Bullying among students in Sulaimani city: A cross-sectional study

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> ***Abstract***---Background: Bullying among students is a significant problem worldwide and is one of the most common antisocial behaviors among adolescents and children. Examining different aspects of bullying according to the age, gender and level of education of students can be important in planning to manage this behavior. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of investigating bullying among students in Sulaimani city, 2022. Methods and Materials: This cross-sectional study was conducted on 272 participants from schools and colleges in Sulaimani between March and June 2022. Data were collected through a researcher-made instrument with two demographic sections and 16 questions about bullying. Sampling method was convenience method. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 23 statistical software and descriptive and chi-square statistical tests was obtained. Results: The students faced bullied had higher percentage of students didn't faced bullied during study and bullies students had higher percentage of victims students. The highest rate of students faced bullied was among female students at the age of 10-12 in middle and elementary schools. Conclusion: This study showed that bullying exists in Sulaimani city schools and that effective bullying prevention and intervention programs are needed.
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> ***Keywords***---bullying, students, school, college.

Introduction

Bullying is considered a serious problem in academic arrangements in all parts of the world [1] the school is not only a place characterized by learning, but an environment where students are harassed and experience peer harassment [2]. Bullying is the repeated acts of unprovoked aggression that are mental or physical harm to the victim and where the powers of the aggressors and the victim are unequal [3]. Bullying and common aggression are to some ways or

another different, bullying is respected as a form of aggression in which a person repeatedly harasses another person physically and psychologically [4].

School bullying occurs anywhere, either in the school building or around the school building, and may occur in school washroom and buses while waiting for school buses, and in classes which may require group work or after school activities. School bullying is a widespread issue that affects school students in many parts of their lives such as; psychologically, educationally and professionally [5], the phenomenon of bullying consists of three elements: as follows: first, there must be an intention to harm; second, it is necessary that it happens many times; and finally, it needs to be no balance of power between bullies and the victim [6]. There are numerous forms of bullying that include (physical bullying, verbal bullying, psychological bullying, sexual bullying, social bullying, properties bullying, Cyber bullying) [7].

Physical bullying: physical bullying includes: hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property. Verbal bullying: verbal bulling includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse, while verbal bullying can start off harmless, it can escalate to levels which start affecting the individual target [8]. Psychological bullying: harassment, threats and intimidation, humiliation and rejection from the group. Sexual bullying: this refers to use dirty words, touch, or threat of doing [7]. Social bullying: sometimes referred to as covert bullying, is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied student 's back, it is cause humiliation, social bullying can include: lying and spreading rumors, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous see, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging others to social exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance [9]. Properties Bullying: taking other people's things and dispose, or destroy [7]. Cyber bullying: intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, phones, and other electronic devices cyber bullying can be overt or covert bullying behaviors using digital technologies including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites and other online platforms. Cyber bullying can include: abusive or hurtful texts emails or post, images or videos deliberately excluding others online, nasty gossip or rumors imitating others online or using their log-in [10]. Bullying is different from peer conflict. This is a conflict between individuals who do not share equal physical or psychological strength. Bullies are usually physically stronger and victims are usually perceived as weaker and unable to protect them self [11]. Bullied students have feel of fear from coming to school because they feel that they are unsafe; therefore, they are unable to concentrate which reelect negatively on their academic success [12].

According to some findings, the existence of bullying in schools or universities or Institutes has become a worldwide phenomenon and a problem that can create negative impacts for the general school atmosphere and for the rights of students to learn in a safe environment without fear [13]. Bullying can also have negative lifelong consequences both for students who bully and for their victims. Formal research as well as the intervention program to prevent bullying have been going on for decades in some developed countries, as well as issues related to bullying

around the world wherever there is a formal school environment [14]. Bullying creates a complex issue in the lives of school children. It is an issue that affects every student whether it is a bullies or a victim, and those who attended interpersonal violence. Bullying may include numerous sections verbal, physical assaults, threats, jokes or language, and criticizing [15] all of such factors affect individually, or collectively, for contributing in students' likelihood of bullying, it is well known that bullying is difficult to prevent or stop in schools because it is used by students. difference between bullying and harassment , bullying and harassment both behaviors are included in hurting, scaring, threatening, relinquishing, torturing, humiliating, or mortifying someone[16].Bullying and harassment in sometimes overlap, not all bullying is harassment and not all harassment is bullying[17].Bullying is considered a related issue that includes abuse power whereas harassing could be a human rights issue. Harassment takes place when someone discriminates against another on the basis of a protected class, such as age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability [18].

Materials and Methods

This study is a cross-sectional descriptive analytical study that was conducted between March and June 2022 in the schools of Sulaimani city in the Kurdistan region. The number of samples was calculated using Cochran's formula and 270 was obtained. The sampling method has been done in by convenience method and among the schools and universities of the city. The study tool was a researcher-made questionnaire with 16 questions, which included two parts of demographic information and a part of examining information related to bullying. Validity and reliability of the tool were checked. Content validity was checked through 10 psychology expert members of Sulaimani University Research Committee (r=0.78). Reliability was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α = 0.82). In order to increase the study power and the possible loss of samples, 300 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher among the students of schools and colleges. Before sampling, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their informed consent was obtained and they were assured that the information would remain completely confidential. 272 participants completed the questionnaires and delivered them to the researcher. After collecting the data, they were entered into the SPSS version 23 software, and descriptive statistical tests were used to analyze the data, and chi-square statistical tests were used to compare the qualitative data considering the significance level less than 0.05.

Results

The results showed that out of 272 participants in this study, 137 people (50.4%) have faced bullying and 135 people (49.6%) have not experienced bullying. 34 people who have faced bullying were 10-12 years old, 59 people were 13-16 years old, 32 people were 17-20 years old, and 12 people were more than 20 years old. And in people who have not experienced bullying, 23 people were 10-12 years old, 55 people were 13-16 years old, 36 people were 17-20 years old, and 21 people were more than 20 years old. The results of chi-square test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups (P = 0.17).

In the group exposed to bullying, there were 71 women and 66 men, while in the group that did not face bullying, there were 54 women and 81 men, and these values had a statistically significant difference between the two groups (P= 0.05). The results showed that from the group facing bullying, 38 people were in elementary school, 43 people were in middle school, 31 people were in high school and 25 people were in college. In the group that did not face bullying, there were 33 people in elementary school, 24 people in middle school, 40 people in high school and 38 people in college. And these values are statistically significant between the two groups (P = 0.02).

In the group exposed to bullying, 63 people were the first child in the family, 41 people were the middle child, and 33 were the last child in the family, and in the group not exposed to bullying, these values were 64, 37, and 34, respectively. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups (P = 0.89). In the bullying group, 111 people lived in the city, 26 people lived in the village, 17 people lived in the dormitory and 9 people were commuting from their place of residence to their place of study. And these values were 96, 39, 19, and 20 in the non-exposure group, respectively. Despite the difference between the two groups in terms of residency status, this difference was not statistically significant (P = 0.054). (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of demographic variables of two groups of bullied and non-bullied groups

Demographic variable		Faced bullied				P value*
		Yes		No		
		Frequency	Percent%	Frequency	Percent%	
Age	10-12	34	59.6	23	40.4	0.17
	13-16	59	51.8	55	48.2	
	17-20	32	47	36	53	
	Over 20 years	12	36.4	21	63.6	
Sex	Female	71	56.8	54	43.2	0.050
	Male	66	44.8	81	55.2	
Education level	Elementary school	38	53.5	33	46.5	0.02
	Middle school	43	64.1	24	35.9	
	High school	31	43.6	40	56.4	
	College	25	39.7	38	60.3	
Birth order	First	63	49.6	64	50.4	0.89
	Middle	41	52.6	37	47.4	
	Last	33	49.2	34	50.8	
Residence status	City	111	53.6	96	46.4	0.054
	Rural	26	40	39	60	
	Dorm	17	47.2	19	52.8	
	Commuter	9	31	20	69	

* performed by chi square test

The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference among students of different levels in terms of the number of times they face bullying. In elementary school students, 23.7% faced bullying once, 26.3% faced 2-3 times,

36.8% faced 4-5 times and 13.2% faced bullying more than 6 times. In middle school students, 17% have faced bullying once, 42.5% 2-3 times, 21.3% 4-5 times and 19.1% more than 6 times. In high school students, 13.1% faced bullying once, 23.7% faced 2-3 times, 21% faced 4-5 times and 42.1% faced bullying more than 6 times. And college students, 7.6% were exposed once, 38.4% were exposed 2-3 times, 30.7% were exposed 4-5 times, and 23% were exposed to bullying more than 6 times. According to the results of chi-square test, there was no statistically significant difference among students of different levels in terms of the number of times they were bullied (P = 0.09) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of the participants of different educational groups in terms of the number of times they were bullied

		Number of times bullied								P-value*
		1 time		2-3		4-5		More than 6		
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Education level	Elementary school	9	23.7	10	26.3	14	36.8	5	13.2	0.09
	Middle school	8	17	20	42.5	10	21.3	9	19.1	
	High school	5	13.1	9	23.7	8	21	16	42.1	
	College	1	7.6	5	38.4	4	30.7	3	23	

* performed by chi square test

The results of examining the variables related to bullying showed that 92 people (33.8%) reported abuse by teachers and professors. 55 people (20.2%) reported that they experienced deliberate actions by people in the back rows to prevent learning and increase distraction. 73 people (26.8%) reported that they were forced to do things they did not want to do. 80 people (29.4%) have faced false promises. 58 people (21.3%) reported that they do not feel safe in their place of study. 74 (27.2%) of the participants felt inferior to their friends. 148 people (54.4%) were bullied compared to other people. 139 people (51.1%) informed their parents and school about the bullying they did (Table 3).

Table 3- Frequency of presence or absence of variables related to bullying in students

Variables related to bullying	Yes		No		No answer	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Abuse by teacher	92	33.8	45	16.6	135	49.6
Intentional distraction by behind the scenes in class	55	20.2	82	30.2	135	49.6
Forced to do unwanted things	73	26.8	64	23.5	135	49.6
Lies and false claims to students	80	29.4	57	21	135	49.6
Feeling safe in the school	79	29	58	21.3	135	49.6
Feeling different and inferior to friends	74	27.2	63	23.2	135	49.6
Bullying against others	148	54.4	124	45.6	0	0

Notifying the school and family of bullying by oneself	139	51.1	129	47.4	4	1.5

Fiqure 1 gives information about the type of bullying among victims students about what they have been called mean names by friends or teachers or school staff about the way look or are disability (30.5%) bullied students called mean name (19.9%) not called mean name.
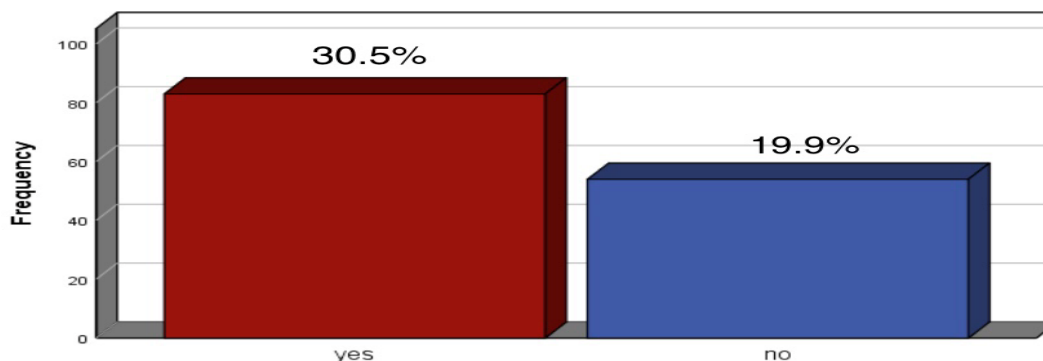

Figure 1- The frequency of people who are called bad names by friends or staff of the educational center about their appearance or disability.

Figure 2 gives information about the type of bullying among other victims students about anything taken by friends or teachers from students by force(29.8%) nothing has been taken away by force (8.8%) yes taken copybook and pencil and other school equipment by force (6.3%) in bullied students taken personal and precious things students by force (5.5%) taken money by force from bullied student's.
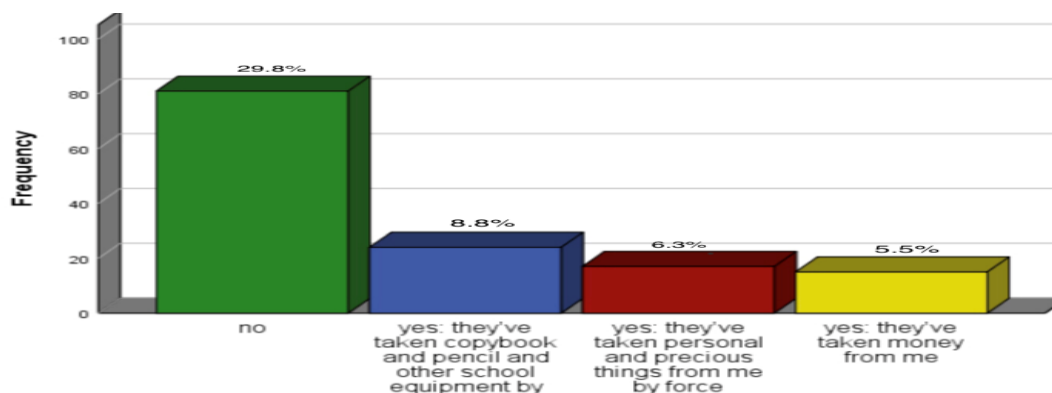

Figure 2- anything taken by friends or teachers from students by force

Figure 3 gives information about the type of bullying among victims Students about (the students were annoyed by their friends pushing or beating or closing the door on the students). (30%)in the students were annoyed by their friends.
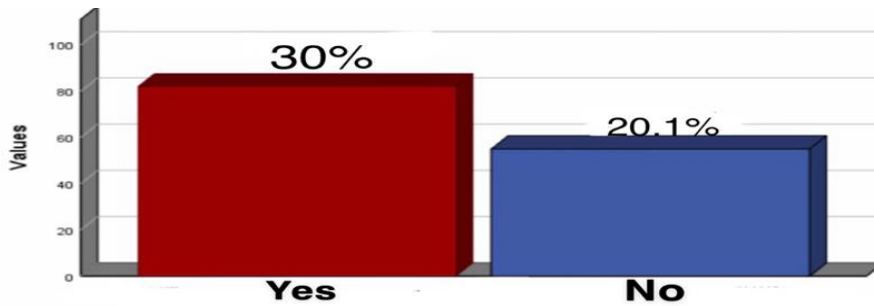
Fiqure 3- the students were annoyed by their friends pushing or beating or closing the door on the students

Fiqure 4, the chart gives information about the type of bullying among victims Students about (the students haven been sexually bullied).(25.7%)in the Students have not been sexually bullied and (24.6%) in the students haven been sexually bullied.
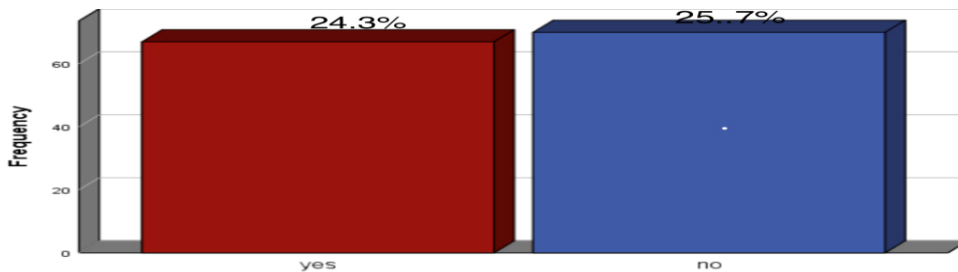

Figure 4- the students haven been sexually bullied

Figure 5 gives information in among victims students about Students' reactions during the mistakes of the surrounding people, the highest percentage (18.8%) in the students have heard the harassers and have been silent (16.9%) in the students .They took things and left their place, (11.4%) have fought and responded, (7%) have told family or teachers or the school staff to solve the problem, (4%) have fought and taken back what was taken.
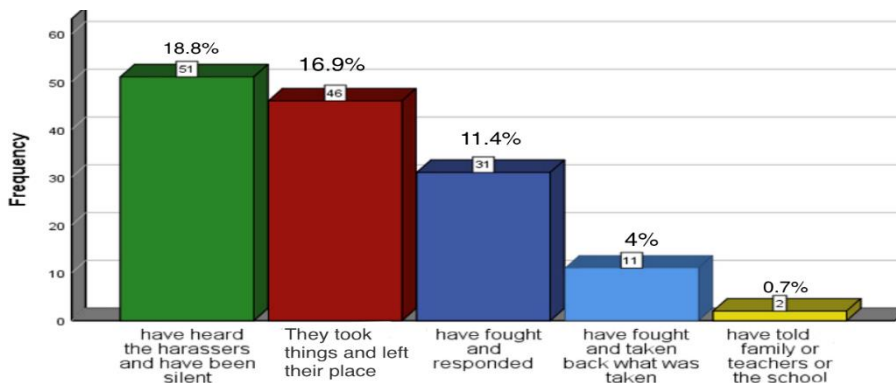

Figure 5- Students' reactions during the mistakes of the surrounding people

Discussion

In this research which was done on 272 students, 137 students faced bullying during completing their studies, in return 135 students did not suffer from any a bullying [19]. In this rate that we received, the highest rate was in the female and was at the age of 10 to 12 at the end of elementary school and the beginning of middle school, according to the result we got [19], the possibility of changing the curriculum and changing the geography is the reason for the occurrence of bullying, and in urban centers most cases have occurred, and in terms of the ranking of family members children with middle age levels will face the most cases [21]. In terms of repeated student bullying, more than five times for high school students the lowest rate of student bullying is at the university level [20]. According to the information obtained in the data, one of the main causes of abuse is due to teachers and partly to the students themselves, and students who have been forced to create abuse are less likely than they wanted to do, but both of them were the cause of abuse [21].and only 60% of students who have been abused feel safe, which is still low, and at the same time 53% feel underestimated and distrustful, and 54% have been abused by their friends or people around them [21] , These results are similar to those found elsewhere by Olweus (1993) in Norway and Whithney and Smith (1993), Smith and Sharp (1994) in England. Fonzi et al [19]. (1999) in Italy, Ortega and Mora-Merchan (1999) in Spain, of all the cases, only 51% of students have notified their families or school staff. Towards bullying. One of the main differences is that [22],school students in Kurdistan are more likely to do something about the situation themselves rather than telling teachers or someone at home compared to results from Italy (Fonzi et al., 1999) and England (Smith, 1999) [22].

Limitation

The present study had some limitations: First limitation in this research study is the sample size; however considering the aim of the research study and the amount of time provided to complete the research, the sample size is relatively appropriate. We would have liked to interview more individuals, but time was not permitting. Some students may not have been able to answer our questions correctly because they were afraid of their friends and teachers or have not taken their questions seriously. Some schools didn't allow us to publish the forms under the pretext that we take them during the students and school, we don't have permission forms from the Minister Education. Some teachers didn't give us time to explain the questions to the students in details.

Conclusion

This study showed that bullying exists in Sulaymani city schools and that effective bullying prevention and intervention programs are needed. It is important that the ministry of national education should consider school bullying as a serious problem, bullying among students is a problem that continues to receive attention from researchers, educators, parents, the students who reported that they were victims of physical, verbal and emotional bullying. Particularly in Kurdish society, this issue frequently faces females, male sex has a more noteworthy chance of bullying than female. The frequency of bullying varies from

nation to nation and school to school inside countries, however, that the bullying that occurs in all schools at all levels of education by existence of an intervention program can reduce the rate of bullying among student.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank all the participant who patiently helped in this research, and also thank for their support and help.

Author's contributions

The author has passed the criteria for authorship contribution based on recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data Availability

The author guarantee that the data of this research will be provided at the request of other researchers.

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