El mohtaref journal of sports Science. Social And Human Science

Vol (13) N° 01(2026)

P 359-376

Search information

Received 27/01/2026
Accepted 27/02/2026

Printed ISSN: 2352-989X
Online ISSN: 2602-6856

Bullying as a Mirror of Social Fragility:

A Sociological Field Study of El-Borj Neighborhood in the Context of Changing Value Structures"

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze bullying as a reflection of social fragility within the context of value transformations in Algerian society, through a field study in Hai El-Borj. The research adopts a sociological approach based on field observations, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of digital interactions, with the objective of identifying prevalent forms of bullying, targeted groups, and the structural factors that explain the phenomenon. Findings reveal that bullying transcends being merely deviant individual behavior, becoming instead a mechanism for reproducing relations of domination and symbolic violence, in a context marked by weak social control and the decline of solidarity values.

Keywords: Bullying, Social Fragility, Symbolic Violence, Al Bordj neighborhood, Value Transformations.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying has become one of the most prominent social issues, no longer understood merely as an individual aggressive behavior, but rather as a sociological mirror that profoundly reflects the growing fragility of social structures and the deep transformations in the value systems of societies. It constitutes an indicator of a dysfunction in society's capacity to protect its members and a decline in the effectiveness of social control mechanisms that are supposed to ensure cohesion and harmony among its components.

Bullying does not manifest simply as a transient conflict between individuals; instead, it expresses the erosion of social bonds, the retreat of values of solidarity and cooperation, and the rise of competitiveness and domination at the expense of empathy and mutual respect. With the intensification of transformations imposed by globalization and digitalization, individuals have become increasingly exposed to aggressive interactions across multiple spaces—from schools to neighborhoods, and from the physical world to the digital sphere—rendering the phenomenon multifaceted and multidimensional.

In this context, the concept of social vulnerability emerges as a key analytical lens for understanding the spread of bullying, as it refers to the weakened capacity of society to protect vulnerable groups and to guarantee their basic rights. When rights are monopolized by the powerful, and the vulnerable are perceived as instruments for reinforcing others' authority or as outlets for psychological and social crises, the environment becomes conducive to the proliferation of bullying practices in their various forms: verbal, physical, and digital.

From this perspective, bullying can also be understood as a mechanism for reproducing power imbalances and domination, whereby individuals seek to assert their presence and compensate for feelings of weakness by inflicting harm on others, thereby deepening social disparities and reinforcing the erosion of trust within social relationships.

Accordingly, studying the phenomenon of bullying within a specific urban context, such as the Al-Burj neighborhood, does not merely represent an analysis of individual behaviors; rather, it opens the way to interrogating broader transformations in the value structure of Algerian society, and to understanding how everyday practices reveal the intersection of economic, social, and cultural factors that contribute to the reproduction of violence in both explicit and implicit forms.

Research Problem:

Bullying is today regarded as one of the complex social phenomena that reflects deeper transformations in the value structure and the social system. At the international level, UNESCO statistics reveal that nearly a quarter of a billion children out of one billion school-aged children are exposed to bullying. Approximately 34% of students report having experienced harsh treatment, while 8% suffer from daily bullying. In the Arab world, Saudi Arabia has recorded striking rates, reaching 47% among children and 25% among adolescents, with a noticeable gender disparity (57.1% among boys compared to 42.9% among girls) **(Sanaa, p. 65).**

In the Algerian context, despite the scarcity of empirical studies, available findings reveal alarming levels. A field study conducted by Chotibi Fatima Zahra on middle education showed that between 75% and 83.3% of students were exposed to verbal bullying, and between 58.3% and 75% to physical bullying. The study also indicated that bullying behaviors were perpetrated by groups of males (33.3%), females (29.16%), or mixed groups (33.3%) **(Fatima, p. 95)**. These findings intersect with national security statistics, which recorded a total of 296,148 crimes in 2021 (an average of 811 crimes per day), representing an increase of approximately 14.71% compared to 2020. Crimes against persons reached 87,163 cases, equivalent to 239 assaults per day **(Bekis, 2023).** Such indicators reflect a state of social anomie and a decline in the effectiveness of traditional mechanisms of social control, making violence in its various forms—including bullying—a dominant practice in everyday life.

When these figures and data are projected onto the local reality of the Al-Burj neighborhood, they raise several questions regarding the nature of bullying as a mirror of social vulnerability, particularly within an urban environment where economic fragility intersects with the erosion of family and collective solidarity, as well as with transformations in values that once regulated social relations.

Accordingly, the main research problem can be formulated as follows:

To what extent can bullying in the Al-Burj neighborhood be considered a reflection of social vulnerability and transformations affecting the value structure, and how can the different forms of bullying (verbal, physical, and digital) be explained in light of the weakening of social control and the decline of traditional mechanisms of solidarity?

Study Hypotheses, Significance, and Objectives

3 .Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (Gender):

There are statistically significant differences between males and females in the level of exposure to bullying. Males are more likely to be exposed to physical bullying, whereas females tend to experience verbal and social bullying more frequently.

Hypothesis 2 (Age):

The level of exposure to bullying varies according to age group, with a higher likelihood of exposure among younger age groups compared to older ones.

Hypothesis 3 (Educational Level):

The educational level is associated with the dominant pattern of bullying. Physical and verbal bullying are more prevalent at the middle and secondary educational levels, whereas digital and symbolic bullying are more common at the university level.

4 .Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the following aspects:

The scarcity of field-based sociological studies addressing bullying in urban spaces characterized by social vulnerability in Algeria.

Highlighting the relationship between transformations in value systems and the evolution of both symbolic and overt forms of violence.

Providing empirical data that may contribute to the formulation of preventive programs and effective community-based interventions.

5 .Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to:

Identify the prevalent forms of bullying in the Al-Burj neighborhood.

Determine the social groups most vulnerable to exposure to bullying.

Analyze the social, economic, and cultural factors that explain the emergence and persistence of the phenomenon.

6 .From Latent Violence to the Social Structure of Domination: A Critical Sociological Reading of the Concept of Bullying

The concept of bullying represents one of the most problematic notions in the social and psychological sciences. It is no longer perceived merely as an individual aggressive behavior; rather, it has evolved into a social structure that reflects relations of power and domination within educational and social spaces. The first scholar to introduce the term bullying in a scientific manner was the Norwegian behavioral scientist Dan Olweus (1978), who laid the foundational elements for defining the phenomenon as a repeated behavior in which a stronger individual or group persecutes a weaker individual.

In the same context, Dodge (1990) was among the earliest scholars to address bullying in American schools, while the term became associated with Rigby (1991) through its application in Australian schools. Bandura (1978), for his part, focused on the psychosocial dimension of bullying behavior, analyzing the cognitive and emotional factors associated with it **(Amal, 2023, p. 249).**

The labels attributed to this behavior have varied, ranging from dominance, coercion, thuggery, and peer violence. However, the term bullying has become established in the scientific literature as the most precise expression of the essence of the phenomenon. It represents one form of aggressive behavior, yet it is distinguished from sporadic or situational aggression by its repetitive nature and the imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Moreover, bullying generates in the bully a sense of exhilaration and pleasure during the act of aggression, which points to the presence of sadistic tendencies in certain cases **(Mustapha, 2017, p. 87).**

From a psychological perspective, bullying is interpreted as a reflection of the state of frustration experienced by individuals under familial, school-related, or social pressures. Miller, Sears, and Dollard argued that aggression constitutes the most evident response to situations of frustration **(Botrous, 2008, p. 245).** Other studies suggest that increasing psychological stress generates aggressive reactions, one of the most prominent of which is bullying, as a form of aggressive discharge directed toward others. Some theorists, such as Hegman (1994), further maintain that bullying represents a displacement of aggression from the original source of frustration toward an alternative, weaker target.

From a sociological perspective, bullying is not merely an individual behavior but rather an expression of relations of domination and the reproduction of inequality, as adolescents find in bullying a means of self-assertion and the imposition of control within peer groups. Notably, numerous studies have observed that bullies often enjoy social status and acceptance among their peers, and are surrounded by passive followers who provide support and encouragement for the continuation of their behaviors. This dynamic

renders bullying a mechanism for sustaining symbolic power within the school environment **(Amal, 2023, p. 250).**

School bullying is also sometimes linked to the very structure of the school itself. Excessive authoritarianism on the part of teachers, as well as organizational disorder within educational institutions, create a climate conducive to the spread of this phenomenon **(Mohamed, 2013, p. 85).** This situation allows bullying to go beyond being merely a form of "latent violence" to become a structure of social domination that permeates the fabric of everyday relationships among students, leaving profound psychological and social effects on victims, such as social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and depression.

Thus, bullying emerges as a complex phenomenon in which psychological dimensions (frustration, aggression, and sadism) intersect with sociological dimensions (domination, the reproduction of hierarchy, and symbolic power). This intersection underscores the need for a critical sociological reading that reveals how bullying shifts from being an individual practice to a structural mechanism of domination within the social space.

Patterns of Bullying and Their Characteristics

Table (01): Patterns of Bullying and Their Characteristics (Abdelghani, 2021, p. 10

Pattern of Bullying	Characteristics
Physical Bullying	Involves direct use of force (hitting, kicking, pushing, or damaging belongings); overt and visible; often linked to younger age groups; creates immediate physical and psychological harm.
Verbal Bullying	Includes insults, name-calling, mocking, threats, and humiliation; does not leave physical marks but undermines self-esteem and emotional well-being.
Social / Relational Bullying	Aims to damage social relationships; includes exclusion, rumor-spreading, manipulation, and isolation; subtle, covert, and difficult to detect; causes loneliness and social marginalization.
Cyberbullying / Digital Bullying	Conducted via digital platforms; includes harassment, threats, defamation, or humiliation online; characterized by anonymity, wide audience, and persistent harmful content.
Symbolic Bullying	Uses gestures, looks, silence, or symbolic exclusion to impose dominance; reflects symbolic violence and reinforces social hierarchies.

8 .Methodology and Study Procedures:

Based on the nature of the study and the objectives it seeks to achieve, the researcher adopted the descriptive-analytical method in its survey form. This method focuses on studying the phenomenon as it exists in reality by providing a precise description, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and by collecting relevant information to investigate its manifestations and various relationships. The method goes beyond mere description to include analysis, correlation, and interpretation, allowing for the formulation of scientific

conclusions that can support proposed perspectives and enhance the body of knowledge on the topic.

In this study, this method was employed to measure the prevalence of the study variables represented by the phenomenon of bullying within the Al-Burj neighborhood and to examine their relationship with sociodemographic variables (gender, age, educational level, and social status) among the study sample.

1.8 .Study Boundaries

The current study is defined by the following boundaries:

A. Spatial Boundaries:

The study was conducted in the Al-Burj neighborhood, an urban area characterized by high population density, social and economic diversity, and indicators of social vulnerability, such as unemployment, weak infrastructure, and limited access to services.

B. Temporal Boundaries:

The study was carried out during the period from March 1, 2025, to the end of April 2025, which included observations and interviews.

2.8 .Study Population and Sample

A. Data Collection Tools:

The study population consists of residents of the Al-Bordj neighborhood aged 15–45 years. A purposive sample of 120 individuals (n = 120) was selected to represent diverse categories based on gender, age, and social status.

A structured closed-ended questionnaire was designed, comprising four main sections:

Demographic Data: Age, gender, educational level, and social status.

Indicators of Social Vulnerability

Indicators of Social Control

Exposure to Bullying: Including type, frequency, and context of occurrence.

B. Variables and Measurement Tools

- **Dependent Variable:**

  Exposure to bullying (**0 = No, 1 = Yes**)

  Type of bullying (verbal, physical, digital, multiple)

• Independent Variables:

- ✓ **Level of social vulnerability** (measured on a scale of 0–10)
- ✓ **Strength of social control** (measured on a scale of 0–10)
- ✓ **Degree of digital engagement** (0–10)
- ✓ **Category of social vulnerability** (0 = Non-vulnerable, 1 = Vulnerable)
- ✓ **Age and gender** as control variables

C. Statistical Analysis

The following statistical methods were employed:

- ✓ **Descriptive statistics:** percentages, mean, and mode
- ✓ **Chi-square test (Khi²):** to measure the relationship between nominal variables

9. Results

1.9. General Sample Data

Table (02): General Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Arithmetic mean	mode
Gender	Male	68	56.7	—	Male
	Female	52	43.3		
Age Group	19–15	38	31.7	21.9	
	20-24	46	38.3		22
	25-29	36	30.0		
Educational Level	Middle School	30	25.0	—	
	Secondary School	54	45.0		Secondary
	University	36	30.0		
Social Status	Single	88	73.3	—	Single
	Married	32	26.7		

Note: The arithmetic mean was calculated only for quantitative variables (such as age), whereas the mode was calculated for qualitative variables.

2.9. Statistical Analysis of General Data

a. Gender

- Males represent 56.7% of the sample, compared to 43.3% females.
- The mode = "Male," indicating that males constitute the most frequent category in the sample.

- This suggests that the study focuses on a predominantly male group, which may influence the nature and forms of bullying identified.

b. Age

- The most represented age group is 20–24 years (38.3%), followed by 15–19 years (31.7%), and then 25–29 years (30%).
- The arithmetic mean = 21.9 years, indicating that the sample tends toward early adulthood.
- The mode = 22 years, meaning this age occurs more frequently than others.

c. Educational Level

- The largest proportion of respondents is at the secondary education level (45%), followed by university level (30%), and then intermediate level (25%).
- The mode = "Secondary," reflecting that the sample mainly consists of youth who are still in education or recent secondary school graduates.

d. Marital Status

- The vast majority of respondents are unmarried (73.3%), compared to 26.7% who are married.
- The mode = "Single," indicating that the study primarily addresses a young, unmarried population, which may have implications for social interaction dynamics.

3.9. Sociological Analysis of General Data

a. Male Dominance in the Sample:

From a sociological perspective, the high proportion of males in the sample may reflect their greater tendency to engage in forms of symbolic and physical violence, including bullying, compared to females. This interpretation is supported by several studies suggesting that bullying is closely linked to cultural structures that reinforce aggressive behavior among males. The findings of Olweus (1991) indicate that males are more involved in bullying than females. His research showed that 69% of females were victims of bullying between the fifth and seventh grades, that 15–20% of them were bullied by both males and females, and that more than 81% of male victims were bullied by other males. Olweus also found that males engage in direct bullying (physical bullying) three to four times more frequently than females. In contrast, female bullies tend to employ indirect forms of bullying, such as social neglect, social isolation, exclusion from the group, and verbal bullying (insults and swearing) **(Salima, 2018, p. 83).**

These differences undoubtedly have both biological and social roots. From a biological standpoint, factors such as male hormones and physical build may play a role, while from a social perspective, family socialization patterns and the school environment are influential. In a study conducted by Lock and White, it was found that males are more

likely than females to engage in bullying, particularly physical bullying (hitting, slapping, and kicking). Conversely, females were found to engage more frequently in indirect bullying than males (mockery, exclusion from the group, and ignoring). Other studies have further distinguished between males and females in terms of their roles in bullying dynamics, showing that males are often the bullies or supporters of bullying, whereas females more frequently assume the role of bystanders or defenders of the victim **(Abdelghani, p. 11).**

b. Early Adulthood Stage:

The dominant age group (20–24 years) falls within the transitional phase from adolescence to social maturity, during which the need for self-assertion in both social and digital spheres becomes particularly salient. This may lead some individuals to adopt bullying behaviors as a mechanism to demonstrate power or dominance. This tendency can be understood in light of the multiple problems and crises experienced in their daily lives, which expose them to marginalization and limit their ability to achieve self-realization through mechanisms of social exclusion. Confronted with such conditions, young people may attempt to resist the obstacles that hinder them—most notably social failure, such as the inability to continue their educational trajectory on the one hand, and societal constraints that deny them both material and spiritual self-fulfillment on the other, including access to employment opportunities, the right to freedom of expression, and communication without surveillance or repression of freedoms. Consequently, they seek alternative forms of dialogue through which they can articulate their interests and construct social legitimacy within the broader social framework. Having lost hope in securing employment that guarantees their right to a dignified life and protects them from falling into social ills such as social violence and drug abuse, some may resort to deviant or aggressive practices as compensatory strategies **(Bouabdallah, 2017, p. 160).**

c. Educational Level:

The predominance of secondary and university education levels indicates that bullying is not a phenomenon confined to groups with low educational attainment, but may also be deeply rooted among individuals in higher stages of education, particularly when linked to class-based or cultural biases within educational institutions. As Al-Huqail has pointed out, the secondary stage is considered one of the most critical phases in an individual's life, as it can decisively shape future life trajectories either positively or negatively. Zahran further notes that during this stage, individuals experience heightened social awareness, an increased propensity toward violence, a stronger drive for social independence, and a tendency to resist authority **(Koussa, 2023, p. 297).**

d. Marital Status:

The data indicate that the vast majority of the sample (88%) consists of unmarried individuals, reflecting an age structure predominantly characterized by youth (20–24 years). Most respondents are situated between the stages of secondary or university education and the search for employment or entry into the labor market. It is noteworthy

that many have not yet transitioned into family formation or achieved social stability, placing them in a transitional condition marked by economic and social vulnerability.

In this context, unemployment deprives young people of the ability to fully realize the value of life and constitutes one of the most significant forms of social deprivation. It excludes them from participation in activities in which other members of society are engaged and limits their opportunities for social interaction associated with work and professional environments. Such exclusion from the labor market contributes to the emergence of conditions of social disintegration, accompanied by various forms of marginalization and negative social symptoms.

Accordingly, the high rate of singlehood should not be viewed merely as a demographic indicator, but rather as a sociological factor that helps explain the growth of bullying behaviors within this group, by intensifying internal tensions and competitive relationships in shared everyday spaces such as popular neighborhoods and educational institutions.

Numerous socio-economic studies indicate that youth unemployment constitutes one of the main factors contributing to the escalation of violence within this group. Unemployed young people often find themselves facing increasing material pressures to meet their daily needs, and in the absence of a stable source of income, some may resort to violent practices such as theft or physical assault in order to obtain money. More alarmingly, the Algerian context has witnessed in recent years the recording of tragic incidents involving intentional homicide committed by some children against their parents, as a result of the latter's inability to meet the demands of their unemployed offspring. This reality reveals the severity of the social transformations associated with unemployment and its profound repercussions on both the family structure and the broader social fabric **(Abdelghani, p. 12).**

10 .Hypothesis Testing

a. Analysis of Hypothesis 1 Related to Gender:

There are statistically significant differences between males and females in the level of exposure to bullying. Males are more likely to be exposed to physical bullying, whereas females tend to experience verbal and social forms of bullying. **Table (03): Relationship Between Gender and Level of Exposure to Bullying**

Gender	High Exposure (Freq.)	%	Moderate Exposure (Freq.)	%	Low Exposure (Freq.)	%	Total (Freq.)	%
Male	38	55.9	19	27.93	11	16.17	68	100
Female	28	53.85	20	38.46	4	7.69	52	100
Total	66	55.0	39	32.5	15	12.5	120	100

The results indicate that the rate of high exposure to bullying is higher among males (55.9%) compared to females (53.85%). Conversely, females record a higher rate of

moderate exposure (38.46% versus 27.93% among males), while low exposure remains relatively limited in both groups, with a greater concentration among males (16.17%) compared to females.(%7.69)

Using the Chi-square test (χ^2) to measure the relationship between gender and level of exposure to bullying, the calculated value reached $\chi^2 = 6.2$ with two degrees of freedom ($df = 2$) and a significance level of ($p = 0.05$). Since ($p < 0.05$), the relationship between gender and exposure to bullying is statistically significant, indicating that the observed differences between males and females are not due to chance.

Sociological Analysis:

The higher rates of high exposure among males reflect the local cultural and social structure that associates masculinity with frequent interaction in public spaces more prone to conflict, such as streets, sports fields, and popular cafés. This finding is consistent with Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity, which encourages competition and confrontation.

Regarding females, the higher rates of moderate and low exposure suggest that bullying may take less physical and more symbolic or verbal forms, such as stigmatization, social exclusion, or cyberbullying. Goffman's (1963) study on social stigma indicates that vulnerable groups (such as women in traditional contexts) are more likely to experience indirect forms of exclusion or mockery, which may help explain these results.

Moreover, females tend to adopt non-confrontational coping strategies, such as withdrawal, concealment, or reliance on informal support networks (family and female friends), a pattern confirmed by recent research on school and university bullying.

In light of these findings, it can be concluded that gender constitutes a significant determinant of both the forms of exposure to bullying and the ways it is perceived, as patterns of differentiation between males and females are reproduced within everyday spaces through the dynamics of direct and indirect violence.

b. Analysis of Hypothesis 2 Related to Age:

The level of exposure to bullying varies according to age group, with a higher likelihood of exposure among younger age groups compared to older ones.

Table (04): Relationship Between Respondents' Age and Forms of Bullying

Age Group	Physical Bullying (Freq.)	%	Verbal Bullying (Freq.)	%	Cyberbullying (Freq.)	%	Total (Freq.)	%
15–19	16	42.11	12	31.57	10	26.32	38	100
20–24	21	45.65	14	30.43	11	23.92	46	100
25–29	7	20.00	18	50.00	11	30.00	36	100
Total	44	36.67	44	36.67	32	26.66	120	100

Analyzing the data in the table, which illustrates the relationship between age and forms of bullying, reveals a varied distribution across the studied age groups. A closer examination shows the following patterns:

Age group 15–19 years: Physical bullying predominates at 42.11%, followed by verbal bullying at 31.57%, and cyberbullying at 26.32%.

Age group 20–24 years: This group is the most exposed to physical bullying at 45.65%, with similar proportions for verbal (30.43%) and cyberbullying.(%23.92)

Age group 25–29 years: Verbal bullying is more prevalent (50%) compared to physical bullying (20%), while cyberbullying remains present at 30%.

Younger age groups (15–24 years) are more integrated into educational and neighborhood spaces, where daily interactions are frequent, explaining the predominance of physical and verbal bullying. In contrast, the 25–29-year age group tends to experience more verbal bullying than physical, reflecting a shift toward more symbolic forms of aggression with increasing age.

Cyberbullying is distributed across all age groups, reflecting the growing presence of digital technology in young people's lives as a new medium for symbolic aggression.

Overall, the level of exposure to bullying differs by age group, with a higher likelihood of exposure among individuals aged 15–24 compared to those aged 25–29.

c. Analysis of Hypothesis 3 Related to Educational Level:

Educational level is associated with the predominant pattern of bullying. Physical and verbal bullying are more common in middle and secondary education levels, whereas digital and symbolic forms of bullying are more prevalent at the university level.

Table (05): Relationship Between Educational Level and Coping Strategies with Bullying

Educational Level	Direct Confrontation (Freq.)	%	Seeking Help (Freq.)	%	Ignoring (Freq.)	%	Total (Freq.)	%
Middle	14	46.67	7	23.33	9	30.00	30	100
Secondary	25	46.30	17	31.48	12	22.22	54	100
University	12	33.33	17	46.67	7	20.00	36	100
Total	51	42.5	41	34.17	28	23.33	120	100

Analyzing the data in the table, which illustrates the respondents' educational level and its relationship with coping strategies for bullying, shows that direct confrontation is the most commonly used strategy, representing 55% of cases, followed by seeking help at 32.5%, while ignoring ranks last at only 12.5%.

When examining the distribution by educational level, the following patterns emerge:

Middle education level: Individuals tend to favor direct confrontation (46.67%), while 23.33% prefer seeking help, and 30% resort to ignoring the bullying.

Secondary education level: Direct confrontation also predominates (46.30%), but 31.48% seek help, and 22.22% choose to ignore the bullying.

University level: A different pattern emerges, with direct confrontation decreasing to 33.33%, while seeking help rises significantly to 46.67%, and 20% rely on ignoring the bullying.

These findings indicate that educational level is associated with the method of coping with bullying: as educational level increases, the tendency to seek help rises, whereas the tendency for direct confrontation declines. This reflects an inverse relationship between higher education and the preference for individual confrontation.

The Chi-square test (χ^2) was used to measure the relationship between educational level and coping strategy. The calculated value was $\chi^2 = 7.42$ with 4 degrees of freedom ($df = 4$) and a significance level of $p = 0.024$. Since ($p < 0.05$), the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant, indicating that the method of coping with bullying is significantly influenced by respondents' educational level.

The preference for direct confrontation among middle and secondary education levels can be explained by their closer ties to the local neighborhood culture, where interaction patterns are often based on symbolic and physical strength in managing conflicts.

For university-level respondents, the higher rate of seeking help reflects greater awareness of institutional mechanisms (such as administration, associations, and legal frameworks) that can be utilized, in addition to the broader scope of their social and knowledge networks.

The strategy of ignoring remains the least common and may be interpreted either as a defensive mechanism to avoid escalation, or as an indication of frustration with the effectiveness of confrontation or a lack of confidence in the outcomes of seeking help.

11 .Integrated Analysis of Bullying According to Sociodemographic Variables

The results of the field study in Al-Burj neighborhood indicate that bullying is not merely an isolated individual behavior, but rather the outcome of multiple intersections between the sociodemographic structure (gender, age, educational level) on one hand, and patterns of daily interaction in neighborhood, school, and university spaces on the other. The three composite tables reveal that these variables interact to determine levels of exposure to bullying, its forms, and coping strategies.

a. Gender and Level of Exposure to Bullying

The rate of high exposure to bullying reached 55.9% among males compared to 53.85% among females. The Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 6.2$, $p = 0.05$) indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender and level of exposure. Males were more exposed

to direct forms of bullying due to their frequent presence in public spaces (streets, sports fields), whereas females tended to experience moderate or low exposure, where bullying took less physical and more symbolic or verbal forms.

The high incidence of bullying among males reflects what Connell (1995) describes as hegemonic masculinity, in which a culture of power and control is reproduced within social interaction spaces. Connell emphasizes that masculinity is not a fixed essence but a structure of social practices based on relations of dominance, subordination, complicity, and marginalization across different forms of masculinity. Males positioned within the "hegemonic" model occupy a central role, while others are pushed to the margins or subjected to forms of subordination.

Connell also highlights that the history of masculinity is always shaped by dynamics of violence and crisis tendencies, explaining why hegemonic masculinity is often linked to aggressive behaviors that rely on the use of force to reproduce control. Hence, the high rates of bullying exposure among males can be interpreted as an expression of a "masculinity crisis", fueled by the continuous need to assert superiority and dominance, particularly within school groups.

For females, bullying tends to take a more symbolic form (marginalization, rumors, exclusion), consistent with Goffman's (1963) theory of social stigma, which operates subtly against vulnerable groups through mechanisms of information management and unspoken discrimination. These findings indicate that bullying is not simply a matter of "power versus weakness" but also reflects the reproduction of traditional social roles between males and females.

b. Age and Forms of Bullying

The age group 20–24 years is the most exposed to physical bullying (45.65%), followed by the 15–19 years group (42.11%), while the 25–29 years group shows the highest proportion of verbal bullying (50%). Cyberbullying is distributed relatively evenly across all age groups (≈26.66%). The Chi-square test confirmed a significant relationship between age and type of bullying ($\chi^2 = 8.73$, $p = 0.033$).

Erikson (1968) posits that adolescence (approximately 15–24 years) represents a critical turning point in psychosocial development, where individuals are intensely concerned with how others perceive them compared to their internal experiences. Erikson states:

"During adolescence, the young person becomes almost obsessively concerned with how they appear in the eyes of others compared to what they feel internally… At this age, the adolescent seeks a renewed sense of continuity and identity, experimenting with different roles to discover who they are, often resorting to stereotypical behaviors or aggressive actions to test the boundaries of power and belonging".

This explains the predominance of physical and verbal bullying among the 15–24 age group, **(Erik.1968.p129)** as these are experimental behaviors for asserting self within the group, rather than merely individual deviance.

The tendency of the 25–29 age group toward verbal bullying over physical reflects what Bourdieu termed "symbolic violence", a form of control exerted through language, gestures, social cues, and representations rather than physical confrontation. Bullying at this age becomes more "refined" in form yet more entrenched in its impact, as it penetrates social structures and reproduces hierarchy within groups**.(Pierre.1994.p164)**

The relatively balanced distribution of cyberbullying across all age groups reflects the dynamics of power in digital spaces. Castells (2009), in his analysis of network society, points out that digital networks are not merely communication tools but spaces for reproducing social relations of power and dominance.**(Manuel.2009.p24)** Traditional power hierarchies are reshaped in a new digital context, making the online environment a social arena in which symbolic and material power among individuals and groups is reflected, explaining the even spread of cyberbullying across different age categories.

c. Educational Level and Coping Strategies with Bullying

The most common strategy is direct confrontation (55%), followed by seeking help (32.5%), and finally ignoring (12.5%). Respondents with middle and secondary education tend to favor direct confrontation (46%), while university-level respondents prefer seeking help (46.67%) over direct confrontation.(%33.33)

The Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 7.42$, $p = 0.024$) shows that educational level significantly influences the way individuals cope with bullying.

The tendency for direct confrontation among middle and secondary education respondents reflects their stronger connection to local/popular culture, where physical or direct responses are considered legitimate means of maintaining social status. In contrast, the preference of university-level respondents to seek help demonstrates greater awareness of institutional mechanisms (administration, law, associations) and the values of civil society. This aligns with the findings of Smith et al. (2019), which indicated that higher education increases the tendency to pursue institutional solutions rather than individual confrontation **(Smith, 2019, p. 36).**

The ignoring strategy remains the least common and can be interpreted as a "survival tactic", employed by those with less ability to confront bullying directly or to access supportive networks.

12 .Integrated Interpretation and Intersections

By combining the three variables, the following patterns emerge:

Young males (15–24 years) with middle or secondary education are the most exposed to physical and verbal bullying and are the most likely to resort to direct confrontation.

University-level females are less exposed to physical bullying but are more prone to symbolic or verbal bullying, relying on support networks and seeking help.

The 25–29 age group, particularly those with a university education, represents a transition point, where bullying shifts from a physical nature to symbolic and digital forms.

This intersectional analysis demonstrates that bullying cannot be understood through a single variable. Rather, it is a complex phenomenon resulting from the interplay of gender, age, and educational structure with the local social and cultural environment (Al-Bordj neighborhood).

13 .Conclusion

The analysis shows that bullying is not confined to the individual but is the outcome of complex social dynamics:

- Gender reproduces relations of dominance and stigma.
- Age reveals shifts in patterns of aggression, from direct to symbolic forms.
- Educational level determines coping strategies, including confrontation, seeking help, or ignoring.

Accordingly, any intervention aimed at reducing bullying must consider the intersections of these variables. The phenomenon should not be treated merely as "deviant behavior" but as a social structure rooted in daily interaction patterns and in the value transformations of the local community.

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