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## IDENTIFYING THE IMPACT OF BULLYING AT SCHOOL

### *Abstract*

The main purpose of our research work is to identify and examine the impact of school bullying on pupils' academic achievement. Our study examined how teachers handle the behavior and situations of bullying in middle school. The research showed that bullying behavior is more prevalent and the bullying is rising, and more training is needed for teachers and middle school staff to recognize and manage bullying among pupils. The relevance of the study is connected with the increasing problems of adolescents in recent years. The manifestation of children's aggressive behavior in communication with each other requires special attention. The manifestation of the phenomenon of "bullying" in schools and colleges raises strong concerns. Despite the extreme importance of the bullying problem in schools and colleges, little research on the topic has been presented so far. "Bullying", which is a serious problem, has become widespread in Kazakh society in the last ten years. However, Kazakh information about it in the media, especially in the Internet space, is extremely rare. This research project examines the concept of bullying, bullying frequency and types, bullying location, bullying consequences, and prevention strategies for anti-bullying at school. The research method is based on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Fifty-four participants were recruited for the questionnaire and 3 educators took part in interviews. This research begins with a review of the literature on the topic, the methods used, and the outcomes of our study.

*Keywords:* academic achievement, bullying, influence of bullying, pupils, school.

**Introduction.** According to UNICEF, 63% of children in Kazakhstan have witnessed violence and discrimination, 44% have been victims, and 24% have committed acts of violence and discrimination against other children in school (Chirkina et al., 2019). Approximately 300,000 children in Kazakhstan become victims of bullying each year. Every fifth child from 11 to 15 years old is mocked and bullied by classmates. Not everyone withstands such pressure and, alas, some sometimes decide to commit suicide.

According to experts, 17% of 11- to 15-year-olds are victims of bullying one or more times a month. Moreover, pupils in urban schools are more often subjected to humiliation than in rural areas. In addition, more than 12 percent of 11- to 15-year-olds have experienced cyberbullying at least once (Dewani et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020). As part of this issue, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his Address "Kazakhstan in New Conditions: A Period of Action" noted that "it is time to take legislative measures to protect children from

cyberbullying. It is necessary to strengthen other measures to ensure the protection of children's rights (Bioglio & Pensa 2022; Alcaine & Sánchez 2020). "Today, even the vast majority of young people who find themselves in the path of someone else's stream can be considered victims of this cyberattack (Isik & Ozdemir 2019; Masrom et al., 2021). For this purpose, the media project "Unsiz qalma" was created in our country. The project is implemented as part of the Internews Kazakhstan program "Media CAMP-Central Asia". Project leader Olzhas Kasym informed pupils and presented videos on preventing bullying (Aikenova, 2014)

Analysing the Kazakh researchers' works, we can highlight several directions of problems. Bullying in modern society is quite a frequent problem in the structure of interaction of various collectives: labor, student, military, and other associations formed by social interaction. Here the bullying definition used in this report has a broad basis and covers a wide range of personal relationship behaviors (Kaldybaeva, 1995).

Bullying here involves acts occurring within a dominant versus a less dominant person or group relationship, where:

- An unbalanced power (actual or perceptual) is expressed through violent actions, physically or psychologically;

- A negative interaction takes place, either directly (face-to-face) or indirectly (gossip, alienation);

- The negative activities are undertaken with the intent to cause harm. It may include some or all of the following actions;

- physical acts (hitting, kicking, biting),
- Verbal actions (threats, name-calling, slurs, ethnocultural or sexual comments), and
- Social exclusion (spreading rumors, ignoring, gossiping, exclusion).

- The negative actions are repetitive. The intensity or length of them set up the dominance of the bully over the victim (Iranzo et al., 2019)

The problem of school bullying in the country emerged already in the early twentieth century, in 1905. Olweus first published his work on this topic. The first systematic studies of bullying were conducted by Scandinavian researcher Olweus (1993). He elaborated on the concept of bullying (bullying), describing it as harassment, discrimination, and bullying. Later British scientist Tattum (1988) was interested in this problem and understood bullying as a specific type of violence where a person is physically attacking or threatening another person with weakness and powerlessness over a long period to make them feel withdrawn, scared, discouraged, and isolated.

Sung (2018) gives the following definition of bullying: bullying, which is violence that can be both short-term and long-term, can be physical or mental, and is manifested against individuals or a group who are not able to defend themselves in the current situation. Other foreign scholars have put forward their ideas about the concept of bullying. Ttofi et al., (2011) suggested that bullying, a behavior that could be identified as a recurring physical, mental, and social or verbal attack, can happen many times in people whose power is formally or contextually superior, on people who are incapable of defending themselves, to inflict misery to obtain their self-gratification. According to Walters (2018),

bullying is long-term abuse, either physical or psychological, carried out by one person or a group of people and aimed against a person who cannot defend himself or herself in a real situation, with the conscious desire to hurt, scare or put a person under prolonged stress. In identifying bullying as a situation, Smith (2016) provides concrete examples of bullying such as threatening, hitting and kicking, locking a person in a room, sending an intimidating message, or refusing to interact with anyone. Bullying is an observed behavior that takes place between young people in school, causing feelings of offense or distress (Thornberg et al., 2021).

Laftman et al., (2018) prove that bullying can be committed either individually or in groups and provokes violation of the rules of interaction, in which the dominant subject (“the bully”) repeatedly demonstrates such behavior that confuses the less dominant subject (“the victim”) (Laftman et.al, 2018).

**Main part.** The Russian researchers Novikova and Rean (2019) distinguish three major approaches to the research of bullying: 1. The dispositional approach concentrates more on the subjects of bullying, on the personal traits of people involved in bullying situations, intrapersonal prerequisites that lead to a person being a victim or an aggressor in these situations. 2. The temporal method considers the imbalanced risk realization in the course of a person’s life path and highlights the existence of periods of increased sensitivity due to life events, the exposure to which increases a person’s vulnerability and the risk of mastering the role of aggressor or victim in bullying cases. 3. The contextual framework notes the significance of environment, group microclimates, and community systems process in that the dominant mode of interaction between people becomes a mode based on unequal power: context actualizes intrapersonal preconditions and moves bullying from the category of risks to the category of reality.

In surveys, about the problem of bullying many scientists from different countries have put forward their definitions of bullying, Many are inclined to say that bullying is violence, some scientists say it is bullying, some say it is action, aggression, or a pattern of behavior (Khukhlaeva, 2021; Yarmina, 2018). The most

prominent in defining bullying is that bullying is a stereotypical interaction. Despite this, all researchers are similar in their understanding of the presence of a large group of social, psychological, and pedagogical problems. Based on the above concepts of different authors, we can identify common characteristics of bullying, such as violence (physical, psychological); bullying occurs alone or by a group of people; bullying is directed against a psychologically/physically weak person who cannot defend themselves; bullying is systematic and prolonged. In what follows, we will rely on the concept that bullying is prolonged violence, physical or psychological, perpetrated by one person or group against a person who cannot defend themselves (Stratiychuk, 2019). This concept most fully and accurately describes the concept of “bullying” and includes all the characteristics that we have highlighted (Soldatova, 2021).

We will examine bullying among adolescents in school, which occurs in connection with the learning process, in school. It is necessary to determine what forms bullying takes at school. It is stated that there is physical and mental violence in the concept of bullying. Researcher Shapovalenko (2020) says about the existence of verbal, behavioral, and aggressive bullying, with physical violence; distinguishes physical, emotional, verbal, mental, and sexual violence (Obukhova, 2021; Khanolainen & Semenova 2020). On this basis, we can distinguish such forms of bullying: 1. Physical school bullying - deliberate pushing, hitting, kicking, beating, and causing other bodily harm, etc. Sexual bullying is also possible, which includes acts of a sexual nature. 2. Psychological school bullying violent actions related to action on the child's psyche, psychological damage is inflicted through constant insults, threats, harassment, and intimidation. The “victim” begins to feel insecure because of constant labelling (hurtful nickname), teasing, spreading of unpleasant rumours, isolation, intimidation (“offender” can make the “victim” do things he/she does not want), extortion (money, food, forcing to steal something), damage and other actions with property (theft, robbery, hiding of the “victim's” personal things). It also includes cyberbullying - humiliation with the help of cell

phones, the Internet, distribution of ambiguous images, photos, rumors, name-calling, etc (Dashuk, 2019). Thus, based on our analysis, we can conclude that bullying is understood as violence that is carried out systematically over a long period, by one person or group of people, against a person who cannot defend themselves. These actions are aimed at causing damage and harm to the victim over a long period, to obtain psychological or physical satisfaction by the offender.

*Purpose of study.* The main purpose of our research work is to identify and examine the impact of school bullying on pupils' academic achievement.

**Materials and methods.** In this research paper, qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

*Participants.* In the process of data collection, first, students participated in the online questionnaire. The participating pupils were asked to answer the questionnaire. Then the following method was a semi-structured interview. Participants were asked several questions on the topic.

In this regard, since our study focused on bullying, we looked at participants who had experienced and resolved bullying issues. In addition, some participants had developed anti-bullying strategies. Here, participants also had to show confidence and professionalism in dealing with bullying among their students. In the data collection process, all 54 pupils took part in the online questionnaire. It included respondents from school number 153. Pupils were asked to respond to the questionnaire and informed not to write their names or any personally identifiable information on the questionnaires.

*Data Collection Tools.* The used method was a Survey Questionnaire for learners. The next method was semi-structured Interviews, especially qualitative interviews, which allow for understanding and meanings to be explored in depth. When coupled with the literature review, informal semi-structured interviews provided us with information to interpret and analyze for our research. They consisted of 4-5 questions with 20 to 30 minutes on average.

The research questions addressed the participant's experiences with bullying in the classroom, different types of bullying, and the

influence of bullying on pupils, classes, and the school community.

Due to our research focus on problems of bullying, we looked for participants who had experienced and solved problems of bullying. Furthermore, some participants had demonstrated inclusive practices in their classroom or school, whether they had taken part in anti-bullying strategies initiatives or campaigns, participated in professional development courses or workshops, or illuminated inclusive teaching strategies. Attendees were also expected to demonstrate competence and confidence in addressing bullying among their learners' backgrounds.

*Data analysis.* Therefore, we collected quantitative as well as qualitative data and carried out descriptive and theme analyses, respectively. Descriptive analysis focuses on quantitative data, and this approach to analysis is primarily used to identify differences in attitudes between groups. Thus, descriptive analysis is used to examine how bullying affects academic achievement among middle school students. Additionally, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze qualitative data.

The interview transcripts of the teachers were collated before seeking interpretations. During each interview, insights and meanings were analyzed, which were used to identify common phrases to explore to develop a theme.

**Results and discussion.** As we have mentioned before, questionnaire data were collected from fifty- four learners (6<sup>th</sup> B, V, G grades). Pupils were asked to report the bullying forms they observed. The majority of pupils reported that the bullying forms they have witnessed physical and verbal bullying, which accounted for 38 %. Among the participants responding to this question, those who said they had only experienced physical bullying accounted for 34 %, and 18 % said they had only experienced verbal bullying. Furthermore, 4 % reported experiencing both verbal and social bullying; 3 % said they experienced other forms of bullying that were not listed, and 3 % said they never faced any form of bullying. The findings show that physical and verbal bullying are the most experienced and widespread forms of bullying that the majority of students have witnessed. The qualitative results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *The qualitative results of the study*

Versions	Periodicity	%
What was the harassment form?		
Physical bullying	16	34
Verbal bullying	10	18
Physical and verbal bullying	17	38
Verbal and social bullying	4	4
Others	4	3
I've never faced bullying	3	3
Total	54	100

The research also focused on students reporting incidents of bullying that they had witnessed most often. Therefore, pupils were asked to identify the places they reported any form of bullying they encountered. Fully half of the pupil respondents (50 %) indicated that they never tell anyone they are bullied. The fewest number of pupils (7%) pointed out that

they tell their parents when they are bullied at school. Pupils who indicated they told the school administration when they were bullied made up 26%, and pupils who indicated they told their friends when they were bullied at school were 17%. Results show that pupils in general do not tell anyone, including school administrators, parents, and friends, about bullying.

Table 2. *Descriptive report on pupils reporting on bullying*

Versions	Periodicity	%
Who have you reported that you are being bullied?		

School Administration	13	26
Parents	2	7
Friends	12	17
None	27	50
Total	54	100

The research also aimed to determine the pupils that suffer the most from bullying between males and females in classes in private schools and residential schools, and how often pupils experience bullying in schools. The results, presented in Table 3 below, indicate that male pupils suffer the most from bullying in school than female pupils, comprising 21%. Pupils indicating that both males and females experienced bullying equally were 67%. So, the results suggest that both male and female pupils faced bullying to an equal extent.

Table 3. *Descriptive reporting of the most bullied pupils by gender and by frequency of bullying*

Versions	Periodicity	%
Who is the worst victim of bullying in your class?		
Males	14	21
Females	10	12
Both	30	67
Total	54	100

After collecting the data by conducting the interviews, we transcribed the interviews into script format. I then read through the transcripts of each interview and identified codes within data and themes within the categories.

Qualitative analysis of teachers' views of the data collection from teacher interviews was used to create themes describing the research questions. In This subsection, the research findings are presented in the form of themes. The themes were designed based on the information gathered from the teacher interviews. The following themes were identified: bullying frequency and types of bullying, bullying location, bullying consequences, and bullying reduction strategies. A coding process was conducted that resulted in the following codes for the bullying frequency and types of bullying theme: Verbal Bullying, Social Bullying, Physical Bullying, Bullying Rate, Bullying Location, Coding Process using codes for Academic Decline, student death, attrition, bullying as a survival mechanism, and strategies to reduce bullying based on the following codes: Policy and Regulations and Disciplinary Measures.

*The bullying frequency and bullying types.* According to the data gathered, a theme analysis of the interview data was conducted. As a data analysis result, themes of bullying incidence

and types of bullying were developed. A process of coding was conducted during the analysis to assist in the theme creation. Three teachers provided responses that were coded to create themes. Teachers and pupils provided feedback on bullying types and frequency they had witnessed. The models of bullying frequency themes and types are verbal bullying, social bullying, physical bullying, and bullying incident numbers.

The teachers all provided their bullying behavior, its types, and frequency. Based on the teachers' answers, verbal, social, and physical bullying were common types of bullying that teachers observed in schools. Teachers indicated that verbal bullying, which typically happens in their schools, is mocking, hazing, and call-backs. Teachers also revealed that social bullying - spreading rumors about someone and intentionally leaving someone out - was common among pupils. Teachers said that bullying happens daily, and some teachers witnessed bullying five times.

Teachers were also asked to talk about what they think about bullying at school. Teachers shared that physical, social, and verbal bullying are regular occurrences in schools, and it happens either at school or on the way home.

*Bullying Placement.* Manual coding of teachers' responses was conducted, and a theme

of bullying location was determined. The theme codes were: bullying mostly happens at school, bullying in class after the teacher leaves, and bullying on the way home or to school, as shown in Appendix C. The participants also spoke about the places where bullying occurs. The answers indicated that bullying happens either at school or when pupils are going home. Teachers pointed out places in school, such as classrooms, hostels, and the playground, where bullying happens. Teachers explained that pupils practice bullying in school, especially in classrooms after teachers leave the class. Other pupils took part in bullying during school hours because of idleness.

*The consequences of bullying.* Teachers were requested to share their opinions on how bullying affects academic achievement. The codes that formed the theme were declining achievement, student death, dropping out of school, and bullying as a coping mechanism, as seen in Appendix C. All teachers shared their opinions and provided valuable information that was used in the development of their respective themes. A manual coding process was conducted and themes were generated based on participants' answers. Teachers shared their perceptions of bullying and its consequences. According to teachers' responses, they indicated that bullying decreases achievement and causes other pupils to drop out or change schools.

Teachers shared bullying incidents at schools. Teachers revealed they witnessed incidents of bullying outside of school by their pupils. In addition, some of the pupils agreed that they reported incidents of bullying to the appropriate authorities, which helped to solve the bullying problem in school. Teachers explained that most of their pupils have reported a few incidents of bullying outside of school, which helped them to use appropriate measures to stop it. Although some teachers said they did not report bullying, most teachers admitted they did have to report bullying to school administrators, advisory committees, and others.

*Bullying Reduction Strategies.* The topic of methods to prevent bullying was formed from the teacher's and pupils' responses (Galal et al., 2019). Teachers' answers were analyzed and similar phrases were coded, resulting in a theme of strategies to reduce bullying. The codes that

were used to create the main theme were rules policies and disciplinary measures.

Teachers were asked about any strategy given by school administrators to reduce the number of bullying perpetrators and improve achievement. Teachers stated that the school has a school policy and a school rule set to decrease the level of bullying in the school. Teachers also referred to school disciplinary measures developed in schools to punish pupils involved in bullying and the bullying practice. In terms of school rules, teachers feel that they are already in place, which helps teachers and pupils understand the bullying consequences.

The data analysis and coding process provided valuable themes discussing bullying at school. Teachers and pupils believe that bullying is common in schools and is practiced by pupils toward others. They believe that bullying happens mostly in the school environment: in classrooms, and during games. Teachers explained that pupils report incidents of bullying outside of school, which mostly happens either on their way to school or when children are walking to school. Moreover, the main place where bullying happens is when pupils are on their way to school or when they are walking to school. Bullying in school has been found to decrease achievement and lead to pupils' deaths, Some may drop out of school and others may change schools. Because of this, teachers believe there are several school rules and disciplinary measures to curb bullying. However, pupils believe that these policies are ineffective because incidents of bullying continue to increase. Pupils believe that those who are punished or suspended from school continue to bully others.

**Conclusion.** This research studied the impact of bullying on pupils' academic achievement at school. The study showed that verbal bullying, physical bullying, and social bullying are common in schools and have negative consequences. These types of bullying mainly occur in the school environment, such as in the classroom, or when pupils come home or go to school. The study showed that bullying in schools hurts pupils' behavioral and academic achievement behaviors. The study showed that bullying causes pupils to become fearful, and panicky, and stop engaging in class, which leads

to poor academic achievement. The study also found that the perpetrators of bullying were mostly older pupils who bullied younger pupils, causing many pupils to drop out and others to change schools. The study results also showed that victims of bullying develop negative attitudes toward education, which affects their academic achievement. Bullying outside of school is reported by the victims themselves, and teachers and school administrators take steps to mitigate it. Research has shown that school rules and disciplinary measures have been put in schools to help prevent this bullying behavior. However, they are not effective in combating

bullying as incidents continue to increase and most pupils engage in such behaviors.

**Recommendations.** The bullying aspect of schools provides the framework for enforcing school regulations. The research results suggest that schools should recommend that all pupils and teachers enforce rules to reduce bullying incidents. The research showed that teachers should be role models for pupils in following rules to avoid bullying incidents. These recommendations are made based on the fact that most pupils are impacted by bullying. Thus, enforcing school rules regarding bullying can help in preventing bullying.

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