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**Ph.D. Dissertation Defense**

Entitled

*POLICYMAKER'S PERSPECTIVES AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING AT SCHOOLS IN THE UAE: A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH*

by

Alfan Saghayir Mubarak Markhan Alketbi

Faculty Advisor

Prof. Michal Grivna, Public Health Institute  
College of Medicine and Health Sciences

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Abstract

Bullying is a significant issue in schools worldwide, including in the UAE. This dissertation aims to explore the dynamics of school bullying and improve anti-bullying interventions through a mixed-method approach. The primary goal is to investigate current anti-bullying efforts in the UAE and identify a comprehensive framework for school-based bullying intervention, considering policymaker perspectives and student experiences. The study includes a systematic scoping review, qualitative studies with policymakers, a SWOT analysis of Abu Dhabi's anti-bullying approaches, and a cross-sectional survey of students' perceptions, attitudes, and awareness in Al-Ain City. These methods provide an integrated view of bullying in the UAE by incorporating diverse perspectives and data sources. The findings reveal various anti-bullying strategies involving different stakeholders; however, gaps are identified within existing approaches. Policymakers emphasized culturally sensitive interventions while acknowledging challenges related to implementation and evaluation processes. Although Abu Dhabi's approach has solid legislative support, incomplete implementation is recognized as a weakness. The analysis of students' survey data showed varied experiences and perceptions regarding bullying among students, leading to a 36.7% prevalence rate overall, with higher rates observed in private schools than public ones, especially concerning cyberbullying (37% vs 27%).

Additionally, numerous instances where over half have witnessed online bullying were reported. Moreover, it was notable that only about one-fourth inform teachers about these incidents while nearly half report them to parents, the latter being slightly more noticeable among private school attendees, reporting 47% versus public at 42%. It emerged further that less than fifty percent confirm the proper policies for reporting such cases, indicating limitations from private and public schools. Additionally, fear associated with bullies holds significance amongst factors underlying hesitancy surfacing during surveys. This study provides valuable insights on potential areas that focus on enhancing efficient policy enforcement against such issues, thus serving as critical input informing future decision-makers towards effective preventive measures.

**Keywords:** School Bullying, UAE, Anti-Bullying Strategies, Mixed-Method Approach, Cultural Sensitivity, Policy Analysis, Student Perceptions.