

## The Level of School Bullying and Its Relationship to Self-Esteem among Students with Learning Difficulties

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is an intrusive term in our Arab world, but it is a phenomenon and a behavior that is not new. Several societies around the world have suffered from it; however, many workers in education and psychology consider it as a new phenomenon. Bullying is an aggressive behavior spread in schools and in various countries of the world including our schools. Schools in Jordan, like other schools, suffer from this phenomenon, even if the situation does not reach the limit known to the rest of the countries. Its appearance is due to several reasons, such as the changes that occurred in human societies (such as asylum and displacement), the differences in family relations, academic delay, school leaving and school failure, all of which are factors related mainly to the emergence of violence and aggression. Bullying often comes from deprived areas and poor circles that suffer from economic problems. The bullies are usually leaders with a strong personality, and the danger of this lies in transferring this behavior from the school to the street and turn it into a behavior that threatens the security of society through the formation of gangs.

Violence differs from bullying, as bullying leads to great verbal violence and mild physical violence. In violence, weapons are used and leads to severe violence. Most researchers confirm that there is a relationship between bullying and the school environment, where the limits of respect have vanished. This, of course, will encourage some students to bully and being bossy with an unequal relationship characterized by aggression and coercion between two parties, one of whom is a bully who attacks the other party and the aggressor is the victim. Global statistics indicate the spread of school bullying among students of different stages, as approximately (20-15)% of students from third to sixth grades are subjected to bullying and violence from their peers, and this percentage increases among students in grades from seventh to ninth, reaching about (30%). (Corvo, 2012). Many statistics indicate the development, spread and exacerbation of this phenomenon in abundance within the school. It has been practiced in various forms recently and in a striking way. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, it witnessed an increase and spread in all countries of the world, whether developed or developing. In Australia, for example, one out of six students in the age group between nine and seventeen is attacked once a week. At least, in American schools; there are approximately 25% in primary schools and 50% in secondary schools. (Wolk & Woods, 2004).

A student who bullies others feels negative self-esteem. His self-esteem, value, and respect include his convictions in his self-esteem, such as saying (I am competent, I am valuable). People with learning disabilities suffer from a lack of self-esteem and a negative view of others, the self is important in the formation of the individual's personality through events that balance the basic desires and needs and the instincts that the individual seeks to satisfy. When an individual reaches to be satisfied with his/her desires, he/she will be far of feeling depressed, feel as an acceptable individual to others, and has a high satisfaction of his/her self. Hence, the importance of developing self-esteem for him/her self starts here, as it parallels his/her social appreciation, which helps her/him to face life situations. Feeling to be less than others will be reflected in the behavior, conduct, and acceptance of others. Individuals with such feeling show lack of optimism, feel helpless, feel that things are going wrong, give up easily, describe themselves as negative and helpless and they take a vengeful behavior towards others. Unlike the one who looks at himself in a positive way, they act positively in a better way. Academically, self-esteem has a role. The student who suffers from learning difficulties is vulnerable to bullying and looks at himself negatively, which affects his performance and self-esteem, so he needs to raise the level of his self-esteem.

**Statement of the Problem:** Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior, and it is one of the common problems among children, which grows with them at an early age until later stages, and which may affect their future interactions. Bullying makes children suffer from a clear emotional and behavioral disorder at the stages of late childhood, adolescence and youth. The child may bully his peers or may fall a victim to others' bullying. The victim child may learn to practice bullying behavior in later situations, so he becomes a bully when he is a victim at other times (Ibrahim, 2017).

### **Questions of the Study**

1. What is the relationship between the level of School bullying and self-esteem among students with learning disabilities?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the relationship between the level of School bullying and self-esteem among students with learning disabilities

**Significance of the Study :** The study deals with one of the modern and important topics that our schools are witnessing, the behavior of bullying and its reflection on self-esteem, especially for children with learning difficulties, and what is reflected on their self-confidence, their personality and their performance. The importance of the current study comes from two aspects:

#### **First: Theoretical Perspectives**

1. Provide a theoretical framework of bullying as a danger educational and social problem among our societies.
2. Explore the relationship between the bullying and self-esteem among students with learning difficulties

#### **Second: Practical Perspectives**

1. Provides researchers interested in the subject with the study tools to benefit from them in the middle age stage of school.
2. It adds and provides school workers with the impact of bullying behavior among students and its relationship to self-esteem in how to deal with and reduce this phenomenon within the school.
3. It helps those interested in the field to find a safe school community and a guiding method that helps them to alleviate this phenomenon, whether for ordinary students or those with learning difficulties.

**Study Limitations :** The results of the study will be generalized in light of the following limits and limitations:

**Objective Limitations:** The level of school bullying and its relationship to self-esteem among students with learning difficulties. This study came to study the relationship between bullying and self-esteem of students with learning disabilities.

**Definitions of Terms:** School bullying is defined procedurally: it is the degree that teachers will obtain on the bullying scale prepared in this study

Self-Esteem is defined procedurally: it is the degree that teachers will obtain on the self-esteem scale prepared in this study Learning disabilities is defined: it refers to the student who are attached to the Resource rooms and diagnosed as having learning difficulties according to the categorizes adapted by the Ministry of Education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**First:** The Bullying Bullying is a form of aggressive interaction that occurs frequently, depends on command and control, and is practiced by students over their peers in school or even outside the school. It is considered one of the most social, psychological and educational phenomena at the present time, and it is the reason why many students stumble academically, which leads them to hate studying or to leave school. UNICEF defines bullying as: "Bullying is a recurring behavioral pattern, not a single incident. Children who engage in bullying usually proceed from their perception that they are in a higher social position or in a position of power, such as larger physical size, or more physically strong children, or who have a perception that they are popular among their peers. (unicef.org 2020).

### **Phenomenon Spread**

Many educators, international organizations and bodies agreed upon the spread of bullying and its seriousness. The report (UNESCO, 2019) states the following:

- One student out of three students (32%) was subjected to harassment by his peers at school, or to physical violence, at least once.
- Physical bullying is the most common type of harassment in many regions, with the exception of North America and Europe, where psychological bullying is more common in these areas.
- Sexual violence is the second most common form of bullying in many regions.

- Globally, just over one in three students aged 15-13 years suffer from peer bullying, and a roughly similar proportion of students engage in physical fights.
- 3 out of 10 students admitted to bullying their peers in 39 industrialized countries.
- In 2017, 396 attacks on schools were documented or verified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 26 attacks in South Sudan, 67 attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic, and 20 attacks in Yemen.
- About 720 million school-age children live in countries that do not fully prohibit corporal punishment in schools

### **Patterns of School Bullying**

1. Emotional bullying: includes threats, insults, mockery of the victim, and exclusion from peers, humiliation, and telling false and shameful stories.
2. Physical Bullying: It includes pushing, hitting the victim, and stealing private property and school supplies.
3. Sexual bullying: It includes shameful comments on others, and sexual harassment
4. Cyber Bullying: It includes threatening and intimidating messages, photos and videos of the victims (Al-Hadidi, 2018)

### **Theoretical Explanation of Bullying**

**Behavioral Theory:** The specialists in this theory explain the behavior of bullying as observable and measurable. The aggressive behavior according to the behavioral theory goes through two stages: the first stage is based on the assumption (frustration and aggression), while the second stage is the stage of social learning. The theory of frustration and aggression sees that aggression is usually the result of frustration. The exposure of the individual to frustration leads to aggression in any form. The behavioral theory believes that the bully reinforces his behavior by the individuals surrounding him, such as colleagues and friends, and achieves a degree of stardom among his colleagues, which makes him feel different and distinct. The bully getting what he wants is a reinforcement in itself, and this pushes him to create and build bullying attitudes in attacking the people around him, especially, if he is rarely punished by the family or school.

**Cognitive Theory :** Bullies differ from victims in cognitive aspects and processes. Bullies realize themselves that they have the ability to control the environment in which they live. They realize their behavior through self-centeredness and often justify the bullying behavior that they inflict against the victims, as the victims deserve this bullying and punishment. Such bullies have some cognitive distortions in their thinking patterns, and their thinking style is characterized by cognitive immaturity. They always tend to think one-way towards others and have a positive self-concept, high levels of self-confidence, and positive attitudes towards violence (Ghoneim, 2020).

**Self-Esteem :** Joseph Wolpe is considered the founder of the concept of self-esteem, but the first to refer to it and crystallize it in a scientific way, and to reveal its health content is Salter in 1949 in his writings on reflexology. Salter states that this concept represents a characteristic or feature of a general personality. If such a characteristic is available in a person, it is emphatic, and in the absence of it, he becomes unable to assert himself in social situations (Ben Zeroual and Youssef, 2019).

**The Self Concept and its Categories :** Psychologists distinguish between three categories of the self:

**First: Physical Self :** Efforts regarding the physical self focus on helping the child to know his body and the different body limbs, the function of each of them, how to maintain them, develop his motor skills, and accept himself in the image left by the Almighty.

**Second: Psychological Self and Personality :** The psychological self relates to the individual's personal efficiency, including his ability to acquire knowledge and benefit from experience and the growth of his logical and innovative thinking, and his opinion of himself as an individual, to grow his confidence in himself, his abilities and his capabilities.

**Third: Social Self :** It relates to the growth of social relations, in order for the social self to grow, and it is necessary to provide many opportunities for cooperation between children to accomplish simple tasks such as arranging the activity room (Al-Nashef, 2016).

**Theories in Self-Esteem :** There are theories that deal with self-esteem in terms of: its inception, growth, and its impact on the behavior of the individual in general. These theories differ according to their owners and their methodologies in proving the variable that is used in the study, among these theories are:

1. The Needs Theory (Maslow):

He believes that self-esteem is a human need that depends primarily on real competition, uniqueness and achievement, and not on factors outside the scope of the individual (external reinforcement). On one hand, Self-esteem appears in self-confidence and a feeling of discrimination and power, and on the other hand, the frustration of this need leads to a feeling of weakness, powerlessness, inadequacy, and sometimes a feeling of sadness and uselessness. Children have basic needs, which are physiological needs, and the need for security, love, belonging, appreciation and self-realization. Parents and educators play a role in preparing children with the tests related to satisfying their basic needs, therefore, achieving compatibility and self-realization for the child (Al-Dalbahi, 2019).

2. The Self Concept Theory by Rogers, who agrees with Maslow that Self-esteem is a human need that refers to the individual's feeling of satisfaction when he likes himself and dissatisfaction when he disapproves it. It is an acquired need that appears as a result of the association between the goods of the self and the satisfaction or frustration of the need for appreciation. Rogers points out that high self-esteem and positive self-concept come through parents' acceptance of children and their unconditional positive appreciation. Unconditional positive self-esteem means accepting and respecting the children as they are without condition. Positive appreciation leads to the growth and high self-esteem of the children. The psychological atmosphere of the child, in which the child is accepted and appreciated as he is without conditions, does not mean the Lack of controls imposed on the child. This means that the father and mother create the psychological atmosphere for the child through which the child is accepted and appreciated as he is without conditions, which allows him to appreciate himself and achieve his self-esteem. Zahran indicates that the individual transforms his experiences during his life situations into symbols that he perceives and evaluates in the light of the self-concept and in the light of social standards. On the other hand, the individual may ignore himself as having nothing to do with the structure of the self, mentioning it or distorting it (if it does not match the structure of the self). In case a child Experiences a conflict between his evaluation and the evaluation of others, he may sacrifice his self-esteem and deny or distort his experience and change his behavior to match others appreciation and behaviors. This denial and distortion of one's experiences leads to anxiety, resorting to defensive tricks, and poor psychological adjustment (Al-Dalbahi, 2019).

**Previous Studies :** Studies related to the subject of the study, both Arab and foreign, will be dealt with, and will be reviewed from oldest to newest as follows: Abul-Fadl and Hassan (2017) conducted a study aimed at identifying the effectiveness of a selective counseling program in developing emotional intelligence and its impact on the level of school bullying among students of the second stage of basic education with hearing disabilities. The study was conducted through the application of research tools and procedures: emotional intelligence scale (prepared by researchers), The school bullying scale (Arabization of researchers), the Raven progressive matrices test, the scale of the economic, social and cultural level, and the selective counseling program for developing emotional intelligence and reducing the level of school bullying. The research sample consisted of (15) male and female students in the second stage of basic education, who were divided into two groups, An experimental group consisting of (8) students (4 males-4 females), ranging in age from 14.65-13.78 years, with an average age of 14.22 years, and a standard deviation of 0.41) years. As for Bingol's study (2018), it sought to investigate the effect of self-efficacy on bullying behavior. The study sample consisted of (323) male and female students from the schools of the Turkish city of Istanbul, of the eleventh grade students. The results of the study concluded that there is an effect of self-efficacy on bullying behavior.

Mostafawi and Korat (2018) study aimed to know the relationship of bullying behavior with learning difficulties among middle school students in the state of Saida. The study sample consisted of (60) male and female students divided into four study levels, they were chosen in an intentional way. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers used (the diagnosis of learning difficulties for Fathi El-Zayat, a scale for estimating behavioral problems for people with learning disabilities, a questionnaire about bullying behavior, prepared by the researchers). The study revealed that school bullying is spread in a high level among middle school students with learning difficulties. It also showed that there are statistically significant differences in the forms of bullying among students with learning difficulties in the intermediate stage due to the gender variable in favor of males, and there is a positive correlation between school bullying and difficulties Middle school learning.

The study of Ben Zeroual and Youssoufi (2019) aimed to identify the level of self-assertion skill among students who are victims of school bullying in primary education, and the difference in skill between victims of bullying and ordinary students. The final study sample consisted of (26) victims and (30) ordinary students who were chosen intentionally. The study used the scale of falling victim to school bullying and the scale of self-assertion. It concluded that the victims of school bullying are characterized by low self-assertion, and there are statistically significant differences in the level of self-assertion between victims of bullying and other ordinary students in favor of ordinary students. Salimi (2019) conducted a study aimed at knowing the effect of anti-bullying intervention based on social cognitive theory on bullying and victimization behaviors among male students and social competence. It was a randomized controlled trial in disadvantaged urban areas on primary school students. A random sample of (280) students was taken from students of the fifth and sixth grades of primary school from deprived and semi-deprived areas in Kermanshah (western Iran), and the sample included some parents, teachers and school staff. The results of the study showed that the interventions have a significant effect in reducing bullying and victimization, and increasing social efficiency in the intervention group compared to the control group.

Ammari and Fares (2020) conducted a study that aimed to reveal the nature of the relationship in school bullying and self-esteem among school dropouts and non-dropouts from secondary education stage. The sample consisted of (100) male and female students in the Wilayat of Setif, the Al-Emma district. The school bullying scale prepared by researcher Magdy Mohamed El-Desouky (2016) and the Cooper-Smith scale (1967) for self-esteem were used. After statistical treatment, results showed that dropout and non-dropout students at secondary school have a high level of school bullying and a low level of self-esteem. It also showed that there was statistically significant differences in the level of school bullying according to the schooling variable in favor of school dropouts, and statistically significant differences in the level of self-esteem according to the schooling situation variable in favor of school dropouts. The study of Esau and Buali (2020) aimed to detect school bullying and its relationship to the family climate among fifth year students of primary school on a random sample of (100) students. The study was conducted by applying the family climate scale that was developed by Kafafi (2010) and the school bullying scale for Al-Sabhin (2007). The results indicated that there was a relationship between School bullying and the family climate in terms of human aspects and dimensions, the artificial love, the abnormal emotional climate, and the integrated family among the fifth primary students. The results also showed that there were differences among the fifth primary students in the level of school bullying and the family climate according to the gender variable, which is in favor of males.

Beshlaghem Boubacar (2021) conducted a study aimed at highlighting the concept of self-esteem in understanding those with academic learning difficulties and building remedial programs. The study sample consisted of (95) male and female students with academic learning difficulties in the intermediate education stage in the state of Sidi Abbas in Algeria. The study tools were a personal information sheet, Goodenough and Harris's drawing a man test (1963), the academic learning difficulties scale by Bashir Maamaria (2007) and the Cooper Smith (1967) self-esteem scale. The results of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between academic learning difficulties and self-esteem, and there was a decrease in self-esteem and differences attributed to the variable of sex in favor of males.

## **II. STUDY METHODOLOGY**

The study follows the descriptive approach that is concerned with clarifying the apparent state of a particular societal phenomenon or problem through a comprehensive survey of a particular group of society or a social aspect in order to justify this phenomenon or develop future solutions to the problem under study.

### **Variables:**

Independent variable: bullying

Dependent variable: self-esteem

## **III. RESULTS**

By considering the previous studies that dealt with the level of bullying and its relation to self-esteem, such as Bingol (2018) and Beshlaghem, Boubacar (2021), the study of Esau and Bouali (2020) and Hassan (2017), the study of Ammari, Fares (2020), And others studies showed that there is a relationship between the level of bullying and school and self-esteem. As previous studies have shown, the level of school bullying that occurs to students with learning difficulties from their normal peers is high, and the bully is either physical or verbal. Studies have shown that the level of self-esteem of students with learning difficulties is low, in all social, personal and other aspects.

The results of previous studies showed that the low self-esteem of students with learning difficulties is due to students' exposure to bullying in its various verbal and physical aspects.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop educational programs for students with learning difficulties to reduce their effectiveness by bullying
2. Develop educational programs for students with learning difficulties to enhance and increase their self-esteem.

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