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Knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and consequences of bullying among high school students aged (15-20) in Shekhan District

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Abstract---his study examined high school students' attitudes, awareness, and knowledge about bullying in Shekhan district, involving 278 students aged 15-20 (most aged 15-17 and 51.8% female). Using stratified random sampling and a structured questionnaire, data were collected from October 2024 to May 2025. The findings showed that students generally understood the types and effects of bullying, particularly its emotional and psychological impacts, but misconceptions remained about the roles of victims and bullies. Students also expressed strong support for multi-level anti-bullying strategies involving peers, parents, communities, and schools. Despite high awareness, educational gaps persisted, indicating a need for targeted interventions to improve prevention and response efforts within schools and communities.

Keywords---Knowledge, Awareness, Attitudes and Consequences, Bullying.

Introduction

Bullying is a serious problem that affects communities all around the world. It is defined as a form of violent conduct by the perpetrator that entails a power imbalance between the victim and the bully and recurrent acts (Bourou *et al*, 2024). It describes recurrent, intentional acts of hostility directed at a victim who is weaker than the offender. Three main roles are involved in bullying: the bully, who engages in bullying conduct; the victim, who is the focus of bullying; and the bully-victim, who is both the bully and the victim of bullying (Ibrahim *et al*, 2023). There are two main types of bullying: direct and indirect. When someone is physically or vocally exposed to aggressive behaviors in their presence—such as being pushed, struck, the object of sarcastic remarks, or getting direct writing communication—this is known as direct bullying. Conversely, hostile behavior that does not directly approach the target is known as indirect bullying. Spreading rumors, a prevalent type of indirect bullying, is one example of this. Ali (2021). Both the people who are immediately impacted and those who observe bullying and interpersonal violence are impacted. Bullying can take many different forms, such as threats, jeering, using derogatory language, and criticism, in addition to verbal, physical, and emotional abuse. These elements, whether present independently or in combination, raise the likelihood of bullying among kids (Ali, 2023). Bullying negatively impacts a person's academic performance, social relationships, and health in many ways. Bullying victims frequently struggle to adjust, do poorly in school, and deal with a variety of psychosomatic problems. It is classified as a type of violent behavior in which the victim and the bully have unequal power. All children are impacted by this complicated problem, which fosters an atmosphere of interpersonal violence and impacts bullies, victims, and onlookers equally (Kafle *et al*, 2020). Teens that are bullied by their classmates are frequently characterized as timid, reclusive, and lacking in confidence (González & Molero, 2024).

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in the Shekhan District, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, between October 2024 and May 2025. Using a self-administered questionnaire, a cross-sectional study (stratified random sample) was conducted in the district of Shekhan to assess students' attitudes, knowledge, and awareness of bullying and its effects. A sample of 278 students from 926 male and female students was selected using a stratified random sampling method from high schools in Shekhan district, Iraqi Kurdistan. The selected schools in Shekhan district were chosen based on the following logical criteria:

- Representativeness – They cover different school types (mixed, boys-only, girls-only), ensuring diverse student perspectives.
- Feasibility – Their proximity and manageable student population (926 total) made sampling practical within the study's timeframe.
- Alignment with Objectives – The schools' demographics (ages 15–20, grades 10–12) matched the study's focus on bullying in adolescence. The samples were selected according to the sample size formula, to representing 30% of the total number of students (278 out of 926) with 30% of students selected from each school (120 out of 400 in Amad and 158 out of 526 in Hajand schools) and 30% from each class to ensure balanced representation.

Here is a commonly used formula for determining sample size in surveys or studies:

Sample Size Formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n: Required sample size
- Z: Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence level)
- p: Estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic of interest (if unknown, use $p = 0.5$ for maximum variability)
- e: Margin of error (e.g., 0.05 for 5%)

Adjusted Sample Size for Finite Population:

If the population is finite, the sample size can be adjusted using the following formula:

$$n_{\text{adjusted}} = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n-1}{N}}$$

Where:

- N: Total population size
- n: Initial sample size calculated using the formula above.

Application to the Study:

From the document:

- The total number of students in the two schools reached 926 students, according to the Ministry of Education. (Appendix V).
- The researchers selected 278 samples using stratified random sampling.

Although the exact formula is not provided, it is possible that the researchers used a similar approach to calculate the sample size, considering:

1. A confidence level (likely 95%, which corresponds to $Z = 1.96$).
2. A margin of error (commonly 5%, or $e = 0.05$).
3. An estimated proportion ($p = 0.5$) for maximum variability, as no prior information about the prevalence of bullying was provided.

If we assume these values, the initial sample size calculation would look like this:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0025} = 384.16$$

Adjusting for the finite population of 926:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}, \quad n_{\text{adjusted}} = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{n-1}{N}}$$

$$n_{\text{adjusted}} = \frac{384.16}{1 + \frac{384.16-1}{926}} = \frac{384.16}{1+0.41378} = \frac{384.16}{1.41378} = 272$$

Rounding up, the adjusted sample size would be approximately 272, which is close to the 278 samples selected by the researchers. While the exact formula is not provided in the document, the researchers likely used a standard sample size calculation method and rounded up from 272 to 278 for practical purposes.

Table 1- sample selection method

School name	Total student	Study sample
Shekhan mixed evening high school (Excluded)	74	22
Amad high school for boys	$400 * 0.3$	120 (43%)
Hajand high school for girls	$526 * 0.3$	158 (57%)
Total	926	278 (100%)

The study involved high school students aged 15-20 in two Shekhan district, with the inclusion criteria being regular students in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th for the 2024-2025 academic year. Exclusion criteria included students who refused questionnaires or repeated the year. Researchers visited Shekhan district high schools in Kurdistan-Iraq for data collection. Interviews and questionnaire completion were conducted, with 55 students completing a pilot study. 300 samples were collected, with 278 analyzed, with 22 students excluded due to age eligibility. The study was approved by the Shekhan Technical College of Health's scientific committee and the General Directorate of Education / Duhok / Shekhan District. The study aimed to investigate the knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and consequences of bullying among high school students in Shekhan Town. The questionnaire was prepared with 300 samples, 278 of which were cluded due to age criteria. The questionnaire included general information about students, their education level, and their relationship with parents and teachers. The study also examined the students' experiences with bullying, such as depression, anxiety, academic difficulties, suicide, and social and emotional problems. A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire's validity, but the main sample was not included. Ethical considerations were a fundamental principle in the data collection process, with approval from the Shekhan Technical College's ethical committee and permission from the students. The project title was changed to 'Knowledge, Awareness, Attitudes, and Consequences of Bullying Among High School Aged (15-20) Students in Shekhan Town'. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to estimate sociodemographic characteristics and assess knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and consequences related to bullying. Obstacles faced included limited access to Hajand Girls High School, time limitations, midterm exams, and frequent school breaks.

Results

The socio-educational and demographic traits of a sample of 278 pupils. Most pupils (72.7%) were between the ages of 15 and 17, while 27.3% were between the ages of 18 and 20. The proportion of genders was slightly skewed, with men making up 43.2% of the sample and women 56.8%.

Table 2. Sociodemographic and characteristics of students

Characteristics of the students	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-17	202	72.7
18-20	76	27.3
Gender		
Male	120	43.2
Female	158	56.8
Grade		
10	151	54.3
11	61	21.9
12	66	23.7
Study branch		
Scientific	186	66.9
Literary	92	33.1
Mother's education		
Illiterate	123	44.2
Read and write	36	12.9
Until primary stage	59	21.2
Until intermediate stage	36	12.9
Until preparatory	14	5.0
Until college	10	3.6
Father's education		
Illiterate	41	14.7
Read and write	40	14.4
Until primary stage	57	20.5
Until intermediate stage	62	22.3
Until preparatory	28	10.1
Until college	50	18.0
Living status		
Parents	272	97.8
Mother or Father	5	1.8
Grandparents	1	.4
Total	278	100

Academically, Grade 10 accounted for more than half of the pupils (54.3%), with Grades 11 (21.9%) and 12 (23.7%) following closely behind. Two-thirds (66.9%) of the study branches were in the scientific stream, while just 33.1% were in the literary stream. The educational attainment of parents differed; a significant percentage of fathers (14.7%) and mothers (44.2%) were illiterate, whereas lesser percentages had higher education. The majority of people (97.8%) lived with both parents. table 2.

Figure 1 compares the connections that students have with their parents and teachers, classifying them into three categories: "Very good," "Good," and "Bad." The findings show a clear difference between the two kinds of relationships. A resounding 93.5% of students said they had a "Very good" relationship with their parents, compared to just 6.1% who said it was "Good" and a pitiful 0.4% who said it was "Bad." This suggests that among the students polled, parent-child connections were largely good. 52.5% of students rated their relationships with teachers as "Very good," 41.4% as "Good," and 6.1% as "Bad." In comparison, interactions with teachers were less favorable.

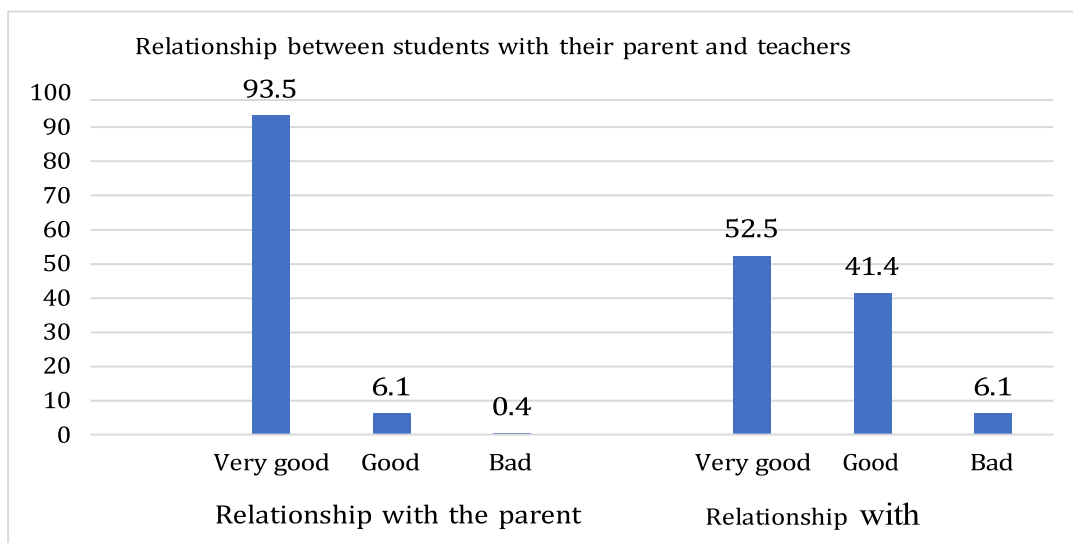


Fig.1- Demonstration with the relationship status with teachers and parents

The results of the survey on participants' understanding and opinions of bullying, including its definition, types, victims, offenders, and motivations, are shown in table.2. Just 7.9% of respondents mistakenly defined bullying as a one-time bad conduct, while 18% of respondents said when you physically hit someone.

In contrast, the majority (62.6%) correctly defined bullying as persistent harmful behavior, purposeful harm toward someone vulnerable. The majority of respondents (66.9%) correctly recognized the primary categories of bullying as being physical, verbal, social, cyber, and psychological. Regarding victims, 67.6% of respondents accurately said that anyone could be a target, however a sizable minority (23.4%) thought that primarily girls are impacted.

In a similar vein, 77.0% of respondents stated that anyone could be the victim of bullying, and 13.3% falsely stated that only well-liked men could be bullies. However, none of the respondents chose the right response, which was that anyone may engage in bullying behavior. Lastly, when asked about their motivations, 38.5% said that bullying stems from a desire for power, 2.5% said that they are bored, and 9.4% said that they somewhat recognize that they are unkind. Furthermore, 49.6% of respondents said all of the above.

presents the results of 278 participants' responses about their awareness of the negative impacts of bullying. According to the findings, the majority of respondents (71.9%) acknowledged that bullying had a number of negative impacts on victims, such as emotional distress (19.8%), food or sleep disorders (1.8%), and academic degradation (6.5%). Similarly, 23.7% of individuals reported having low self-esteem, and 59.7% of participants noted long-term repercussions for bullies, such as trouble establishing good relationships. Bullying can cause anxiety and sadness (89.6%), social isolation (86.7%), and behavioral changes (91.4%), according to a large majority of respondents (78.8%), who also noted the connection between bullying and thoughts of self-harm. These results demonstrate the widespread and complex harm that bullying causes, underscoring the pressing need for focused treatments to lessen its negative psychological and social effects.

Table 5. presents the frequency and percentage distributions of attitudes toward strategies for addressing bullying from various stakeholders. The most common responses from bullying victims were "Ignore it" (41.7%) and "telling parents" (15.8%), while "All of above" (29.1%) and "fighting back" (8.3%) were supported. Bullying witnesses favored "telling an older one" (22.3%) and "supporting the victim" (9.4%), although a significant percentage also supported "ignoring it" (17.6%), indicating that peers have different strategies. According to respondents, schools are most successful when they "punish the bully" (14.0%), however "educating students" (7.9%) and "training staff" (10.4%) were also mentioned. Fewer people emphasized "monitoring online activity" (4.0%) or "teaching respect" (10.8%), but the majority of respondents viewed parents as crucial in "building self-confidence in children" (13.3%). The most common association with communities was "creating anti-bullying programs" (18.7%). taking precedence over "raising awareness about bullying" (11.2%).

Based on survey responses from 278 participants, table 6 provides a thorough study of the negative effects of bullying, broken down into legal, social, emotional, and academic dimensions. According to the findings, social repercussions were also significant, with 13.3% of participants citing exclusion from activities as a frequent consequence, followed by losing friendships (19.8%) and becoming the subject of gossip (12.6%). Legal repercussions included expulsion from school (32.7%) and social acts (7.2%). After considering all of the aforementioned, depression was the most major emotional consequence, as revealed by 13.3% of respondents, accounting for 70.5% of the total. Low self-esteem (12.2) and anxiety (3.6%) were less commonly mentioned. Low grades were the most common academic penalty (27.3%), surpassing school dropout (7.2%). The Knowledge and sociodemographic are related. Study looked at sociodemographic variables linked to students' differing degrees of knowledge, as shown in Table 6. Age, gender, and grade differences were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$).

Compared to their younger colleagues (63.4%), older students (18–20 years old) demonstrated greater knowledge levels (77.6% high). 12th graders demonstrated the highest proficiency (81.8%), whereas females fared better than boys (73.4% vs. 59.2% high knowledge). Higher knowledge among students.

Table 3. Assessment of the knowledge regarding bullying among the high school students

Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
What is bullying?		
• Harmful behavior toward someone one time	22	7.9
• Repeated, intentional harmful behavior toward someone vulnerable.	174	62.6
• When you joke with someone.	32	11.5
• When you hurt someone physically.	50	18.0
What are the different types of bullying?		
• Physical, verbal, and psychological	51	18.3
• Physical, verbal, and social	18	6.5
• Physical, verbal, social, and cyber.	23	8.3
• Physical. Verbal, social, cyber, psychological.	186	66.9
Who can be a victim of bullying?		
• Only boys	12	4.3
• Only girls	13	4.7
• Only shy man	65	23.4
• Anyone	188	67.6
Who can be a bully?		
• Only boys	20	7.2
• Only girls	7	2.5
• Only man who are popular	37	13.3
• Anyone	214	77.0
Why do people bully others?		
• Because they are mean	26	9.4
• Because they are bored.	7	2.5
• Because they want to feel powerful.	107	38.5
• All of the above.	138	49.6

Table 4. Assessment of the awareness regarding bullying among the high school students

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
What are the effects of bullying on victims?		
They may feel sad, angry, or scared	55	19.8
They may have trouble sleeping or eating.	5	1.8
They may do poorly in school	18	6.5
All of above	200	71.9
What are the effects of bullying on bullies?		
They may get into trouble at school or with the law	21	7.6
They may have trouble forming healthy relationships	25	9.0
They may have low self-esteem	66	23.7
All of above	166	59.7
Does bullying make people think about hurting themselves?		
Yes	219	78.8
No	59	21.2
Can bullying lead to anxiety and depression?		
Yes	249	89.6
No	29	10.4
Can bullying lead to social isolation?		
Yes	241	86.7
No	37	13.3
Do you think that bullying changed individual behavior?		
Yes	254	91.4
No	24	8.6
Total	278	100

Table 7. The study looked at the relationship between students' awareness levels and sociodemographic characteristics. The findings showed that there were no statistically significant variations in awareness levels by research branch ($p=0.374$), gender ($p=0.6$), or age group ($p=0.42$).

Similarly, awareness was not substantially impacted by living status ($p=0.553$) or parental education levels (mother: $p=0.88$; father: $p=0.67$). Nonetheless, a weak correlation with grade level was noted ($p=0.055$), indicating a possible pattern in which students in the 12th grade demonstrated greater moderate awareness (60.6%) than those in the 11th grade (39.3%).

Additionally, there was no discernible effect from relationships with instructors ($p=0.78$) or parents ($p=0.259$). These results imply that although the majority of sociodemographic factors have little effect on awareness, bigger sample sizes may help to shed light on the trends in grade-level inequalities that have been noted.

Table 5. Assessment of the attitudes regarding bullying among the high school students

Attitudes	Frequency	Percentage
What can victims of bullying do to stop the bullying?	116	41.7
Ignore it	23	8.3
Fight back	44	15.8
Tell parents	14	5.0
Tell teachers	81	29.1
All of above		
What can witness of bullying do to stop the bullying?	49	17.6
Ignore it	74	26.6
Tell the bully to stop	26	9.4
Supporting the victim	62	22.3
Tell an older one	67	24.1
All of above		
What can schools do to prevent bullying?	46	16.5
Create a bullying prevention policy	22	7.9
Educate students about bullying	29	10.4
Train staff to recognize and respond to bullying	39	14.0
Punish the bully	142	51.1
All of above		
What can parents do to prevent bullying?		
Talk to their children about bullying.	36	12.9
Monitor their children's online activity	11	4.0
Teach their children how to be respectful of others.	30	10.8
Building self-confidence in children	37	13.3
All of above	164	59.0
What can communities do to prevent bullying?	52	18.7
Create anti-bullying programs	32	11.5
Support schools in their bullying prevention. Efforts.	31	11.2
Raise awareness about bullying	163	58.6
All of above		

In Table 8. the results presented in the table highlight significant associations between sociodemographic factors and attitude levels among the studied population. Age emerged as a critical variable, with the 18-20 age group exhibiting a higher proportion of high attitude levels (57.9%) compared to the 15-17 group (29.7%), a difference that was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). Another important factor was gender, with a significant p-value ($p = 0.006$) supporting the finding that women were more likely than men to exhibit high attitude levels (39.9% vs. 34.2%). Grade level also had an impact on attitudes; students in the 12th grade had the largest percentage of high attitude levels (56.1%), whereas students in the 10th and 11th grades had lower percentages (31.8% and 31.1%, respectively; $p = 0.01$). However, with the exception of the link with teachers, which came close to significance ($p = 0.051$), factors like study branch, parental education, living situation, and interactions with parents or teachers did not show statistically significant associations with attitude levels ($p > 0.05$). According to these results, age, gender, and grade are important determinants of attitudes that call for focused efforts to close these gaps.

Table 6. Assessment of the consequences regarding bullying among the high school students

Consequences	Frequency	Percentage
What are the legal consequences for a bully?		
Expulsion from school	91	32.7
Social acts	20	7.2
Will be taxed	62	22.3
All of above	105	37.8
What are common social consequences for bully?		
Loss of friendships	55	19.8
Become a target for talk	35	12.6
Exclude from activities	37	13.3
All of above	151	54.3
What are common emotional consequences of bullying?		
Low self-esteem	34	12.2
Anxiety	10	3.6
Depression	38	13.7
All of above	196	70.5
What are academic consequences of bullying?		
Low degree (marks)	76	27.3
Drop out of school	20	7.2
All of above	182	65.5
Total	278	100

Table 9. The results presented in the table highlight significant associations between sociodemographic factors and consequence levels, and according to the p-values (Sig. Age shows a substantial statistical relevance ($p = 0.000$), with most respondents between the ages of 15 and 17 reporting "High" repercussions (53.5%) and those between the ages of 18 and 20 reporting "High" consequences (56.6%). With all male respondents indicating "High" repercussions, gender also demonstrates a very significant connection ($p = 0.000$).

In contrast, female respondents show a more diversified distribution among low (57.0%), moderate (23.4%), and high (19.6%) levels. Another important link is grade level ($p = 0.000$), with grade 12 students reporting the largest percentage of "High" repercussions (63.6%).

On the other hand, there are no significant correlations between study branch and parental education ($p > 0.05$). Relationships with parents or teachers and living situation are likewise not statistically significant.

Table 7. Association between sociodemographic with knowledge of bullying

Sociodemographic	Categories	Knowledge levels			Sig.
		Low	Moderate	High	
Age	15-17	9 (4.5%)	65 (32.2%)	128(63.4%)	.032
	18-20	0 (0.0%)	17(22.4%)	59(77.6%)	
Gender	Male	8 (6.7%)	41(34.2%)	71(59.2%)	0.004*
	Female	1(0.6%)	41(25.9%)	116(73.4%)	
Grade	10	7 (4.6%)	52(34.4%)	92(60.9%)	0.041*
	11	1(1.6%)	19(31.1%)	41(67.2%)	
	12	1(1.5%)	11(16.7%)	54(81.8%)	
Study Branch	Scientific	7(3.8%)	50(26.9%)	129(69.4%)	0.34
	Literary	2(2.2%)	32(34.8%)	58(63.0%)	
Mother education	Illiterate	6(4.9%)	39(31.7%)	78(63.4%)	0.397
	Read and write	1(2.8%)	9(25.0%)	26(72.2%)	
	Until primary stage	2(3.4%)	14(23.7%)	43(72.9%)	
	Until intermediate stage	0(0.0%)	8(22.2%)	28(77.8%)	
	Until preparatory	0(0.0%)	7(50.0%)	7(50.0%)	
	Until college	0(0.0%)	5(50.0%)	5(50.0%)	
Father education	Illiterate	3(7.3%)	15(36.6%)	23(56.1%)	0.079
	Read and write	1(2.5%)	15(37.5%)	24(60.0%)	
	Until primary stage	0(0.0%)	15(26.3%)	42(73.7%)	
	Until intermediate stage	5(8.1%)	12(19.4%)	45(72.6%)	
	Until preparatory	0(0.0%)	9(32.1%)	19(67.9%)	
	Until college	0(0.0%)	16(32.0%)	34(68.0%)	
Living status	Parents	9(3.3%)	81(29.8%)	182(66.9%)	0.9
	Mother or Father	0(0.0%)	1(20.0%)	4(80.0%)	
	Grandparents	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	
Relationship with parent	Very good	8(3.1%)	78(30.0%)	174(66.9%)	0.88
	Good	1 (5.9%)	4(23.5%)	12(70.6%)	
	Bad	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	
Relationship with teacher	Very good	2(1.4%)	45(30.8%)	99(67.8%)	0.187
	Good	5(4.3%)	33(28.7%)	77(67.0%)	
	Bad	2(11.8%)	4(23.5%)	11(64.7%)	

Table 8. Association between sociodemographic and awareness regarding bullying

Sociodemographic	Categories	Awareness levels		Sig
		Low	Moderate	
Age	15-17	105 52.0%	97 48.0%	0.42
	18-20	35 46.1%)	41 53.9%	
Gender	Male	58(48.3%	62(51.7%	0.6
	Female	82(51.9%)	76(48.1%	
Grade	10	77(51.0%)	74(49.0%)	0.055
	11	37(60.7%)	24(39.3%)	
	12	26(39.4%	40(60.6%)	
Study Branch	Scientific	90(48.4%)	96(51.6%)	0.374
	Literary	50(54.3%)	42(45.7%)	
Mother education	Illiterate	63(51.2%)	60(48.8%)	0.88
	Read and write	16(44.4%)	20(55.6%)	
	Until primary stage	32(54.2%)	27(45.8%)	
	Until intermediate stage	17(47.2%)	19(52.8%)	
	Until preparatory	8(57.1%)	6(42.9%)	
	Until college	4(40.0%	6(60.0%)	
Father education	Illiterate	18(43.9%)	23(56.1%	0.67
	Read and write	23(57.5%)	17(42.5%	
	Until primary stage	31(54.4%)	26(45.6%	
	Until intermediate stage	28(45.2%)	34(54.8%	
	Until preparatory	16(57.1%)	12(42.9%	
	Until college	24(48.0%)	26(52.0%	
Living status	Parents	136(50.0%)	136(50.0%)	0.553
	Mother or Father	3(60.0%)	2(40.0%)	
	Grandparents	1(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	
Relationship with parent	Very good	134(51.5%)	126(48.5%)	0.259
	Good	6(35.3%)	11(64.7%)	
	Bad	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	
Relationship with teacher	Very good	71(48.6%)	75(51.4%)	0.78
	Good	61(53.0%)	54(47.0%)	
	Bad	8(47.1%)	9(52.9%)	

In Table 10. the study findings reveal significant variations in knowledge, attitudes, and consequences among participants (N=278). While a majority demonstrated high knowledge levels (67.3%, n=187), attitudes were more frequently moderate (48.6%, n=135), with a notable proportion also reporting high attitudes (37.4%, n=104). Interestingly, consequences were polarized, with 32.4% (n=90) experiencing low consequences, whereas 54.3% (n=151) reported high consequences. This suggests that despite strong knowledge and relatively positive attitudes, a substantial segment still faces significant adverse outcomes.

disparity between high knowledge and moderate attitudes may indicate gaps in translating awareness into proactive behavioral change, warranting further investigation into underlying sociocultural or structural barriers influencing these outcomes. These insights highlight the need for targeted interventions that bridge knowledge-attitude gaps while addressing mitigating factors to reduce negative consequences effectively.

In Fig.3- The data reveals a narrow range in students' awareness levels regarding bullying, with percentages clustered between 49.2% and 50.6%. The highest recorded awareness level was 50.6%, while the lowest was 49.2%, indicating minimal variation across the sample. Notably, the "high" awareness category showed values between 49.2% and 49.6%, while the "Levels" category exhibited slightly higher figures, peaking at 50.4%.

Table 9. Association between sociodemographic with Attitudes of bullying

Sociodemographic	Categories	Attitudes levels			Sig.
		Low	Moderate	High	
Age	15-17	35(17.3%)	107(53.0%)	60(29.7%)	0.000
	18-20	4(5.3%)	28(36.8%)	44(57.9%)	
Gender	Male	26(21.7%)	53(44.2%)	41(34.2%)	0.006
	Female	13(8.2%)	82(51.9%)	63(39.9%)	
Grade	10	22(14.6%)	81(53.6%)	48(31.8%)	0.01
	11	11(18.0%)	31(50.8%)	19(31.1%)	
	12	6(9.1%)	23(34.8%)	37(56.1%)	
Study Branch	Scientific	31(16.7%)	85(45.7%)	70(37.6%)	0.154
	Literary	8(8.7%)	50(54.3%)	34(37.0%)	
Mother education	Illiterate	16(13.0%)	66(53.7%)	41(33.3%)	0.887
	Read and write	7(19.4%)	15(41.7%)	14(38.9%)	
	Until primary stage	10(16.9%)	25(42.4%)	24(40.7%)	
	Until intermediate stage	4(11.1%)	17(47.2%)	15(41.7%)	
	Until preparatory	1(7.1%)	8(57.1%)	5(35.7%)	
Father education	Until college	1(10.0%)	4(40.0%)	5(50.0%)	0.228
	Illiterate	5(12.2%)	21(51.2%)	15(36.6%)	
	Read and write	7(17.5%)	26(65.0%)	7(17.5%)	
	Until primary stage	7(12.3%)	22(38.6%)	28(49.1%)	
	Until intermediate stage	8(12.9%)	28(45.2%)	26(41.9%)	
Living status	Until preparatory	4(14.3%)	12(42.9%)	12(42.9%)	0.6
	Until college	8(16.0%)	26(52.0%)	16(32.0%)	
	Parents	38 (14.0%)	133(48.9%)	101(37.1%)	
Relationship with parent	Mother or Father	1(20.0%)	1(20.0%)	3(60.0%)	0.33
	Grandparents	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	
	Very good	34(13.1%)	127(48.8%)	99(38.1%)	
	Good	5(29.4%)	7(41.2%)	5(29.4%)	
	Bad	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	

Sociodemographic	Categories	Attitudes levels			Sig.
		Low	Moderate	High	
Relationship with teacher	Very good	19(13.0%)	69(47.3%)	58(39.7%)	0.051
	Good	14(12.2%)	62(53.9%)	39(33.9%)	
	Bad	6(35.3%)	4(23.5%)	7(41.2%)	

Table 10. Association between sociodemographic with Consequences of bullying

Sociodemographic	Categories	Consequences levels			Sig.
		Low	Moderate	High	
Age	15-17	90(44.6%)	4(2.0%)	108(53.5%)	0.000
	18-20	0(0.0%)	33(43.4%)	43(56.6%)	
Gender	Male	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	120(100.0%)	0.000
	Female	90(57.0%)	37(23.4%)	31(19.6%)	
Grade	10	63(41.7%)	7(4.6%)	81(53.6%)	0.000
	11	25(41.0%)	8(13.1%)	28(45.9%)	
	12	2(3.0%)	22(33.3%)	42(63.6%)	
Study Branch	Scientific	65(34.9%)	25(13.4%)	96(51.6%)	0.384
	Literary	25(27.2%)	12(13.0%)	55(59.8%)	
Mother education	Illiterate	33(26.8%)	15(12.2%)	75(61.0%)	0.471
	Read and write	12(33.3%)	5(13.9%)	19(52.8%)	
	Until primary stage	24(40.7%)	8(13.6%)	27(45.8%)	
	Until intermediate stage	15(41.7%)	7(19.4%)	14(38.9%)	
	Until preparatory	4(28.6%)	1(7.1%)	9(64.3%)	
Father education	Until college	2(20.0%)	1(10.0%)	7(70.0%)	0.105
	Illiterate	11(26.8%)	3(7.3%)	27(65.9%)	
	Read and write	14(35.0%)	5(12.5%)	21(52.5%)	
	Until primary stage	21(36.8%)	8(14.0%)	28(49.1%)	
	Until intermediate stage	23(37.1%)	6(9.7%)	33(53.2%)	
Living status	Until preparatory	11(39.3%)	8(28.6%)	9(32.1%)	0.509
	Until college	10(20.0%)	7(14.0%)	33(66.0%)	
	Parents	90(33.1%)	36(13.2%)	146(53.7%)	
Relationship with parent	Mother or Father	0(0.0%)	1(20.0%)	4(80.0%)	0.73
	Grandparents	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	
	Very good	83(31.9%)	36(13.8%)	141(54.2%)	
Relationship with teacher	Good	7(41.2%)	1(5.9%)	9(52.9%)	0.000
	Bad	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	
	Very good	49(33.6%)	29(19.9%)	68(46.6%)	
Relationship with teacher	Good	41(35.7%)	8(7.0%)	66(57.4%)	0.000
	Bad	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	17(100.0%)	
	Very good	49(33.6%)	29(19.9%)	68(46.6%)	

Table 11. Association between Knowledge and Attitudes and Consequences regarding bullying

Level	Knowledge	Attitudes	Consequences
Low	9 (3.2)	39 (14)	90 (32.4)
Moderate	82 (29.5)	135 (48.6)	37 (13.3)
High	187 (67.3)	104 (37.4)	151 (54.3)
Total	278 (100)	278 (100)	278 (100)

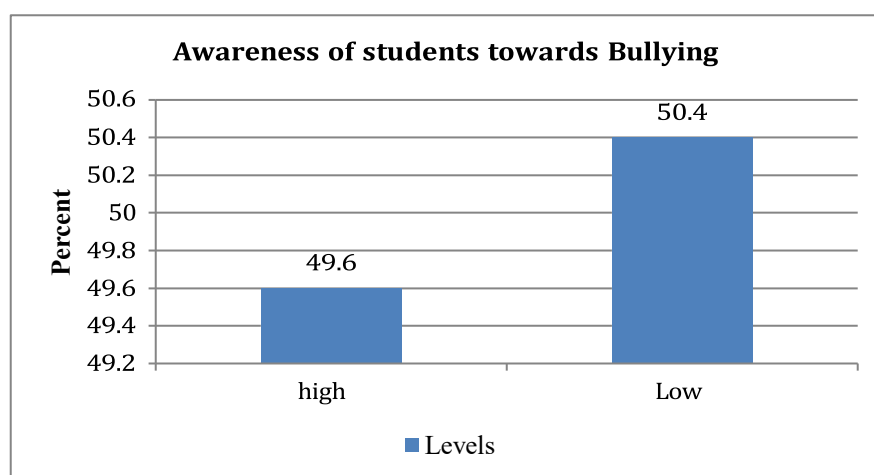


Fig.3- Awareness of the students towards bullying

Discussion

In this study, most participants were between 15 and 17 years old, and females accounted for 56.8% of the sample. A large majority (97.8%) reported residing with both parents, and 93.5% stated they had a very good relationship with their parents. According to the results, 62.6% of students correctly identified bullying as a repetitive, intentional behavior that targets a vulnerable person, demonstrating a solid foundational understanding. However, there are some misconceptions: 7.9% thought bullying could happen in a single incident, and 18% saw bullying only as physical assault. When questioned about the many forms of bullying, 66.9% of respondents said they were aware of the verbal, physical, social, cyber, and psychological abuse.

According to a rather medicalized perspective, 73% of pupils in Sulaimani, Iraq, said bullying was a condition that needed to be addressed. The same study classified bullying as verbal, physical, relational, and cyberbullying and defined it using standard criteria: persistent, intentional harm marked by a power

imbalance. Remarkably, 75% of pupils could accurately name each of these kinds (Ali, 2021). In the current study, 70.5% of participants acknowledged bullying's long-term emotional effects, such as low self-esteem and persistent unhappiness, while 89.6% of people linked bullying to anxiety and depression. Furthermore, 91.4% of respondents said bullying changed behavior, and 71.9% of them acknowledged consequences including decreased academic performance and emotional discomfort, including grief, rage, and fear. Furthermore, 78.8% of respondents thought bullying might trigger suicidal thoughts. Comparatively, statistics from Iraq showed that 28% of bullied persons had suicidal thoughts and 42% of bullied individuals had clinical signs of depression, both of which were far higher than those among students who were not victims. In addition to social disengagement and school avoidance, the same study documented somatic symptoms such irregular eating and sleeping patterns. The destructive effects of bullying were demonstrated in severe cases, such as the suicide of a disabled student following years of harassment, supporting prior results indicating harassed teenagers are more likely to suffer from mental health conditions. Shafaq (2021). According to the study's findings, the majority of bullying victims used passive coping mechanisms, like ignoring the conduct (41.7%) or confiding in parents (15.8%). Bystanders frequently opted to provide direct assistance to the victim (9.4%) or notify a trustworthy adult (22.3%). These answers indicate a preference for informal or indirect methods and a lack of faith in formal reporting systems. Accordingly, only 51.1% of bullied kids in the Sulaimani study told their parents or school officials about their experiences. This reluctance could be a result of mistrust, fear of reprisals, or the conviction that reporting would be futile (Hamid 2022). Students preferred punitive tactics over preventive approaches to bullying, according to Craig et al. (2011). Although schools and parents were viewed as important stakeholders, victims' and bystanders' reactions were primarily reactive. According to other studies, pre-service teachers frequently undervalued the gravity of less obvious kinds of bullying, such as cyberbullying or homophobic bullying, and thought that physical bullying was more harmful. Pre-service female teachers were more empathetic and more inclined to step in.

Conclusion

More over 60% of students correctly identified the definition, kinds, and reality that anybody can become a victim of bullying, indicating that most students have a good awareness of the topic. Most also acknowledged the severe emotional and intellectual repercussions for both victims and offenders, emphasizing problems including low self-esteem, anxiety, despair, and subpar academic achievement. Almost all students agreed that bullying has a significant effect on behavior and mental health, and many connected it to self-harm and social isolation. Many children had proactive attitudes toward prevention and supported all-encompassing approaches that involved communities, parents, and schools. These results show a knowledgeable student body that appreciates group efforts to avoid bullying and understands how serious it is.

Acknowledgments

Schools should enforce strict anti-bullying policies, including zero-tolerance policies and real-time reporting training. Parents should attend workshops on bullying signs, emotional support, and online activity monitoring. Schools should

also establish anonymous reporting and mental health support systems to address emotional repercussions. Additionally, examine the connection between bullying and parental education, as illiteracy rates among mothers may affect bullying rates. Implementing parental engagement programs and addressing the 44.2% illiteracy rate among mothers can help improve awareness and prevent bullying.

Declarations:

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval

An ethical approval to perform the study was obtained from Duhok General Directorate of Health (No.25092024-8-13).

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