

Bullying among Preparatory School Students

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Abstract

Background: Bullying is a social problem characterized by intentional aggression over time, usually in school contexts and in cyberspace, characterized by intentionality, repetition, and power asymmetry. Bullying victimization during school years is a serious global health problem with those students experiencing bullying having an increased risk of physical, cognitive, and mental health issues. **Aim:** This study aimed to assess bullying among preparatory school students. **Design:** descriptive research design was used in this study. **Sample:** Simple random sample includes 150 students. **Setting:** 3 preparatory schools in Massara district, Cairo, Egypt. **Tool:** an interview questionnaire, **1st part** includes socio-demographic characteristic, **2nd part** assess students' knowledge about bullying, **3rd part** assesses the effect of bullying on students' health status, **4th part** assess students reported practice. **Results:** it revealed that 54 % of the studied sample had average knowledge about bullying while only 10% of them had good knowledge. 44.7% of the studied sample had total satisfactory health practices regarding bullying **Conclusions:** more than half of the studied sample exposed to bullying and had average knowledge about bullying, more than one third of them had satisfactory practice regarding bullying and there are non-significant association between total knowledge and total practice when $P=0.07$. **Recommendation:** Provide prevention program and orientation sessions about bullying for preparatory school students.

Key words: Bullying, Students and Preparatory School

Introduction

Bullying is distinguished from conflicts between students who are seen as not having equal strength or power. The perpetrator behavior is commonly referred to as the 'bully' students are treated in such ways as 'victims'. Some students are known as 'bully victims' in both categories, that they are bullied by some other students and engage in bullying others. These students constitute between 10 and 20% of the student population directly involved in bullying at school (Goodwin et al., 2019)¹.

The main reasons for bullying in the unique psychological characteristics of students, the influence of family education, peer groups, the bad demonstration of mass media, and the lack of moral education in schools. Unfair management of students, lack of school management system and management behavior, lack of school culture construction and the poor quality of teachers, the mobility of parents, family changes, poor communication between families and schools, and poor quality of parents are the family causes of school bullying. Being isolated is more likely to be bullied (Mischel & Kitsantas, 2020)².

Bullying victimization in schools has predominantly received attention in high-income countries. For example, in Australia a meta-analysis of 46 studies reported that nearly one in every seven adolescents was victimized by 12-month bullying and approximately one in four students reported lifetime bullying. A recent study in England reported that 36% of females and 24% of males experienced regular bullying victimization. Another study from the United Kingdom reported that 21% of students aged 9:16 years were bullied. Risk factors associated with bullying victimization are wide-ranging and include family dynamics, school factors, and peer support (Biswas et al., 2020)³.

Although negative self-related insight is linked to bullying, the chances of being a pure un-victimized bully are not greater. Popularity and social skills "social relationship problem" has been used to describe bullying. Indeed, victims, bully-victims, and some bullies have social skills deficiencies. Bullies can be seen among their peers as popular, influential, and "cool". In addition, bully members are often central and have friends in their peer networks. Like other people who engage in and affiliate with similar behaviors, students can strengthen the coercive behavior of the other (Kim et al., 2022)⁴.

Parental characteristics have found that bullies are more likely to come from families, where there is little cohesion, little warmth, absent fathers, high power needs, and a tolerance for aggressive behavior. Students may have experienced physical abuse as well as being from low socioeconomic status families with authoritarian parents (**Azami & Taremian, 2021**)⁵.

Bullying behaviors within these contexts can take the form of physical, verbal, and social/relational. The physical form of bullying behaviors can be exemplified as damaging personal property, pushing, spitting, kicking, and hitting while threatening verbally or with gestures or with written notes, making inappropriate sexual comments, name-calling, and taunting are some examples of verbal bullying behaviors between the bully or bullies and the victim (**Forster et al., 2020**)⁶.

School nurses are ideal position to coordinate care for students involved in bullying episodes by building up a solid relationship with the students and showing themselves as approachable, gaining students' confidence, getting as much information as possible out of the situation, and empowering them to act liaising with schools and parents about the bullying situations (**Moselhy, 2020**)⁷.

School nurses play an important role in helping students to deal with bullying situations. Create a safe space at school where students can verbalize concerns about all health issues including bullying and other incidents of violence. Since the school nurse is not in a disciplinary or academic role, students are more likely to confide in the nurse and tell their secrets more comfortably. As a result, nurses are often on the front lines of bullying being the first adult, the victim, and the bully go to for help (**Brandão et al., 2020**)⁸.

Significance of the study

Nationally representative groups of students in 25 countries were used to conduct cross-sectional self-report surveys. Bullying involvement was evaluated as a bully, perpetrator, or both bully and victim. In each of the participating countries, surveys were conducted at public and private schools. A total of 113,200 students aged 11.5, 13.5, and 15.5 years. Bullying involvement ranged widely across continents, ranging from 9% to 54% of young people (**Colpin et al., 2021**)⁹.

In Egypt 70 % of students with ages ranging between 13-15 years old are being bullied. According to the latest global data, slightly more than 1 in 3 students aged 13-15 around the world

experience bullying. While females and males are equally at risk of being bullied (**Kandil, 2018**)
10.

New data collected by UNESCO (2018) between the years 2013-2018 also revealed that bullying amongst young people occurs everywhere, with almost one-third of teenagers experiencing bullying worldwide. The human rights movement advocates the prevention of bullying as part of the school's duty of care toward students, and a moral imperative to keep students safe (**Kalandyk-Gallagher, 2020**)¹¹.

Aim of the study

This study aims to assess bullying among preparatory school students.

Research questions

1. What is the prevalence of bullying in school?
2. What are the levels of students' knowledge about bullying?
3. Is there a relation between knowledge about bullying and reported practices?
4. What are students' reported practice regarding bullying?

Subject and methods material

Design: Descriptive research design used in this study.

Setting:

The study was conducted in three preparatory schools in Maassara district. There are 16 preparatory schools Maassara district, three schools selected randomly. These schools are 1st one Huda Sharawy El-Tagribia preparatory school consist of 4 floors contain 8 class 3 for grade one, 3 for grade two and 2 for grade three, each class of grade two contain about 50-55 student mix male and female, 2nd one El-kholafaa El- Rashedeen preparatory school for boys only consist of 4 floors 7 class for grade one, 5 for grade two and 3 for grade three, each class of grade two contain about 45-50 students and 3rd El-Shaheed Ahmed Hamdy preparatory school consist of 4 floors contain 10 class for grade one, 6 class for grade two and 3 class for grade three, each class of grade two contain 45-50 students).

Sampling:

Type of the sample: Simple random sample included 150 students' academic year 2021-2022.

Sample criteria: Preparatory school students grade two in selected classes, accept to participate in the study and have smart phon.

Tool of data collection:

Data for this study will be collected by using the tool:

Tool: An interview questionnaire:

Data for this study collected by using a questionnaire sheet consisted of four parts:

Part I: Socio-demographic characteristics of students. it involved 14 items such as: age, sex, school name, father's occupation, father's education, mother's education, income level of family, mother's occupation, crowding index, number of rooms, mother presence at home, father presence at home, family type, family bullying.

Part II: Assessment student's knowledge regarding bullying. That composed of 9 closed end questions to assess students' knowledge about bullying including meaning of bullying, classifications, causes, risk factors of bullying and effects of bullying on student's health status and school achievement.

Scoring system

The answers to these questions were 0 for don't know or wrong answers, 1 for incomplete correct answers and 2 for complete correct answers. Total answers range between (0-18) divided through the following:

- Poor knowledge < 50% (0 - < 7)
- Average knowledge 50% to < 75% (7 - < 13)
- Good knowledge" $\geq 75\%$ (13 – 18)

Part III: Assessment prevalence of bullying that composed of 3 closed end questions and effect of bullying on student's health status that composed of 6 closed end questions including physical, psychological, social, behavioral, students' performance in school and school achievement.

Scoring system

The answers to these questions were 0 for no and 1 for yes.

Part IV: Assessment of students reported practice regarding bullying contained 24 questions related to the students' practice assessment bullied, victim & bystander as pushed or shoved other students, slapping, or kicking colleagues...etc.

Scoring system

The answers to these questions are 1 for not done and 2 for done, Total answers range between (9-27) divided through the following .

- Unsatisfactory practice <70% (32 - 57)
- Satisfactory practice \geq 70% (58- 72)

Validity:

The revision of the tool for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, understanding, and applicability done by a panel of 5 experts (3 from community health nursing, 1 from pediatric nursing Faculty of Nursing and 1 from faculty of education) Helwan University to measure the content validity of the tools and the necessary modification was done.

Reliability:

Knowledge Cronbach alpha was calculated between the two scores using SPSS computer package. It was 0.85 which indicates that the tool is reliable to detect the objectives of the study. For reported practice Then Cronbach alpha was calculated between the two scores. It was 0.80 which indicates that the instrument is reliable to detect the objectives of the study.

Ethical Considerations:

- Official permission was conducted for the study and obtained from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee. Participation in the study was voluntary and subjects were given complete full information about the study and their role before signing the informed consent. The ethical considerations included explaining the purpose and nature of the study, stating the possibility to withdraw at any time, and confidentiality of the information that was not accessed by any other party without taking the permission of the participants. Ethics, values, culture, and beliefs were respected.
- **Pilot study:**

A pilot testing was conducted on 15 students from a total of 150 students under study. They presented about 10% of the total study sample to assess the feasibility of the study as well as

clarity and objectivity of the tools. The needed modification was applied, and those subjects were not included in the actual study sample.

▪ **Field work:**

After attaining the approval to conduct the study, informal consent was obtained from students and their parents, and the sample was collected during the day of the school. Two days / week on Tuesday and Thursday of each week from 9 am to 12:30 pm in each school. After establishing a trustful relation, every student was interviewed individually by the researchers to explain the study purpose then study tools were completed by students. The tool took 20 minutes to fill out. The researcher took 7-8 students from the school every day where the data was collected through an interview questionnaire. Data of the current study was collected from the middle of October 2021 to the middle of May 2022.

Statistical analysis:

Quantitative data were presented by mean (X) and standard deviation (SD). Qualitative data were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables, number, and percentage. It was analyzed by chi-square (χ^2) test. However, if an expected value of any cell in the table was less than 5, Fisher Exact test was used (if the table was 4 cells), or Likelihood Ratio (LR) test (if the table was more than 4 cells). The level of significance was set as P value <0.05 for all significant tests.

Results:

Table (1):- Socio demographic Characteristics of the Studied Sample (N=150)

Socio Demographic Characteristics		No.	%
Gender	▪ Male	69	46
	▪ Female	81	54
Father's education	▪ No read and write	6	4
	▪ Basic education	39	26
	▪ Middle education	72	48
	▪ University education	33	22
Mother's educational	▪ No read and write	15	10
	▪ Basic education	21	14
	▪ Middle education	81	54
	▪ University education	33	22

Father's occupation	▪ Employee	39	26
	▪ Farmer	6	4
	▪ Worker	105	70
Crowding Index	▪ < 1	0	0
	▪ 1-2	48	32
	▪ > 2	102	68
Father return home	▪ Yes	117	78
	▪ No	33	22
Mother at home	▪ Yes	129	86
	▪ No	21	14
Family breadwinner	▪ Father	102	68
	▪ Mother	18	12
	▪ Both	30	20
Home type	▪ Family house	69	46
	▪ Separate apartment	81	54
Family called bad names	▪ Yes	54	36
	▪ No	96	64
Family hit you	▪ Yes	69	46
	▪ No	81	54

Table (1) Illustrates that 48% and 54% of studied sample had middle educated fathers, and mothers respectively. Regarding their father's occupation 70% of them had worker fathers. In addition, 54% of them were living at separate apartments, approximately 46% of studied sample their families hit them, and 36% of them mentioned that their families called bad names.

Table 2: Distribution of the Studied Samples' according to their Exposure to Bullying, (N = 150)

The school students' exposure to Bullying		
	N	%
Student exposed (during the past year) to bullying?		
Yes	105	70
No	45	30
If yes, type of Bullying: N=	105	100
Hitting/ punched	26	24.8
Steeling	33	31.4

Bad names	30	28.6
Threatening	10	9.5
Lies about the student	6	5.7
Students participate (during the past year) in bullying?		
Yes	45	30
No	105	70
If yes, type of Bullying: N=	45	100
Hitting/ punched	3	6.6
Steeling	9	20
Bad names	18	40
Threatening	12	26.8
Lies about the student	3	6.6
Student watching (during the past year) bullying at school?		
Yes	147	98
No	3	2
If yes, type of Bullying: N=	147	100
Hitting/ punched	33	22
Steeling	36	30
Bad names	57	63
Threatening	12	15
Lies about the student	9	6

Table 2: Highlights that 70% of studied sample exposed to bullying. 31.4% of studied sample exposed to bullying by stealing. Then 30% of studied sample participate in bullying. Also, this table shows 98% of studied sample watching bullying in school & 63% of them bystander of bullying by bad names.

Table 3: Distribution of the Studied Samples' according to The Effect of Bullying on their Health Status

The effect of bullying on students:		
	N	%
Psychological effect		
• No psychological effect	78	52
• Feel low self-confidence (yes)	6	4
• feelings of depression(yes)	9	6
• Feeling lonely(yes)	7	4.7
• All of the above(yes)	50	33.3
Social effect		
• No social effect	70	46.7
• Withdrawal from social life?	45	30
• Isolation	35	23.3
Physical effect		
• No physical effect	102	68
• Sleeping difficulties (yes)	45	30
• Stomach disorders(yes)	3	2
Behavioral effect:		
No behavioral effect	42	28
Smoking	0	0
Aggressive behavior	75	50
Combined items	33	22

Table 3: This table illustrates that 33.3% of studied sample had psychological effect of bullying & 30% of them withdrawal from social life as social effect of bullying. Also, 30% had sleeping difficulties and 50% of them had aggressive behavior.

Table 4: Total Score Knowledge of the Studied Sample about Bullying (N=150)

Total knowledge	Poor Knowledge (0-6)		Average Knowledge (7-12)		Good Knowledge (13-18)		χ^2	P value
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
	54	36	81	54	15	10		

Tables (4): The table demonstrates that only 10% of the studied sample has good knowledge response and the difference was highly significant ($P < 0.0001$). Also, 84% of them have average knowledge.

Table 5: Total Score of the Studied Sample Reported Practice regarding Bullying (N=150)

Total practices	Unsatisfactory (24-35)		Satisfactory (36-48)		χ^2	P value
	No.	%	No.	%		
	83	55.3	67	44.7		

Table 5: Illustrates that 64.7% of the studied sample have satisfactory reported practice regarding bullying and 35.3% of them have unsatisfactory reported practice regarding bullying.

Table 6: Relation between Knowledge and Reported Practice of the Studied Sample (N=150)

Total knowledge	Total practice				Total		χ^2	P
	Unsatisfactory (24-35)		Satisfactory (36-48)					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Poor Knowledge (0-6)	35	23.3	19	12.7	54	100	5.1	0.07 NS
Average Knowledge (7-12)	44	29.3	37	24.7	81	100		
Good Knowledge (13-18)	4	2.7	11	7.3	15	100		
Total	83	55.3	67	44.7	150	100		

Table 6: Demonstrates a non-significant association between total knowledge about bullying and total reported practice regarding bullying when $P=0.07$.

Discussion

School bullying is a serious public health problem because of its detrimental effects on students' adjustment and well-being, as well as school functioning. Bullying is defined as a form of aggressive harmful behavior that is exhibited repeatedly over a period and is characterized by a peer power differential. Although bullying behavior is a worldwide public health problem among students, prevalence rates vary across countries. Bullying is defined as a direct or indirect intentional aggressive behavior that is repeated over time on a long-term basis, with a power imbalance between perpetrators and victims (Arslan et al., 2021)¹².

Concerning sex, the result revealed that more than half of the studied sample were female. This agrees with Yang et al., (2020)¹³ in published study entitled “**School wide social emotional learning (SEL) and bullying victimization: Moderating role of school climate in elementary, middle, and high schools**” conducted in 90 schools in Delaware who reported that 51.3% of students were female.

Regarding father and mother education the result illustrated that more than one third of studied samples fathers and mothers had middle education. This disagrees with Abuhammad et al., (2020)¹⁴ in published study entitled “**Intimidation and bullying: A school survey examining the effect of demographic data**” who reported that 23.8% of fathers had bachelor's and 30.8% of mothers had bachelor's degree.

From the researcher's opinion: Parents' level of education influences students' practices and attitudes. When students are bullied at home, they try to imitate adults to gain power over their peers.

Concerning father and mother occupation the result showed that more than two third of studied sample fathers had worker and more than two third of mothers had housewife. This disagrees with Zhang et al., (2022)¹⁵ in published study entitled “**Association of child maltreatment and bullying victimization among Chinese adolescents: The mediating role of family function, resilience, and anxiety**” conducted among 6247 adolescents (3401 males, 2846 females) in Anhui Province, China who reported that 45.8% of fathers had worker and 14.9% of mother had unemployed.

From the researcher's opinion: socio-economic status and number of siblings influences students' practices and attitudes. When the crowding index is high the concerns between family members increase. This led to many psychological problems to the student include participate in bullying.

Answer the research question 1, what is the prevalence of bullying in school?

Regarding to exposed to bullying. The study revealed that more than half of the studied sample was exposed to bullying. This agrees with **Vaillancourt et al., (2021)¹⁶** in published study entitled “**School bullying before and during COVID19: Results from a population-based randomized design**” conducted in Canada who reported that 59.8% (n = 2312) of students reported being bullied.

From the researcher's opinion: increase bullying rate at this stage related to the puberty period when students have many changes in physical, physiological, and psychological make them try to attract attention.

Concerning participation in bullying, the result revealed that less than one third of the studied sample participated in bullying. This agrees with **Eyuboglu et al., (2021)¹⁷** in published study entitled “**Traditional school bullying and cyberbullying: Prevalence, the effect on mental health problems and self-harm behavior**” conducted in Turkey who reported that 22.4% (95% confidence interval [CI] = 21.3-23.4%) of respondents reported being perpetrators of traditional school bullying.

Regarding the effect of bullying, the result revealed that one third of studied sample had psychological effect of bullying. This agrees with **Li & Hesketh (2021)¹⁸** in published study entitled “**Experiences and Perspectives of Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying Among Adolescents in Mainland China Implications for Policy**” conducted in Mandarin in Zhejiang and Chongqing, and in the local dialect in Henan, who reported that anger, sadness, and embarrassment were all reported by victims as effect of bullying.

Answers the research question number 2, what are the levels of students' knowledge about bullying?

Concerning total score of knowledge about bullying. The study revealed that less more than one third had poor knowledge when (p<0.000) in the total knowledge score. This agrees with **Debby Ng et al., (2022)¹⁹** in published study entitled “**The Effectiveness of Educational**

Interventions on Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying Among Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis” conducted in Germany who reported that Empathy, knowledge about bullying, internet risks and safety, and assertive ways for bystanders to intervene months long 1. Long: 15- 45 min sessions 2. Short: 4- 90 min sessions (No follow-up) Pretest T: 16.6% Posttest T: 32.8%.

From the researcher’s opinion: this is related to more information, banners, and announcement about bullying now in social and mass media.

Answers the research question number 3, what are students’ reported practice regarding bullying?

Concerning bullied practice, the result revealed that more than one third of the studied sample say something about one to make others laugh. This disagrees with **Xu et al., (2022)²⁰** in published study entitled **“School Bullying Among Vocational School Students in China: Prevalence and Associations With Personal, Relational, and School Factors”** conducted in China who reported that 9.04% Making fun of others with sexual comments/gesture.

From the researcher’s opinion: this is related to transition period of puberty when every student searches about social relation and power that make them practice bullying on their peers.

Concerning bullied practices, the result revealed less than half of the studied sample has satisfactory practice. This disagrees with **Wachs et al., (2019)²¹** in published study entitled **“Bullying Intervention in Schools: A Multilevel Analysis of Teachers’ Success in Handling Bullying From the Students’ Perspective”** conducted in German who reported that As evaluated the success of the bullying intervention by participants 20.4% stated that “it was stopped completely,” 43.2% reported that “it was stopped partly.

From the researcher’s opinion: this is related to poor knowledge about bullying make the students practice bullying without known the effect of it.

Answers the research question number 4, Is there a relation between knowledge about bullying and reported practices?

Concerning the relation between knowledge and reported practice, the result revealed a non-significant association between total knowledge and total reported practice when $P=0.07$. This disagrees with **Schoeler et al., (2018)²²** in published study entitled **“Quasi-Experimental**

Evidence on Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Bullying Victimization: A Meta-Analysis” conducted in London who reported that any program efficient in reducing bullying victimization should result in a proportional decrease in its indirect impact on outcomes. This may explain why the KIVA (Kiusaamista Vastaa, against bullying) program, which was successful in that it reduced bullying perpetration by about 60%, did not have a significant impact on depression.

From the researcher’s opinion: this is related to low economic status of the student’s parent and increase domestic violence led to increase bullying level inside and outside family.

Conclusion

The result of the study supported the research question of the study: Shows that, most of the studied sample exposed to bullying, most of studied subject had average knowledge about bullying. There were statistically significant relations demographic characteristics of the studied sample's total and total knowledge. There were statistically significant relations between total demographic characteristics of the studied sample's and total reported practice.

Recommendations

- 1- Provide health education programs about bullying to generalize the results.
- 2- Make posters or banners about bullying prevention and put schools under observation from school health nurses.
- 3- Provide prevention guideline program and reorientation sessions about bullying for students at schools.

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