



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

School bullying in Baghdad, Iraq

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Received: 15 May 2015
Final Accepted: 26 June 2015
Published Online: July 2015

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INTRODUCTION

To the editor,

Bullying in school is an important problem affecting wellbeing and social functioning¹. It is an aggressive physical, verbal and psychological behavior intended to harm repeatedly overtime². Majority of research on bullying has been carried out in developed countries^{1,3}. Interest in school bullying in Arab world is a recent phenomenon⁴. Iraqi children grow up during wars, sectarian and political conflicts, and terrorism⁵ which are in turn affects their development⁶. That fact was the starting point to carry out this work to report on the prevalence of bullying in Iraq.

A total of 300 pupils selected by cluster random sampling were included in the study. Their age was 15.6 ± 2.1 years with male to female ratio of 1.3:1. Each pupil was interviewed and a questionnaire was filled. Demographic data and questionnaire on school violence were requested. The later was validated by previous WHO-HBSC surveys.

Out of the total, 173 (86.5%) were bullies (Perpetrates of bullying behavior), bullied pupils (victims) were 161 (80.5%), bully- bullied were 148 (74.0%) and by –standers (witness of bullying behavior) were 153 (76.0%). The forms of bullying were physical (hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, tripping, spitting, unwelcome, touching ...etc.) in 154 (77.0%), verbal (teasing, name-calling, taunting, threatening ...etc.) in 161 (60.5%) and relational (making offensive sexual jokes, comments ...etc.) in 85 (42.5%).

The observed figures of bullying (bully, victim and bystander) and form of bullying (physical, verbal and relational) in this study are higher than that reported in Arab countries⁴. This finding might be attributed to the growing up in socio-cultural that replete with political and sectarian conflicts⁴ in which conflict is resolved by violence. This exposure last more than a decade. Sectarian violence strengthens the sense of entitlement (privilege and right to control), intolerance towards difference (different equals inferior) which are in turn form contempt (a powerful feeling of dislike somebody considered to be worthless, inferior or undeserving).

The observed high figure of relational bullying (sexual jokes and comments) reflected the sexual orientation among adolescents. Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) demonstrated that bullying was affected by sexual orientation⁷.

High figures bullying were noticed among school children in Iraq. This phenomenon needs further studies.

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