Bullying in EFL Classrooms, Reasons and Suggestion Solutions: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

The present research deals with bullying. It is a form of aggression that is damaging psychologically or physically for the victim, and where the strength of the aggressor and the victim is unequal. 450 teachers and pupils working in primary and secondary schools in the General Directorate of Education in Baghdad- Al-Karkh /2 who had attended in the survey during the academic year 2021-2022 were the research subject. Data were collected through a questionnaire that consisted of five items. The responses were analyzed by using the proper statistics. The research findings indicate that focuses on School bullying which is a serious psychosocial and educational problem for students and teachers alike. A number of theories are discussed in addition to the reasons and finally, a number of solutions are suggested.

SECTION ONE

Introduction

Bullying is defined as "repeated acts of unprovoked aggression that are damaging psychologically or physically for the victim, and where the strength of the aggressor's and the victim is unequal" (Jankauskiene et. al., 2008:46). Bullying is a form of aggression in which there is imbalance of power between the bully and the victim that occurs mostly in peer group context (Mishna, 2003:338). Bullying is one of the most evident problems that children face in education system; in addition, it is one of the most important health risks (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011:64). Bullying is perceived as a serious problem in schools in these days (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2011:4).

Educators understand bullying's dynamics and consequences in addition to what they can do to support students in such situations (Allen, 2010:11). Bauman (2006:220) indicated that bullying phenomenon has three components: they are as follows: first, there must be an intention to harm; second, it is necessary that it happens many times; and finally, it needs to be no balance power between perpetrator and the victim. School bullying is defined as a form of violence that harms others and it occurs at school or during various activities when a student or group of students uses their strength in hurting other individuals or other groups. The basis of bully's strength is either physical strength or their age or financial situation, or social level or technological skills (Quiroz et al., 2006). School bullying is considered as "aggressive behavior which mostly usually contains no equivalent power between the bully and the victim, and occurs many times over the time". There are many forms of bullying such as physical abuse, verbal abuse and threats of non-verbal communication. Bullying also includes the use of modern communication means for sending various messages of confusing and threatening. Bullying refers to frequent aggressive behaviour made by one bully or more bullies. Bullying also occurs when a student is teased frequently in a way student does not like (Omoteso, 2010:500). Bullying is deemed as common increasing problem in every society and school. Bullying occurs in any time and it has negative impacts mainly on students' academic, emotional and social development during school period (Kartal & Asude, 2009). Bullying in schools has many and different causes, in this regard Omoteso (2010:500) indicated that characteristics of personality and typical reaction patterns, all together combined with physical strength or weakness level in boys, can help in explaining bullying problems development in individual students. In addition to environment impacts, such as teachers' attitudes, behaviours and supervisory routines which play an important role in determining such problems in school? In addition, parents have great impact in this concern so if they use aggression

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as a way of meeting their needs, or use harsh or aggressive methods of discipline shall have children who engage in aggression or bullying Omoteso (2010:501).

Bullying includes physical and verbal violence includes power and control and the desire to control the destiny of others from peers and colleagues, this behavior exists among students in all stages of public education and can lead to violence comprehensive sense. Aggressive behavior is offensive and the damage to the same people or property or the environment and nature may be aggression verbally or in practice.

Bullying Forms

Quiroz et al., (2006) identify several forms of bullying:

1. Physical bullying: such as hitting, slapping, kicking or forced to do something.
2. Verbal bullying: verbal abuse, insults, cursing, excitement, threats, false rumors, giving names and titles for individual, or giving ethnic label.
3. Sexual bullying: this refers to use dirty words, touch, or threat of doing.
4. Psychological bullying: harassment, threats and intimidation, humiliation and rejection from the group.
5. Bullying in social relations: preventing some individuals from exercising certain activities or reject their friendship or spreading rumors about others.
6. Properties Bullying: taking other people's things and dispose, or destroy.

Bullying in Schools

It is a serious psychosocial and educational problem for students and teachers alike. One obstacle to understanding and preventing bullying is that the phenomenon is a more heterogeneous concept than was originally believed, including a range of subtypes characterized by whether the bullying is reactive or proactive, direct or indirect, and whether the participants are dually involved in bullying and victimization. It appears that each subtype is somewhat unique, not just in the form and function of bullying, but in the risk factors involved. Therefore, a major goal of the present paper is to delineate the heterogeneity of bullying and to explore possibilities for individualizing interventions to meet the specific needs of students involved in the various subtypes of bullying. We intend to illustrate how teachers of ESL students may adapt and individualize well-established cognitive-behavioral programs for preventing and reducing bullying to best meet the needs of students experiencing these difficulties, including the implementation of school-based intervention strategies for addressing bullying situations that are sensitive to cultural contexts.

The Nature of Bullying

Bullying is a growing and significant problem in many schools around the world (Olweus, 1997:1172). Bullying is a deliberate act designed to inflict physical and psychological harm. It involves a person's or group's intentional, hurtful action directed toward one person or more than one person and involves a complex interplay of dominance and social status (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999:131). Bullying incorporates a wide range of aggressive and social behaviors such as name-calling, extortion, physical violence, slander, group exclusion, damage to property, and verbal intimidation (Smith & Sharp, 1994.(Whereas aggression may involve a singular action by individuals or groups against each other and tends to be time-limited (Feshbach & Zagrodzka, 1997). Bullying is typically repetitive in nature, whereby bullies continue to bully victims for extended periods of time (Rigby, 2001:330-331). Bullying also involves a power imbalance between the bully and victim characterized by a victim's inability to defend him or herself against the bully (Olweus, 1997). The imbalance of power might, but does not necessarily, include physical superiority over the victim (Lagerspetz et al., 1982). The imbalance can also be caused by group membership or affiliation (i.e., the bully may belong to a gang, a group with intellectual superiority, or a group with a racial or ethnic composition different to that of the victim). An imbalance can also exist if the victim holds certain attitudes and beliefs. For example, victims may be scared of a bully, or victims may hold beliefs that prevent them from resorting to violence to defend themselves (Parada, 2001:441). The key factor is that bullies, for their own benefit, exploit this imbalance of power to dominate the victim repeatedly in an unwelcome way such that the victim does not welcome this domination and is harmed or disadvantaged in some way.

At least one in six Australian students are bullied on a weekly basis at school (Rigby, 1996:33). Similar figures have been found in schools in Canada, Scandinavia, Ireland, and England (Smith et al., 1999). Research regarding bullying rates in the United States has been limited by the fact that representative surveys have largely concentrated on violence and aggression in schools and have to some extent ignored other typical components of bullying.

Theoretical Perspectives of Bullying

Many researchers and educators have been challenged to explain theoretically the phenomenon of bullying. Thus, numerous perspectives have been used to try to make sense out of why individuals choose to engage in bullying.

According to Sutton (2001:21), bullying is strongly regulated by social cognition and environmental factors. Recently, experts in the field have focused on these factors to develop theoretical frameworks to explain why bullying occurs. In particular, two theories have been strongly emphasized: the social information processing theory and the theory of the mind framework. A third theoretical approach, moral development theory, will also be discussed.

SECTION TWO: THEORIES AND STUDIES ABOUT BULLYING

Social Information Processing Theory

The social information processing theory (SIP) was originally developed by Dodge in 1986 and redefined by Crick and Dodge in 1994. The reformulated theory involves six sequential stages of processing social information. In step one, the individual encodes sensory information being taken into the ''system.'' Second, the individual attempts to make sense or interpret the sensory information. Next, clarification of the information and goal setting occurs. Fourth, the individual seeks ideas for possible responses or develops unique ones on his or her own. Fifth, a decision about which response is most appropriate occurs. Last, the individual follows through with the behavioral response. Using this model, Crick and Dodge (1994:80) claimed that bullying occurs as a result of social information processing biases or deficits at one or more of the six stages. Research findings have supported their ideas.

For example, Camodeca et al. (2003:) reported that bully-victims exhibit deficits in the second stage of processing (clarification/interpretation) and the fifth stage of processing (response decision making). In addition, Berkowitz (1977) found significant differences among individuals in how they interpret situational cues during conflict. Moreover, Camodeca et al. (2003:440) reported that bullies and victims display lower social competence than children not directly involved in the bullying episode. They concluded that the necessary social knowledge may have been available to the children but that bullies and victims did not always apply it successfully.

Randall (1997) argued that individuals who exhibit bullying are doing so because they do not process social information accurately. They exhibit what he termed social blindness in that they are lacking skills to understand other people's perspectives. That is, bullies have little awareness of what others are thinking of them and display a deficient ability to empathize.

Evidence suggests that these deficits result from environmental influences (McKeough, Yates, & Marini, 1994). Children who are exposed to neglect or other inadequate experiences are likely to develop internal working models of human relationships that are not healthy or normal. Thus, social incompetence results. The popular stereotype of a bully who is a social outcast and lacks social insight is implied by the SIP theoretical framework.

Theory of the Mind Framework

Recently, the SIP perspective on bullying has been challenged (Sutton et al., 1999). Instead of explaining bullying behavior as a result of social incompetence, Sutton and his colleagues claim that some bullies actually possess a ''superior'' theory of the mind. Sutton (2001:22) described the theory of the mind (TOM) framework as ''the ability of individuals to attribute mental states to themselves and others in order to explain and predict behavior.'' That is, individuals who possess well-developed TOM skills will be more equipped to read and understand the feelings and emotions of other people. Thus, they do not lack social competence as implied by the SIP framework but instead have an advanced ability at ''reading'' other people. Sutton and et al (2001:3520) argued that successful bullying may be a result of superior TOM skills. Being able to understand the mental states of others and to predict their behaviors can

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be utilized to manipulate the minds of others. This could be a potentially useful skill in all aspects of bullying, particularly with indirect aggression such as spreading rumors, excluding victims from social groups, and avoiding getting caught in a bullying episode.

For instance, for a bully to socially exclude his or her victim, the bully needs to understand the feelings of others in the social context to manipulate others to make the victim feel ''left out.''

Children begin to exhibit more fine-tuned TOM skills as they develop beyond 6 years of age (Ibid). As indicated by research, older bullies are more likely to use indirect types of bullying, while younger bullies exhibit more direct methods (Rivers & Smith, 1994). In addition, indirect bullying is more likely to occur with girls than with boys (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992), and TOM studies indicate that girls exhibit more sophisticated TOM skills than do boys (Baron-Cohen & Hammer, 1996). These findings imply that engaging in indirect methods of bullying requires a well-developed TOM framework. However, some critics of the TOM framework argue that having advanced TOM skills can not only lead to various types of bullying but can also lead to highly prosocial behavior; thus, ''having a superior TOM says nothing about how that knowledge will be utilized' (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001:990).

Sutton (2001) claimed that prior research provides support for the TOM perspective. When Sutton categorized students into one of the six participant roles in bullying (as discussed earlier in this chapter), they also assessed the participants' understanding of cognitive false beliefs and emotions based on false beliefs. They claimed that this research was measuring the children's TOM skills. Results revealed that a bully's scores were significantly higher than those of the assistants of the bully, reinforcers of the bully, defenders of the victim, outsiders, and victims. In addition, results indicated a positive correlation between bullying and social cognition. Bjorkqvist etal . (2000) also reported a significant positive correlation between social intelligence and indirect aggression. Hence, these findings support the notion that bullies possess more advanced TOM skills than the other ''players'' in the bullying episode.

Moral Development Theory

In response to the debate between Crick and Dodge (1999:89) and Sutton et al. (2001:3521), Arsenio and Lemerise (2001:988) argued that bullying cannot be fully understood without considering the moral aspects involved in the phenomenon. They claimed that such issues as fairness, individuals' welfare, and sacrifice need to be addressed. It appears that the SIP and TOM theoretical perspectives do not adequately include this aspect of bullying and victimization. Guerra, Nucci, and Huesmann (1994) indicated that the gap between the study of bullying and the study of moral reasoning is unsettling. A common element exists within the two areas, and experts in the field of bullying would be remiss not to include this theoretical framework in the study of bullying. One theory of moral development that seems to link social cognition and bullying behavior is Rest's four-component model of morality (Rest, 1983).

Using Piaget's (1932) and Kohlberg's (1969) theories of moral development, Rest proposed a four-component model of morality that involves four separate aspects of moral understanding. In this cognitive-developmental model, Rest theorized that moral development consists of moral sensitivity (being aware that a moral problem exists), moral judgment (deciding on a moral action), moral motivation (staying committed to one's values and prioritizing a moral action), and moral character (implementing and following through on the moral action). This model supports the notion that developmental differences in moral understanding exist partially because of the strong cognitive component of moral development. Rest's model of moral development adds an additional element to the study of morality that most other moral developmental theories leave out: a behavioral component. The first two components (moral sensitivity and moral judgment) tap into the social cognition capabilities of the individual. These components integrate ideas proposed by the SIP and TOM perspectives. That is, one's ability to identify a moral problem and consider various possible moral actions requires social information processing skills (SIP) as well as the ability to understand and predict feelings and behaviors of other people (TOM).

The other two components of the model (moral motivation and moral character), however, address the behavioral component to morality. This behavioral component can be directly related to bullying behavior. Once an individual assesses the social situation and considers all possible responses to the situation, he or she may or may not commit to the response and may or may not make a cognitive decision to respond in an aggressive manner. These components

basically determine whether the individual will choose to exhibit actual bullying behavior. Without considering all four components of Rest's model, the complete bullying phenomenon is not fully explained. A person's moral developmental understanding must be taken into account. Researchers, educators, and parents need not only understand how the bully is processing the social information and how the bully is reading others' feelings and emotions, but they must also seek to explain why certain behavioral outcomes occur as a response to the social cognition.

Further research in this area is needed to reveal how moral development theories can add to the understanding of bullying behavior. Although Sutton (2001:3319) argued against incorporating moral behavior into the study of bullying, the author suggests that an attempt may prove to be worthwhile. Why is it that some children choose to resort to bullying behavior as their ''moral'' action, whereas other children choose not to? An individual's sense of ''right'' and ''wrong'' certainly plays an important role in the process. Thus, more investigation into this area of human development is wanted.

In the past, bullying was predominantly considered as a dyadic interaction. Most of the research tried to identify and investigate only the bully and the victim. Recently, more emphasis has been placed on viewing bullying as a group process. Many research studies have identified various roles in the bullying phenomenon. The bully and the victim are not the only individuals who are influencing and who are being influenced by bullying episodes.

Research indicates that nearly 90% of children or youth in a school setting are easily categorized as ''players'' in bullying situations (Salmivalli et al., 1996:255). Thus, research needs to be broadened to emphasize the study of all the roles.

Finally, the social information processing (SIP) theory and theory of the mind (TOM) have helped experts explain the bullying phenomenon. The SIP perspective claims that bullying occurs because the bully has deficits or biases in processing social information. Advocates of the TOM perspective, on the other hand, argue that some bullies actually possess ''superior'' skills in understanding the feelings and emotions of others. This allows them to successfully predict others' behaviors and manipulate them. Theorists from both camps have challenged each other claiming that their perspective is correct.

It is suggested that an ''eclectic'' theoretical approach needs to be taken to explain bullying behavior. In addition to using the SIP and TOM approaches, researchers, practitioners, and educators need to include theories of moral development to grasp a richer understanding of this serious phenomenon.

SECTION THREE: PROCEDURES AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The researchers adopted some solutions on their survey to avoid bullying and treat this phenomenon. The survey contains many suggestional tips and solutions and forms to add any suggestion by the adults. The researchers distributed their survey on population containing teachers and parents on the Directorate of Education karkh 2. See appendix(D) at the end of the research.

Preliminary

The descriptive analytical methodology is adopted to describe and analyze the information taken from the questionnaire to explore EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions. Descriptive research is defined by Brown and Rodgers (2002:117) as "Research that describes a group of characteristics or behaviors in numerical terms". In the present research, the researcher uses quantitative data that is taken from the questionnaire and described numerically.

Procedures

To achieve the aim of the current research, the following procedures are adopted: Select a representative sample of EFL primary and secondary school teachers, pupils and students who enroll education process and faced Bullying

{(see Appendix (B)and (C)}. Constructing a questionnaire for evaluating how they faced Bullying and them advices to prevent it. Applying the questionnaire and collecting data. Statistical manipulation of the data collected.

Population and Sample

The population of the research includes EFL primary and secondary school teachers, pupils and students in General Directorates of Education in Baghdad (Al-Karkh- 2). The total sample number of teachers is (450) teachers, pupils and students, in academic year 2021/2022.

Description of the Instrument

Educational researchers maintain that the tool of research is determined according to the nature of the research and its limitations (Borg &Gall, 1983:273). Since the present research aims at evaluating in-service training courses for English secondary school teachers, the questionnaire will be the most appropriate instrument to be used in achieving the aim of the research. It is designed in the light of different local and foreign questionnaires, literature, and previous studies related to the field of in-service teacher training, and the researcher experience. The questionnaire comprises (5) items under one domain (solutions to prevent bullying) Each item is measured by 5-point scale starts from 5 (excellent) to 1 (weak).

Face Validity

Validity is one of the important aspects to be checked in any data collection instrument. Face validity is one of the several types of validity that is most appropriate for questionnaires. It is secured if the list of items appears to measure what is intended to be measured (Anastasia, 1976:139).In order to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire of the present research, its initial form was exposed to five jurors (Appendix: B) in the fields of EFL methodology, applied linguistics, and education to give their opinion about the validity of the items, The jury members mostly agree on all the (5) items with some modifications, under the same one category of the questionnaire, thus the face validity was achieved (Appendix-1).

Reliability

Reliability is an important step for assessing the research instrument. Mousavi (1999:323) indicates that "reliability is a quality of test scores which refers to consistency of measures across different times, test forms, raters, and other characteristics of the measurement context." The researcher uses the test-retest reliability (Person Correlation Coefficient formula). So, the researcher distrusted the questionnaire to (20) EFL secondary school teachers, pupils, students. After two weeks re-administration of the questionnaire has taken place. Frequencies and reliability coefficient have been found between the first responses and the second for all the items of the questionnaire. The reliability correlation coefficient is reached (0.87). This result indicates that the questionnaire is reliable and is suitable for final administration.

Statistical Means

Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to show the reliability. Fisher's formula is applied to each item to establish the mean score for each item

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Results Analysis

The present research gathers data with respect to the perception of (450) primary and secondary school teachers, pupils, students who are working in Baghdad/ General Directorate of Education/Al-karkh-2 enrolled in educational process and faced bullying and them tips to prevent bullying. The information gathered through the questionnaire has been treated statistically. The results are analyzed quantitatively through the computation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and means. Following is the analysis of the questionnaire's items according to their rank-order organization. (Table:1) provides the results of the statistical treatment of the items:

(Table:1): Suggestion items to prevent Bullying

NO.	Items (Suggestion tips)	Weighted Means	Weighted percentage
1.	If joking comes easy, try humor to shift the energy of the moment.	4.0	75.4
2.	Don't try to fight the bully. Instead, walk away if possible and find an adult to get help.	3.8	73.9
3.	Tell parents or a trustworthy adult about the situation so they can help create a plan to stop it.	4.4	79.8
4.	Bullies tend to pick on kids when they're alone, so try to stay near other children and adults.	4.8	83.8
5.	Sit near the front of the school bus, or ride the bus with a friend from the neighborhood.	3.8	73.9

Results description

Item number (1) If joking comes easy, try humor to shift the energy of the moment. Got weighted means of (4.0) with weighted percentage of (75.4). Item number (2) Don't try to fight the bully. Instead, walk away if possible and find an adult to get help. Got weighted means of (3.8) with weighted percentage of (73.9). Item number (3) Tell parents or a trustworthy adult about the situation so they can help create a plan to stop it.. got weighted means of (4.4) with weighted percentage of (79.8). Item number (4) Bullies tend to pick on kids when they're alone, so try to stay near other children and adults. got weighted means of (4.8) with weighted percentage of (83.8). Item number (5) Sit near the front of the school bus, or ride the bus with a friend from the neighborhood. got weighted means of (3.8) with weighted percentage of (73.9). Item

Recommendations and suggestions

Discussion

Bullying can't always be stopped by a pupil alone. Sometimes it's the responsibility of an adult (teacher/ parent) to put an end to bullying and find out how to help a child, who is being bullied with the most effective advice and tips.

Bullying can happen to a child no matter where they go to school, and although you can try to help them know what to do at the moment, it's sometimes necessary as a parent or adult to step in and help. You need some real ways to stop it in its tracks and truly help a child who can't escape the mental, physical and psychological turmoil of being bullied. Since there are laws that protect people from bullying and harassment, you have people on your side to assist you. Here's how to help.

Tips and suggestions to face bullying.

There are differences between teachers according to their experience and opinions. Here are some suggested tips and opinions.

- If joking comes easy, try humor to shift the energy of the moment.
- Don't try to fight the bully. Instead, walk away if possible and find an adult to get help.
- Tell parents or a trustworthy adult about the situation so they can help create a plan to stop it.
- Bullies tend to pick on kids when they're alone, so try to stay near other children and adults.
- Sit near the front of the school bus, or ride the bus with a friend from the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

Bullying is a common and persistent problem in society, particularly in schools. Overall, a large number of children and youth will experience some type of bullying during their educational experience. Bullying has been

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identified as a problem in many countries. Considerable debate surrounds the definition of bullying. What does it mean to say someone has been ''bullied?'' Experts in the field agree that a worldwide-accepted definition of bullying is needed. The literature on the subject carries a variety of operational definitions for the phenomenon. Thus, more effort in creating a solid operational definition is needed. It is expected that this topic will take its share of research as it is a very important topic.

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APPENDIX (A)

Dear Sir/Madam,

The researchers intend to conduct a study under the title **"Bullying in EFL Classrooms, Reasons and Suggestional Solutions: A descriptive Study"**

Please read the following suggestions and tips suggested by the two researchers to avoid bullying. Mark the option you choose.

NO.	Items (Suggestional tips)	Excellent	Very good	Good	Acceptable	weak
1.	If joking comes easy, try humor to shift the energy of the moment.					
2.	Don't try to fight the bully. Instead, walk away if possible and find an adult to get help.					
3.	Tell parents or a trustworthy adult about the situation so they can help create a plan to stop it.					
4.	Bullies tend to pick on kids when they're alone, so try to stay near other children and adults.					
5.	Sit near the front of the school bus, or ride the bus with a friend from the neighborhood.					

APPENDIX (B)

Jury members

No.	The name and Scientific degree	Specialization	Place of work
1.	Prof. Dr.Jassem M. Ryhan	Methods of teaching English	Al Ma'amoun university college
2.	Prof Dr. Bushra saadoon AlNoori	Methods of teaching English	Al Mansour University College
3.	Prof. Dr. Nidham Sheet Hameed	Applied linguistics	Alhikma university college
4.	Prof. Dr. Abd Ali Naief	Applied linguistics	Babylon university
5.	Prof. Dr. Hussein Mussa kadhim	Applied linguistics	Karbala university
6.	Prof. Sabeeha Hamza dahham	Methods of teaching English	Babylon university