

Effects of Bullying on School Students in Saudi Arabia

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Received: May 20, 2023 ▪ Reviewed: June 10, 2023

▪ Accepted: July 13, 2023 ▪ Published: August 10, 2023

Abstract:

The primary aim of this study was to determine the academic, social, and mental health effects of school bullying on students in Saudi Arabia. It also seeks to recommend approaches to mitigate such bullying. Previous studies have evaluated the phenomenon mainly from the perspective of students, based on data gathered on how bullying affects their lives and education. The current research analyzes the effects of bullying from the perspective of educators who encountered many cases of bullying over the course of their careers and are knowledgeable about its impact on students. The findings contribute to the increasing body of research on the effects of bullying, both globally and in the Middle East.

Keywords: school bullying, academic effects, social effects, psychological effects, Saudi Arabia.

欺凌行为对沙特阿拉伯中学生的影响

摘要:

这项研究的主要目的是确定校园欺凌对沙特阿拉伯学生的学业、社会和心理健康的影響。它还寻求建议减轻此类欺凌行为的方法。先前的研究主要从学生的角度评估这一现象，基于收集的有關欺凌如何影响他们的生活和教育的數據。当前的研究从教育工作者的角度分析了欺凌的影响，他们在职业生涯中遇到过许多欺凌案例，并且了解欺凌对学生的影响。这些发现有助于越来越多关于全球和中东欺凌影响的研究。

关键词: 学校欺凌、学业影响、社会影响、心理影响，沙特阿拉伯。

1. Introduction

Bullying in Saudi Arabia has become normalized as

a phase of growing up. The practice remains relatively tolerated in Saudi Arabian culture despite being a global

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public health issue. Its effects are often unrecognized in the country partly due to bullying and its impacts being still comparatively understudied in Saudi Arabia (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Bullying in schools is a significant issue in society. The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes childhood bullying as a significant public health concern that can have negative academic, social, and health consequences (Armitage, 2021). Its effects vary depending on the role played by the students involved in bullying. Samara et al. (2021) outline the three roles students can play when involved in bullying: the victim, the bully, or the bully-victim. Engaging in bullying often causes bullies to display externalizing behaviors such as conduct disorder and hyperactivity (Samara et al., 2021). On the other hand, victims exposed to bullying end up with internalizing behaviors such as mood disorders and anxiety (Samara et al., 2021). Conversely, bully-victims develop externalizing and internalizing behaviors that are more severe than those of students that are only either bullies or victims (Samara et al., 2021). Research has extensively studied the effects of bullying.

Bullying in childhood comes with a myriad of both short- and long-term consequences. These consequences depend on the severity of bullying along with the role the individual played (Armitage, 2021). The short-term effects include educational and health implications of bullying on children, while the long-term effects relate to the aftermath of bullying on adults (Armitage, 2021). Some academic consequences of bullying include poor socialization and low academic achievement (Armitage, 2021; Samara et al., 2021). On the other hand, the adverse health outcomes of bullying are mostly psychosomatic and include sleeping difficulties, poor appetite, headaches, fatigue, dizziness, depression, and pains (Armitage, 2021). The health outcomes of bullying on children predominantly impact the mental health of the individuals involved, especially the victim (Armitage, 2021; Biswas et al., 2020). In adulthood, the consequences of childhood bullying may stem from the adverse effects of bullying on academic outcomes. Poor academic achievement may translate to economic hardships and a poor perceived quality of life (Armitage, 2021; Biswas et al., 2020). A substantial portion of adult depression (29%) is also attributable to bullying victimization during childhood or adolescence (Armitage, 2021). The consequences of bullying can best be avoided by preventing bullying in the first place.

Numerous approaches to preventing bullying are backed by research. One of the most common research-backed approaches that institutions use in preventing bullying is offering peer and parental support to victims, which works regardless of norms, geographical location, and social status (Armitage, 2021). Some structured programs can also be deployed in institutions to prevent bullying. These programs constitute interventions that involve the whole school or curriculum-based bullying prevention initiatives (Armitage, 2021). Carefully structured cooperative

learning can also provide more opportunities for a positive peer interaction to minimize potential bullying (Armitage, 2021). The recommended approaches to mitigating bullying in schools also consider the relatively new phenomenon of cyberbullying. Nonetheless, as cyberbullying rarely works independently of traditional bullying, approaches to mitigating cyberbullying also align with the prevention of traditional forms of bullying to work (Armitage, 2021). Overall, the approaches advanced in research for mitigating cyberbullying exhibit success if peer and parental support is incorporated and sufficient awareness of the problem is created in the school environment.

1.1. Data on the Global Prevalence of School Bullying

Despite recognizing the ramifications of bullying in schools and the availability of interventions to mitigate the phenomenon, the issue is relatively prevalent worldwide. Based on a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) study performed in 2019, nearly one in three children (32%) had fallen victim to school bullying on one or more days over the month before the study (Armitage, 2021). Additionally, 1 out of every 13 (7.3%) children reported having experienced school bullying on six or more days cumulatively over the month preceding the investigations (Armitage, 2021). The UNESCO report used data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) to assess the prevalence of school bullying across the globe (Armitage, 2021). It also incorporated additional data from the Programme for International Students Assessment and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. While the prevalence rates of school bullying are relatively high globally, there are variations in the global prevalence rates.

The incidence rates of school bullying vary based on global regions and the type of bullying most commonly reported. Central American nations record an average prevalence rate of 22.8%, and Europe and North America have relatively moderate figures of 25.0% and 31.7%, respectively, but higher prevalence rates of up to 48.2% can be found in sub-Saharan Africa (Armitage, 2021). Wider disparities in the prevalence rates of bullying have been reported by Biswas et al. (2020). On the other hand, linking school bullying to income levels in nations, Biswas et al. (2020) highlighted that the European region reports a significantly lower incidence of bullying, averaging 8.4% (8.0-9.0%) compared to Africa - 43.5% (43.0-44.3%) and the Eastern Mediterranean region - 45.1% (44.3-46.0%). The type of bullying most reported also depends on the nation, with low- and middle-income nations reporting a higher prevalence of direct physical and sexual bullying and high-income nations recording higher frequency rates of indirect bullying (Armitage, 2021). Regardless of these variations in the prevalence of school bullying, the problem poses a public health

concern of notable global importance.

Therefore, studies show that bullying is relatively prevalent. Nonetheless, even though this may be true, an encouraging statistic related to the prevalence rates of bullying is that school bullying has decreased by half in half of the countries evaluated in the UNESCO report since 2002. At the same time, however, there has been no significant change in the rates of bullying reported in 31.4% of the nations. Even worse, 18.6% of nations studied recorded an increase in the rates of bullying (Armitage, 2021). The rise in school bullying was noted among either boys or girls in some nations but among both genders in others, such as Myanmar, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, and some North African and Sub-Saharan Africa nations (Armitage, 2021). It is important to note that these prevalence rates do not factor in cyberbullying but only in traditional bullying.

Nonetheless, cyberbullying is not as common as traditional bullying. Studies indicate that cyberbullying is significantly less common than its counterpart, with online victimization rates under half those of traditional bullying incidents (Armitage, 2021). Nevertheless, there is a strong association between online and offline bullying in that those experiencing cyberbullying have a high likelihood of also experiencing traditional bullying. Moreover, while traditional bullying is more prevalent among boys, cyberbullying is more common among girls. Recent evidence from England suggested that about 1 in 20 adolescent girls reported cyberbullying compared to 1 in 50 boys over the two months before the study (Armitage, 2021). Overall, bullying among children and adolescents in school is relatively high and presents a need to be curbed.

1.2. Bullying in Schools in Saudi Arabia

School bullying in Saudi Arabia has never been an issue that has gotten significant prominence in the nation, despite being present and visible in this Middle Eastern nation. As a matter of fact, bullying as a term is a novel construct in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, with research performed as far back as in 2008 (Hammad & Awed, 2020). Therefore, the phenomenon is vastly understudied (Hammad & Awed, 2020). It also lacks a specific legal description in the nation, which adds to its being overlooked (Alsalem et al., 2021). The widely accepted consensus in Saudi Arabian culture is that youngsters frequently encounter bullying as they start formal education and grow their networks socially past the rudimentary family unit (Jambi, 2020). Bullying is viewed as more of a 'rite of passage' that children will go through in their development. This perspective does not see school bullying as an experience that could stress children or adversely affect the mental wellbeing of young persons (Jambi, 2020). Therefore, bullying has been normalized in Saudi Arabian culture as part and parcel of growing up, and its wider repercussions are largely unrecognized.

However, recent times have seen bullying in Saudi Arabia increasingly receiving attention from scholars.

For instance, a study conducted in 2009 examined the prevalence of bullying in 18 countries, among them Saudi Arabia, and presented findings highlighting that the rates of school bullying were between 20% and 40% higher than average (Hammad & Awed, 2020). When a 2010 study compared the prevalence of bullying in three nations, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and America, it outlined findings that bullying rates were higher in the Arab nations relative to America, with boys experiencing bullying at higher rates comparatively (Hammad & Awed, 2020). A different study in 2014, this time focusing on Saudi Arabia, found that a notable proportion of adults who lived in Riyadh (12.5%) had fallen victim to bullying during childhood, with men (28.2%) having been more exposed to bullying compared to women (14.7%) (Hammad & Awed, 2020). High prevalence rates of bullying were also recorded in a 2016 study on Saudi adolescents, which found that a quarter of them had fallen victim to traditional forms of bullying, again with boys (27.1%) experiencing bullying more often than girls (22.7%) (Hammad & Awed, 2020). Another study focusing on 6-10-year-olds in an international school in Riyadh (n = 268) presented findings that 81% of the children had experienced bullying from either parents or teachers in playgrounds (48%), classrooms (36.7%), or school busses (14.9%) (Hammad & Awed, 2020). In this study, high-achieving males more frequently experienced bullying, and there was no association between being a victim and being the bully. Prevalence rates of up to 64.7% have been presented by even more recent studies, such as Alsalem et al. (2021), which evaluated the frequency of school bullying in a secondary school in Southwestern Saudi Arabia. Shifting the focus to cyberbullying, a 2015 study by Al-Zahrani presented findings that 27% of university students in a sample of 287 had engaged in cyberbullying at least once or twice before (Hammad & Awed, 2020). In general, the prevailing culture that is tolerant of bullying in Saudi Arabia seemingly contributes to high rates of school bullying in the nation, which presents a clear need to establish the implications of school bullying and identify approaches to mitigate its effects on Saudi Arabian children.

1.3. Definitions and Types of Bullying

The definition of bullying is rather specific, incorporating the constructs of intentional harm and power imbalance. For a long time, researchers have drawn from the definition advanced by Dan Olweus in describing what constitutes bullying (Jambi, 2020). The definition states, "The phenomenon of bullying is thus characterized by the following criteria: it is aggressive behavior or intentional 'harm doing,' which is carried out repeatedly and over time in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power" (Olweusi, 1993, pp. 8-9, as cited in Jambi, 2020). Based on this definition, bullying constitutes a unique type of aggressive behavior characterized by proactive, planned, goal-oriented behaviors intended to cause

harm and enforce social dominance (Jambi, 2020). Bullying seeks to repeat the actions that cause harm over time to reinforce a disastrous interaction pattern between bullies and their victims (Jambi, 2020). Also, it includes either a perceived or an actual power imbalance characterizing the relationship between bullies and victims, which compromises the ability of the victim to defend themselves (Jambi, 2020). Age, physical strength, authority, and popularity are some of the power systems that bullies exploit to perpetuate bullying (Jambi, 2020). The relationship between bullying and victimization is complex and multifaceted, considering elements related to power and harm causation.

Various manifestations of bullying form different types of bullying individuals may encounter. They are broadly categorized by Armitage (2021) as traditional bullying, sexual bullying, and cyberbullying. Traditional bullying includes physical confrontations such as punching, pushing, or kicking (Armitage, 2021). It also includes direct verbal confrontations and overt verbal attacks, such as teasing, taunting, making fun of the victim's appearance, or subjecting them to threatening behavior (Armitage, 2021). Moreover, traditional bullying encompasses indirect emotional manipulation such as passing nasty notes about the victim, defacing their personal property, shaming, and ostracizing (Armitage, 2021). It is the most widespread form of bullying and the first type that comes to mind when the term bullying is used. Sexual bullying, on the other hand, also goes by the term sexual harassment and involves inappropriate touches, the use of sexualized language, and pressuring victims into promiscuous activities (Armitage, 2021). Finally, cyberbullying perpetuates aggressive behavior or emotional manipulation delivered through digital technologies. Cyberbullying involves spreading misinformation about the victim, posting it online without permission or excluding bullying victims from online spaces and forums. Bullying can be perpetuated in various ways to allow the perpetrator to leverage a power imbalance to propagate harm to victims.

1.4. The Problem Statement

School bullying, a problem the WHO has classified as a public health issue, is relatively prevalent in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, while the problem comes with short- and long-term repercussions, bullying is relatively tolerated in Saudi Arabia. Also, no laws prohibit bullying in schools in Saudi Arabia. It is essential to address the problem of bullying in schools in the nation to mitigate the immediate and future consequences that bullying has on the mental health, academic, and social outcomes of children.

1.5. Study Significance

The available studies on the effects of bullying in schools in Saudi Arabia assess bullying through the lens of students, mostly children or adolescents. While this perspective is essential, this paper examines the

ramifications of bullying from the viewpoint of teachers and guide teachers. These educators work closely with students and spend much time with the children and adolescents in school, mitigating and resolving cases of bullying. Their third-party perceptions of the implications of bullying on the mental health, academic and social outcomes of children and adolescents are therefore highly valuable in understanding the problem and identifying solutions for it.

1.6. Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to determine the implications of school bullying for students in Saudi Arabia. It will focus on understanding these effects from three key dimensions, namely academic, social, and mental health effects. It will look to learn of these repercussions of school bullying from the perspective of educators. Along with understanding the ramifications of bullying on school children, the study also seeks to recommend some approaches to mitigate school bullying in Saudi Arabia.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The current study entailed collecting data on the effects of school bullying experiences on students in Saudi Arabia. It used an electronic questionnaire to gather information on the effects of bullying on students from a sample of teachers and guide teachers who are actively teaching. It considered educators at the primary, middle, and high school levels. The questionnaire was tailored to allow for the collection of quantitative data on the possible effects of bullying on students in Saudi Arabia, and the researcher sent links to it to the educators via email. The research settled on a quantitative approach to allow more straightforward data processing and analysis. On the other hand, the researcher opted to direct the questionnaires to educators rather than students because they felt that the educators would be more conversant with the questions posed.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

Some ethical considerations were vital in the actualization of this study. The approval to conduct this relatively sensitive study in Saudi Arabia was obtained from the nation's Ministry of Education. Approval was granted only after an ethics board reviewed the questionnaire. Considerations on participant privacy and confidentiality were also made to ensure that personal information and responses from the educators would be protected throughout the study.

2.3. Criteria for Selecting the Research Object

The criteria for selecting the research object were based on the following:

- 1) The rationality and methodology used to study students' bullying behavior in schools. For example, it was clear that the survey design can bring insights into

what teachers think about bullying in schools;

2) Previous authoritative studies mentioned, previous study section, and how they examined these phenomena;

3) The nature of the schools in Saudi Arabia and the restrictions on interviewing students who exhibit this behavior.

2.4. Limitations

1) It was not possible to rely on interviews with those students or implement tests to measure and investigate bullying. Therefore, the survey design was an alternative tool to conduct this research;

2) The experimental design, such as a single-subject research design or other designs, was not used because of the restrictions on studying this challenging behavior in schools;

3) The large sample also prevented the researcher from using a different methodology to conduct this study.

2.5. Sampling

2.5.1. Target Population

The current study targeted male and female teachers and guide teachers practicing in primary, middle, and high schools in Jeddah, West of Saudi Arabia. Jeddah was selected because it is the second largest city in Saudi Arabia and the leading city in terms of cultural diversity. These factors would allow for a better representation of the target population in the study. The decision to focus on the educators was motivated by the nature of the questions posed by the study. A convenience sample of 189 teachers and guide teachers ($m = 109$) was selected for the study. All educators targeted to participate in the study had to have attained at least undergraduate-level education. The target population also needed to have some experience with teaching. Table 1 shows some characteristics of the target population of this study.

Table 1. Target population characteristics ($n = 189$) (Developed by the author)

The sample		Fer	%
Job title	Teacher (male)	97	51.3
	Teacher (female)	67	35.4
	Guide teacher (male)	12	6.3
	Guide teacher (female)	13	6.9
Level schools	Primary	73	38.6
	Medium	44	23.3
	High school	72	38.1
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's	170	89.9
	Master's	18	9.5
	Ph.D.	1	5
Experience	Less than 5 years	44	23.3
	From 5 to 10 years	57	30.2
	More than 10 years	88	46.6

2.6. Data Collection

Data collection for the study was done through a survey. The primary tool for data collection was an online questionnaire designed to align with the aims of the study. The online questionnaire was validated using

insights from the researcher's university instructors and expert opinions from individuals knowledgeable on the topic. The study also computed Cronbach's alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the data collection tool. The resulting value of 0.91 indicated an acceptable level of reliability. After improvements were made to the instrument in terms of the language, style, content, and format, the online questionnaire was administered to the 189 teachers and guide teachers. Subjects were requested to indicate their level of agreement with the corresponding questionnaire items. The items utilized a three-point Likert scale with response options "scarcely" (1), "sometimes" (2), and "always" (3).

2.7. Data Analysis

The study used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyze the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires. This analysis included a basic demographic analysis and the computation of mean and response values. The response value "scarcely" was assigned the value 1, "sometimes" - 2, and "always" - 3. The proportions of the respondents for each item were also tabulated as percentages.

2.8. Piloting the Questionnaires

The questionnaire was piloted on a random sample of 30 teachers and guide teachers to assess its feasibility in the main study. The pilot study adopted a procedure different from the one planned for use in the full-scale study in that the sessions were physical using paper questionnaires. It saw the researcher collaborate with a team of research assistants to explain the nature of the questionnaire to the pilot study participants in a two-hour session, distribute questionnaires, supervise participants, and collect the questionnaires from them once the responses were completed. Based on the responses of the pilot study participants, the number and types of questions asked and the procedure adopted were modified to enhance the data collection process.

3. Results

3.1. Effect of School Bullying on Academic Achievement

The results of the study indicated that teachers and guide teachers highly perceived bullying to have adverse effects on the level of academic achievement of students (Table 2). More than half of the educators (67.7%) believed that bullying always negatively affected academic achievement. About a third (31.7%) perceived bullying to only occasionally impact student academic achievement. A significant proportion of teachers and guide teachers (61.9%) also perceived that bullying always prevented victims from participating in school activities. Slightly more than a third of the teachers and guide teachers (36.5%) observed that bullying sometimes limits victims from participating in school activities. The educators generally perceived

bullying to highly affect victims' school activity participation rates.

Table 2. Descriptive data on the academic effect of school bullying (Developed by the author)

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Items		Scarcely	Sometimes	Always	Mean	SD	Rank	The level
Bullying negatively affects the level of academic achievement.	Fer 1 % 0.5	60 31.7	128 67.7	2.67	0.482	3	High	
Bullying prevents victims from participating in school activities.	Fer 3 % 1.6	69 36.5	117 61.9	2.6	0.522	5	High	
Bullying causes the victim to drop out of school.	Fer 14 % 7.4	113 59.8	62 32.8	2.25	0.583	7	Middle	
Bullying causes the victim to feel that school is an unsafe environment.	Fer 5 % 2.6	59 31.2	125 66.1	2.63	0.535	4	High	
Bullying causes early science talent to be wasted.	Fer 8 % 4.2	89 47.1	92 48.7	2.44	0.577	6	High	
Bullying is the cause of quarrels between students at school.	Fer 4 % 2.1	53 28	132 69.8	2.68	0.512	2	High	
Bullying causes hatred and enmity among students at school.	Fer 0 % 0	40 21.2	149 78.8	2.79	0.41	1	High	
The overall mean of the effect of bullying on academic achievement of students					2.58	0.318	High	

Most teachers and guide teachers (59.8%) were, nevertheless, not convinced that bullying always caused victims to drop out of school. There was only moderate support for the perspective that bullying resulted in dropping out. However, a substantial proportion of educators believed that bullying always caused victims to drop out (32.8%). In contrast, there was a higher level of support for the notion that bullying always caused victims to feel insecure in the school environment (66.1%) than the notion that bullying only sometimes made victims feel insecure in the school environment (31.2%). There was a high perception that bullying made victims feel unsafe in school. This sentiment was shared for the perception that bullying led to the wastage of science talent. Nonetheless, in terms of proportionality, teachers and guide teachers were almost split on whether bullying always caused the wastage of science talent (48.7%) or only sometimes caused this effect (47.1%). Bullying was also highly perceived to cause quarrels and enmity among students at school.

A substantial proportion of teachers and guide teachers (69.8%) believed that bullying caused quarrels

between students, while 28% perceived that bullying only sometimes caused quarrels between students. By far, most educators perceived bullying as a cause of enmity between students (78.8%). No teacher or guide teacher believed that bullying scarcely caused enmity. Overall, bullying was always highly perceived to affect academic achievement.

3.2. Social Effects of School Bullying

The teachers and guide teachers perceived that school bullying had significant social effects on students (Table 3). When questioned about whether bullying affects positive social relationships, the teachers and guide teachers overwhelmingly reported that it always did (69.3%), while less than a third (29.1%) reported that it only sometimes does. Relative to all other items related to the social effects of bullying, educators most strongly recognized the effects of bullying on positive social relationships. On the other hand, when asked whether bullying causes social fear, 61.4% of the teachers and guide teachers reported that bullying always caused social fear, while only 33.9% reported that bullying only resulted in social fear.

Table 3. Descriptive data on the social effect of school bullying (Developed by the author)

Table 3. Descriptive data on the social effect of school bullying (Developed by the author)								
Items		Scarcely	Sometimes	Always	Mean	SD	Rank	The level
Bullying affects positive social relationships.	Fer	5	55	129	2.66	0.529	1	High
	%	2.6	29.1	68.3				
Bullying causes social fear.	Fer	9	64	116	2.57	0.585	3	High
	%	4.8	33.9	61.4				
Bullying causes social isolation.	Fer	6	81	102	2.51	0.561	4	High
	%	3.2	42.9	54.0				
Bullying decreases social engagement.	Fer	3	71	115	2.59	0.524	2	High
	%	1.6	37.6	60.8				
Bullying is a reason for committing social crimes.	Fer	23	114	52	2.15	0.613	6	Middle
	%	12.2	60.3	27.5				
Bullying is a reason for violating social values.	Fer	21	103	65	2.23	0.635	5	Middle
	%	11.1	54.5	34.4				
Bullying causes intellectual extremism.	Fer	34	107	48	2.07	0.656	7	Middle
	%	18.0	56.6	25.4				
The overall mean of social implications of bullying for students					2.40	0.418	High	

With respect to social isolation, the results indicated that the teachers and guide teachers more highly perceived bullying to always cause social isolation (54%). A lesser proportion of educators (42.9%)

believed that bullying only sometimes caused social isolation. Nonetheless, a substantial proportion of the educators (60.8%) reported perceiving that bullying always caused decreased social engagement among

students. Few but more than a third of the teachers and guide teachers in the study (37.6%) acknowledged the effects of bullying on decreasing social engagement. Bullying was highly perceived to be an ever-present underlying factor behind the social isolation of students. It was also a highly considered factor that consistently decreased the social engagement levels of students.

Nonetheless, when questioned about the effects of bullying on committing social crimes, violating social values, and driving intellectual extremism, the teachers and guide teachers were not convinced that bullying was always an underlying factor. 60.3% of the educators reported that bullying only occasionally led students to commit social crimes, while 27.5% of the teachers believed that bullying was always the reason for committing social crimes. Similarly, 54.5% and 56.6% of teachers and guide teachers perceived that bullying only led students to violate social values and toward intellectual extremism sometimes and not always. A lesser proportion, 34.4% and 25.4% of the educators, respectively, believed that bullying always led to students violating social values and engaging in intellectual extremism. Overall, the teachers' and guide teachers' perceptions were that the social implications of bullying were high, albeit the social effects of bullying perceived by the educators were not as prominent as their academic effects. There was a higher mean acceptance that bullying always affected

academic achievement than the perception that bullying had social effects.

3.3. Psychological Effects of School Bullying

The teachers and guide teachers did not perceive that bullying always had psychological implications on students (Table 4). Instead, they held that school bullying only sometimes had psychological effects. When asked whether they perceived bullying to cause bad dreams to students, 59.8% of the teachers and guide teachers responded that bullying only sometimes caused terrible dreams, while 30.7% believed that bullying always caused bad dreams. Similarly, when asked whether bullying caused drug use, significantly more than half of the educators (60.8%) saw bullying only as sometimes an underlying factor of drug use among students. On the other hand, about a quarter of the teachers (25.4%) and guide teachers saw that bullying was only scarcely related to drug use, and only a few (13.8%) believed that bullying always caused drug use among students. Teachers and guide teachers also mainly reported that bullying only caused the desire for self-harm among students sometimes (55%). There was almost a split decision on whether bullying always (24.9%) or only scarcely (20.1%) caused the desire for self-harm in students. The effect of bullying on causing bad dreams, drug use, and self-harm thought was deemed to be moderate by the educators.

Table 4. Descriptive data on the psychological effect of school bullying (Developed by the author)

Items		Scarcely	Sometimes	Always	Mean	SD	Rank	The level
Bullying causes bad dreams.	Fer	18	113	58	2.21	0.599	3	Middle
	%	9.5	59.8	30.7				
Bullying causes drug use.	Fer	48	115	26	1.88	0.616	6	Middle
	%	25.4	60.8	13.8				
Bullying causes the desire to harm oneself.	Fer	38	104	47	2.05	0.671	4	Middle
	%	20.1	55.0	24.9				
Bullying is a cause of anxiety or fear.	Fer	5	82	102	2.51	0.552	1	High
	%	2.6	43.4	54.0				
Bullying causes feelings of violence toward others.	Fer	11	83	95	2.44	0.604	2	High
	%	5.8	43.9	50.3				
Bullying causes suicidal feelings.	Fer	49	93	47	1.99	0.715	5	Middle
	%	25.9	49.2	24.9				
Bullying is a cause of homosexuality.	Fer	89	76	24	1.66	0.694	7	Middle
	%	47.1	40.2	12.7				
The overall mean of psychological effects of bullying on students					2.11	0.470	Middle	

Moreover, half of the interviewed teachers and guide teachers perceived bullying to always cause feelings of violence toward other students (50.3%). A lower but equally substantial proportion of the educators interviewed (43.9%) saw that bullying only sometimes caused feelings of violence toward others. Bullying was viewed mainly by educators as only causing suicidal feelings sometimes, with close to half of the respondents (49.2%) sharing this perspective. The shares of teachers and guide teachers who believed bullying scarcely or always caused suicidal feelings were almost comparable at 25.9% and 24.9%, respectively. When asked about the relationship between bullying and homosexuality, teachers and guide teachers mostly viewed that bullying only scarcely (47.1%) or occasionally (40.2%) led to

homosexuality. Bullying was least associated with homosexuality by the educators, with the item ranking as the least probably influenced by bullying.

Overall, the teachers and guide teachers only moderately viewed bullying as having psychological effects on school children. They only significantly agreed with the statements that bullying always caused anxiety, fear, and feelings of violence toward others. Fewer educators perceived school bullying to have significant psychological implications for students than teachers and guide teachers who associated bullying with social and academic effects. The respondents did not associate bullying with psychological effects as much as they did with social and academic effects.

4. Discussion

4.1. Effect of Bullying on Academic Achievement

The teachers and guide teachers in this study perceived that bullying always affected academic performance. The sentiment shared by the teachers and guide teachers interviewed showed that many believed that bullying affects academic achievement, participation in school activities, dropout rates, and safety within the school environment and causes wastage of science talent, quarrels, and enmity among students in Saudi Arabian schools. These sentiments align with what research highlights with respect to the effect of school bullying on academic achievement. For instance, while studying the effects of bullying on academic achievement, Samara et al. (2021) link bullying to withdrawal from school activities owing to a decreased desire for participation. Muluk et al. (2021) also link bullying to participation in school activities, outlining that bullying often causes the victims to withdraw from school activities and be inactive in classroom schedules. Muluk et al. (2021) also present a correlation between bullying and dropping out of school, particularly for bullies. Osiesi et al. (2023) confirmed the links between bullying and dropping out of school made by Muluk et al. (2021) when discussing the problem of dropping out among primary school children in Etiki State, Nigeria. The research concurs that school bullying always leads to decreased participation in school activities and dropping out.

The studies also concur that school bullying always leads to unsafe school environments, wastage of science talent, quarrels, and enmity among students. Allen (2010) linked bullying to creating unsafe school environments. The association between bullying and unsafe school environments was also made by Osiesi et al. (2023). On the other hand, Allen (2010) presented a strong association between bullying and the wastage of talents held by gifted children. Halid (2023) stated that bullying often leads to student quarrels that spill over to guardians.

4.2. Social Effects of Bullying

The teachers and guide teachers surveyed by this study indicated that bullying always affected positive social relationships, caused social fear, increased isolation, and decreased social engagement among learners. These perspectives were supported by Wahab and Sakip (2019) linking bullying and indirect bullying to damaged social relationships and lower self-esteem. Wahab and Sakip (2019) also highlight how victims of bullying demonstrate social fear when they dread school and display avoidance behaviors. The effect of bullying on social fear is also shown by Ali and Ali (2021), who linked frequent exposure to bullying to social fear, avoidance, and anxiety. On the other hand, Marlina and Sakinah (2019) linked bullying to higher rates of social isolation, particularly for special needs students, supporting the perceptions of teachers that bullying always leads to lower levels of social

engagement. Ahmed et al. (2021) also linked bullying to lower student social engagement in line with the study respondents' perspectives.

The teachers and guide teachers were not convinced that bullying always resulted in social crimes, the violation of social values, and intellectual extremism. Available evidence also did not always support these sentiments. Bryant (2019) and Farmani et al. (2021) made some associations between bullying and social crimes. They presented how bullying could sometimes result in social crimes, such as carrying weapons to school or acting out. However, while these findings aligned with the outcomes of this study, the research on bullying causing a violation of social values and intellectual extremism was unclear. No studies have reported that bullying causes violations of social values, but Almahasni (2019) linked a lack of social values to the incidence of bullying. Similarly, there was no mention of any relationship between bullying and fueling intellectual extremism in institutions. The lack of studies on this element of the social effect of bullying presents a research gap that future studies could fill in.

4.3. Psychological Effects of School Bullying

The teachers and guide teachers interviewed in this study did not have the perspective that students suffered significant psychological effects from bullying. However, while available studies may largely complement the sentiments of the teachers and guide teachers, there are some key differences when the perspectives held by the educators are compared to those in previous research. The educators deemed bullying to be only a moderate factor behind bad dreams in students. However, Dorofiy (2020) outlined experiencing bad dreams as one of the common symptoms of students experiencing bullying. Bad dreams were listed along with several other signs, such as isolation, loss of academic interest, unexpected declines in performance, and fear of attending school (Dorofiy, 2020). With respect to the relationship between bullying and drug abuse, however, the findings of the current research aligned with those of previous studies. Like the teachers and guide teachers, Brady et al. (2020) and Arcadepani et al. (2021) did not always view bullying as a factor behind drug use. Bullying must be accompanied by other factors, such as socioeconomic status and family background, to result in drug use.

The educators surveyed deemed bullying to only sometimes cause the desire for self-harm. Likewise, Al-Bitar et al. (2022) also estimated the prevalence rate of self-harm desires among bullied students as 26.9%, which can be described as 'sometimes.' Moreover, Jadva et al. (2023) highlighted how the desire for self-harm only emerged on pairing bullying with confounding variables such as socioeconomic status rather than frequently in isolation. As the teachers and guide teachers interviewed, the study by Strindberg et al. (2020) also highlighted how bullying always resulted in fear and anxiety, particularly when bullies single out

victims. The research on the psychological effect of bullying, especially the findings by Cuesta et al. (2021), also concurred with this study's findings that bullying may cause suicidality, albeit only sometimes. In the case of feelings of violence and homosexuality, however, the available studies on the effects of bullying contradicted the sentiments of the interview educators.

Brady et al. (2020) and Farmani et al. (2021) presented research linking bullying to feelings of violence among students, especially victims. However, the authors highlight how victims may only sometimes resolve to be violent toward bullies, presenting observations that differ from the study participants, that bullying always causes feelings of violence. The educators interviewed also aligned with the view that bullying sometimes may cause homosexuality, albeit a substantial proportion of the participants held that bullying scarcely resulted in homosexuality. Nonetheless, based on Vito (2020), homosexuality does not share any links to bullying in school and is instead influenced by vastly different factors unrelated to the issue.

5. Conclusion

This paper sought to understand the implications of school bullying on students in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of educators through the lens of the academic, social, and psychological effects of bullying. It uncovered that bullying has significant and notable effects on students in Saudi Arabia. According to teachers and guide teachers, bullying always has implications for academic achievement and the social life of students, while it may also sometimes affect the psychology of learners. Considering that the WHO has classified bullying as a public health problem, there is a need to develop and adopt approaches to mitigate the issue. Bullying comes with tremendous short- and long-term implications. Therefore, resolving the problem of bullying in Saudi Arabia will improve the academic outcomes of students. It will also enhance the mental wellbeing of students, who will feel safe in their school environments. These benefits will translate to a better quality of life in adulthood as the students will attain higher academic achievements while free of past trauma from bullying.

6. Recommendations

This study recommends the development of approaches to mitigate bullying in Saudi Arabia. One potential initiative that could be undertaken to combat bullying in schools in the nation is the expansion of school sports programs. Holbrook et al. (2020) demonstrated that sports participation has the effect of moderating bullying and the incidence of depression in school children. Teachers, guide teachers, and students could also be encouraged to form stronger relationships to prevent potential bullying. Cuesta et al. (2021) recommend that students form good relationships with adults other than their parents to establish a protective

factor against bullying. Based on the few discrepancies between the sentiments of the educators surveyed and the studies evaluated, it would also be beneficial to expand the knowledge of teachers and guide teachers on the problem of bullying, potentially through training and education.

7. Study Contributions

Previous studies on the effects of school bullying have mainly evaluated the issue of bullying from the perspective of students, gathering data from them on how school bullying affects their lives and education. The current research is innovative in that it analyzed the effects of school bullying from the perspective of educators, specifically teachers and guide teachers. Having dealt with many cases of bullying over the years of their career, this group would be more knowledgeable about the effects of bullying on students. The insights from the educators did not just add to the available knowledge on the effects of school bullying but also exemplified the understanding of the problem among teachers in Saudi Arabia.

8. Study Limitations

The primary limitation of the current study relates to the sampling approach used. The study used convenience sampling to select educators to participate in the study. Nonetheless, this approach has inherent limitations that lower the reliability of the study. The approach allows selecting only a small pool of participants, which could introduce bias and skew the findings. The study is also limited in that its findings are not generalizable. The shortfall in generalizability comes from the sampling approaches used and the aim of the study, which was to evaluate the effects of bullying on students in Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Hail University (Saudi Arabia) for its continued support.

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