

Level of Bullying Behavior and its Relation to Gender and Age among Adolescents in Al-Nassera City

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Abstract:

The current study aimed to identify the level of bullying behavior and its relation to gender and age among adolescents. The sample consisted of (441) students, who were randomly chosen from public prep and secondary schools in Al-Nassera City. Bullying behavior scale utilized and developed by the author after verifying its validity and reliability. The results showed that the mean scores of the participants on the total instrument for bullying among adolescents (1.70) with medium level, the results also showed that there are no statistically significant significances in the level of bullying behavior among the participants attributed to gender and age. In the light of the findings of the study, the author recommended the need to draw the attention of officials and educators to draw and develop plans and strategies governing all the forms of bullying behavior among adolescents and providing the adolescents with awareness to confront the bullying behavior.

Keywords: Bullying behavior, adolescents, public schools, Al-Nassera City

1. Introduction

Bullying among students is considered a growing educational social and personal problem that has a negative effect on the public school environment, cognitive, emotional and social growing of the individual and his/her right to learn within secured school environment. They must learn in an environment providing psychological security for its students to protect them from violence, danger and threat that affect their academic achievement and self-conception (Mongold, 2006).

The behavior of bullying has various damages that psychologically harm the bullying individuals themselves; they suffer from social problems with the workers and students in the school, in addition to academic classroom problems including poor achievement, frequent failure, low academic achievement, and low self-esteem. The danger lies in the extension of this problem in the future to the community in which this category of students live, they are more likely to fall in problems such as smoking, drinking alcohol and drugs, and they may become criminals (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons & Scheidt, 2001)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

Bullying in the school is aggressive behavior done by one student or a group of students to deliberately and psychologically, physically and verbally harm another student, repeatedly in power-imbalanced situation between the bullying student and the victimized. The behavior of bullying involves saying harmful insults and speech, rumors among students, physical violence and abuse (Undheim and Sund, 2010).

The behavior of bullying involves the non-involvement of the bullied in the social interactions and activities. This type of bullying is more common among girls than boys, where male bullying focuses on physical abuse and damaging the property of others (Vieno, Gini, and Santinello, 2011) and (Heino, Frodj, and Marttnen, 2010).

The results of recent studies in this field showed that younger students are more vulnerable to bullying behaviors (whether bullying students or the victimized) than older ones, including the study of Fleming and Jacobson (2009) and Frisen, Jonsson, and Persson (2007).

Vieno et al. (2011) indicated that there was a correlation between the behavior of bullying and some behavioral psychological problems, such as the low level of self-esteem, the high level of symptoms of anxiety and depression, the high level of suicide-committing, smoking and drinking alcohol among school students.

The victim students of the behavior of bullying have a greater tendency to become outstanding students in the later stages of academic life, and the behavior of bullying is one of the important factors to predict delinquency in the later stages of life (Heino, et al, 2010). Owusu, Hart, Oliver and Kang (2011) pointed that the behavior of bullying emerges in the early stages of the life of the individual, especially in the stage of late childhood and early adolescence; they are indicators of predictive delinquency among boys and self-mischief among girls. Undheim and Sund (2010) indicated that the lack of social support, especially from the family and the school, is

linked with the emergence of the behavior of bullying among students, being vulnerable to bullying or falling victim to bullying.

Lien, Green, Vatn and Bjertess (2009) revealed that the degree of prevalence of bullying behavior in secondary schools was medium and the behaviors of bullying decreasing among older students, and that physical bullying is the most common among boys while verbal and social bullying is the most common among girls, and that there is a correlation between the bullying/victim and the emergence of some psychological problems in the later stages of life.

Heino, Frodij and Marttinen (2010) conveyed that the physical bullying behavior was the most common among boys, and the verbal social bullying behavior is the most common among girls and involvement in the behavior of bullying or being vulnerable to bullying is a robust predictive factor for the symptoms of depression in the later stages of life of the individual.

Undheim and Sund (2010) pointed out that there were statistical differences in the level of bullying behavior due to the gender variable in favor of boys. Vieno, Gini and Santinello (2011) revealed that the level of vulnerability to bullying was high among school students, and there were differences attributed to the gender variable in favor of males, and that physical violence was the most common type of violence among boys while verbal violence in social relations was the most common among girls.

Hence, the author confirms that the gravity of the bullying behavior lies in its threats and outcomes that negatively affect society and psychologically weaken many individuals. This type of behavior must be addressed and that the family, school and society should restrict all aspects surrounding it, where its gravity lies not only in the low self-esteem, but extend to the existence of many social problems, and poor social support from the surrounding community.

2. Statement of the problem

The current study seeks to identify the level of bullying behavior among adolescents in public schools of Al-Nassera city. The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of bullying behavior among adolescents in public schools in the city of al-Nassera?
2. Are there any statistical significant differences at the level of the ($\alpha = 0.05$) in bullying behavior attributed to gender and age among adolescents?

3. Significance

The current study added new information to the human knowledge and Arab library about bullying behavior through access to the literature review and theories related to the study variables and highlighting the results of the study. The current study may contribute to utilize the theoretical literature in the interpretation of the current variables among the population of the current study. The findings of the current study may benefit educational officials through addressing the bullying behavior to help adolescents develop their positive side and modify their negative sides.

4. Theoretical framework

Frankova (2010) defined "Bullying Behavior" as individual's or group's control over another to practice power over them, including verbal, physical, sexual, ethnical and religious harm and mischief to be socially excluded.

It is defined in this study as the total degree/score obtained by the student on the scale prepared by the author for this study.

Adolescence: Adolescents in this study are the students who are in public schools in the city of al-Nassera for the academic year 2011/12, distributed to two categories: early adolescence (12 – 15 years), middle adolescence (15 -18 years).

5. Methodology

The descriptive approach utilized in this study to achieve its objectives and answer its questions.

5.1 Population

The study population consisted of students of prep and secondary stages in public schools in Al-Nassera city for the academic year 2011/2012, numbered (5600) students.

5.2 Sampling

The participants were randomly selected from the study population for the first semester of the academic year 2011/12. The sample consisted of (441) students distributed to the variables of gender and age as shown in table (1).

Table (1): The participants distributed according to gender and age

Variable	Category	No.	Percentage %
Gender	Males	208	47.2
	Females	233	52.8
	Total	441	100.0
Age	Early adolescence (from 12 to less than 15 years)	236	53.5
	Middle Adolescence (from 15 to less than 18 years)	205	46.5
	Total	441	100.0

5.3 Instrument: Bullying behavior scale

The scale of Bullying Behavior was developed by the author to match the population and sampling of the study. Access to pieces of literature review helped the author to formulate the paragraphs of the scale, such as Jaradat (2008), Ouaidat (1997), and Oddah (2009). The final draft scale consisted of (39) paragraphs distributed to four dimensions:

Physical bullying: Physical bullying is the most obvious form of bullying. It occurs when adolescents use physical actions to gain power and control over their targets. Physical bullies tend to be bigger, stronger and more aggressive than their peers. Examples of physical bullying include kicking, hitting, punching, slapping, shoving and other physical attacks. Its paragraphs are from (1-9).

Verbal bullying: Perpetrators of verbal bullying use words, statements, and name-calling to gain power and control over a target. Typically, verbal bullies will use relentless insults to belittle, demean and hurt another person, defaming, blackmail, phone calls, false accusation, and prejudicial insults. They choose their targets based on the way they look, act or behave. Its paragraphs are from (10-21).

Social bullying: It demeans the bullied/victim with low self-esteem including negligence, exclusion from peers and any social activities within the school. Its paragraphs are from (22-31).

Damaging of others' property: It refers to clothes' tearing, book, notebook and pens' damage and stealing; its paragraphs are from (32-39).

5.4 Validity

To verify the validity of the bullying behavior scale, it was reviewed and evaluated by ten more experienced evaluators in psychology and measurement and evaluation at Jordan Universities; where they were asked to check the appropriateness of the paragraphs (items) of the dimension and the total scale, and to make sure of the language and the appropriateness of the scale to achieve the study objectives. In light of the views and suggestions of the evaluators, the required modifications were conducted with agreement percentage (80%), and the final draft consisted of (29) paragraphs.

5.5 Reliability

The reliability of the scale was verified by two methods: First, the method of (test-retest), where Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between the scores of respondents and the total reliability coefficient of the scale is (0.89). The second method conducted by calculating of the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale = (0.96). These are considered appropriate values for achieving the objectives of the study as shown in table (2).

The author used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences System (SPSS) in analyzing the data and concluded the results that were discussed and then some recommendations have been made.

Table (2): Internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) and (test-retest) for Bullying behavior scale

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Test-retest
Physical	0.90	0.80
Verbal	0.88	0.87
Social	0.86	0.84
Damaging the property of others	0.89	0.83

These values are considered appropriate for the purpose of the study. Three-point scale Likert (always, sometimes and rarely) used to analyze the responses of respondents.

6. Results

Results related to the first questions: What is the level of bullying behavior among adolescents in public schools in the city of al-Nassera? To answer this question, arithmetic means and standard deviations of each domain and the total instrument of bullying behavior, as shown in table (3).

Table (3): Means and standard deviations of each domain and the total instrument of bullying behavior

No.	Domain	No. of paragraphs	Maximum	Paragraph sig. mean (*)	St. D	Level	Rank
2	Verbal bullying	12	21.44	1.78	0.37	Medium	1
3	Social bullying	10	21.83	1.75	0.40	Medium	2
1	Physical bullying	9	14.59	1.62	0.46	Low	3
4	damaging of others' properties	8	12.65	1.58	0.49	Low	4
	Total scale	39	70.53	1.79	0.33	Medium	

(*) Mean in terms of paragraph = maximum mean ÷ number of paragraphs

Table (3) indicates that the mean of the degrees of the participants for the total scale of bullying behavior among adolescents is (1.79) with a standard deviation (0.33) and medium level of bullying. The second domain (verbal bullying) ranked the first with a mean of (1.78) with a standard deviation (0.37) and medium level of bullying. Followed by the third domain (social bullying) in the second place with a mean of (1.75) and a standard deviation (0.40) and medium level of bullying, followed by the first domain (physical bullying) in the third place with a mean of (1.62), a standard deviation (0.46) and low level of bullying, while the fourth domain (bullying behavior against the property of others) ranked the fourth place with a mean of (1.58), a standard deviation (0.49) and low level of bullying.

Results related to the answer of the second question, "Are there any statistical significant differences at the level of the ($\alpha = 0.05$) in bullying behavior attributed to gender and age among adolescents?"

A) With respect to the gender of the student (male, female):

To answer this question, T-test calculated for the significance of differences between males and females on the total scale of bullying behavior and all the domains on the one hand and their levels on the total scale paragraphs on the other hand, as shown in table (4).

Table (4): T-test for the significance of differences between males and females in the level of bullying behavior

Domain	Gender	No.	Mean	St. D	Degrees of freedom	T-value	Sig. level
Family social support	Males	208	28.4231	6.17411	439	1.185	0.277
	Females	233	28.3047	6.47387			
Social support from friends	Males	208	32.6010	6.01121	439	1.603	0.206
	Females	233	33.0129	5.86080			
School social support	Males	208	28.0529	4.89721	439	.600	0.439
	Females	233	28.2146	5.09279			
Total scale	Males	208	89.0769	9.14794	439	.814	0.368
	Females	233	89.5322	8.73163			

Table (4) indicates that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) between males and females in the total scale of bullying behavior and all of its domains.

B) With respect to age of adolescents (early adolescence: 12- less than 15 years), (middle adolescence: 15 - less than 18 years): To answer this question, T-test calculated for the significance of differences between the age groups of adolescents in bullying behavior as shown in table (5).

Table (5): T-test results for the significance of differences between the age groups of adolescents in the bullying behavior

Domain	Group	No.	Mean	St. D	D. of freedom	T-value	Sig. level
Family social support	Early adolescence	236	28.3051	6.36748	439	.150	0.698
	Middle adolescence	205	28.4244	6.29584			
Social support from friends	Early adolescence	236	32.6059	5.83108	439	.010	0.921
	Middle adolescence	205	33.0634	6.04484			
School social support	Early adolescence	236	27.9153	4.93804	439	.420	0.517
	Middle adolescence	205	28.3951	5.06284			
Total scale	Early adolescence	236	88.8263	9.43553	439	2.002	0.158
	Middle adolescence	205	89.8829	8.28097			

Table (5) points out that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the age groups of adolescents in total bullying behavior and all of its domains.

7. Discussion

The results of the current study showed that the level mean of the participants for the total instrument related to bullying behavior among adolescents was (1.70) with medium degree. This is due to the nature of the emotional and psychological adolescence, where the adolescent gets freedom and independence by following some verbal, physical, social bullying behaviors and damaging of property as a reaction to family, school and community controls, where the bullying student finds various harms caused psychological mischief to his opponents.

As for the domains, the verbal bullying ranked the first place with a mean (1.79) and medium level. The verbal bullying is the most common type of bullying behaviors among students because it involves the use of irony and ridicule style in order to influence the self-concept and self-esteem of the victim, where it is practiced in front of a group of peers, resulted in deep psychological effect, and thus guarantees the bully's physical and social safety, followed by the domain of social bullying ranked in the second place with a mean (1.76) and medium level. The practice of this type of bullying behavior is highlighted for being intended to belittle the victim, and to reduce the degree of sense of self-esteem, and thus the bullies realize the psychological, emotional and social effects of this type of bullying behavior on the victim's soul and make him more misery and sad, followed by the domain of physical bullying behavior in the third place with a mean (1.62) and low degree because physical bullying is easily seen and recognized by the family, school and society, where it is seen in various forms such as beating, kicking, biting, punching, slapping, pulling hair, scratching, spitting, and this makes it easier to punish the bully by the officials in authority; so this type is avoided by the bully.

The fourth domain (bullying behavior against the property of others) ranked in the fourth place with a mean (1.58) and low degree because this type of bullying is easily seen and recognized by the family, school and society, and therefore the authority can blame and punish the bully, as it does not cause psychological, emotional and social effects to the victim compared with other types of bullying behaviors; so rarely to occur among adolescents.

The results of this study have shown that there were no statistically significant differences between males and females in the total scale of bullying and all its domains. This is due to the nature of social life experienced by the family and the freedom of enrolling in the co-ed schools and the communities, making the differences in the behavior of bullying are not statistically significant among males and females. The results of this study are consistent with many of English pieces of literature that investigated the significance of differences between males and females in bullying behavior, which indicated mostly to a lack of statistically significant differences between the two genders, given the nature of the lives they lead; such as Baldry & Farrington (2000) whose results showed that bullying behavior does not vary according to age, while the delinquency increases with old age, and the results showed that bullying appears in an early stage to develop gradually up to delinquency. For family relationships, the results of the study indicated that the bullies and the delinquents have various relationships with their parents, where the study showed that parents of the bullies are domineering and often disagree with their children.

The results of the current study are inconsistent with the results of Kimhi, Eshel, Zysberg, and Hantman (2010), which indicated that there are statistically significant differences due to the variables of gender and age in the impact of social support to recover from the ordeal suffered by students in favor of females aged 15-16 years.

8. Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the author recommended the following:

- The need to draw the attention of academic officials to develop plans and strategies that control all types of bullying behavior among adolescents.
- Provide guidance to adolescents for addressing the bullying behavior (the victim).
- Conducting studies similar to the current study through larger and different populations, such as universities, and the use of other instruments such as monitoring and interview.
- Conducting studies similar to the current study through taking other variables: Social economic level of the family, and the level of academic achievement and their impact on the level of bullying behavior.

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