

Level of Bullying among Children with a Hearing Impairment, as Perceived by their Parents

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to examine the level of bullying among children with a hearing impairment (HI), as perceived by their parents, and to highlight how much of the bullying against these children may be attributed to the variables of child's gender, parent's gender and educational qualifications, and hearing impairment type and severity, respectively. A descriptive-analytical approach was employed, and the study was applied to a sample of 130 parents of HI children using a 29-item questionnaire as the study tool. According to the findings of the study, the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents is shown to be low ($M = 1.890$, $RW = 37.80\%$). The results showed no statistically significant differences in the level of bullying of HI children as perceived by their parents that may be attributed to the variables of parent's gender and educational qualification or child's gender and impairment type; however, significant differences were found with the variable of impairment severity, with the differences being in favor of those with profound impairment. In addition, there are statistically significant differences in the level of bullying of HI children as perceived by their parents that can be attributed to the child's age, with the differences being in favor of the younger age categories.

Keywords: Hearing impairment - Bullying - Parents - Children

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a form of abuse that involves violence by one person or group of people with the aim of hurting another person, either morally or physically. Bullying has become a common problem: statistics indicate that more than 50% of children are either victims of bullying or are bullies themselves as a result of having previously been victims of intimidation and bullying by their families or peers. Some bullies may have previously been harassed to the point that they felt they were insignificant, so causing them to become angry and take out their anger on others. Therefore, to help stop it being a prevalent problem among children (Al-Abadi, 2020), it is important that the causes of bullying are properly understood. The Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre (GASERC) (2020) reported that the underlying causes behind school bullying are social norms, gender, situational factors, and gender discrimination. Moreover, school rules and systems that intensify teachers' authority over children may also legitimize the use of violence to control children and maintain discipline. Bullying is the mockery of, and the deliberate and repeated infliction of physical and psychological harm on people, and the exclusion of the victims of bullying from social situations." (Levenson et al. (2019, p. 310). Bullying consists of three basic elements: bullies, victims of bullying, and onlookers and is more widespread among school students (Al-Sayed, 2021, p. 455).

The phenomenon of bullying is characterized by repetition because bullies assume that they are more powerful and always resort to violence and abuse in order to dominate, control, and humiliate their victims. Bullying is widespread among children and, unfortunately, it can have profound negative effects on a child's psyche and future prospects (Al-Abadi, 2020). The causes of bullying are multifaceted and can be psychological, personal, familial, cognitive, or academic in nature (Al-Qurashi, 2020). In fact, bullying is one of the most serious and widespread problems of recent times and the impact it has on victims can lead to psychological disorders, anxiety, low self-esteem, and loneliness, and cause high rates of school dropout and failure (Al-Magharebah, 2018).

Parents play prominent and important roles in the lives of their children, and they are an essential component in the structure of the family. Children are more affected by the family than by any other community, so families must pay attention to the behavior of their children; if family members notice any signs of bullying, such as reluctance to go to school, low academic achievement, depression, or any unexplained wounds or injuries, they must investigate these signs and carefully check the wellbeing of their children (Regional Center for Educational Planning, 2019).

Bullying takes several forms: verbal, physical, social, and online (Al-Abadi, 2020). Some studies have shown that children with disabilities are abused more than their ordinary peers, with disabled children representing a high percentage of those involved in bullying incidents, whether as victims or bullies, perhaps twice as much compared to their non-disabled peers. This is likely due to the poor social communication skills of disabled children, which mean these children are more likely to be rejected by their peers and struggle to deal with social problems (GASERC,

2020). Children with special needs fall victim to bullying at a higher rate than those without. As such, the school environment should be adapted for both the deaf and hard of hearing; the deaf are those who suffer a hearing loss of more than 90 decibels, while the hard of hearing have a hearing loss range of 25-90 decibels" (Al-Khateeb and Al-Hadidi (2021) p. 91). The hearing impaired may struggle to adapt to social situations, with the result that they suffer from several social, educational and emotional problems, such as a feeling of worthlessness and a lack of self-respect, which can, in turn, lead to them being victims of bullying. This result was confirmed by (Weiner, 2013) whose results state that the hearing impaired are subject to bullying at a higher rate than their ordinary peers, and has also been shown through use of the "Olweus" questionnaire, which focuses on the different aspects of bullying (Al Dahan, 2018). Therefore, the current study aims to examine the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents and to investigate whether the level of bullying against these children differs by the variables of parent's gender and educational qualification, child's gender, and impairment type and severity.

LITERATURE REVIEW (Previous studies on bullying of persons with disabilities)

Al-Rifai (2021) identified the level of bullying behavior and its relationship to the academic self-concept of primary-stage students with learning disabilities (LS) in the city of Taif. A descriptive-correlative approach was used, and the study sample consisted of 86 (9-12-year-old) LS students. The Lie & Wang's Academic Self-Concept Scale (2005), modified by Tan & Yates (2007) and translated by the researcher, was used as the study tool, along with the Bullying Scale developed by the researcher. showed a prevalence of bullying among LS students of up to 16.3% and indicated that psychological bullying as being one of the most prevalent forms of bullying, followed by verbal and then physical bullying. And it concluded that there are no statistically significant differences between the types of bullying that can be attributed to the grade variable and that self-concept is a predictor of bullying behavior among LS students.

Al-Sayed (2021) attempted to examine the relationship between exposure to bullying and withdrawal behavior among primary-stage students with intellectual disabilities (ID) in the inclusion schools in the Al-Ahsa Governorate. The study aimed to reveal the differences between male and female students' exposure to bullying and withdrawal behavior. The descriptive approach was used with a sample of 102 male and female ID students. The Bullying Victims Scale developed by the researcher and the Withdrawal Behavior Scale developed by (Abdullah, 2003) were applied to the study sample. The results showed a positive, statistically significant relationship between the scores of the sample members of ID students on the Bullying Victims Scale and their scores on the Withdrawal Behavior, in addition to statistically significant differences between the average scores of male and female students on both scales, with the differences being in favor of male students.

Abu Al-Deif et al. (2020) sought to identify the prevalence of school bullying among a sample of mentally handicapped (MH) educatable children and the differences between these children in relation to the variable of gender. The descriptive approach was used, and the sample consisted of 90 (9-12-year-old) educatable MH children (45 males and 45 females). The School Bullying Scale developed by the researcher and the Stanford-Inter Intelligence Scale (IV) were used. The results showed that the prevalence of bullying among MH children is relatively high, with no statistically significant differences between the average scores of males and females on the Bullying Scale.

Al-Zahrani (2020) identified the factors that lead to the exposure of LD upper primary-stage students to school bullying in the city of Jeddah, as perceived by resource room teachers. The sample consisted of 182 male and female teachers to whom the descriptive approach and the questionnaire were applied. The results showed no statistically significant differences between the responses of the study sample that can be attributed to the variables of gender, work experience, academic qualification, or the number of professional courses, while significant differences were found in relation to the educational qualification variable, with the differences being in favor of graduate students.

In the same year (2020), Lotti, et al. attempted to investigate whether students' behavioral and emotional forces and disabilities or relationships between students and teachers were associated with different types of direct motivation for defending victims of school bullying. The sample consisted of 483 male and female students with whom the descriptive approach was used. According to the results, The higher the students' academic merits, the stronger the relationship between the students and their teachers. Moreover, a higher level of academic merit strengthens victims' motivation to defend themselves against school bullying.

Lung, Chiang & Lin (2019) aimed to identify bullying behavior and the prevalence of such behavior among a sample of LD, MH, and ADHD students. The study was applied to a sample of 1561 students, including 439 LD students (289 males and 150 females), 389 MH students (196 males and 193 females), 467 ADHD students (301

males and 166 females), and 266 ADS students (167 males and 99 females). The Oxford Questionnaire for Psychological Happiness developed by Hills & Argyle (2002) was used as the study tool, and bullying behavior was measured via the reports of teachers and families. The results showed that there is a greater prevalence of bullying behavior among LD students, with these students being more prone to bullying. They also found a higher prevalence of bullying among males than among females.

Hamada (2018) studied the provision of a treatment program for the parents of HI children to reduce the bullying behavior of their children. The experimental method was used, and the sample consisted of 15 (6-12-year-old) HI children and their parents. The Bullying Scale for Hearing-Impaired Children developed by the researcher, an observation checklist for parents and teachers of HI children developed by the researcher, and an interactive treatment program between parents and HI children developed by the researcher were used as the study tools. The results revealed significant differences between the pre- and post-scale scores on the scale of bullying among HI children at the significance level (0.01), while no differences were found between the mean scores of the post and follow-up scale scores on the scale of bullying among children one month after the implementation of the program.

Turunen, et al (2017) attempted to identify the relationship between having dyslexia and falling victim to school bullying. The sample consisted of 1045 male and female students, to whom the descriptive approach was applied. The results indicated that a relationship between dyslexia and exposure to school bullying by peers; that is, the more profound their learning disabilities, the more vulnerable LD students become to school bullying. In addition, the study revealed a significant relationship between dyslexia and feelings of frustration.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The researcher used the descriptive-analytical method, and the study population included all 376 parents of HI persons in Makkah Al-Mukarramah.

STUDY SAMPLE

The pilot sample consisted of 36 parents of HI persons, and the final sample was composed of 130 parents who were observed for the purpose of the study.

Table (1) Statistical description of the study participants according to the variables

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Parent's gender	Male	22	16.92%
	Female	108	83.08%
Parent's academic qualification	Lower than bachelor's degree	30	23.8%
	Bachelor's degree	15	11.54%
	Master's degree	13	10%
	PhD	9	6.92%
	Others	63	48.46%
Impairment type	Deaf	60	46.15%
	Hard-of-hearing	70	53.85%
Student's age	8 – 12 years	55	42.31%
	12 – 16 years	45	34.62%
	More than 16 years	30	23.08%
Child's gender	Male	35	26.92%
	Female	95	73.08%
Impairment severity	Mild	15	11.54%
	Moderate	25	19.23%
	Severe	45	34.62%
	Profound	45	34.62%

STUDY TOOL

A 29-item questionnaire entitled "Level of Bullying among HI Children" was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire items were distributed according to four dimensions: physical (4 items), verbal (8 items), social (10 items), and sexual bullying (7 items). The independent variables were the parents' gender and educational qualifications and the children's gender, age, and impairment type and severity. The validity of the study tool was established by measuring the face validity and the internal consistency by Pearson's correlation coefficients. To verify

the tool's reliability, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient method of 0.878 and the split-half method of 0.868.

STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the main question of the study, "What is the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by parents?", the researcher calculated the frequencies, percentages, arithmetic averages, standard deviations, and ranks of the responses to the questionnaire.

Table (2) Arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the dimension of the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents

Dimension	M	SD	RW	Level	Rank
Social bullying	2.135	0.650	42.69%	Low	1
Verbal bullying	2.048	0.619	40.96%	Low	2
Physical bullying	1.740	0.523	34.81%	Very low	3
Sexual bullying	1.637	0.547	32.75%	Very low	4
Total Average	1.890	0.480	37.80	Low	

Table (2) shows that bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents has a low rating level (M = 1.890, RW = 37.80%). The same table shows that the dimension of social bullying comes first, followed by verbal, then physical, and finally sexual bullying.

Sub-question 1: Are there any significant differences in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents that are due to the parent's gender and educational qualifications?

Parent's gender

Due to the large discrepancy in the number of gender categories, the Mann-Whitney test (U) and (Z) values were used as a non-parametric method to identify the significance of the differences between the mean ranks of the scores of the two groups. Table (3) shows the results.

Table (3). The significance of the differences between the mean scores of the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents, which are attributed to the parent's gender variable.

Dimension	Total score		
Group	Female	Male	Female
Number	108	22	108
Rank average	64.30	65.27	65.55
Rank total	6944	1436	7079
U value	1183		
Z value	-0.031		
Significance level	0.975 (insignificant)		

As shown in Table (3), the results of the "Mann - Whitney test indicate that there are no significant differences in the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents due to the parents' gender, as the calculated Z value (Z = -0.031, p = 0.975) is smaller than the cut-off value (1.96).

Parent's educational qualifications

Due to the large discrepancy in the number of categories of educational qualifications, the researcher used a non-

laboratory test (namely, the Kruskal-Wallis test) to reveal the differences in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents that could be attributed to the parents' academic qualifications. Table (4) displays the results.

Table (4). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test to identify the differences between the members of the study sample in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents, which are attributed to the educational qualification variable

Dimension	Group	N	Rank average	Kruskal value	Significance level
Total score	Lower than bachelor's degree	30	79.25	8.612	0.072 (insignificant)
	Bachelor's degree	15	49.67		
	Master's degree	13	58.19		
	PhD	9	78		
	Others	63	62.44		

According to Table (4), there are no significant differences in the bullying level among HI children as perceived by their parents that are attributed to the parent's educational qualification variable. The Kruskal-Wallis value at the degree of freedom (4) is $\chi^2(4) = 8.612$, $p = 0.072$, which means that the educational qualification variable does not affect the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents, with the exception of the dimensions of physical bullying and sexual bullying, which show significant differences in favor of PhD holders.

Sub-question 2: Are there significant differences in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents that are attributed to the variables of the child's gender, age, and impairment type and severity?

Child's gender

Due to the large discrepancy in the number of gender categories, the Mann-Whitney test (U) and (Z) values were used as a non-parametric method to identify the significance of the differences between the mean ranks of the scores of the two groups. Table (3) shows the results.

Table (5). The significance of the differences between the mean scores of the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents due to the child's gender variable.

Dimension	Total score		
	Female	Male	Female
Group			
Number	95	35	95
Rank average	66	69	64.21
Rank total	6270	2415	6100
U value	1540		
Z value	-0.646		
Significance level	0.519 (insignificant)		

As shown in Table (5), the results of the "Mann - Whitney test indicate that there are no significant differences in the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents due to the child's gender, as the calculated Z value ($Z = 0.646$, $p = 0.519$) is smaller than the cut-off value (1.96).

Impairment type

Due to the large discrepancy in the number of impairment type categories, the Mann-Whitney test (U) and (Z) values were used as a non-parametric method to identify the significance of the differences between the mean ranks of the scores of the two groups. Table (6) shows the results.

Table (6). The significance of the differences between the mean scores of the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents due to the impairment type

Dimension	Total score	
Group	Deaf	Hard of hearing
N	60	70
Rank average	67.79	63.54
Rank total	4067.50	4447.50
U value	1962.500	
Z value	-0.645	
Significance level	0.519 (insignificant)	

As shown in Table (6), the results of the "Mann - Whitney test indicate that there are no significant differences in the level of bullying among HI students as perceived by their parents due to the impairment type variable, as the calculated Z value (Z = 0.645, p = 0.519) is smaller than the cut-off value (1.96).

Impairment severity

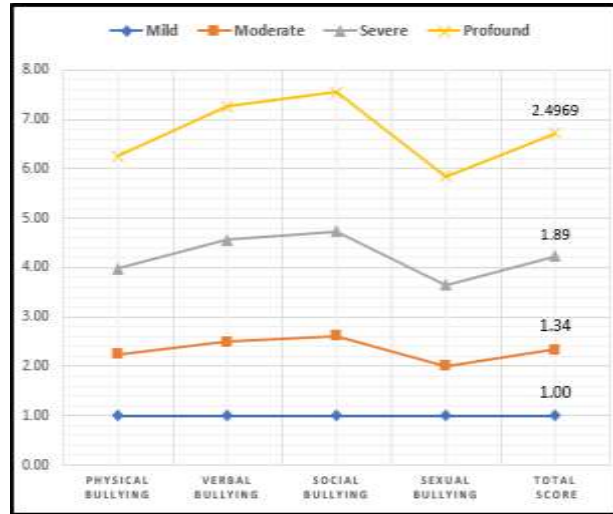
To identify the differences in the bullying level among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the impairment severity variable, while accounting for the large discrepancy in the number of categories of impairment severity, the researcher used a non-laboratory test, namely, the Kruskal-Wallis test. Table (7) displays the results.

Table (7). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test to identify the differences between the members of the study sample in the level of bullying among HI children, as perceived by their parents due to the impairment severity variable

Dimension	Group	Number	Rank average	Kruskal value	Significance level
Total score	Mild	15	10.50	116.804	0.000 (significant at 0.01)
	Moderate	25	26.50		
	Severe	45	63		
	Profound	45	108		

According to Table (7), there are statistically significant differences in the bullying level among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the impairment severity variable, with the difference being in favor of those with profound disabilities. The Kruskal-Wallis value at the degree of freedom (3) is $\chi^2(3) = 116.804$, $p = 0.000$, which means that the impairment severity variable affects the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents. It can be deduced that the higher the impairment level, the higher the level of bullying of HI children. Figure (1) shows the results.

Figure (1) The level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the impairment severity variable



Child's age

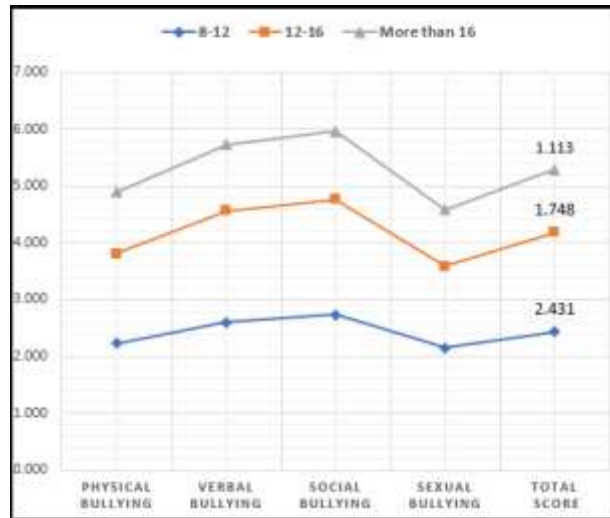
To identify the differences in the bullying level among HI children, as perceived by their parents due to the child's age variable, while accounting for the large discrepancy in the number of categories of the child's age, the researcher used a non-laboratory test, namely the Kruskal-Wallis test. Table (8) displays the results.

Table (7). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test to identify the differences between the members of the study sample in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents, due to the child's age

Dimension	Group	N	Rank average	Kruskal value	Significance level
Total score	8-12 years	55	103	112.847	0.000 (significant at 0.01)
	12-16 years	45	53		
	More than 16 years	30	15.50		

According to Table (8), there are significant differences in the bullying level among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the child's age variable, with the differences being in favor of those of a younger age. The Kruskal-Wallis value at the degree of freedom (2) is $\chi^2(2) = 112.847$, $p = 0.000$, which means that the child's age variable affects the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents. It can be deduced that the younger the child's age, the higher the impact of the bullying level on HI children. These results can be seen in Figure (2).

Figure (2) The level of bullying among HI children, as perceived by their parents due to the child's age variable



DISCUSSION

The findings revealed the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents to be low ($M = 1.890$, $RW = 37.80\%$), with social bullying having the highest level, followed by verbal, then physical, and finally sexual bullying. Moreover, there are no statistically significant differences in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the study variables (parent's gender and educational qualification and child's gender and impairment type), while there are statistically significant differences due to the impairment severity variable, with the differences being in favor of the profoundly disabled. The results also confirmed that there are statistically significant differences in the level of bullying among HI children as perceived by their parents due to the child's age variable, with the differences being in favor of the younger ones. The researcher believes that this result is logical, as the higher the impairment severity, the higher the level of bullying among HI children. This is consistent with (Weiner, 2013), who reported that the hearing impaired are more prone to bullying than their ordinary peers. The hearing impaired may have problems in adapting to social situations, which can, in turn, lead to them suffering various social, educational, and emotional problems. They may feel that they are worthless and lack self-respect, and such negative self-esteem can result in many problems, including bullying (Abu Al-Fadl, 2017).

One of the problems with bullying is that parents often don't realize it is taking place; instead, bullying develops in secret while parents, teachers, and social and psychological specialists remain unaware. The effects of being bullied can even affect the behavior of victims outside school, with victims behaving aggressively, with the result that those close to them may describe them as being violent, rough, or selfish. Further exacerbating the problem of bullying is simply the fact that many parents and teachers do not understand what causes bullying.

Younger children are likelier to be bullied by others, and this is also confirmed by the results of (Lung, Chiang & Lin, 2019), who reported that the child's age variable has an effect on the level of bullying. Therefore, to reduce the threat of bullying, the school environment should be adapted for both the deaf and hard of hearing. The phenomenon of bullying has become a common and dangerous problem, and research confirms the extent of the negative effects that it can have on the psychological wellbeing of children in the long run. The statistics indicate that half of children will experience bullying at some point in their school lives. Victims of bullying often hide their suffering from their parents because they feel ashamed and do not want to appear vulnerable. To help children confront bullying in their schools, parents should notice and realize the nature of the problem so that they are able to quickly confront and resolve it (Abu Al-Diyar, 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the cooperation of both parents and teachers in creating a safe classroom environment, on the basis of the following: building values for children, offering workshops for teachers of HI students on how to

reduce bullying behavior among students, and promoting aculture of understanding of individual differences so that people are able to better understood HI childrenand modify their attitudes toward them. The researcheralso calls for training HI children on how to protect themselves from bullying and how to defend themselves in a safe and legitimate manner. Furthermore, laws that deter bullying should be established with the aim of reducing bullying and spreading societal awareness and acceptance of hearing impairments.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher suggests conducting further training program-based studies on how to i) change the attitudes of students towards their HI peers, ii)help teachers of HI students to reduce the bullying behavior of HI students, ii) find out the factors that lead to the exposure of HI persons to school bullying, iv) educate mothers of HI children on how to reduce bullying behavior among their children, and v)study.

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