaie, 2024*)

- **Operational Definition of University Bullying:** It refers to behaviors that violate university rules and regulations, such as domination, ridicule, name-calling, and verbal or physical aggression, which occur within the university space in the absence of effective supervision.
- **University Environment:** According to *Ismail (1993)*, the university environment is “the human context in which interactions occur among the main elements of university work, including the physical space, faculty members, students, administration, student organizations, and community relations clubs.”
- **Social Worker (Reiterated):** A social worker is a specialist in social work who must possess individual qualities, practical skills, and scientific competence that qualify them to work in various sectors and fields of social service.

## 5. Previous Studies

We attempted to present several previous studies related to the topic of our research, categorized from the general to the specific in order to encompass the subject comprehensively.

### *First: Foreign Studies*

**Study 1:** Conducted by *Emma D. Harrison (2022)*, entitled “*A Thematic Analysis of Students’ Perceptions and Experiences of Bullying in UK Higher Education.*” This study examined the phenomenon of bullying in higher education and sought to explore its impact on students’ mental health, as well as their perceptions and experiences of bullying at university. The researchers conducted both virtual and face-to-face focus group interviews with 40 students from 17 universities across the United Kingdom, with an average age of 22 years. The study adopted a thematic analysis approach, and its main findings revealed that bullying in higher education shares similar characteristics with school bullying, workplace bullying, and sexual harassment. The study recommended addressing power and inequality issues within institutional anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies, and ensuring clear guidance and information are available to prevent and reduce bullying within universities.

**Study 2:** Conducted by *Tay (2023)*, entitled “*Revisiting the Definition of Bullying in the Context of Higher Education.*” The study aimed to explore the nature of interpersonal interactions that students perceive as bullying within higher education. A qualitative approach was used, relying on semi-structured interviews with university students and administrators from two public universities in Ghana and one university in Norway, in order to examine how national differences might influence bullying manifestations. The sample consisted of 58 participants.

The study found that bullying takes several forms, including deliberate annoyance, social exclusion, embarrassment and scolding, ridicule, gossiping, intimidation, sexual harassment, and unwanted touching or kissing, as well as ignoring or showing hostile reactions. Participants reported that bullying behaviors are often intertwined with everyday interactions, making them difficult to identify, report, or address. Moreover, students noted that lack of awareness of anti-bullying structures and weak deterrence due to lack of transparency in rule enforcement contribute to the persistence of this phenomenon.

### *Second: Arab Studies*

**Study 1:** Conducted by *Elsayed (2021)*, entitled “*The Relationship between Cyberbullying and Intellectual Security of University Youth.*” The study aimed to investigate the relationship between cyberbullying and intellectual security among university youth, as well as the indicators of the social worker’s role in enhancing intellectual security and combating cyberbullying among university students. The study sample consisted of 378 students (142 males and 236 females) from various faculties. Results showed a statistically significant negative correlation at the 0.01 level between cyberbullying and intellectual security among university youth—meaning that the more cyberbullying practices increased, the lower the level of intellectual security among students. The study concluded that intellectual security should be strengthened by developing awareness and online counseling programs within universities and activating the role of social workers in monitoring cyberbullying cases.

**Study 2:** Conducted by *Ashoush (2021)*, entitled “*The Educational Role of the University in Confronting Bullying Among Its Students: An Analytical Study.*” The study aimed to derive the expected role of the university in protecting its students from the various effects of bullying. Using the descriptive method, it analyzed literature on

the concept of bullying, its components, types, causes, and its effects on students, while proposing a set of educational roles for the university to combat bullying. The study applied its tools to a sample of faculty members and academic leaders (deans, vice-deans, and heads of departments) from five Faculties of Education at Tanta, Mansoura, Kafr El-Sheikh, and Assiut universities. The results revealed consensus among the sample on the importance of the proposed educational roles and mechanisms necessary for universities to confront bullying.

**Study 3:** Conducted by *Othman (2021)*, entitled *“Attitudes of Social Work Students Toward Cyberbullying: A Proposed Model from a Social Work Perspective.”* The study aimed to measure the attitudes of students at Fayoum University toward cyberbullying, using the social survey method and an online questionnaire applied to 243 students from the Faculty of Social Work. Conducted over two months in 2021, the study found that cognitive components scored 74.89%, affective components 44.62%, and behavioral components 37.11%. The study concluded with a proposed model to address the issue.

**Study 4:** Conducted by *Al-Mun'im (2022)*, entitled *“A Proposed Model from the Casework Perspective to Reduce Bullying in the University Environment.”* The study sought to investigate the factors associated with bullying among university students and proposed a behavioral modification model within social casework to reduce it. Using the social survey method and a simple random sample of 350 students from the Higher Institute of Social Work in Kafr El-Sheikh, the results indicated that bullying behaviors stem from a desire for attention, mockery of overweight peers, and lack of respect for others. The main causes were found to be moral decline, lack of family supervision, and weak social values. The study proposed fostering positive relationships between students and professors and building students' self-confidence from an early age.

**Study 5:** Conducted by *El-Shattouri (2023)*, entitled *“A Proposed Casework Model to Reduce Bullying Behavior Among University Youth.”* The study aimed to develop a proposed model for casework practice to mitigate bullying behaviors among university students. Using the descriptive approach and a purposive sample of 80 students from the Faculties of Education and Physical Education, results revealed the presence of various forms of bullying, with psychological bullying ranking highest, followed by verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying. The study concluded with a proposed model to reduce bullying among students.

### **Third: Local Studies**

**Study 1:** Conducted by *Noura Fettache (2024)*, entitled *“Bullying in the Academic Work Environment: A Case Study of PhD Students and Research Professors.”* This study aimed to explore the phenomenon of bullying in the academic work environment, focusing specifically on PhD students and research professors. Using the theoretical framework of workplace bullying and analyzing how Algerian legislation addresses the issue, data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through the Facebook page of the University Professors' Club, with a sample of 230 respondents. Results indicated that academic bullying often takes a collective form, where groups of bullies become dominant forces using multiple means to serve their own interests while excluding others.

**Study 2:** Conducted by *Faiza (2022)*, entitled *“The Reality of Cyberbullying in Algerian Universities During the COVID-19 Pandemic.”* The study aimed to measure the prevalence of cyberbullying during the COVID-19 pandemic through a field study on a stratified random sample of 120 students from Khemis Miliana University during the 2021–2022 academic years. Using the descriptive approach and the Shenawi Bullying Scale, the study revealed that the level of cyberbullying was high (97.5%). The most frequent forms were ridicule and defamation, followed by exclusion and harassment.

**Study 3:** Conducted by *Amour (2023)*, entitled *“Cyberbullying Among University Students in Light of Some Personal Variables.”* The study sought to identify the level of cyberbullying among university students in relation to certain personal variables. Using the descriptive method and the Shenawi Bullying Scale, the study was conducted on a sample of 120 students from Hassiba Ben Bouali University in Chlef. Results showed low levels of cyberbullying concerning college and specialization variables. The researchers recommended organizing scientific seminars and conferences to raise students' awareness about the dangers of cyberbullying.

**Study 4:** Conducted by *Ben Maâchou & Mahaji (2023)*, entitled *“Cyberbullying: A Study of Its Causes in the University Environment.”* The study aimed to uncover the causes of cyberbullying within the university environ-

ment using the descriptive approach on a sample of 139 students from the Department of Educational Sciences at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Saïda. Findings revealed that the main causes included compensation for feelings of inferiority, personality disorders, jealousy, parental treatment, and online gaming. The study recommended activating the roles of parents and increasing awareness and guidance through seminars and academic days.

## 6. The Conceptual Context of Bullying: Types, Causes, and Effects

The phenomenon of bullying is ancient and widespread across both developed and developing societies. Literature and prior studies indicate that bullying behavior first appeared among schoolchildren and was initially perceived as playful teasing between students. However, due to its negative consequences, researchers in psychology and sociology began to take interest in understanding its dimensions and manifestations. As a result, *Olweus (1991)* opened the field for systematic research on the phenomenon to provide a theoretical foundation for bullying behavior (*Ali B., 2015, p.15*).

Bullying is defined as **repeated aggressive acts aimed at causing physical or psychological harm to a relatively weaker student who is unable to defend themselves**. It manifests through recurring aggressive behaviors intended to inflict psychological or physical harm on others, often accompanied by the bully's need to display dominance and superiority — in other words, *to exercise power over others*. Thus, bullying can be defined as “aggression practiced by some university students toward their peers, causing them social and psychological harm” (*Al-Mun'im, 2022, p.617*).

### 6.1 Causes of the Spread of Bullying

There are several factors that have contributed to the emergence and spread of bullying behavior, which can be summarized as follows:

- **Psychosocial Causes:** These include the failure to meet psychological needs, leading to anxiety and tension — for instance, lack of attention and feelings of being undervalued in key social institutions such as school, family, or peer groups. These frustrations generate anger and rebellion against controlling environments, prompting individuals to engage in bullying behavior. Moreover, adverse social conditions and family instability also contribute significantly to the formation of bullying tendencies.
- **Modern Technology, Films, and Electronic Games:** Such media often promote aggressive and violent behavior. With the decline of socialization institutions and the absence of parental supervision, young people—especially children—absorb the values and behaviors propagated by technological media. Animated films and electronic games based on fantasy, power, and combat foster aggressive and violent tendencies.

### 6.2 Types of Bullying

According to *Ashoush (2021)*, bullying can be categorized into **two main forms**: traditional (direct) bullying and modern (cyberbullying).

#### A. Traditional Bullying:

- **Physical Bullying:** Includes acts of physical violence such as hitting, slapping, and kicking.
- **Verbal Bullying:** Includes insults, name-calling, and the use of inappropriate or derogatory nicknames.
- **Emotional Bullying:** Involves harassment, intimidation, threats, and rejection by peer groups.
- **Sexual Bullying:** Includes threats of sexual acts or the use of obscene and inappropriate language.
- **Social Bullying:** Involves exclusion, marginalization, and rejection from friendship groups.

- **Racial Bullying:** Arises from hatred or prejudice toward individuals or groups based on race or ethnicity and often manifests as ridicule or mockery of a particular background.
- **Bullying of Property:** Involves taking, damaging, or refusing to return others' belongings, such as tearing clothes, destroying or stealing books, or damaging personal items like pens and notebooks (*Al-Fawzan, 2022, p.394*).

**B. Cyberbullying:** This refers to bullying conducted through the Internet using digital technologies, social media platforms, emails, or other online communication tools. It is a **repetitive behavior** intended to intimidate, defame, or humiliate individuals, and represents an aggressive form of behavior in which the bully uses electronic means to exert power over their victims.

### 6.3 Effects of Bullying

The growing interest in studying bullying behavior in general—and university bullying in particular—stems from the negative and long-term consequences of this aggressive behavior, which gives rise to multiple social and psychological problems, including:

- **Increased suicidal tendencies** or attempts to escape the effects of bullying.
- **Psychological pressure** such as anxiety and depression. According to *Al-Suwailhi (2019, p.684)*, “the feeling of depression is not limited to bullying victims only, but also extends to those who witness cyber-bullying incidents.”
- **Academic problems**, including poor academic achievement, frequent absenteeism, or permanent dropout from studies.
- **Social health deterioration**, manifested in loneliness, social isolation, withdrawal from peer groups, and deterioration of social relationships.
- **Low self-esteem**, accompanied by fear, suspicion, and mistrust of others.
- **Psychological and physical disorders**, including sleep disturbances and eating disorders.

## 7. The Conceptual Context of Social Work Practice

Social work represents one of the fundamental pillars of society, as it plays a crucial role in helping individuals solve problems through interventions at the individual, group, and community levels. These interventions rely on specific strategies that require the social work practitioner to possess professional knowledge, analytical skills, and interpersonal competence. Social work is a **systematic social method designed to help individuals prevent and address social problems**.

The concept of social work has evolved through various theoretical perspectives. Some scholars view social work as both an **art and a science**, while others define it as a **helping profession** or a field concerned with individuals who experience adjustment difficulties.

Accordingly, social work can be defined as:

*“The scientific method of serving humanity and a social system that addresses human problems, develops capabilities, and assists existing social institutions in performing their roles, as well as establishing new systems needed by society to achieve the welfare of its members.” (Khater, 2009, p.132)*

Social work has three **main professional methods**:

- **Casework (Social Case Work)**

- **Group Work (Social Group Work)**
- **Community Organization (Community Development)**

It also has **supporting methods**, including social research and the administration of social institutions. The field covers a variety of domains such as health, family, the elderly, employment, juvenile care, childhood, persons with

## 6. The Conceptual Context of Bullying: Types, Causes, and Effects

The phenomenon of bullying is old and widespread across both developed and developing societies. Literature and studies have indicated that bullying behavior first appeared among school students and was initially perceived as mere play or joking among peers. However, due to its negative consequences, it has drawn the attention of researchers in the psychological and social fields. As a result, Olweus (1991) opened the way for systematic research into the phenomenon to understand its dimensions and manifestations and to provide a theoretical foundation for bullying behavior.

Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive acts aimed at causing physical or psychological harm to a relatively weaker student who is unable to defend himself. It manifests through recurring aggressive behaviors intended to harm another person psychologically or physically, serving as a demonstration of dominance and power—essentially an act of coercion. Hence, bullying can be understood as “aggression practiced by some university students toward their peers, resulting in various social and psychological damages” (Al-Mun'im, 2022, p. 617).

### 6.1. Causes of the Spread of Bullying

Several factors have contributed to the emergence and spread of bullying behavior, which can be summarized as follows:

- **Psychosocial Causes:** These are linked to the failure to meet psychological needs, leading to anxiety and tension. Lack of attention and appreciation from major social institutions such as the family, school, and peer groups can generate feelings of anger, frustration, and rebellion against social norms, pushing individuals to adopt bullying behavior. Social instability and family disintegration also contribute to the development of such tendencies.
- **Modern Technology, Films, and Electronic Games:** These media forms often promote aggressive and violent behaviors. In the absence of effective socialization agents and family supervision, children and youth absorb the values and behaviors promoted by digital media, particularly video games and cartoons that glorify violence, power, and aggression.

### 6.2. Types of Bullying

According to (Achouch, 2021), bullying can be classified into two main categories: **traditional (direct)** and **modern (cyberbullying)**.

#### A. Traditional Bullying:

- **Physical bullying:** Includes all forms of physical violence such as hitting, slapping, and kicking.
- **Verbal bullying:** Involves insults, name-calling, and using inappropriate nicknames.
- **Emotional bullying:** Includes harassment, intimidation, threats, and social rejection.
- **Sexual bullying:** Consists of threats or use of obscene and inappropriate language.

- **Social bullying:** Appears in exclusion, marginalization, and refusal to include individuals in friendship groups.
- **Racial bullying:** Motivated by hatred or prejudice toward an individual or group, often expressed through mockery or ridicule based on ethnicity or race.
- **Bullying of property:** Involves taking, damaging, or destroying others' belongings such as clothes, books, pens, or personal items (Al-Fawzan, 2022, p. 394).

**B. Cyberbullying:** This refers to bullying practiced online through digital technologies and social media platforms, email, or messaging apps. It is a repeated behavior intended to intimidate, humiliate, or defame others and constitutes a deliberate form of aggression where the bully uses digital means to assert dominance over victims.

### 6.3. Effects of Bullying

The study of bullying behavior, especially within universities, has highlighted numerous long-term negative consequences, summarized as follows:

- Increased suicidal tendencies or attempts as a means of escape.
- Heightened psychological stress such as anxiety and depression — “Depression does not affect only victims of cyberbullying but also extends to those who witness it” (Al-Suwihri, 2019, p. 684).
- Academic problems, including poor performance, frequent absenteeism, or even dropping out of studies.
- Social health issues such as feelings of loneliness, social withdrawal, and deterioration of peer relationships.
- Low self-esteem, fear, and distrust of others.
- Exposure to psychological and physical illnesses, including sleep and eating disorders.

## 7. The Conceptual Context of Social Work Practice

Social work represents one of the essential pillars of society due to its significant role in helping individuals, groups, and communities overcome problems through preventive and remedial interventions. This professional practice relies on scientific knowledge and interpersonal skills that enable the social worker to engage effectively and ethically.

The concept of social work has evolved through various theoretical and practical perspectives. Some scholars consider it both a **science and an art**, others see it as a **helping profession**, while another view defines it as a **profession dedicated to assisting individuals who face difficulties in social adjustment**.

Accordingly, social work can be defined as:

“A scientific method of serving humanity and a social system that aims to solve human problems, develop individual capacities, assist social institutions in fulfilling their functions, and create new systems necessary for the community to achieve the welfare of its members.” (Khater, 2009, p. 132)

Social work encompasses three main methods: **casework**, **group work**, and **community organization**, as well as auxiliary methods such as **social research** and **social welfare administration**. Its fields of application are diverse, including **health**, **family**, **elderly care**, **employment**, **juvenile rehabilitation**, **childhood**, **people with special needs**, and **educational institutions** such as **schools and universities**.

### 7.1. The Fundamental Components of Social Work Practice

The profession of social work is built upon several essential foundations and standards, including:

- **Scientific Foundations of Social Work:** Social work relies on the principles of the scientific method to analyze and interpret social situations through comparison, analysis, experimentation, and historical inquiry. It applies various research tools such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, and case studies. Moreover, social work draws upon related social sciences—such as psychology for diagnosing psychological problems and promoting mental health, and sociology for understanding society, group dynamics, and diagnosing social issues.
- **Methods of Social Work:** Social work is based on three main methods: **casework, group work, and community organization.**
- **Professional Competence and Skills:** As a profession, social work requires practitioners to possess specific personal attributes, cognitive abilities, and professional skills—such as a genuine desire to help others, the ability to establish professional relationships, and the capacity for sound judgment and problem analysis.
- **Defining the Profession's Goals:** The primary aim of social work is to improve the quality of life for individuals, groups, and communities by addressing their problems through **preventive, therapeutic, and developmental programs.**

### 7.2. The Objectives of Social Work

Social work practice seeks to achieve a set of interrelated objectives that can be categorized into three main areas:

#### *First: Preventive Objectives*

Social work emphasizes prevention by developing mechanisms that protect individuals from falling into social problems, enabling them to perform their social roles and adapt to their environments. To achieve this goal, social workers engage in the following activities (Alyan, 2015, p. 28):

- Contributing to the improvement of individuals' living standards.
- Raising public awareness through lectures, seminars, media, and training workshops.
- Conducting social studies and surveys to identify social problems, their causes, and possible solutions.
- Promoting desirable social change among individuals, groups, and communities.
- Helping individuals and groups make effective use of their available resources and capacities.
- Introducing changes to existing social systems to solve societal problems and reduce their prevalence.
- Cooperating with other community institutions to prevent individuals from becoming victims of social problems.

#### *Second: Therapeutic Objectives*

Social work also seeks to rehabilitate individuals, groups, and communities to restore their capacities to perform expected roles. This is achieved through:

- Studying and diagnosing individual and group problems to develop appropriate intervention plans.

- Relying on rehabilitation programs—psychological, social, physical, and vocational—to improve individuals' conditions.
- Establishing therapeutic and rehabilitative centers, whether residential or day-care (Alyan, 2015, p. 29).

### *Third: Developmental Objectives*

Social work contributes to the development of individuals, groups, and communities by designing social policies and developmental frameworks that consider both social and economic dimensions. It emphasizes balanced development between urban and rural areas and seeks to foster values of responsibility and encourage collective and voluntary community work.

### **7.3. The Preventive Approach in Social Work Practice**

The **preventive approach** represents a professional activity undertaken by social workers to avoid the emergence of social problems affecting individuals, groups, or communities. This approach focuses on **preventive action** before problems arise, helping individuals to strengthen their capacities and prevent maladaptive behaviors.

As Al-Ma'ati (2000, p. 39) defines it:

"The preventive role of social work aims to help individuals enhance their ability to handle life situations, take action to improve their living conditions, prevent maladjustment, and promote good health and well-being."

Prevention, therefore, is the final outcome of a series of processes that include research, treatment, education, and legislation. It involves efforts to **avoid, minimize, or control** problems before they fully develop.

The preventive approach in social work practice can be divided into three levels:

- **Primary Prevention:** Early interventions undertaken by social workers to prevent the conditions that may lead to the emergence of social problems.
- **Secondary Prevention:** Efforts made by social workers to limit the escalation of a problem through early detection, addressing its causes, and providing timely intervention to prevent deterioration.
- **Tertiary Prevention:** Rehabilitation programs provided by specialized institutions through social workers to help individuals recover from existing social problems and prevent relapse.

According to Rifai (2013, p. 93), the preventive approach includes several essential components:

- **The Client Unit:** Individuals or groups who are more vulnerable to deviant or maladaptive behavior.
- **Life Situations:** Conditions of stress, tension, crises, and social challenges.
- **Community Institutions:** Both governmental and non-governmental organizations that play direct or indirect roles in preventing health, educational, or social problems.
- **The Social Worker:** A professional practitioner who implements preventive approaches within institutions.
- **The Professional Relationship:** The structured connection between clients, institutions, and social workers aimed at achieving effective assistance.
- **The Surrounding Environment:** Encompasses all the above components, along with the broader natural and social context.

The main objectives of the preventive approach in social work practice include:

- Developing professional methods specific to group work and community intervention.
- Promoting **change** as a fundamental goal of preventive practice.
- Ensuring the integration of **rehabilitation and prevention** in social intervention programs.

## 8. Social Work Practice in Universities to Reduce Bullying Behavior

The university is a vital institution of socialization that prepares and shapes students for both social and professional life. However, the university environment is not immune to social problems—among them, **bullying behavior**. The integration of university functions with social work practice plays a key role in reducing university bullying through the adoption of a **preventive approach** focused on awareness and early intervention.

This integration reflects a **comprehensive approach** combining prevention, education, and timely response. As an educational institution, the university seeks to cultivate moral values and civic behavior among students, while social work contributes by diagnosing bullying incidents, analyzing their social and psychological causes, and providing counseling and therapeutic programs.

The synergy between academic and professional fields strengthens the effectiveness of interventions aimed at creating a **safe university environment** characterized by mutual respect, solidarity, and positive social interaction. This, in turn, enhances the quality of university life and fosters healthy social behavior within the campus community.

### Strategies That Universities Can Implement to Address Bullying Behavior

Among the strategies that universities can adopt to confront bullying behavior are the following:

1. **Awareness and Sensitization Strategy:** This involves educating university students through purposeful programs on how to use campus spaces positively—by organizing study days, training workshops, seminars, and forums. The goal is to promote positive values, guide student behavior toward respect and appreciation of others, and foster the development of healthy interpersonal relationships among peers.
2. **Strengthening Religious and Ethical Awareness:** Through religious guidance and moral education, universities can instill human values such as tolerance, respect, and cooperation.
3. **Encouraging Positive Use of Leisure Time:** Engaging students in cultural, educational, and sports activities helps redirect those exhibiting behavioral problems (such as bullying) toward positive participation and self-development.
4. **Involving Faculty Members in Student Support:** Specialists in sociology and psychology should be engaged to guide students experiencing behavioral or emotional problems, assisting them in adapting to university life and motivating them toward academic achievement and success.
5. **Establishing Psychological and Social Assistance Centers:** These centers should welcome students, listen to their concerns, monitor behaviors, and address problematic conduct in a professional and supportive environment.
6. **Promoting Dialogue and Effective Communication:** Strengthening channels of communication between university administration and faculty members enables the expression of concerns, resolution of problems, and development of collaborative strategies.
7. **Employing Social Workers:** Social workers should be integrated into the university setting to develop mechanisms and strategies for addressing, correcting, and guiding students who experience or engage in bullying behavior.

## 9. The Role of the Social Worker in Addressing Bullying in the University Environment

The profession of social work plays a crucial role in addressing the problem of bullying within the university setting. Tackling bullying is one of the primary goals of social work practice, especially within educational institutions. The social worker's role is central in maintaining **social control and balance** on campus through programs designed to assist both the victims and perpetrators of bullying.

Undoubtedly, social work practice in the university environment can play a significant role in helping students cope with bullying behavior—using individual and group work methods as tools for achieving preventive goals. The approaches adopted by social workers aim to help students take responsibility, mature emotionally and socially, and develop essential interpersonal skills—core elements of the **preventive approach**.

Through the **combined efforts** of university administration, faculty members, and social work practitioners, supported by educational curricula, it becomes possible to confront university bullying by reinforcing **positive values and social norms** that reject violence and racial discrimination. Such collaboration contributes to creating a **safe and supportive university environment**, enabling students to thrive academically and socially.

This preventive approach becomes most effective in the university setting through the proactive role of the social worker, which includes:

- Observing and identifying any signs of bullying within the university environment.
- Protecting the rights of students who are victims of bullying.
- Organizing and encouraging participation in university activities.
- Intervening immediately to stop bullying behaviors on campus.
- Establishing and enforcing appropriate disciplinary measures against bullies.
- Applying social work methods across casework, group work, and community organization.

## Conclusion

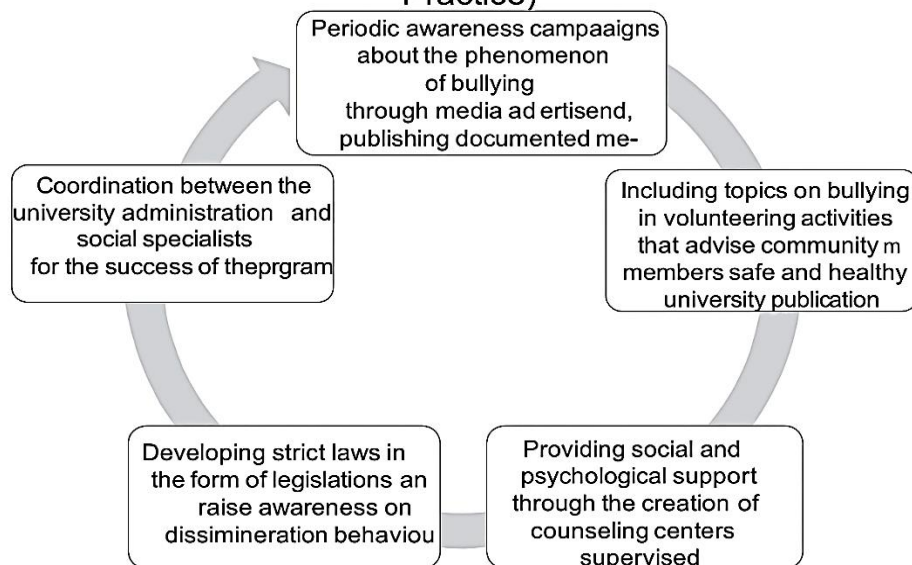
In conclusion, the **integration of roles** among all university stakeholders—administration, faculty members, students, and social work practitioners (including social workers and psychologists)—is essential for effectively addressing university bullying. Incorporating the **preventive approach** as a key strategy to combat bullying allows for the creation of a **healthy and safe academic environment** that fosters positive values, strengthens the sense of responsibility, and promotes justice and empowerment among students.

Such an environment enables students to adapt to emerging challenges, engage meaningfully in university life, and invest in the moral and cultural fabric of their academic community.

## Recommendations:

- Emphasize religious and moral counseling to address behavioral problems.
- Establish digital platforms and online reporting systems for students to safely report cases of bullying within the university.
- **Proposed Framework for a Preventive Approach to Reducing University Bullying (From the Perspective of Social Work Practice)**

### Proposed Vision for the Preventive Approach to Limit University Bullying (From the Perspective of Social Work Practice)



Model Prepared by the Researchers

#### Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, combining theoretical review and empirical observation to analyse the dynamics of bullying in the university context. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis involving university social workers, students, and faculty members. A purposive sample of participants from two Algerian universities—Bordj Bou Arreridj and Bouira—was selected to ensure diversity of gender, academic field, and experience.

The study relied on content analysis to interpret narratives and institutional policies related to bullying prevention. Data triangulation was used to ensure validity by comparing student perspectives, social worker reports, and administrative strategies. The methodology emphasises understanding bullying not merely as an individual deviation but as a systemic social phenomenon requiring multidimensional preventive strategies rooted in social work practice.

#### Ethical Considerations

The research strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines of the University Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi Research Ethics Committee. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained, and no identifying information was disclosed in any publication. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The study avoided any form of harm or coercion, and sensitive issues were handled with empathy and professional discretion.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The content reflects solely the authors' academic analysis and does not represent the official position of any affiliated institution.

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