

# Strategies Of Confronting School Bullying

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## Abstract

The present study aims to identify the most important strategies that can be directed as an effective tool to face school bullying among primary school students, in addition to recommending some procedures that may contribute to reducing bullying behavior. The importance of the present study is due to the fact that it sheds light on the strategic plans undertaken by families, schools, government, media, and international organizations to address the phenomenon of school bullying. As the spread of bullying behavior in the school community causes many problems for students and teachers, such studies are of great importance. In addition to efforts to solve problems, the researcher recommends paying attention to those suffering from family disintegration and allowing international organizations to contribute to addressing the phenomenon of school bullying.

**Keywords:** Strategies, school bullying, sociology, confrontation.

## Introduction

As an educational institution, school includes a wide range of social relations among students. As a result of social interaction, some forms of unpleasant behavior may occur, most notably school bullying. If a problem occurs, everyone must strive to solve it and find successful plans in order to address its effects and get rid of them in the future. There are some strategies that can contribute to limiting the spread of school bullying and addressing its effects on the victim. The researcher has chosen examples of strategies and plans carried out by families, schools, government, media, and international organizations.

## The problem Statement

Improving the school atmosphere contributes to improving the school life of students. The presence of problems in school life disturbs the mood of children and makes them unable to give and pushes many of them to hate studying and some of them may leave it. So, it is necessary to develop successful solutions to solve these problems or phenomena. The home-school cooperation and the support of governmental institutions and humanitarian organizations may help to reduce the

harmful behavior of school bullying. The research problem is represented in answering the following questions:

1. Who can put plans to face school bullying?
2. What are the strategies and plans offered by these entities?
3. To what extent do these strategies contribute to confronting school bullying?

## Significance of the study

The issue of treating and preventing school bullying is of great importance to social and psychological specialists. The Iraqi society has gone through societal changes and economic fluctuations that led to the emergence of many negative phenomena that can only be addressed through well-studied plans and strategies to reduce their impacts, including school bullying behavior, which is among the most prominent of those problems.

## Objectives of the study

The present study aims to obtain a set of interrelated objectives that may be the main objective that the researcher seeks to obtain, which are:

1. Identifying the most important strategies in facing school bullying.
2. Determining the most important entities that provide these strategic plans.
3. Providing some recommendations that contribute to confronting school bullying.

## **Defining Concepts**

### **1. Bullying**

It means causing physical, psychological, or emotional harm, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule by a bullying person against another person who is weaker than him/her (Ibn Mandhour, 1983; Bahnasy, and Hassan, 2015).

It is a complex phenomenon that includes a greater desire to harm an individual and put him/her under pressure. This phenomenon is of a physical, verbal, or psychological nature and usually occurs by one individual or a group of individuals. It may lead to fear and tension by threatening future attacks. Bullying is often directed against any individual that is unable to defend him/herself and the victim alone is subjected to repeated abuse (Abu Ghazal, 2011).

A more comprehensive definition of bullying according to the researcher's opinion considers that it is a form of abuse of others that occurs when an individual or group of individuals uses a victim or victims in various forms, including what is physical, psychological, verbal, or social. It also has three characteristics intended, imbalance between The bully and the victim, and the repeated (Al-Desouky, 2016).

The researcher puts a procedural definition of bullying as every harmful behavior, whether physical or psychological, that the bullying person repeats against a person who is weaker than him/her and who cannot respond in kind.

### **2. strategy**

Strategy refers to defining the basic long-term goals and objectives of the organization, selecting action plans, and allocating the necessary resources to

achieve these goals (Chandler, 1972). That is, they are planned and purposeful programs that the institution uses for the success of its work and to reach and achieve its goals. It means using all human energies and employing skills to manage the serious and purposeful work planned in accordance with certain development programs.

It also means drawing the general lines of the work of the institution, which should follow its curricula and steps accurately. Otherwise, the institution will not achieve its goals and suffer failure in one way or another. The researcher can put a procedural definition of strategy as developing studied plans by social institutions that contribute to confronting school bullying.

## **Strategies for confronting school bullying**

Strategy means the plans made by institutions to deal with a specific problem. These plans are intended and studied. The most important effective strategies to face school bullying are as follows:

### **1. Family strategies**

As the first place of the child, the family takes care of him/her and guides him/her. It certainly plans to protect its children from dangers, including bullying behavior, whether in the family or school. The danger of bullying does not depend only on the victim, but learning this behavior within the family portends great dangers and damage to the child's future personality (UNICEF, 2018). Signs of bullying necessitate modifying behavior before it is too late. The most important strategic steps taken by the family to confront bullying behavior are as follows:-

#### **A. Strategies to educate children**

Through this strategy, the family raises religious, moral, and social awareness and how to deal with others according to a method based on respect, preservation of rights, and non-infringement of property or any form of abuse (Al-Sabhin, and Al-Qudah, 2013). This comes through good dealings, following up on the child, approaching and directing him/her gently and softly, without severity or intimidation, while using the suspense of positive behavior and strengthening it and warning against unwanted negative behavior. One of the most important awareness-raising strategies that parents

offer to their children is to make school attractive, thus removing frustration from him/her and starting to adapt with his/her colleagues, which keeps him/her away from bullying behavior against them (Dawoud, 2005). This guidance includes the method of reinforcement and reward, buying toys or giving money, provided that he/she has good behavior in school and high grades.

One of the important issues in raising awareness is the formation of positive attitudes towards the school community, learning the right behavior, supporting positive social relations with fellow students, respecting the other opinion, and not making fun of or ridiculing others, which reinforces positive behavior and leads to adaptation and harmony, which prevents bullying behavior within the school community (Hmoud, 2011).

Prevention of bullying behavior and awareness towards it starts with the family. Parents, in turn, raise their children to respect the other. They should not differentiate between their children that may make one of the children be taken care of at the expense of the others. With tendencies towards bullying, one of the most important psychological factors that contribute to the prevention of bullying behavior, which is provided by a family to its children are (Kamil, 1996):

1. Justice and equality between individuals in rights and duties.
2. Respect and appreciation towards children, which increases their self-confidence.
3. Awareness of the child with what is going on around him/her in the surrounding environment.

## **B. Child Rehabilitation Strategies**

One of the duties of the family towards the children is to prepare them, rehabilitate them, develop their abilities, and integrate their personality. When this stage is completed, the child will be safe from bullying behavior. So, he/she will stay away from it as a behavior and also be able to deal with it when exposed to it.

The most common thing that children suffer from in the first years of life is shyness, which is one of the positive matters that public morals necessitate. The shy child feels inferior and behaves isolated,

stagnated, and lethargic in school for being unable to adapt to his/her peers. The family of the shy child takes into account his/her rehabilitation according to a purposeful strategy to get rid of shyness to avoid falling as a victim of bullying. Among these steps taken by the family are the following (Abu Saad, 2020):

1. Continuously encouraging the child and praising for the simplest achievements so that he/she will enhance his/her self-confidence and overcome the character of shyness.
2. Cooperating with school and the sports teacher to involve him/her in various sports activities to feel important and have relationships with his/her colleagues through these activities and events.
3. Helping the child in doing homework and continuously supporting him/her so that he/she does not feel embarrassed when he/she fails to perform his/her duties.
4. Cooperating with school administration in creating an appropriate atmosphere in which the student feels safe and confident in order to enhance his/her abilities and overcome confusion.
5. Trying to discover the child's talents, even if they are simple, and developing this talent by communicating with the school, which contributes to supporting and rehabilitating him/her and refining that possibility.

The rehabilitation strategy is not only limited to rehabilitating the shy child to overcome the stage of confusion and avoid bullying, but it may also be to rehabilitate the child who has excessive movement and activity that goes beyond the limits of nature, which may cause him/her to attack his/her colleagues in the school and bully them, which requires parents to take this trait into account, monitor the child's behavior, and coordinate with the school administration and the sports teacher to involve him/her in sports activities to employ this excessive activity for him/her. He/she can be an observer for his/her colleagues because this type of student loves the role of leadership that regulates his/her excessive movements and directs them in a positive direction instead of emptying this activity by trespassing on his/her colleagues ([www.ment/licence/versio/3psi@nationalarchive.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.ment/licence/versio/3psi@nationalarchive.gsi.gov.uk)).

Rehabilitating the hyperkinetic child and employing his/her activity in useful directions enhances his/her ability to express him/herself and generates a sense of importance for others. It develops the motivation towards learning and staying away from problems that hinder his/her educational career.

## **2. School strategies**

School bullying occurs inside the corridors of the school or near its walls. So, direct response to this behavior is the responsibility of the employees of that institution. Accordingly, it requires the school to develop special strategies for that confrontation and not be satisfied with its traditional role or its usual tasks. Successful schools develop a special approach to bullying to prevent its occurrence, not only to treat it. These serious steps include collecting sufficient information about the nature of bullying and knowing its causes and the conditions of the students who commit it as well as the victims who suffer from bullying behavior (Al-Maqtran, and Jihad, 2010). The most important strategic steps taken by school to confront school bullying can be identified as follows:

### **A. Parent-Teacher Councils**

Parents and teachers councils are considered a cooperative and supervisory activity that seeks to achieve cooperation between parents of students and school in order to discuss issues that concern the students in order to achieve joint home-school cooperation to overcome difficulties facing the work of the school staff for the benefit of the students (Taqish, 2004). Parents and teachers councils contribute effectively to confronting bullying behavior and preventing it by developing serious mechanisms to treat cases of bullying within the school community. That can be achieved by applying the following (Shaheen, 2009).

1. The contribution of the financially empowered parents to the development of the school's capabilities.
2. Informing parents if one of their children has tendencies towards bullying behavior to cooperate in modifying his/her behavior.
3. Holding individual interviews between a group of teachers and a group of parents with the aim of providing an atmosphere of mutual understanding

about the role of the school and its steps in confronting school bullying and its keenness on taking care of students.

4. Parents and teachers councils represent psychological and social support for students. When some students see their parents as members of these councils, this brings them a feeling of reassurance and an increase in self-confidence.

Parent-teacher councils are of great importance as one of the school's strategies and a step in confronting school bullying.

### **B. School Administration Strategies**

There is no doubt that the success of each institution comes through successful and cooperative administration with the staff. As an effective educational institution, school has plans and strategies to confront school problems, including bullying. Therefore, the school administration has special methods and feasible steps as it deems appropriate to reduce school bullying and prevent it as follows (Foulkessis and Muhammad, 2021):

1. Application of laws related to bullying; The school administration imposes educational punitive measures on bullies, which are administrative provisions carried out by the administration in order to reduce bullying behavior in the school community. In severe cases, this may be a deterrent to school bullying behavior.
2. Problem-solving strategies; It is a set of steps that the school administration follows in seeking to solve problems among students. The school administration takes this step in coordination with the educational advisor. At the forefront of these problems is school bullying.
3. Strategies for instilling moral and religious values; These procedures contribute to the development of the human spirit, instilling moral values, and strengthening religious rulings among students, which comes in coordination and cooperation with religious education teachers.
4. Preventive Strategies; The school administration implements a set of methods aiming at preventing bullying behavior, such as counseling programs and cultural activities through scientific seminars and others.

### C. Educational counselor strategies

Educational guidance means the interactive relationship that develops by directing the growth of the individual so that his/her potentials reach the maximum possible degree according to his/her needs and tendencies (Salman, and Aanni, 2013).

The educational counselor seeks developing strategies and plans that solve the problems facing students and try to reduce unwanted behavior, including school bullying behavior as follows:

1. Positive reinforcement; It is represented by praising the normal and distinguished students with the aim of promoting, confirming, and continuity of positive behavior.
2. Negative reinforcement; It is the removal of unwanted things from the student if he/she refrains from aggressive behavior. The method of exclusion is used when the student performs the undesirable behavior.
3. Training students on social skills; It is a series of activities for a certain group of students through which they learn positive interaction and social communication skills, such as speaking in an appropriate manner, not rushing to pass judgment on matters, respecting, and accepting opinion.
4. Training students to control the motive and control anger; In this strategy, students are taught how to solve their problems and study situations in several directions and try to be patient when facing difficult situations.
5. Training students to correct aggressive behavior against colleagues; This is done by modifying the students' self-concept, resolving conflicts between them and removing tensions, which modifies behavior.
6. Training students to vent their tensions through sports activities; This strategy is called guiding by playing, which allows the student to remove tension and anger by playing with his/her other colleagues as well as having positive social relations, which is reflected in the reduction of bullying behavior, which comes in coordination with Physical education teacher and school administration.

### 3. Government Strategies

Government's capabilities exceed what the family or school possesses in terms of its planning and implementation capabilities, considering that it is the decision-maker and has the capabilities and wealth of the country. Its strategies are comprehensive and not limited to a school or group of schools to confront a specific problem or behavior. Procedures are as follows:-

#### A. Institutes for people with special needs

Society is of great importance for people with special needs as it represents a crossroads between the processes of social integration and exclusion that this society shows by accepting or rejecting this category. They are not suitable for integration into society, which forces many of them not to adapt and to withdraw from this society (Nigel and Andy, 2009).

B. The disabled child, whether physically or mentally, is affected by bullying more than others. Consequently, many of them leave school because of this behavior. So, it is necessary to have special institutes for these people to save them from bullying first, and be suitable for them in terms of curricula and teachers on the other hand.

The disabled child is not responsible for the delay in his/her physical or mental development. It is unfair to punish or reject him/her because he/she needs help and understanding and also patience and not grumbling or ignoring (Al-Khateeb, 2001).

A child with special needs is a child first of all. He/she has the psychological, physiological, and social needs that children have. He/she needs love and a sense of belonging as well as learning because it is one of the rights of every individual (ibid).

Institutes for people with special needs educate, rehabilitate, and care for children in order to integrate them into society. They also provide regular schools for those with mild to moderate disabilities (Dallah and Farhan, 2021). Successive governments in Iraq are keen to support and care for the institutes for people with special needs, which are affiliated with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which is one of the steps to preserve this segment from school bullying in public schools because they are more susceptible to this behavior than others in all cases.

## B. Teacher training and qualification

Teacher is one of the three most important constants in the educational process, teacher, student, and subject. Teacher's weakness or lack of experience is due to many failures in the educational process, especially with regard to solving students' problems as they require high knowledge and a high degree of culture. Many Arab countries seek to add an academic year for teachers' Faculties, or what is called an introductory year, to bring the study to five years instead of four so that the teacher can practice his/her work with high confidence and skill (Makki, 2015). Qualifying and training teacher is one of the necessities of the educational philosophy that is the responsibility of the government as it is the first sponsor of the educational process. Thus, teachers are able to confront educational problems, considering that they have acquired the experience and training competence necessary for that confrontation.

The behavior of school bullying is a complex behavior and its causes are multiple. The ways to treat and prevent it require a sufficient amount of knowledge. Therefore, educational staffs must be trained to prepare them for that confrontation. Training and qualifying teachers to confront school bullying in the schools in which they work aims at several matters, the most important of which are the following (Abdulhameed, 2000):

1. Raising the educational level of teachers and enabling them to teach subjects, which makes them better able to manage and control the classroom and attract the attention of students.
2. Providing teachers with psychological and social skills to deal with cases of bullying in the school community with high professionalism.
3. Informing teachers of the latest developments in school problems and manifestations of unwanted behavior and ways to detect it early.
4. Through training, teachers acquire sufficient knowledge of students' needs, their individual differences, their cognitive capabilities, and their mental abilities.

## C. Media Strategies

Mass media disseminate the prevailing culture to the public taking into account the educational aspects that stem from the culture of the community accepted by the group. These means are television, radio, newspapers and magazines, cinema, and theater. These institutions are subject in one way or another to state control and following-up by the government through the Media and Communication Commission, which is what is happening in Iraq. There is no doubt that media has a major role in raising the new generation as a means of education (Al-Nassar, 2015).

The most important means that the government can direct towards confronting school bullying is television through educational channels and its awareness programs against bullying and warning of its dangers and damages. The importance of this means can be stated through the following points:

1. Television develops the child's ability to imagine and works through this imagination to draw his/her goals.
2. It works to educate the child about the importance of his/her role in life and how to play a positive and beneficial role in society.
3. Television programs encourage respect for others, such as parents, relatives, colleagues, etc.
4. Education programs warn of bullying and its harm to students, which works to educate students about these dangers.

## 4. Strategies of international organizations

There are international organizations in most societies, including Iraq. These organizations contribute to providing all activities of support and assistance to groups that suffer from problems. Educational problems are among the most prominent of those problems. The goal of these organizations is humanitarian (non-profit). Their members are volunteers who carry out various activities in response to the needs of Others (Mahmoud and Mustafa, 2012).

Among the most important of these international organizations that present a targeted strategy to confront school bullying are UNESCO and UNICEF. Their importance is presented as follows:

## A. UNESCO strategy

UNESCO is a specialized organization that is affiliated with the United Nations and its full name is United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The organization was founded in 1946. 191 countries contribute to it. It is located in Paris. It sponsors human rights and freedom through education, culture, and science. UNESCO supports all fields of education and science. It provides assistance in preserving the right of individuals in this area, solving problems, and removing obstacles (Al-Safi, 2005).

Confronting school bullying is one of UNESCO's priorities because this behavior affects a large number of students. The UNESCO study entitled *Beyond Numbers: Eliminating Violence and Bullying in Schools* showed that one out of every three students is bullied once a month. At least, this study included 144 countries, as published in 2019.

As a result, UNESCO member states agreed to declare the first Thursday of November as the International Day to Combat All Forms of Bullying and Violence in Schools. The first celebration of this occasion was on November 5, 2020. The United Nations, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations gathered to help promote and celebrate this International Day as a serious step for drawing a successful strategy against school bullying.

The message of Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the International Day against All Forms of School Bullying reads: Violence and bullying in schools is a common issue that concerns all. This includes students, their parents, the educational community, and ordinary citizens (<https://ar.unesco.org/commemorations/dayagainstschoolviolenceandbullying>).

UNESCO presents a serious strategy to confront school bullying in order to support education and remove the obstacles it faces. This is evident in its tireless pursuit and its deep concern for the right of children to get education with dignity.

## B. UNICEF strategy

UNICEF is a United Nations organization called the United Nations Children's Fund. This organization

was established in 1946 in the wake of the Second World War. Its headquarters is in New York, in the United States of America (<https://www.unicef.org>).

This organization depends on donations and humanitarian support and is present in 158 countries in which it operates and has more than (7000) employees working in its headquarters in those countries. UNICEF and its partners have alarmed as millions of schoolchildren are exposed to school bullying and school violence. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of the organization, indicates that in light of the Corona pandemic, the disruption of the continuity of education, and reliance on e-learning, the risk of electronic bullying against children has increased. The Director of The organization asserted that the return of many countries to the face-to-face education system, especially in developing countries, including Iraq, highlighted many problems of aggression, violence, and bullying. A video was published on social media showing torturing a kid by his family (<https://news.un.org/ar/tags/ltmnr>). As a result, the Iraqi Ministry of Education, through the directorates of educational guidance in the Provinces, launched the campaign of (No to Bullying) for the academic year (2021-2022) in cooperation with the UNICEF office in Iraq as a strategy to confront school bullying. Before that, Egypt launched this campaign as well as the United Arab Emirates. These educational awareness campaigns may contribute to confronting the phenomenon of school bullying and trying hard to limit its effects.

## Findings and recommendations of the study

Every scientific research must reach specific results as the outcome of the efforts made by the researcher. If the researcher wants to contribute to solving the problem subject of his/her research, he/she must put some recommendations for the competent authorities, provided that those authorities take into account as much as possible the adoption of these recommendations.

## Results

The researcher reached several results, which can be summarized as follows:-

1. Plans and strategies contribute to reducing school bullying behavior.



2. These strategies should be purposeful, studied, and applied according to priority.
3. Taking into account the conditions of the students and helping to solve their problems has a great role in reducing bullying behavior.
4. Community institutions and civil society organizations are of great importance in confronting school bullying.

### Recommendations

1. Paying attention to the family and childhood through targeted programs for care and awareness.
2. Supporting the educational process and qualifying workers in the field of education to deal with the phenomenon of school bullying.
3. Cooperating with international organizations, such as UNESCO, and UNICEF for their active role in supporting education.
4. Encouraging researchers in the field of education to conduct research on school bullying and develop the necessary solutions to address it.

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