Understanding bullying in schools: challenges and strategies of anti-bullying training in schools of Kurdistan

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	*ABSTRACT*
	Background and Aim: Bullying is one of the forms of aggressive behaviors with many negative consequences that is widespread among students today and preventing and dealing with this phenomenon and examining its obstacles and challenges, has become one of the priorities of the education system of many countries. the purpose of this study was to investigate the level of awareness of bullying and the challenges and strategies for training to deal with this phenomenon in Kurdistan province schools. **Methods:** The research was methodologically mixed and explanatory-follow-up design. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to collect information in a quantitative part and semi-structured interviews were used for a qualitative part. The research population consisted of school staff and teachers of the second primary and secondary schools of the province. For quantitative sampling, first in two stages, by cluster random sampling, four education districts of the province and eight schools were selected and all school staff and their teachers responded to the researcher-made questionnaire "Awareness of bullying a and strategies to prevent and deal with it". In the qualitative phase, among those who received the highest scores in the questionnaire, 20 people were purposefully selected to semi-structured interviews. The interviews continued until the data reached theoretical saturation and Finally, 14 interviews were conducted. **Results:** Quantitative findings from univariate t-test showed lower than average knowledge of both school staff and teachers about bullying and strategies to prevent and deal with it (P <0.05). In the qualitative part, data were analyzed by interpretive analysis and challenges of bullying education in schools were classified in the four final categories: a) lack of priority for department of education, b) systemic and organizational challenges, c) formal education-related challenges, d) family-related challenges, and twelve sub-categories, that all of them indicate many problems in the management of bullying and its effective education in the schools of the province. **Conclusion:** Based on these findings, it is suggested that the Kurdistan Education Department put the practical and comprehensive suggestions presented in the present study on its agenda in order to facilitate bullying management and remove obstacles to effective bullying education in schools.

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Introduction

Bullying is the most common form of violence among peers in school, which has become one of the main public health concerns of the student community today (Gaffney et al., 2021; Fabrice et al., 2021). It seems that the school provides the primary social context for bullying (Alavius, 1993), where the attention of peers as a social reinforcer is the trigger for the emergence of different forms of bullying and the child manages his peers in this way. (Akbari Belutbangan et al., 2016; Rad, 2016).

As the pioneer of the first scientific studies in this field, "Elvius" defined bullying as an aggressive act that is repeated many times by a person and involves an unequal power between the bully and the victim (Limber, Elvius, Wang, Masilo, Breiken, 2018). In a more comprehensive definition, school bullying can be seen as intentional and repeated physical, verbal, or psychological pressure on a student as a victim over a period of time, by one or more students called the bully, usually with an imbalance of physical or psychological power. It is connected between the involved parties (Coffin, 2010). Based on these definitions, bullying has three distinct characteristics: intentionality, power imbalance in favor of the bully student, and persistence and repetition of bullying behaviors (Evans et al., 2014). Bullying in the traditional or face-to-face form can occur in direct physical and verbal forms and in indirect or communicative forms that include mostly non-obvious activities such as spreading rumors, social exclusion or undermining the victim's position within the group (Kendy, 2020). Another important category of bullying, which has expanded especially in recent years due to the development of technology, is electronic or cyber bullying, and it occurs against the victim through electronic tools and generally on the Internet (Webb et al., 2021). During the last decades, statistics have always indicated the widespread global prevalence of bullying in schools. In such a way that 35% of students on average stated that they were bullied at school as victims, and nearly 60% of students said that they witnessed bullying at school (Biswas et al., 2020). In Iran, the results of the descriptive researches show the high rate of bullying and victimization in schools and indicate that 80% of students believe in the existence of bullying in schools (Mozaheri Tehrani et al., 2015). The most recent descriptive research has reported the rate of bullying among Iranian students as high as 37% (Khorsand Khatibani et al., 2019; Asmari Borde Zard et al., 2020).

In the field of bullying consequences, extensive global research in the last four decades has shown that being involved in any of the roles related to the bullying phenomenon can be associated with a wide range of physical, psychological, academic, behavioral and social health problems in the short and long term. Bullying perpetrators are more likely to perceive some degree of psychological problems such as feelings of loneliness and social exclusion, conduct disorder symptoms and various academic problems such as low academic achievement, frequent absences and dropping out of school. There is evidence that the continuation of bullying can expose these people to antisocial behavior and physical violence, participation in illegal and delinquent activities, and alcohol and drug abuse in adulthood (Hosseini, 2017). Being a victim can also cause a wide range of academic problems such as running away and refusing to go to school and noticeable academic failure, social problems such as: Low social skills and social adequacy, rejection, dependence on others and decrease in the number of friends, psychological problems, especially depression and fostering suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. In addition, victimization is a significant predictor of a wide range of long-term problems in adulthood, such as social anxiety, chronic anxiety and depression, and emotional disorders (Kennedy, 2018; Kennedy, 2020).

In response to the negative effects of bullying, the development and implementation of anti-bullying programs and the simultaneous attention to the obstacles and challenges facing the implementation of these programs have become one of the educational priorities in schools in different countries, especially in Europe, Australia and North America in the last four decades. . (Badri et al., 2021). Despite the high diversity of these programs, most of them have a similar approach centered on "comprehensive education in schools" that focus on training both school staff and teachers, as well as students and parents (Farrington & Tetofi, 2009; Chen, 2018). The existing theoretical framework, including socio-

ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), supports this comprehensive education approach. Based on that, bullying is a phenomenon that is multifaceted by intrapersonal factors, family factors, factors related to school and peer group (Cohen et al., 2015).

But in the meantime, teachers and school officials play a more key role in both preventing and intervening bullying behaviors. Because they are usually at the forefront of managing students' behavior in the daily school environment and responding to bullying incidents and interacting with other groups involved in the phenomenon, including parents (De Luca, Nasantini, Mansini, 2019; Shamsi, Andrades, Ashraf, 2019). And therefore, it is very important to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of bullying behavior, its differences with other aggressive acts such as arguments, conflicts and fights, as well as scientific solutions to prevent and deal with it, so that while understanding the importance of the issue, they are able to intervene. be effective and timely (Spears et al., 2017). Research has also shown that students who trust that teachers and school staff are aware of bullying and will respond to it, are more likely to report it if they see or engage in bullying. (Yon & Bauman, 2014; Adib, Fathi Azar, Hosseini, Babaei, 2015). In addition, teachers and school officials have the main role in studying the prevalence of bullying and continuously monitoring the degree and quality of their students' involvement in this phenomenon, which is considered the basis of any related action and intervention by education and other relevant authorities (Krigsman and Willencourt, 2019).

Nevertheless, few researches have been conducted so far in the field of investigating the level of awareness of teachers and especially school officials about the phenomenon of bullying, and these limited researches indicate their low understanding of the nature of this phenomenon and its characteristics. Specifically, it has been shown that most teachers have difficulty in explaining the clear differences between bullying and fighting and are unable to define bullying based on its three main characteristics, i.e. intentional harm, power imbalance between victim and bully, and repetition of bullying. (Ai and Campbell, 2021; Naylor et al., 2006). In another research in Norway, more than two-thirds of Madras agents

could not recognize the intentionality of behavior as a main characteristic of bullying (Cameron & Kwak, 2016). Another study of 62 Australian teachers showed that only 5% of them were able to recognize communicative or indirect aggression as one of the most common forms of bullying among students (Byers, Caltabiano, Caltabiano, 2011). Shamsi et al. (2019) also found in their research on 188 Pakistani teachers that most teachers are not able to describe verbal bullying and communication bullying. In the field of bullying diagnosis based on designed scenarios, research has also shown that most elementary and middle school teachers are not able to identify scenarios related to indirect and communicative bullying, and they make mistakes in differentiating bullying from non-bullying scenarios. (Chen et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2019). Therefore, it seems that teachers and school officials do not agree on what bullying is and their perception is different from the definition widely used by experts in this field. This issue is worrying because it may affect their ability to recognize and, as a result, intervene properly in real incidents of bullying, and in such a situation, relying on their help and intervention in order to raise awareness and reduce bullying will not be associated with favorable results. (Ai & Campbell, 2021; Bauman & Del Rio, 2005). Therefore, considering the central role of teachers and school personnel in raising awareness and identifying and early intervention in bullying incidents, it is necessary to conduct research in order to measure their level of awareness of this phenomenon and also to identify the challenges related to their lack of awareness.

Descriptive studies still report relatively high statistics of the prevalence of bullying in the country's schools (Mozahari Tehrani et al., 2015; Asmari Borde Zard et al., 2020). However, until now, no research has been done to investigate the level of awareness of different groups involved in this phenomenon, especially the group of school officials and teachers, about the nature of bullying and the strategies to prevent and deal with it. In addition, research has not been done in line with pathology and investigation of challenges and obstacles of anti-bullying education in schools, and this information gap is the basic issue of the current research. Therefore, the present study aims to first quantitatively investigate the level of

awareness of the group of school staff and teachers about the nature of bullying and the strategies to prevent and deal with it, and investigate the following hypothesis:

- The level of awareness of the group of school officials and teachers about the nature of bullying phenomenon and the strategies to prevent and deal with it is low.

If the hypothesis is confirmed, the present research qualitatively examines the factors involved in these low levels of awareness and the challenges and obstacles facing bullying prevention and countering education in schools of the province. The current research aims to provide practical solutions based on the introduced obstacles in order to facilitate education management and effectively deal with this phenomenon at the level of schools in the province. Based on this, the current research in the qualitative section seeks to answer two research questions as follows:

1- What are the effective factors in the low awareness of the phenomenon of bullying and the challenges and obstacles facing anti-bullying education in the schools of Kurdistan province?

2- What are the appropriate solutions in order to increase awareness of this phenomenon and remove the obstacles to its effective education in the schools of Kurdistan province?

Method

In terms of methodology, the design of the current research was mixed and of the explanatory-exploratory design type. In fact, when the purpose of the quantitative part is to describe the results and the purpose of using qualitative data as a follow-up factor, it is more appropriate to choose an explanatory-follow-up design (Delavar & Koshki, 2013). In the quantitative part, the data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire, and in the qualitative part, a semi-structured interview. The group of school agents (including the school principal, vice-chancellor and school counselor) and teachers have the main agency in teaching any anti-bullying program in the school (Gafni et al., 2021). Therefore, they have the most information about the challenges of teaching these anti-bullying programs, and on this basis, it was decided to be selected as the main group to examine the challenges of teaching and implementing anti-bullying programs in schools. Based on this, the statistical population of the research included all school staff and teachers of second primary and first secondary schools in the province in the academic year 2020-2021. For sampling, according to the size of the society, first, four districts were selected by random sampling among the educational districts of the province. Then, four schools (one girl's school and one boy's second elementary school and one girl's school and one boy's first secondary school) were randomly selected from among all the second primary and first secondary schools in each of these regions using the multi-stage cluster random sampling method. All school staff and their teachers, who were 174 people, were considered as sample members and answered the researcher's questionnaire.

Given that the investigation of the quantitative hypothesis of the research showed that the level of awareness of school officials and teachers is significantly lower than the average of the hypothetical society. The qualitative phase of the research was implemented to answer its two basic questions, and the purposeful sampling method was used to sample and select the subjects of this phase. With the aim of selecting people from the initial sample who have information about the phenomenon of bullying in schools and the main topics and questions of the interview. Based on this, the first 20 people who got the highest scores in answering the researcher-made questionnaire were identified and selected as the final sample to conduct the interview, and finally, based on the principle of theoretical saturation, 14 of them were interviewed.

Materials

1. Questionnaire on the level of awareness of the nature of bullying and prevention and coping strategies: In order to collect the data of the quantitative part of the research, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed. All the components related to knowing the nature of bullying, including the definition of bullying, the difference between bullying and aggression, the semiotics of bullying and victimization, different forms of bullying, the roles involved in bullying, theories of bullying, the basic factors affecting the emergence of bullying and the consequences of bullying were included in it. . In addition, the components related to the level of familiarity with the strategies to prevent and deal with this

phenomenon were considered. This tool had 37 items, in which items 1 to 22 measure the level of awareness of school staff and teachers about the nature of bullying, and items 23 to 37 measure the level of awareness of school staff and teachers about ways to prevent and deal with it. The questionnaire was of the 5-point Likert type, which measures the level of familiarity of the target group as very little (1), little (2), to some extent (3), a lot (4) and very much (5) and the scoring method of all the items is direct. Was.

In the next step, to determine the validity of this tool, the expert confirmation method was used. For this work, nine professors and lecturers of the university with different orientations of psychology and educational sciences who are experts in the field of behavioral inconsistencies of students were selected. In the next step, they were given the tool along with explanations about the main goals of this research, and at the end, a question with the theme that "according to the goals of the research, to what extent do you consider the items of this questionnaire to be suitable for collecting the desired information?" was presented. These people could express their opinion about its legitimacy in terms of content in a three-point Likert scale including options a) inappropriate b) somewhat appropriate, c) completely appropriate. The results showed that most of the judges had a positive and similar opinion about the validity of the content of the tool and confirmed its content validity. In the following, the carcass method was also used to determine the reliability coefficient of the constructed tool. The carcass method is one of the methods of converting the judges' qualitative judgment about content validity into quantity, and it is called the content validity coefficient (Seif, 2012). The coefficient obtained for the items related to measuring the level of awareness of the nature of the phenomenon was 1, and for the items related to the level of awareness of the strategies to prevent and deal with bullying, it was 0.96, which indicates the validity of this tool in terms of content based on the judges' judgment. After confirming the validity, finally, this tool was implemented among the members of the sample and the data was prepared for analysis with SPSS 22 software.

2. Semi-structured interviews: semi-structured interpersonal interviews were used to collect the qualitative data. The interviews were conducted in a quiet atmosphere and at a time that did not interfere with the activities of the interviewees at school and there was enough time to advance the interview process. In the phase of conducting the interviews, first, a mutual and mutual trust and confidence was established between the interviewees and the researcher, as the prominent experts in this field consider it very essential for progress in the interview process (Patton, 2002). During the interviews, each participant was asked the following three general questions:

1- What do you think are the main factors involved in the low awareness of school staff and teachers of the province about the phenomenon of bullying and its prevention and countermeasures?

2- What are the main challenges facing the education and implementation of a program to prevent and deal with bullying in schools, and what obstacles do you think you will face if you want to implement an educational program related to bullying in your school or classroom?

3- What solutions do you suggest to increase the awareness of different groups involved in the phenomenon of bullying, including the group of school officials and teachers, and the effective implementation of educational programs to familiarize with this phenomenon in schools?

Implementation

Each interview continued with sub-questions around these general axes, and at the end, the recorded interview was reviewed by the researcher and implemented as a written text, and the interviews continued until the information was saturated. In the next step, the written texts of the interview were read several times by the researchers and then analyzed by coding method to extract the main components about the opportunities and threats of virtual education in this university. These texts were analyzed in a three-step process including 1) open coding, 2) axial coding, and 3) selective coding. To check the validity and reliability of the data, methods of monitoring colleagues and evaluating participants were used. Based on this, in the research process, there was interaction between the researchers about the method of data analysis and until reaching an agreement with each other. The final analysis was returned to a number of participants to confirm the correctness of the results and they were asked to comment on whether the results seemed reasonable to them. According to these

people, the findings of the research reflected their point of view to a great extent. Reliability was also measured by analyzing and classifying the data by an experienced and independent researcher and comparing it with the researchers' analysis. An approach called using peer review. For this purpose, the edited and unmarked text of an interview was given to one of the researchers with experience in qualitative analysis, and while explaining the nature of the research, he was asked to analyze it and highlight its main statements. Then his findings were compared with those obtained by the original researchers, which indicated a good match between the two analyses.

Results

The results of the descriptive information of the group of school officials and teachers show that the average scores of the sample members in different courses are lower than the actual average determined based on the questionnaire.

Table 1. Descriptive information on the scores of the group of school officials and teachers in the research variables

Variable			Knowledge of ways to prevent and deal with bullying		Knowledge of ways to prevent and deal with bullying	
Grade	Gender	Number	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Elementary	Girl	37	38/37	24/70	24/35	12/00
	Boy	32	38/09	25/22	24/43	12/45
	Total	69	38/24	24/76	24/39	12/12
Junior High School	Girl	53	31/54	21/79	19/77	10/83
	Boy	52	30/03	19/49	18/75	9/33
	Total	105	30/80	20/60	19/26	10/08
Total	Girl	90	34/35	23/14	21/65	11/49
	Boy	84	33/10	22/06	20/91	10/91
	Total	174	33/75	22/57	21/29	11/19

Single-variable t-test method was used to check the significance of the group mean being lower than the assumed community mean. Before that, the assumption of the normality of the distribution of the research variables was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, and due to the non-significance of the test at the 0.05 level, it can be said that the distribution of the investigated variables in the statistical sample was normal.

Table 2. Univariate t-test results comparing the group's average awareness of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig.
Awareness of the nature of bullying	33/75	22/5	-12/77	173	0/001
Knowledge of ways to prevent and deal with bullying	21/29	11/19	-18/5	173	0/001

As the results of the table show, the t value observed for the variable of awareness of the nature of bullying is -12.77, which is greater than the critical value of the table at the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that the participants' lower than average awareness of the nature of the phenomenon was statistically significant (P<0.001 and t=-12.77). The observed t value for the variable of awareness of the solutions to prevent and deal with bullying is -18.50, which is greater than the critical value of the table at the alpha level of 0.05 and indicates the significance of the participants' awareness of the solutions to prevent and deal with bullying. With these findings, the research hypothesis is confirmed (P<0.001 and t=-18.50).

In order to answer the first question of the qualitative part of the research regarding the identification of the factors involved in the low

awareness of the phenomenon of bullying and the challenges and obstacles facing anti-bullying education in the schools of Kurdistan province, the final analysis of the interviews led to the extraction of four final categories including: a) lack of priority of the phenomenon for education; b) systemic and organizational challenges; c) challenges related to formal education; d) Challenges related to family and twelve sub-categories were identified as factors involved in low awareness of bullying and challenges and obstacles in the education of this phenomenon in the schools of the province, which will be discussed in order in the following.

The final category of non-priority of the phenomenon for education and training: Most of the interviewees considered the first key challenge in the way of training programs to prevent and deal with bullying and increase awareness of this phenomenon as the non-priority of dealing with bullying in schools for education and training as the official body in charge. They believed that if this issue was in the priority of educational activities, then there should be an official activity in different forms in this area. This educational neglect from the point of view of the interviewees was evident in several basic areas, which were coded in the form of four core categories: a) Lack of related in-service trainings, b) Failure to raise the issue in the family education program, c) Failure to raise the issue in the job title of counselors and foster assistants, d) Failure to prepare educational resources.

First of all, according to the interviewees, if this phenomenon was considered as an educational priority for education, at least one in-service anti-bullying program should have been held officially for the groups involved in the phenomenon. For example, one of the interviewed teachers stated: "Well, if this issue is important for education and he firmly wants to do something to solve it, he should have at least organized a simple familiarization course in the form of in-service for colleagues and teachers." One of the interviewed counselors acknowledged this and said: "I have personally participated in specialized student counseling courses several times in the last five years, but bullying was not mentioned in any of them." In addition, families should be considered one of the key axes of any anti-bullying educational program due to the key role they can play both

in the emergence and continuation of bullying and in stopping it (Kim et al., 2021). Despite this issue, the analysis of the content of the interviews showed that one of the other reasons given by the interviewees for not prioritizing anti-bullying training for education is the lack of preparation of a special training program in this regard and setting a place in the family education headings to inform parents about this phenomenon. For example, one of the principals of the school has stated: "Really, if bullying was one of the educational priorities, it should have included bullying as one of the topics of the family education program for at least one year and required all schools to implement a training course to familiarize families with this phenomenon." Most of the interviewees believed that considering the position defined for counselors as well as assistants and educational coaches to investigate educational and behavioral problems of students. Phenomena such as bullying with this degree of prevalence and consequences should be defined as one of their continuous work areas in the school, and counselors, by passing specialized training, should play a role alongside the principal and teachers as the main arms of raising awareness and dealing with bullying. Ignoring this issue can be another indicator of the lack of priority to deal with the phenomenon for education. One of the interviewed consultants stated: "When the education and training has not prepared a special training for the consultant and has not defined a framework responsibility for him, it is clear that many consultants may not recognize it as a priority issue and do not have a plan to intervene in this area". In the end, surely, preparing and providing appropriate educational resources to familiarize and deal with bullying for different groups of school officials, teachers, students and even parents, can be one of the most effective measures in order to increase the awareness of each of these target groups with the phenomenon. However, the results of the analysis of the interviews in this open field showed that another reason that the interviewees repeatedly mentioned as signs of the phenomenon not being a priority for education is the lack of preparation of any educational content related to bullying in schools. For example, one of the teachers stated: "I have never seen a brochure, book, pamphlet or a

simple educational CD sent to schools as an educational resource related to bullying."

The final category of systemic and organizational challenges: The second final category identified for challenges related to education and the implementation of anti-bullying programs was called systemic and organizational challenges, which includes problems related to the administrative and organizational structure and the trends governing the education system, and in the form of three subcategories: a) lack of financial resources, b) lack of human resources, c) centralization - lack of support was classified. First of all, the successful implementation of any program in schools requires the provision of facilities and financial resources, and in this regard, one of the biggest challenges that the interviewees mentioned repeatedly. It was the non-injection of the necessary financial and per capita resources from the education department and the fact that most schools are in financial trouble, which causes: School agents should prioritize their spending on issues related to school maintenance and providing necessary resources and equipment for its administration, and many debts will make schools spend in other areas, including: Issues related to the implementation of training programs, such as inviting experts to conduct anti-Qadi workshops and purchasing related educational resources, etc., puts it in a tight spot. For example, one of the administrators said: "When I have to knock on every door to pay the fees, how can I focus on training an anti-bullying program that requires money and facilities?" Secondly, the experience of the leading countries in the field of managing behavioral problems among students, including bullying, shows that preventing and effectively dealing with this phenomenon requires the presence of trained forces to implement training and interventions. But in the schools of Kurdistan Province, like other schools in the country, there are basically no organized behavioral and psychological intervention teams. What was mentioned in the analysis of most of the interviews as a challenge related to the education system is the lack of counselors or even educational coaches in many schools of the province, especially in the less privileged areas. By the way, due to factors such as the weak socioeconomic class of families, the possibility of bullying is more likely in them

(Varla et al., 2020). For example, one of the managers stated: "When I am in school, I am deprived of the existence of a counselor who is familiar with the phenomenon and can take responsibility for anti-bullying activities and training and act as a coordinator in this field. How can I carry out a specific work in this field? From the point of view of the interviewees, the sub-category "centralization-lack of support" also means the dependence of schools on the top-down administrative structure of education and the lack of independence in various fields of activity. It causes the school to be unable to develop and implement its own anti-bullying educational program without the permission of the administration, and for this, school administrators have to enter into a sometimes exhausting administrative process and obtain coordination and approvals from different units. In addition, the administration's lack of support for the independence of schools has caused them to be unable to use effective strategies and solutions for every possible case of bullying. This is especially evident in the discussion of dealing with bully students and the school's strategies to reduce their bullying behavior. It has happened that the parents of the bully students have changed the issue in their favor by going to the offices and filing a complaint about the teacher or the school staff dealing with the student and making the cases look the opposite and with the order of the administration. This has caused the lack of motivation of teachers and school officials to take more effective and informative measures in this area. According to them, this lack of support, especially in secondary schools, has even caused some kind of bullying to spread from the side of students to teachers, and teachers are not willing to officially declare it for various reasons.

The final article of challenges related to formal education: The third final category identified from the content of the interviews refers to the problems related to the flow of formal education common in schools and classes, which were classified into two basic subcategories: a) large amount of curricular activities, b) large number of students. In the discussion of "a large volume of academic and work activities", this form has always been included in the educational system of our country, which is highly knowledge-oriented. Accordingly, a large amount of

knowledge content is determined in the form of a textbook for students and teachers are obliged to teach this content in the form of a linear budget. This problem causes that teachers in elementary and especially secondary schools do not have enough time and energy to carry out educational activities such as increasing their awareness of issues such as bullying and implementing anti-bullying training and interventions. As an example, one of the consultants said: "Unfortunately, all expectations from the school counselor are limited to academic guidance, and we are asked to do so much work, directives, reports, and repetitive activities in this field that we really don't have the time to examine and think about issues like bullying." Another challenge that was prominent in the content of the interview, especially for the teachers, and which they considered to be a major obstacle in the way of raising awareness and implementing programs related to bullying in the classroom and school, was the large number of students in public schools in the province, especially in urban schools, both at the elementary and first secondary levels. For example, one of the interviewees, an elementary teacher, expressed this challenge as follows: "Besides the amount of training that I have to do in class and the expectations that increase every day, having thirty students in one class is my biggest challenge in doing my work. In addition to these two, consider that in this same class, I sometimes have several students who are late learners and have learning disabilities, and I am obliged to bring them to the level of other children without special support in school. Imagine that I had half of these children in my class. Look how much better it would have been and how much time I had to improve my awareness of educational and behavioral issues among students, to check the possible problems and, if necessary, educate children and even families."

Final Category of Family-Related Challenges: The final general category related to bullying education challenges was named "Family-Related Challenges." This means that the interviewees considered the family as a central challenge in the way of increasing awareness of bullying and implementing related interventions in school, which were categorized in three sub-categories. a) weak interaction with the school, b) indifference to the phenomenon, c) unilateral

intervention. First of all, what has been repeatedly mentioned as a key challenge in the way of implementing all kinds of school educational programs from the content of the interviews. The lack of constructive and continuous interaction on the part of most families with the school and the lack of motivation and sense of responsibility in them is due to various reasons such as poverty and illiteracy and lack of proper understanding of the necessity of this interaction. It causes parents not only to not have adequate knowledge in the field of bullying and coping strategies, but also can be an obstacle to raising awareness and implementing anti-bullying programs. As an example, one of the vice-chancellors states: "When we realized at school, the child of one of the parents has a high potential to become a victim. We found it necessary to share this matter with his family and provide appropriate training. After four calls and correspondence, we were able to force his father to attend school for one quarter. During his presence, he was thinking of making us and the school guilty." "Indifference to the phenomenon" was another focus of the interviewees in relation to the family factor, and they believe that some parents do not consider bullying as an aggressive phenomenon. They consider it a childish issue, especially in the primary period, and they even consider it necessary with arguments about their child's strengthening and the so-called child's education. Dealing with such parents really hinders the work of education and awareness in the field of bullying. Blaming the victims makes them not have the courage to state the case and use any other solution (Adib et al., 2017). For example, one of the teachers says: "... in one case, after talking a lot and trying to inform the father of one of the students about being victimized, the content of his words was briefly: I'm not too worried about this matter and these are children and these issues happen a lot between them." Regarding the "unilateral intervention" subcategory, according to the interviewees, another challenge related to anti-bullying training is: On the opposite side of neglectful parents, there is another group of parents who have no motivation to get information and solutions related to bullying. Regardless of the school's education, they unilaterally intervene in the process of bullying and victimization of their child, which

sometimes not only does not help the process of education and dealing with the phenomenon, but also causes the situation to worsen.

Table 3. Summary of secondary and final components extracted from the content of the interviews	
Subcategories	Final components
Lack of relevant in-service training	Lack of priority of the phenomenon for education
Failure to raise the issue in the family education program	
Failure to raise the issue in the work title of counselors and foster assistants	
Failure to provide educational resources	
Lack of financial resources	Systemic and organizational challenges
Lack of manpower	
Centralism - lack of support	
A) A large volume of academic activities	Challenges related to formal education
b) A large number of students	
A) Poor interaction with school	Family related challenges
b) Indifference to the phenomenon	
c) Unilateral intervention	

Table 4. Examples of steps for coding and extracting subcategories and final categories from the content of the interviews		
Examples of semantic units	Subcategories	Categories
Indebtedness of the school, small budget, zero per capita, school without counselor, single-handed manager, lack of expert staff, ten classes without a counselor, lack of an educational deputy or counselor, lack of independence of the principal, directive management, independent decision equals lack of support, routine Dominant administration, little support from the school when necessary, only executive schools	Lack of financial resources	Systemic and organizational challenges
	Lack of manpower	
	centralism	

Conclusion

Various researches have also shown that from the students' point of view, many of the official education and upbringing agents and teachers do not see bullying as a serious phenomenon, or they are indifferent to it, or they consider it a part of children's natural behavior and development. It is caused by the lack of awareness and providing proper training to these people, and this neglect is one of the most important factors in the escalation and continuation of bullying. For example, a comprehensive research in Australia has shown that in schools with weak anti-bullying training and programs and low levels of awareness of the phenomenon, a large number of students believe: School officials and teachers are either not interested or are superficially and occasionally involved in the issue of bullying among students (Rigby, 1996). Another national research among Norwegian students found that nearly 76% of students in such schools believe that school officials do not pay serious attention to bullying (Elvis, 1993). In Iran, the total findings of a qualitative research showed that the victimized students consider the main reason for their victimization to be the indifference and indifference of school officials and teachers towards the occurrence of bullying. A major part of it is due to their little awareness of the nature of this phenomenon and its unfortunate consequences. It is interesting that the results of the same study from the perspective of the victimized students have shown that the most important factor in reducing and stopping bullying is the amount of attention paid by officials and educational agents to the phenomenon of bullying. (Adib et al., 2015) It shows the importance of paying attention to the education of this issue by the General

Directorate of Education in schools, especially for school officials and teachers. As the research literature has shown, teachers who have been trained on the phenomenon of bullying, in addition to paying more attention to the phenomenon, are more likely to implement anti-bullying programs in their classrooms (Swift et al., 2017). Even in the field of challenges related to the family and neglect of parents and their ignorance of effective methods of dealing with the phenomenon when faced with it among children and their unilateral and extreme interventions, it can also be said: The root of a major part of it goes back to the lack of attention of the educational institution to educate parents and families about this phenomenon. Providing appropriate training in the form of family education sessions and preparing effective educational content for parents can help in increasing their awareness of the phenomenon and ultimately reducing challenges related to the family.

In order to answer the second question of the qualitative part of the research on "Identifying suitable solutions in order to increase the awareness of this phenomenon and remove the obstacles to its effective education in the schools of Kurdistan province" and considering the results of the present research, a set of solutions that increase the awareness of this phenomenon The phenomenon and consequently its prevention and countermeasures are presented to be effective in primary and secondary schools of the province. At the same time, due to the centralized system governing Iran's education and as a result, the situation of other provinces is similar to that of Kurdistan province in the challenges of bullying education in schools, all these solutions can be applied by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the general departments of education of other provinces:

1- The issue should be raised in the meeting of the heads of departments and regions with the presence of the director general and deputy directors and preferably the presence of experts and knowledgeable in the field of bullying. In addition to familiarizing the heads of departments and subordinate regions with the phenomenon of bullying, emphasis should be placed on preventing and dealing with this phenomenon as one of the priorities of the new academic year. The expectations of the general administration regarding the necessity of seriousness of all regions in pursuing any action or executive instruction related to bullying should be explained.

2- By the order of the director general, a working group under the title "Working group against bullying in schools" consisting of the department of educational affairs, counseling and care against social harms and experts from the three levels and, if necessary, external experts with the authority of the educational and cultural deputy, should be formed. All the official measures related to bullying considered by the provincial administration, such as any directives or executive instructions, should be compiled in this working group and implemented at the provincial school level with the approval of the vice-chancellor. At the same time, this working group should be appointed to be responsible for receiving feedback and evaluating the quality of actions taken in schools of all levels of the province.

3- Guidelines or regulations for the formation of a committee called "School Anti-Bullying Committee" with the aim of holding regular meetings related to bullying to investigate the situation of bullying in the school and to follow up the cases of bullying on a monthly or quarterly basis. It should be notified to all the schools of the province in order to implement the meetings of this committee.

4- It is suggested that the Educational and Cultural Vice-Chancellor of the General Administration, as a priority, design a comprehensive course during the provincial service under the title of "Getting to know bullying and ways to prevent and deal with this phenomenon" for this year. With a written planning, the necessary arrangements should be made for the participation of all school administrators and teachers of the three levels of the province in this course and to pass it by the end of this year.

5- A measure should be taken to train all school principals in the province, especially novice principals, before starting the practical work of management.

6- An anti-bullying charter is designed for schools of different levels and convince the administrators to install such a charter in a suitable space in the school and inform the students about its provisions at the very beginning of the school year.

7- With the help of experts in this field, a comprehensive anti-bullying program should be

designed and compiled in the form of a special anti-bullying package and sent to schools. In schools where there is an educational advisor or assistant, training and ensuring the implementation of the provisions of this program at the school level can be left to these people.

8- By the Department of Education and Counseling and with the coordination of the Education and Culture Vice-Chancellor, plans to prevent and deal with bullying should be included in the official headings of the annual activities of school counselors.

9- Given that every year the comprehensive program of family education is communicated to schools in the form of specific headings, it is suggested that these trainings be included in the official headings of family education of the province.

10- It is suggested that the General Administration of Education of the province name a special bell every week, for example the third bell on Wednesdays, under titles such as "Bell of non-curricular education" or "Free Bell".

11- One day or if possible a special week with titles such as "Fighting Bullying" day or week or "No Bullying Day or Week" should be approved in the education calendar of the province.

12- A special unit of the General Administration should be responsible for preparing and distributing up-to-date anti-bullying educational resources, including books, posters, brochures, and anti-bullying educational videos among schools.

13- Due to the fact that many researches such as (Risit and Gamez-Guadix, 2014) have shown that recess is one of the most likely times for bullying to occur, especially in the school yard.

14- Arrangements should be designed by various departments of the General Administration, including the Department of Educational Affairs and Counseling and the Deputy Education Department with the help of experts from different levels.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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