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BULLING BEHAVIOURS, SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG JORDANIAN SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated the differences among bullies, victims and uninvolved in self-esteem and academic achievement. The sample of the study consisted of 641 students (303 males, 338 females) in grades from seventh to tenth. For achieving the aim of this study, the following scales were used: bullying scale, victimization scale, self-esteem scale, and GPAs. The results showed that both Uninvolved students and bullies had significantly higher self-esteem than did victims. Uninvolved students had significantly higher academic performance than did bullies or victims. Implications were discussed.

Keywords

Bullying; Self-Esteem, Academic Achievement

1. Introduction

Many students in school suffer from a bullying that may be affected on their mental health and academic achievement. School bullying is a serious problem that threat not only to those involved, But also for the whole school environment. For this reason, there is an increase

interest in this problem among researchers in many countries of the world, seeking to understand and then combat it through various policies and programs.

From the beginning of the study of bullying, the researchers focused on the definition of bullying to understand the dimensions of this dangerous social phenomenon. The definition of Olweus (1993) is the most widely accepted in studies on bullying. His definition is: " The student becomes a victim of bullying when he is repeatedly exposed to negative behaviors during a time period by one student or more than one ", And Marano (1995) believes that this definition has three main components, part One: That the bullying uses repeated aggressive behavior; the second is that this behavior is negative and deliberate and intended to inflict harm; and the third one is that the behavior is directed from a strong student to a weak student. Bullying is defined as a form of aggression, usually classified as physical abuse, verbal abuse and psychological abuse (Shore, 2005). And it is defined as repeated negative behaviors intended to abuse or harassment issued by a strong person against another weak person (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006).

Olweus (1993) clarify that there are three forms of bullying: Physical abuse, verbal abuse, and social relational abuse. Physical bullying refers to harm the victim physically by pushing, beating and smashing his own things. And the verbal bullying refers to use words to humiliate another person or hurting his feelings through harassment, or insult, or threat. Social bullying is to influence others to be a way and reject the victim to be socially isolated; this is done through obscene gestures or social exclusion. Olweus divided the bullying into two categories, direct and indirect. Direct bullying takes the form of an open attack on the victim, as in physical and verbal bullying. And As an examples of direct bullying, Paying, beating, irony and threat. As for Indirect bullying, which is sometimes called psychological bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), Lumsden, 2002), such as the form of spreading rumors, social isolation (Olweus, 1993), asked others not to friend and accompany with anyone, and try to convince others to hate someone (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), And deliberately avoid talking with someone (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006).

Studies referred to three categories of children included in the bullying problem: bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Children of the third category tend to fluctuate between the two roles.

Bullying children share several characteristics such as lack of empathy, denial of victim's weakness, claims of being provoked by others, they often misunderstand behavior of peers, and assume aggressive intentions. Bullies popularity in primary schools is moderate; scholars found

that moving into the high school reduces the bully popularity further, but the victim's popularity level remains higher (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997).

Bullying often leads to unfavorable consequences for the individual, who is a victim (Singh, 2017). Bullied children are obedient, worried, weak, cautious, sensitive, and calm. They lack self-confidence and popularity. Their self-esteem is low (Atkinson & Hornby, 2002; Reid, Monsen & Rivers, 2004). Smith and Sharp (1994) found that victims self-assertion skills are limited; in social interactions victims feel anxious and tensed so they surrender to the bully behavior.

Bully-victims are more anxious and less popular, their emotions are not steady, they are easily provoked, and they provoke others frequently (Atkinson & Hornby, 2002). Olweus (1995) believes that the bully-victims count is little.

The context of bullying helps in understanding of its occurrence among school students. The occurrence of bullying differs from one school to another. School bullying tragic consequences includes both victims and bullies. Victims of bully show withdrawal (such as absence from school or avoiding staying in certain places in the school); their academic achievement and self-esteem is low; and in extreme cases, run away from home, commit suicide or murder their bullies (Ma, Stewin & Mah, 2001). The bully academic achievement is weak compared with intact children, the rate of their school absence is high, more time is spent in prison, and they are more likely to become abusers in their families in future (Elinoff, Chafouleas & Sassu, 2004).

Management of bullying is crucial because it conducts an important message to the other students and to bullies. It is important to intervene in all bullying problems, including the verbal bullying; a fast appropriate response is required. The appropriate response depends on the nature, intensity, duration and number of incidents, as well as the intention and motivation of the bully. The response include, for example, listening to the victim's story; reassuring the victim that actions are undertaken; inform the bully that his behavior is not accepted; instruct the bully to undertake a constructive task; increase control levels; invest parental cooperation; and support the victim in the classroom. When the school manages the problem, the victim and bully receive long-term support. The bully need to understand that bullying others is not right. The intervention process should be educational rather than punitive, such as the attempts to make bullies appreciate victim feelings by using educational methods, like conflicts and problems solving (Atkinson & Hornby, 2002) bullies acquire new thinking styles by such interventions.

2. Literature Review

Bullying sought interest of many researchers in different countries. Few studies examined bullying across gender and grade level variables; other examined the differences between bullies, victims, and bystanders on a number of psychosocial measures such as self-esteem and depression tests.

Mynard and Joseph (1997) examined the relationship between the bullying behavior and efficacy at school among a sample of British students ranging in age from 8-13 years. They found a negative correlation between the level of victimization feeling and efficacy; they also found a weak negative correlation between bullying and efficacy at school. O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) examined the relationship between self-esteem, bullying, and bully victimized male and female students (No. 8249). Participants age range between 8-18 years. They researchers found that bullies, victims or both show low self-esteem levels compared with intact peers.

Seals and Young (2003) examined bullying spread among students in the seventh and eighth grades, and examined the correlation between bullying and victims according to gender, grade level, origin, self-esteem, and depression; students (No. 454) from public schools participated in the study. They found statistical significant differences attributed to bullying in favor of bully males compared with the bully females, and in favor of the seventh grade students compared with the eighth grade. Differences attributed to the origin were not statistical. The researchers also found high depression levels among bullies and victims compared with the intact comparison group. However, they did not find significant differences in the student's self-esteem. Kokkinos and Panayiotou (2004) examined the relationship between behavior disorders, bullies and victims among a sample of (202) adolescent, ranging in age between 12-15 years, the students enrolled in two middle schools in cypress. Behavior disorders and self-esteem predicted bullying. Low self-esteem predicted bully victims; they scored low on self-esteem test, while both the bully group and the comparison group had the same level of self-esteem.

Results of the above-mentioned studies differ in terms of bullying relationship with other variables such as self-esteem and school efficacy. As far as the researcher knows studies comparing bullying groups academic achievement are scarce.

3. Research Objective

Self-esteem, which refers to the extent to which a person respects themselves, is related to high academic achievement (Jaradat, 2011), safe attachment style (Abu-Ghazal & Jaradat, 2009) and several mental health variables. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that school students have safe environment, so that they improve their self-esteem as well as their academic achievement. To shed much light on this issue, the present study sought to investigate the relationship of bullying behaviors to self-esteem and academic achievement among a sample of school students. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the differences among bullies, victims and uninvolved students in self-esteem and academic achievement.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

The study population is composed of all 91658 students of primary school in Jordan, affiliated to the Ministry of Education for the academic year 2019/2018. Participants in this study were a convenience sample of 641 students (303 males, 338 females) in grades from seventh to tenth. They were selected from two primary schools in Jordan in the available way. The survey was conducted after the respondents were told that their participation was voluntary and assured them confidentiality.

4.2 Scales

In this study, the bullying and victimization scales which were developed by Jaradat (2017) were used.

4.2.1 Bullying Scale

The scale consists of 10 items. These items measure forms of bullying such as threatening, hitting and ignoring. Responses ranged from 0 (never) to 7 (seven or more times). The total possible score on the scale is 70. Participants are asked to indicate the extent to which they did each behavior in the last 30 days. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale in the present study was .78.

4.2.2 Victimization Scale

The scale consists of 10 items ask participnats about the frequency of different forms of behavior such as being hit or pushed and ignored. Items are rated on a 0-7 scale, yielding a total possible score of 70. Participants are asked to indicate how often each behavior happened to them in the last 30 days. The internal consistency of the scale in the present study was .80.

4.2.3 Self-Esteem Scale

In this study the Arabic version of Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used (Jaradat, 2006). The scale consists of 10 items. Participants respond to these items on a four point scale ranging from 1 to 4.

Academic achievement was estimated in the present study based on the students' accumulative GPAs, ranged from 1 to 5.

4.3 Procedure

The participants completed the scales in the classroom after providing them with information about the purpose of the study. Their participation was voluntary. The answers were distributed and data entry and analysis of the results according to the study questions.

5. Results

To identify the bullying groups in the present sample, a k-means cluster analysis was conducted. This technique of classification was used in several studies investigated differences among bullying groups including those studies conducted in Jordanian samples (e.g., Jaradat, 2008; Dwairi & Jaradat, 2015; Jaradat, 2016). As in previous studies, a four cluster solution was used. The four groups are uninvolved, bullies, victims, and bully-victims. The number of students in the bully-victim group was very small, therefore this group was excluded in the subsequent analysis. Table 1 shows the distribution of bullying groups by gender and grade level.

Table 1: Bullying Groups by Gender and Grade Level

group		uninvolved	bullies	victims	bully-victims	
variable		(68.6%)440	(19.3%)124	(10.5%)67	(1.6%)10	
gender						
	males	(51.8%)157	(29.7%)90	(15.2%)46	(3.3%)10	
	females	(83.7%)283	(10.1%)34	(6.2%)21	(.0%)0	
grade						
	seventh	(60.9%)109	(19.0%)34	(16.8%)30	(3.4%)6	
	eighth	(66.2%)100	(19.9%)30	(13.2%)20	(.7%)1	

	ninth	(83.9%)135	(10.6%)17	(3.7%)6	(1.9%)3	
	tenth	(64.0%)96	(28.7%)43	(7.3%)11	(.0%)0	

To explore the differences among the bullying groups in self-esteem and academic achievement means and standard deviations were computed (as shown in Table 2) and One-way analysis of variance was conducted (see Table 3).

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of the Scores of the Bullying Groups on the Scales of Self-esteem and Academic Achievement

Group type scale		Uninvolved	Bullies	Victims	Total Sample
Self-esteem	M	3.18	3.10	2.93	3.14
	SD	0.39	0.43	0.44	0.41
Academic Achievement	M	2.94	2.57	2.47	2.82
	SD	1.39	1.17	1.25	1.34

M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

Table 3: Results of One-way ANOVA for the Differences among the Bullying Groups in Self-esteem and Academic Achievement

Dependent variable	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	P
Self-esteem	3.861	2	1.931	11.483	0.001*
Academic Achievement	22.522	2	11.261	6.260	0.002*

*P<0.01

Table 3 shows that there were significant differences among the groups in self-esteem (F= 11.483, P=0.001), and academic achievement (F= 22.522, P=0.002). Sheffe tests showed that the mean scores of uninvolved students and bullies in self-esteem were significantly higher than those of victims, and the mean scores of uninvolved students in academic achievement were significantly higher than those of bullies and victims (see Table 4).

Table 4: Results of Sheffe Tests for Multiple Comparisons

Variable	Group	victims	bullies	Uninvolved
Self-esteem	Uninvolved	*		
	bullies victims	*		
Academic achievement	Uninvolved	*	*	
	bullies			
	victims			

*P<0.05

6. Discussion

This study attempted to examine the differences of self-esteem and academic achievement among bullies, victims, and bystanders. Bullies and bystanders levels of self-esteem scored high compared with the victims scores. This results suggests that the victims believe they are less efficient compared with their peers, they feel they are losers, not intelligent, unimportant, and they are not satisfied with themselves. They do not defend themselves because they think they do not have the ability to do so. Because of their presumed low self-esteem, they do not report bullying often, their silence sends bullies signals to continue the negative behavior; therefore, bullies confront them repeatedly. School counselors help victims to enhance confidence, self-esteem, friendships, and self-assertion. The researcher recommends school staff to invest communicating with parents.

Literature review examining the relation between self-esteem and bullying showed a discrepancy in findings. Some results agree with the results of the current study and others disagree. O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) found that victims' self-esteem level is lower than the bystanders self-esteem level, this result agrees with the current research results, but it differs in finding differences in self-esteem of bystanders and bullies. It disagrees with Seals and Young (2003) study; they did not find differences in bystanders, bullies, and victims self-esteem level. Whereas it agrees with Kokkinos and Panayiotou (2004), they found that bullies and bystanders self-esteem level is similar.

The bullies and victims low achievement level compared to bystander's may be attributed to several reasons such as curriculum difficulty or poor desire to study. These reasons direct bullies and victims to involve in other behaviors such as bullying. Victim's low

achievement levels may be attributed to the school hatred because they encounter bullying, or it is attributed to their family environments. Victim's attention is more often distracted, this result agrees with Mynard and Joseph (1997) findings, and they found a significant negative relationship between the efficacy level and levels of victimization and bullying.

To understand the bullying behavior profoundly, the researcher recommends other researchers to exam the relationship between the bullying behavior and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Scholars are recommended to study peers influence on adolescents bullying behavior, and to test the effectiveness of the psychological counseling programs in training victims on social skills that increase their self-esteem and enable them to act in bullying situations by self-assertion. Scholars are recommended to implement designed programs in emotional involvement on bullies, to teach bullies to express their frustration and anger in appropriate ways. Generalizing the results of the current study are hindered by its sample selection (two primary public schools).

Future research may pay attention to the relationship between bullying and self-esteem in other groups of the population such as inmates of rehabilitation centers, since previous studies (e.g., Jaradat & Al-Mansour, 2013) showed that bullying is prevalent among them.

7. Conclusion

The researcher recommends school counselors to reduce levels of students bullying behavior, and to create safe school environments. Students in turn start feeling comfortable and happy at school; their positive feelings affect their academic performance. Therefore, academic achievement and self-esteem improves.

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