

## School Bullying in Saudi Arabia

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### Background

School bullying is recognized as a global problem with serious academic, physical, social, and psychiatric consequences. The importance of prevention of these phenomena in the psychosocial development of our future generation is crucial.

### Method

We reviewed all published data about this topic in English language in the last ten years in both Saudi Arabia, Arab and countries both in pub med and in other related search site. To estimate its prevalence, consequence, and possible measure to prevent it or minimize its effect. Bullying is defined as making fun of & putting down, or threatening (physically, sexually or verbally or both) another person. Often there is an imbalance of power. Bullying is done on purpose and is often repeated the core elements of the definition include unwanted behavior; observed or perceived power imbalance; repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition in 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Department of Education released the first USA federal uniform definition of bullying for research and surveillance.

### Prevalence

Between 1 in 4 and 1 in 3 U.S. students say they have been bullied at school. Prevalence studies on school bullying in different Western countries are more focused on peer victimization than teacher-on student or student-on teacher bullying, one study estimated 45% of teachers reported having bullied a student at one time or another. Peer victimization rates for 11-15-year-old in schools vary across countries with estimates ranging from 8.6% to 45.2% Rates of bullying being higher for boys than girls, rates of peer victimization decreasing with age, Adolescents in Baltic countries reporting higher rates than northern European country.

Recent Studies suggest that rates of school bullying may be declining! It remains a prevalent and serious problem in today's schools. 33% of students who reported being bullied at school indicated that they were bullied at least once or twice a month during the school year Of those students who reported being bullied, 13% were made fun of, called names, or insulted; 12% were the subject of rumors; 5% were pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on; and 5% were excluded from activities on purpose A slightly higher portion of female than

of male students report being bullied at school (23% vs. 19%) [1-5]. In contrast, a higher percentage of male than of female students report being physically bullied (6% vs. 4%) and threatened with harm (5% vs. 3%) Bullied students reported that bullying occurred in the following places: the hallway or stairwell at school (42%), inside the classroom (34%), in the cafeteria (22%), outside on school grounds (19%), on the school bus (10%), and in the bathroom or locker room Prevalence studies on school bullying in the Arab world are relatively rare.

Fleming and Jacobsen 13 examined the prevalence of peer victimization in middle-school students in 19 low- and middle-income countries (per capita Gross National Income less than US 11,455 in 2007) and reported an average prevalence rate of 34.2% for the 19 countries, and prevalence rates of 44.2% for Jordan, 33.6% for Lebanon, 31.9% for Morocco, 39.1% for Oman, and 20.9% for the United Arab Emirates.

The variance in school bullying prevalence rates reported for the Arab world is similar to variance reported for western countries. Nevertheless, the scarcity of school bullying studies in the Arab world makes it difficult to ascertain whether the problem is going from bad to worse or from bad to better. Additional school bullying prevalence studies are required to project trends and to explain differences in prevalence rates among the different countries of the Arab world. That of Moroccan responders 40%, that of Qatari responders 28%, and that of responders from the United Arab Emirates 7%. Fleming and Jacobson<sup>12</sup> examined the correlates of sex and age (12-16 years), and reported higher prevalence rates of bullying for males than females for Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates but not Oman. Fleming and Jacobson<sup>14</sup> also showed a significant downward trend in prevalence rates of bullying for Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, but not for Morocco, Lebanon or Oman.

### School Bullying in Saudi Arabia

Jeeluna, 10 a national study addressing the health needs of adolescents in the KSA, found that 25% of students had reported being exposed to bullying within the past one month preceding the study. Males were more likely to engage in bullying compared to females (27.1% versus 22.7) Adults in the KSA reported their

adverse childhood experiences, including exposure to bullying during the first 18 years of their lives. It was found that 21.5% of adults reported exposure to peer violence during their childhood, with males reporting this more often than females (28.2% versus 14.7%) Although there appears to be insufficient awareness of the issue, bullying is apparently prevalent in KSA, as is the case in other parts of the world.

Very few other published research concerning child school bullying were found that stressed us to include school bullying in older aged student.

I. Bullying among one Saudi medical school 11 Revealed that more than one quarter (28.0%) of the surveyed students reported exposure to some sort of bullying during their clinical years. (90 percent of the reported insults were verbal, 6% sexual and 4% physical). Males were more exposed but difference was not statistically significant.

## II. Bullying among medical and nonmedical students at a university in Eastern Saudi Arabia

The overall prevalence rate of reported exposure to one form or another of bullying as university students (medical and nonmedical) was almost half (49.0%; n = 146) of the respondents of the sample. Of the medical students, the prevalence rate of bullying was 44% and 58% among the nonmedical students.

When the two groups were compared for the type of bullying experienced, there were no statistically significant differences in most of their experiences the most common types of abuse suffered by the medical students were belittlement and undermining of work as reported by approximately 43 8% of the respondents. Medical students learn not only the complexities of the medicine but also behavior patterns of their seniors and mentors, the so-called “hidden curriculum of undergraduate medical education.

**Table 1: Comparison of the Types of Bullying Between the Two Groups**

Bullying Items	Medical students (n=176) N (%)	Nonmedical students (n=119) N (%)	p-Value
Belittlement and Undermining of Work	77 (43.8)	69 (58)	0.016
Unjustified Criticism, Monitoring Work	51 (29)	50 (42)	0.021
Humiliation in Front of Colleagues	27 (15.3)	24 (20.2)	0.282
Intimidating Use of Discipline or Competence Procedures	62 (35.2)	37 (31.1)	0.461
Undermining your Personal Integrity	27 (15.3)	30 (25.2)	0.035
Destructive Innuendo and Sarcasm	52 (29.5)	42 (35.3)	0.299
Making Inappropriate Jokes Verbal and Nonverbal Threats about you	47 (26.7)	31 (26.1)	0.901
Persistent Teasing	31 (17.6)	23 (19.3)	0.709
Physical Violence	2 (1.1)	5 (4.2)	0.090
Sexual Harassment	3 (1.7)	1 (0.8)	0.529
Violence to Property	9 (5.1)	8 (6.7)	0.561
Withholding Necessary Information	64 (36.4)	34 (28.6)	0.163
Freezing out, Ignoring or Excluding	65 (36.9)	36 (30.3)	0.236
Under Pressure to Produce Work	77 (43.8)	87 (73.1)	0.000
Setting of Impossible Deadlines	36 (20.5)	62 (52.5)	0.000
Shifting of Goalpost Without Prior Information	60 (34.1)	54 (45.4)	0.063
Constant Undervaluing of Efforts	38 (21.6)	40 (33.6)	0.022
Persistent Attempts to Demoralize	44 (25)	34 (28.6)	0.495
Removal of Areas of Responsibility Without Consultation	29 (16.5)	23 (19.3)	0.528
Discrimination on Racial or Sexual Grounds	46 (26.1)	36 (30.3)	0.439

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets.

Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation [5]. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that an estimated 14.9% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey. Given the frequent use of technology among adolescents in Saudi Arabia, Cyberbullying comes as no surprise. 1 in 4 sixth

grade students have become friends with a stranger online and 1 in 10 have attempted to meet an online friend face-to-face [6-9].

In USA, 86% of girls say they can chat online without their parents’ permission. 28% of teens say they use code words on a daily basis to hide their online conversations from their parents. 22% of all teen girls – 11% of teen girls ages 13-16 years old – say they have electronically sent or posted online, nude or semi-nude images of themselves (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com 2008). The percentages of individuals who have experienced Cyberbullying at some point in their lifetimes have nearly doubled (18% to 34%) from 2007-

2016. 43% of teens are exposed to cyberbullying in one form or another, yet only 1 in 10 have told their parents (U.S. National Crime Prevention Council. 2008). Only 7% of U.S. parents are worried about cyberbullying, even though 33% of teenagers have been victims of cyberbullying. 18% of 8 to 10-year-olds spend time on some kind of social networking site daily [10-14].

### **Bullying and Suicide**

The relationship between bullying and suicide is complex. Many media reports oversimplify this relationship, insinuating or directly stating that bullying can cause suicide. It is not accurate and potentially dangerous to blame bullying as the “cause” for a suicide, or to suggest that suicide is a natural response to bullying. Media should not use the term “bullycide.” Research indicates that persistent bullying can lead to or worsen feelings of isolation, rejection, exclusion, and despair, as well as depression and anxiety, which can contribute to suicidal behavior. The vast majority of young people who are bullied do not become suicidal. Most young people who die by suicide have multiple risk factors bullying isn’t one of the top risk factors. Some youth, such as LGBTQ, (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) youth are at increased risk for suicide attempts even when bullying is not a factor. The Arabic translation and validation of the Peer Interaction in Primary School Questionnaire (PIPSQ) in Egypt and Saudi Arabia was shown to have cultural and sex-based factorial invariance hindering the questionnaire use.

### **Essential Factors to counteract bullying**

1. Develop a school wide bullying policy
2. Implement classroom curriculum:
3. Develop classroom rules against bullying
4. Develop cooperative learning projects that encourage teamwork and reduce social isolation
5. Create activities or assignments that teach problem-solving or conflict-resolution skills
6. Participate in role-playing or other activities to help children understand the perspectives of others and identify feelings
7. Raise awareness of bullying.
8. Allow students to fill out surveys to better understand their perspective of bullying
9. Inform caregivers of bullying policies/curriculum through conferences, newsletters, or PTA meetings
10. **Encourage parent involvement in anti-bullying initiatives**

Education reform has been a rousing topic in KSA. Academic development and achievement are appropriately of primary concern to school professionals. High levels of school pressure have been found to have an effect on peer victimization: therefore, with the lengthy period of time spent at school, schools may be utilized as a means for positive adolescent and youth development. This can either be done through the introduction of extracurricular activities or by embedding school curricula with nonacademic activities that will contribute to positive adolescent development.

It was also evident that there were inconsistencies in following school and the Ministerial educational guidelines. For some, this was attributed to lack of knowledge of the existing guidelines or policies, and for others, it was an inconsistency in the application of policies or the use of personal judgment in dealing with situations. Addressing a bullying situation is discussed in the MOE guidelines for misconduct. And problematic behaviors and so is not highlighted in any particular way. Clarity may be provided by addressing bullying as a distinct

topic of its own and in more details due to its prevalent nature. The documentation of specific guidelines, policies, and procedures for handling a bullying situation is worthwhile and necessary. Education of all stakeholders, including students and families, about existing policies and procedures is necessary, and enforcing the application of such procedures in a consistent manner will systematically support resolution of the problem. Access to policy manuals should be made available to all.

Saudi Arabia is witnessing vast rate of social and educational reform this is clearly demonstrated by getting the first rank in Arab world educational system and the 25 on the world The World Top 20 Project is an international project aimed to monitor and rank over 200 nations education systems for students from ages 3 to 25 .2018

### **Summary and conclusions**

School bullying is a serious issue occurs in almost all society and should be addressed at all levels. The rate of School bullying of some published studies in our country is alarming. The need for more systematic research on forms, signs, locations and consequences of school bullying in our school & university is mandatory, Preventive measures aiming to target the factors that the participants identified as conducive to bullying is a priority.

National policies stressing school & university anti-bullying program initiatives are required and should be implemented as early as possible.

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