

1. Algeria

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BACKGROUND

This chapter will focus specifically on bullying of children and adolescents in Algeria, a predominantly Muslim and Arab country where bullying (تتمر in Arabic; *harcèlement* in French) is less researched. Algeria, the largest country in Africa and in the Mediterranean by geographical area, has a population of over 45 million, with children under the age of 15 constituting approximately 30% of the population. Thousands of children and adolescents in Algeria are affected by bullying. An Algerian newspaper, *Echorouk Online*, published a news article on 16 October 2021 titled ‘Bullying Invades Schools ... and 4 Million Students Suffer.’ Due to increased media coverage and heightened public awareness of bullying, combating bullying has been recognized as crucial in Algeria in recent years. The current chapter aims to explore bullying in Algeria. Firstly, it examines the definition and prevalence of bullying in Algeria, followed by the current state of research on bullying. Finally, it discusses the anti-bullying prevention and intervention programmes as well as laws and policies in Algeria.

Definition of Bullying

Since the seminal work of Swedish-Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus (1978), the concept of bullying has continually evolved. Initially, it focused on physical harassment and the harsh treatment that stronger students might inflict on weaker ones. However, it is now understood to encompass a broader range of behaviours, including many subtle forms of aggression and intimidation. According to Olweus (1978), bullying is intentional (i.e., aimed at causing harm), repeated (i.e., directed at the same victim several times), and involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (e.g., Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). In Algeria, most of the researchers have adopted Olweus’ definition and conceptualization of bullying.

Researchers, including those in Algeria (e.g., Belal & Lazeb, 2020; Zouichene & Bendahmane, 2022), have also explored several types of bullying. Generally speaking, there are four major types of bullying: physical bullying, verbal bullying, psychological bullying, and cyberbullying. Physical bullying includes actions such as hitting, pushing, or other forms of physical aggression. Although this type of bullying is often more visible, it is not always reported, as victims may fear retaliation or further humiliation. Verbal bullying involves insults, name-calling, and verbal threats. Perpetrators of verbal abuse often target a student’s appearance, social background, or academic performance. Psychological bullying or emotional bullying involves behaviours, such as excluding someone from a group, spreading rumours, and manipulating friendships. Cyberbullying occurs online and is carried out through platforms such as social media, messaging apps, or online games. It can include harassment, spreading rumours, or threatening messages sent via the Internet (Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

Prevalence of Bullying

In Algeria, the issue of bullying is often addressed under the broader category of violence and aggressive behaviour in schools. As a result, it is difficult not to consider specific data on the prevalence of bullying in the statistics published by the Ministry of National Education. A survey conducted by the Ministry during the 2015–16 academic year found that 80% of violent incidents (37,219 cases) occurred between students, while 13% (6,167 cases) occurred between the student (perpetrator) and a teacher (victim), 5% (2,531 cases) occurred between teacher (perpetrator) and student (victim), and 2% (710 cases) occurred between teachers. These findings suggest that bullying constitutes a significant portion of violent incidents in Algerian schools, and the most vulnerable age groups are middle school students (aged 11–14), followed by secondary school students (aged 15–17). Verbal bullying and psychological harassment were the most prevalent forms of aggression (Benghafour, 2020).

In a series of four surveys conducted as part of the *Children's Worlds* project, also known as the International Survey of Child Well-Being (ISCWeB), Tiliouine (2020) found that 74.5% of children had never been involved in physical bullying. Over 60% (62.1%) of the children also reported that they had not experienced passive bullying. For other types of victimizations, such as being hit or being left out by other children in the classroom more than three times during the preceding month, the study found that 6.6% reported being hit and 10.3% reported being left out.

A similar trend was observed in subsequent surveys (Tiliouine, 2015b, 2019), where 66%–70% of children reported never experiencing physical bullying, while 6%–7.5% were victims of bullying multiple times. Passive bullying was reportedly more frequent during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with 44.5% of children reporting being victims. Repetitive bullying was also more common during this period, with 15.5% of children reporting multiple instances of victimization in 2015 (Wave 3).

Psychological bullying, specifically being called unkind names, was explored in the 2015 survey and during the COVID-19 pandemic. As with other forms of bullying, psychological bullying was generally more frequent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately half of the children reported being victims of psychological bullying, with around 14% suffering from repetitive incidents of such bullying (Tiliouine & Tiliouine, 2022). This finding was consistent with Rudatskira et al.'s (2014) study, which reported a significantly high prevalence rate of bullying victimization. The study, which consisted of 4,532 students in Algeria (aged 13–15) as part of the 2011 WHO School-Based Health Survey, found that 51.1% reported being victims of bullying, with 47% of the victims being boys and 54.9% being girls.

Among children aged 11, 25%–34% have experienced physical bullying. Also, 34%–44% were left out by their classmates, and 36%–48% were called unkind names by other children in the class at least once during the preceding month.

Two more recent studies (Tiliouine, under review; Tiliouine et al., 2019) investigated changes in the self-reported well-being of 443 children aged 12–14 and 578 children aged 8–10 in Algeria. The studies found that despite increasing dissatisfaction with various aspects of their school experience over the two years, there was no evidence of a significant change in the frequency of children experiencing physical or social bullying.

Table 1.1a Children's World surveys in Algeria: sample characteristics

Survey Wave	Sample Size (n)	Mean Age (SD)	Girls (%)
Pilot	1452	10.9 (1.7)	51.4
Wave 1 (2013)	3676	11.1 (1.6)	47.0
Wave 2 (2015)	3375	10.0 (1.5)	52.7
Wave 3 (2020)	816	11.3 (0.92)	50.5

Table 1.1b Prevalence of being hit by other children at school (%)

Frequency	Pilot	Wave 1 (2013)	Wave 2 (2015)	Wave 3 (2020) ¹
Never	74.5	70.7	68.9	65.9
Once	13.3	15.9	16.3	18.6
2 or 3 times	5.8	5.9	7.1	9.4
More than 3 times	6.6	7.6	7.6	6.1

Table 1.1c Prevalence of being left out by other children in class (%)

Frequency	Pilot	Wave 1 (2013)	Wave 2 (2015)	Wave 3 (2020) ¹
Never	62.1	66.4	63.8	55.6
Once	20.4	16.4	16.5	17.4
2 or 3 times	7.2	7.3	7.8	11.5
More than 3 times	10.3	9.9	11.8	15.5

Table 1.1d Prevalence of being called unkind names by other children in class (%)

Frequency	Pilot	Wave 1 (2013)	Wave 2 (2015)	Wave 3 (2020) ¹
Never	Not measured	Not measured	64.0	52.2
Once	Not measured	Not measured	14.7	21.1
2 or 3 times	Not measured	Not measured	7.0	13.1
More than 3 times	Not measured	Not measured	14.3	13.6

Note: Despite some noticeable discrepancies in the figures reported in Table 1.1a, these differences can be attributed to sampling errors, such as variations in age and the proportion of girls in the samples.

¹The large pilot study and Wave 3 were conducted in the Oran province only. Wave 3 data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tiliouine & Tiliouine, 2022). Waves 1 and 2 were representative of the western regions of the country, with three provinces studied, including Oran, Tlemcen, and El Bayadh (Tiliouine, 2015b, 2019).

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH ON BULLYING

Empirical studies on bullying among children and adolescents in Algeria are limited. When the topic is addressed, it is often framed within the broader context of violent and aggressive behaviour (e.g., Kadri & Dahmani, 2023; Zouichene & Bendahmane, 2022). To date, the cultural context of bullying in Algeria is often overlooked. Nevertheless, research on the correlates of bullying and victimization has emerged over the years.

Correlates of Bullying

Gender and age

Regarding gender, a finding from Rudatskira et al.'s (2014) study revealed that males were 28% less likely to be bullied compared to females. In contrast, Tiliouine (2015a) found that boys were more likely to be victims of direct forms of bullying ($p < .001$), while both males and females experienced indirect bullying, such as being ignored. Moreover, Tiliouine's (2015a) research in the first wave of the *Children's Worlds* survey indicated that boys were significantly more likely than girls to experience physical bullying, such as being hit by other children at school ($p < .005$), though no gender differences were found when it came to social exclusion. The second wave of the survey replicated these findings, with boys again being more likely than girls to experience being hit and called unkind names by other children at school. However, no gender differences were found in being left out. In the third wave of the survey, which was conducted with a smaller and older group of children during the COVID-19 pandemic, different results emerged. Boys were found to be significantly more likely than girls to experience name-calling ($p < .005$) and social exclusion ($p < .01$), but there were no gender differences in physical bullying (Tiliouine & Tiliouine, 2022). A recent study (Tiliouine, under review) found that the frequency of both active and passive bullying remained stable for both boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 10. However, in Wave 1, both being hit and being left out significantly decreased with age (Tiliouine, 2015a). In Wave 2, being hit decreased significantly after the age of 8, but being called unkind names remained the highest in the 12-year-old age group. According to Rudatskira et al. (2014), adolescents under 13 years were 14% less likely to be physically bullied compared to those aged 16 years or older.

Area of residence

There are also some variations in the frequency of bullying according to the area (province) of residence in Wave 1 (Tiliouine, 2015a). Children living in the southwestern province (El-Bayadh) were significantly less likely to be hit or left out compared to children from two northern provinces of Western Algeria. In Tlemcen, a less urbanized region compared to Oran, children were less likely to be hit by schoolmates. El-Bayadh, a more rural area with characteristics similar to the Sahara Desert regions, also reported lower rates of physical bullying. However, no significant differences between geographical regions were found in Wave 2 (Tiliouine, 2019).

Socioeconomic status

Regarding the socioeconomic factors influencing bullying, Rudatskira et al. (2014) found that adolescents from poorer households were 21% more likely to be bullied compared to their peers from wealthier households. Similarly, Tiliouine (2015a) identified that coming from a

socially disadvantaged background, along with frequent changes in residence, was linked to an increased likelihood of bullying.

Lifestyle

Rudatskira et al. (2014) further examined the relationship between bullying and adolescent lifestyle, revealing that those with a sedentary lifestyle were 10% more likely to be victims of bullying compared to their more active peers. Tiliouine (2015a) further highlighted the negative impact of bullying on children's subjective well-being, including higher absenteeism rates, which negatively affect their academic performance.

Sociocultural context

Violence, including bullying, does not occur in a vacuum. Research has demonstrated that the sociocultural context plays a critical role in either encouraging or deterring such behaviours (e.g., Maunder & Crafter, 2018). In the case of Algeria, the educational system faces several significant challenges, including high waste of educational resources, high dropout rates, violence, and low-quality teaching (Benghafour, 2020). Therefore, bullying must be understood within the broader sociocultural context and its unique challenges. For example, in Algeria, there is immense societal pressure on students to perform well academically which is perceived as a key to career success. This pressure often leads to heightened competition among students, creating a stressful and sometimes hostile atmosphere that can encourage misbehaviours, such as bullying (Kadri & Dahmani, 2023; Zouichene & Bendahmane, 2022). Students who are perceived as 'different' – whether in terms of physical appearance, ethnicity, or academic ability – are particularly vulnerable to bullying.

In addition, victims of bullying are often discouraged from speaking out due to traditional cultural norms, which may stigmatize those who seek help or complain about such issues. This silence further isolates the victims, making it more difficult for them to receive support. Furthermore, pedagogical methods, including evaluation techniques, have not kept pace with the changing needs of students. The slow pace of educational reform and the lack of adequate teacher training exacerbates the situation, contributing to an environment in which bullying can thrive.

ANTI-BULLYING INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

To date, despite their importance, anti-bullying intervention and prevention programmes are rarely implemented in Algerian schools. That being stated, addressing bullying in Algerian schools requires a multifaceted approach, which should include the following components:

- *Educational awareness:* Teachers and students in Algeria need to be educated about the serious nature of bullying. Anti-bullying programmes focusing on empathy, respect, and conflict resolution might be integrated into the school curriculum.
- *Strengthening support systems:* Schools are advised to establish clear procedures for reporting bullying incidents and ensure that students feel safe when speaking out. It is also crucial to establish and reinforce counselling services for victims of bullying.
- *Involving parents and professional communities:* Parents need to be actively involved in anti-bullying efforts. Educational programmes for parents can help them recognize signs of bullying and provide the appropriate support for their children. Parent associations can

play an important role in this regard. Researchers should also be encouraged to study the role of parents further. The media and community organizations should also be involved in promoting the healthy social development of children in Algeria.

ANTI-BULLYING LAWS AND POLICIES

As the Algerian school system continues to expand rapidly, decision-makers have recognized the need to adopt legislation to address some challenges and protect educational institutions from the disruptions and dangers caused by violence (Benghafour, 2020). The Ministerial Decree No. 2-171 of 1 June 1991 was enacted, which prohibits corporal punishment and violence against students.

A key milestone in the legislative response was the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on 19 December 1992, which was initially adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989. This convention outlines the fundamental rights of children, emphasizing peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality, and solidarity. It also guarantees the right of children to express their opinions, participate in decisions that affect them, and have their voices heard.

In addition, Ministerial Instruction No. 644 of 1 December 1999 was introduced to combat violence in educational institutions, mandating the establishment of provincial committees to address violence in schools. The Ethics Charter for the National Education Sector also contains provisions for combating violent behaviour within schools (Ministere de l'Education Nationale, 2016).

In 2008, the Education Act (*Loi d'Orientation de l'Éducation Nationale n° 08-04 du 23.01.2008*) was developed and enacted, which specifically prohibits corporal punishment, moral abuse, and all forms of bullying in schools.

In 2015, the Child Protection Law was developed, which introduced a new dynamic in addressing violence against children. This law led to the creation of a permanent body, the National Organ for the Protection and Promotion of Children (NOPPC), which reports directly to the Prime Minister. The NOPPC is supported by a dedicated hotline (11-11) for reporting any violations of children's rights.

In 2016, the Ministerial Circular No. 649 of 24 August 2016 stressed the need to systematically record incidents of violence occurring in schools. Building on this, the Ministry of National Education proposed a sectoral strategy aimed at fostering a safer environment for children's schooling, which was launched on 7 March 2017. Little information is available on the specific details of this strategy.

In 2020, the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech (Law No. 20/05, 2020) was developed, which provides another significant legal tool for combating harmful expressions. This law criminalizes any form of speech that promotes, encourages, or justifies discrimination, as well as expressions that are derogatory, insulting, hostile, hateful, or violent towards individuals or groups based on gender, race, colour, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, language, geographic affiliation, or disability or health condition (Articles 1 and 2, Law No. 20/05, 2020). Although the law applies to all age groups, Kadri and Dahmani (2023) observed that the Algerian legislator deliberately avoided using the term 'bullying' due to its general nature, opting instead for broader concepts like 'discrimination' and 'hate speech,' which also encompass harmful online content (Article 35). The law stipulates penalties for those convicted of discrimination or hate speech, including imprisonment for six months to

three years, and fines ranging from 60,000 DZD to 300,000 DZD (Article 30, Law No. 20/05, 2020). If the victim suffers physical or mental harm because of discrimination or hate speech, the punishment becomes more severe (Article 31). Additionally, the National Observatory for the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech was established to propose and implement preventive measures against such crimes. The Observatory works in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to promote a culture of tolerance, dialogue, and the rejection of all forms of violence. It also plays a key role in monitoring and reporting incidents of discrimination and hate speech to the appropriate judicial authorities (Articles 9 and 10, Law No. 20/05, 2020).

A wide array of legislative texts already exists in Algeria to tackle bullying. These include national laws, decrees, and ministerial instructions aimed at preventing violence, protecting children's rights, and promoting a safe educational environment. However, the main challenge lies in the implementation of these laws. While the legal framework is robust, it is often hindered by gaps in enforcement, insufficient monitoring, and a lack of consistent application at the local level. To address these shortcomings, these laws must be applied within the context of a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy. This strategy should involve not only the relevant government institutions but also schools, teachers, students, and civil society organizations. Effective implementation requires awareness-raising campaigns, training programmes for educators, and stronger collaboration between various stakeholders. Only through such an integrated approach can the legislative framework be fully realized and the fight against bullying in schools become effective.

CONCLUSION

Bullying in Algerian schools is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires the collective efforts of educators, parents, students, and the broader community to effectively address it. Much more needs to be done to create a school environment that is genuinely safe, inclusive, and supportive for all students in Algeria. The implementation of robust anti-bullying laws and policies is necessary, but it must be coupled with a comprehensive approach that includes raising awareness, fostering empathy, and providing psychological support for both victims and perpetrators of bullying. Training for educators and counsellors, as well as the establishment of clear reporting and intervention systems, are crucial elements in ensuring that schools become environments where bullying is not tolerated. Moreover, promoting a culture of respect, kindness, and inclusion within schools requires active engagement from all stakeholders, including families, local communities, and policymakers. By adopting evidence-based interventions and ensuring continuous dialogue and collaboration among educators, parents, and students, it is possible to significantly reduce the rate of bullying and establish a healthier, more positive school environment in Algeria.

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