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Research Article

Comparative Analysis of Verbal Victimization among Male and Female High School Students in Iran

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
Key words: **Bulling; verbal; victimization**	School bullying and peer victimization are major social problems affecting children and adolescents in all parts of the world. School bullying may take many forms, such as physical, verbal, and relational or social. So the purpose of this study was to compare verbal victimization among male and female high schools students of Boukan city in Iran in academic year 2013-14. Four schools were selected by random cluster sampling. Data collected using Iranian form of bullying victimization scale (B.V.S) and analysed with descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (One Way Variance test) using SPSS 19 software. The results showed that gender was a meaningful factor for predicting verbal victimization among students thus boys had meaningfully a higher average score than girls.

INTRODUCTION

Schools are a place of learning and growth for most youth. However, they may also be a place for victimization from school violence and bullying (0lsen et al., 2014). In the last two decades, the issue of bullying in educational environments has attracted more attention to itself and has been given numerous names. Liman has counted bullying a current process in everyday life and stated that Bullying occurs when the behavior is done for the purpose of humiliation and harassment. Real harassment takes place when bullying behaviors occur more frequently, the distance between the power of the bully and the victim becomes wider, also when there is no way to escape and avoid it for the victim and also when the values and attitudes of the victims are the target of bullying (Tehrani, 2004). Bullying is probably one of the most difficult and prevalent problems that our school today face (Orpinas & Horne, 2006), such that around the world between 15 to 30 percent of students are exposed to bullying and its consequences (Curelaru,Iacob, Abalasei, 2009). More recent research estimate the

prevalence of bullying among students in different countries to be close to 50% (Black, Weinles, Washington, 2010; Henningham, Gardner, SusanWalker, 2009). Olweus (1993) defined bullying as an aggressive, intentional behavior repeatedly carried out by one or more individuals toward a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself (Baxendale, & Johnston, 2012). According to bullying definitions, bulling behavior has five important characteristics: 1. It is an aggressive action; 2.It isn't generally pre-motivated; 3. It takes many a time place; 4. It includes an unequal power between bully and victim; 5. It happens in small social groups that their members are familiar with each other (Hulsey, 2008).

Victims are individuals who are repetitiously victimized by others, and they are known through characteristics, such as introversion, weakness, emotionality, shame, caution, unsafety, and higher level of anxiety (Felipe et al., 2011; Spelage & Holt, 2013). Majority of victims are physically weaker than bully, and have less power in order to defend and take care of them physically and

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verbally. Hence, they are often aimed at bullies' aggression with no reason (Turner, Fenkelhor & Emrood, 2010). Victims have typically a negative and defective insight about themselves, weak social skills, less power than their peers and failure in emotional expression. They have negative attitude toward themselves and their status. They are loneliness, aren't a member of social networks, or have restricted relations with others. In addition, they have supporting parents. This parenting style have likely a role in victimization, because parents haven't already been trained them how to encounter difficulties and tolerances (Felipe et al., 2011). These defects probably augment victims exposed to bully, and exacerbate their difficulties. Victims may become isolated and distressed. They have low self-esteem and self-confidence (Dukes, Stein & Zane, 2009), more negative self-efficacy and attitude, and miss their braveness and power defense. If victim students aren't supported and treated for a long time, they'll have in physical health problems, such as neurological and digestive diseases, sleep disorders, headaches and muscle tension, educational and academic difficulties, such as escaping and refusing to go to school(Kowalski & Limber, 2013), psychological difficulties, like severe depression (Roth, Coles & Heimberg, 2002), mental health disorder (Trofi & Farrington, 2008), and spread of suicide thoughts and even the possibility of suicide attempts (Espelage & Holt, 2013).

Based on the theory of Olweus and other theoreticians, bullying behavior is a broad range of destructive behaviors that constantly for a period of time causes victimization of students in different ways, whitch verbal victimization is one of the most important ways of those (Rothon, Head, Klineberg, & Stansfeld, 2011). Becoming a victim of verbal bullying includes being verbally attacked using words of insult, humiliation, threat, name calling and tagging on the victims. The main intention of the bullies for verbal victimization is to destroy the victim's self-esteem that usually done against peers (Rivers, & Smith, 1994). So far, an abundance of research have shown that verbal victimization is one of the most common form of victimization. Including Atick (2006) reported verbal victimization has the highest rate in his research. Seals and Young (2003) also showed that the most common form of victimization is the verbal form. In Iran also Bolandhematan (2010) has shown that verbal victimization has the highest rate including swearing (75.3%), tagging and name calling (59%), and mocking and insulting the victim's personality (70.2%). BarzegarBafroo'ee and Khezri (2013) as well have reported that verbal victimization is the most common type of becoming a victim among Iranian students.

In relation to the victimization rete of students in different countries Different numbers are reported. for example In a current extensive survey this figure is reported to be 15% in Europe (Olweus, 1993), around 30% in the U.S. (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center , 2006), 11% in Finland (Kaltiala-Heino et al, 1999), 20.5% in Turkey (Alikasifoglu, et al, 2007), 40% in Romania (Beldean-Galea, Jurcau, Tigan, 2010), and 41 to 60% in the Africa and the Middle East (Fleming, Jacobsen, 2010). In Iran also, Bolandhematan (2010) reported the extent of victimization among Iranian students to be at least 22.9 percent. But the results on the victimization of the two genders are rather contradictory. Some research have showed that the percentage of boys and girls being victimized is approximately the same (Beldean-Galea, Jurcau, Tigan, 2010 ; Fekkes, Pijpers, Verlove-Vonherick, 2004; Peskin, Tortolero, Markham, 2006), while other researchers' findings showed that the number of boys being victimized is more than girls. for example Due, et al. (2009) in their international survey among 35 countries found that in most countries, boys have stated to be more victim than girls. Bolandhematan (2010) in Iran has also showed that the frequency of victimization in all its forms in boys' more than girls'. There has been also much research with regard to the role of gender in becoming a victim by Rigby (2007), Card et al. (2008) Bourne Trager et al. (2009) that have showed boys in comparison with girls, become more victims of direct forms of bullying specially physical and verbal bullying, while girls in comparison with boys are more victims of indirect forms of bullying. In other words, the probability of girls becoming emotional victims is higher. In general we can say that the boys in comparison with girls are involved in more violent forms of bullying and use more verbal physical and tools to bully (Barzegar Befroo'ee and Khezri, 2013). However, there hasn't been done much research on this subject in Iran so far. In one research Mohammadkhani (2002), reported that boys are mainly physically and verbally victims and girls are mostly victimized through rumor-mongering that is one of the forms of emotional bullying (Cheraghi, Piskin, 2011). Barzegar Befroo'ee and Khezri (2013) also showed that boys have significant differences with girls in direct types of bullying and In other words, most of them involve in verbal and physical bullying.

Research Objective: as mentioned Already the research on the prevalence of victimization in Iran, specially verbal victimization among students and its comparison between boys and girls has not been enough. This is while investigating on the topic of victimization with regard to the gender variable is highly important because using its results we can determine both the prevalence and the type of victimization that is dominant in each gender, and take the necessary interventions according to this information for each of the genders. This is even more important in Iran given the single-gender schools and the different culture than other countries, thus the necessity of considering the results obtained from local research is higher. In this regard, the present study has sought to comparatively examine verbal victimization among male and female high school students of Boukan city in Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population and Sample: The statistical population of this study consists of all male and female high school students from Boukan city in the 2013-2014 academic year. under study was considered 846 students. To do so 2 first high schools and 2 secondary high schools in Boukan city were selected using the method of random cluster sampling and all students of this schools that were exactly 846 people filled the Iranian form of bullying victimization scale. (B.V.S).

Iranian form of Bullying Victimization Scale (B. V. S): In present study (B.V.S) was used to collect data in pretest and posttest phases. This scale was made and validated based on Elvis's (1996) questionnaire and normalized with Iranian cultural situation. It consists of 26 items that evaluates physical, verbal and emotional victimization at a 6 degree Likert scale. Scoring is directly conducted and people, who obtain more than 49.5, are identified as victim. The coefficients obtained for all test is r = 0.98 and for verbal victimization area is r = 0.99 that indicates high reliability of this scale. Its validity was assessed using construct validity on the range of 0.75 to 0.90 showing that all items of subscales assessed verbal victimization (Moradi, 2009).

FINDINGS AND RESULT

Data analyzed with descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (Covariance Test) using SPSS 19 software.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Highest score	Lowest score
Female	423	11/7	6/13	27	3
Male	42	10/6	6/017	28	1
Total	846	11/17	6/097	28	1

Table 1: Descriptive data of verbal victimization in male and female students

According to table 1, the mean score of male students in the variables of verbal victimization has been more than female students. To investigate the fact that whether or not the difference in means is statistically significant, one-way variance analyze test was used. First, variance consistency was analyzed as one of main assumption of one-way variance analyze test. Homogeneity assumption of variances was studied by Levene test for examining variance consistency. The results are visible in the following table.

Sig.	Between-group df	Within-group df	F
0/264	1	844	1/294

Table 2: Levene test to examine variance consistency in verbal victimization

As Table 2 shown, the variance error of groups was homogeneous and equal, because F wasn't significant at the level of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the assumption of variances homogeneity has been verified.

Sources of change	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Between-group	275/755	1	275/755		
Within-group	31137/745	844	36/893	7/474	0/006
Total	31413/5	845	-		

Table 3: One-way variance analysis test for verbal victimization in male and female students

The variance analysis test results showed that the obtained F= 14.108, is significant at the level of 0.05. So gender has been a significant indicator to predict verbal victimization in students under study.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicated that the rate of verbal victimization among male students is significantly higher than females. This finding is consistent with other research like (Rigby (2007), Card et al. (2008) Bourn Trager et al. (2009), Cheraghi, and Piskin (2011), Baxendale, Cross & Johnston (2012), Barzegar Befroo'ee and Khezri (2013) that showed that boys more than girls become victims in direct forms of bullying, including verbal and physical bullying. It is also consistent with the Crick, & Grotpeter (1995), and wolke et al. (2000) that showed both bullying and victimization in boys is more direct such as physical and verbal ways than girls, and with Farnigton (1993) that has reported that bullying and consequently being physically and verbally victim is more common in boys (Vimer,2009). Overall, research in about 40 countries and in various age groups have showed that boys, more than girls, are victims of direct forms of bullying (Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, Jugert, 2006). So it seems that there is a partial agreement among researchers on this finding that boys become physically victim more than girls. In explaining the findings of this study it should be stated that the society and culture can have very impoetant role in this respect. In Eastern cultures such as Iranian culture, boys have more freedom to express their feelings and use of direct and overt aggression and bullying. Simply it can be said that this kind of aggressive behaviors is tied to the male role in these cultures. So effect of culture on the incidence of bullying and aggression should not be ignored. For example in Ramirez's, Andreu, & Fujihara, study (2001) on the Spanish students it was indicated that they gain higher scores in verbal bullying but the Japanese students gain higher scores in physical bullying that clearly shows the impact of culture on the incidence of bullying.

Another factor goes back to the involvement of boys engaging in bullying in certain friend groups, especially Among Teenagers. Most of these boys are members of these groups only because they have an intense need for social approval. As a result, these boys are ready to try anything only for the sake of maintaining their place in the group and usually one of the goals of these groups is victimizing other students and peers in different ways including verbal victimization. In addition, the role of social lessons is also very important. Turkel (2007) says that while boys are encouraged directly and indirectly in the society to let their negative emotions out through actions such as pushing and hitting, girls are taught to avoid direct and aggressive behaviors so they show those negativities in other indirect ways. In fact, there is In fact, there is a stereotype of the social lessons that introduces men as active, physical and dominating people, while women as passive, obedient, and humble and obviously weak. Of course, this does not mean that girls do not bullying or become victims of physical form, but means that there are tendencies in bullying that depends on the gender variable, as the results of this research also indicated.

Study Limitations: A questionnaire is a mental tool and only based on personal experiences; attitudes and feelings, memories and this problem can also cause distortion of the results of this research. Also, because of the sensitivity of the issue of bullying, a lot of students, especially girls, may not answered to the questionnaire honestly, due to their fear or shame of being identified as a victim of bullying.

Practical Recommendations: As girls and boys become victims of bullying in different ways, it is very important that we seek to understand these differences in our society and carefully discern them. Otherwise, the bullying phenomenon remains unclear and ambiguous, and then the long-term consequences of bullying may become even severe on students. Therefore teachers and school personnel, parents and students themselves need to learn about the various forms of bullying and its consequences. It is also recommended that anti bullying programs be conducted in a way that boys and girls in different ways are involved.

Research Recommendations: It is recommended that given the role of the social lessons on the phenomenon of bullying, in future research the importance of social variables in the emergence of sex differences in bullying be Examined with regard to the local culture.

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