

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Can School Environment Effect the Willingness to Seeking Help and Prevalence of Bullying among Middle School Students?

Sarah Jawad Kadhim^{1*}, Arkan Bahlol Naji²

1. MSN, Department of community Health Nursing, College of Nursing, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq.
2. Professor, PhD, Department of community Health Nursing, College of Nursing, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq.
3. Corresponding author: Sarah Jawad Kadhim

Email: Sarah.Jawad1206b@conursing.uobaghdad.edu.iq

ORCID

ABSTRACT

Background: Current school climate theories believe that it is a multidimensional concept that relates to the experiences that students have during their school day. According to the National School Climate Center, climate affects the interactions of all students, teachers, and parents in a school. It also reflects the values, beliefs, and teaching and learning of the school.

Objective(s): The aim of this study is to determine whether school environment effect the willingness to seeking help and prevalence of bullying among middle school students.

Methodology: The descriptive correlational design has been considered a subtype of correlational research, with its primary purpose being to examine relationships between and among variables and it is referred to occasionally as simple correlational design. The study was carried out at public middle schools for males and females in Baghdad City. The study included a convenience sample of male and females middle school students who agreed to participate in this study. The study subjects were recruited from six public middle schools. Thus, the recommended sample size would be 305.

Results: There is no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among grade groups.

Conclusion: The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the prevalence of bullying. The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the better the school climate.

Recommendations: There is for the officials in the Ministry of Education to establish school-based zero-tolerance violence policy.

Keywords: School Environment, Seeking Help, Prevalence, Bullying, Middle School Students.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License.

Received: 27 June 2022, Accepted: 14 July 2022, Available online: 21 July 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the various factors that influence school safety and prevent violence. It can also help policymakers and school administrators develop effective prevention strategies. The findings of this study will be used to develop effective prevention strategies and improve the quality of education for students. It will also help school districts implement additional programs and improve the safety of their students. The findings of this study will be used to develop effective prevention strategies and improve the quality of education for students. It will also help school administrators and teachers feel more confident about their safety (Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, & Benbenishty, 2013; Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017).

As school officials and stakeholders continue to look for ways to improve the experiences of students, it is important that they consider the role of school climate in their efforts. Numerous studies have shown that positive school climate can help improve academic performance and social and emotional well-being (Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, & Benbenishty, 2013; Berkowitz, Moore, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2017). A review of school climate research has shown that positive school climate can help address educational achievement gaps between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Berkowitz et al., 2017).

Current school climate theories believe that it is a multidimensional concept that relates to the experiences that students have during their school day. According to the National School Climate Center, climate affects the interactions of all students, teachers, and parents in a school. It also reflects the values, beliefs, and teaching and learning of the school. Despite the growing body of research that focuses on how school climate affects the experiences of students, few studies have included the perspectives of school staff members (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).

The goal of school climate models is to accurately describe the characteristics of a school climate and how it affects its various constituents. They need to also include the school staff members, as these individuals play a vital role in the development of the climate. In addition to academic indicators, other non-academic factors such as social and emotional learning are also important in assessing the school climate. As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act, states are required to include various measures of school success and quality in their accountability

systems. This will allow them to identify areas of improvement and make informed decisions regarding the climate of their schools (Melnick, Cook-Harvey & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The importance of school climate is acknowledged as a vital component of academic and social development. It can be used to reinforce the development of emotional and social skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Melnick et al., 2017). The school climate can help teachers and students improve their emotional and social health. It can also help them make informed decisions (Melnick et al., 2017; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

Analyzing the school climate from a staff perspective is important to provide a deeper understanding of the concept. Unfortunately, most studies on school climate have focused on student experiences. This makes it hard to imagine how teachers can be fully understood without having a deeper understanding of the climate. There has been a lack of empirical and theoretical work on school staff and climate (Melnick et al., 2017; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). Thus, the aim of this study is to determine whether school environment effect the willingness to seeking help and prevalence of bullying among middle school students.

METHOD

Study Design

The descriptive correlational design has been considered a subtype of correlational research, with its primary purpose being to examine relationships between and among variables and it is referred to occasionally as simple correlational design.

The Setting of the Study

The study was carried out at public middle schools for males and females in Baghdad City.

Sample and Sampling

The study included a convenience sample of male and females middle school students who agreed to participate in this study. The study subjects were recruited from six public middle schools. The sample size was determined using G*Power software based on an effect size of 0.25, alpha error probability of 0.05, a power of 0.95, five groups. Thus, the recommended sample size would be 305. Considering an attrition rate of 20%, additional 61 subjects would be required. As such, the recommended sample size would be 365. The final sample size is 415.

Statistical Analyses

Data were analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) for windows, version 28. The statistical measures of frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation, linear regression, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and independent-sample t-test were used.

Ethical Considerations

After receiving the approval of the College of Nursing, University of Baghdad for the study, the Directorate of Education in Baghdad City, the student researcher discussed study details with schools' administrators. The student researcher explained to the participants the general purpose

of the study, as well as the method by which they can answer the study instrument, to ensure that they understand that participation is optional and that they can withdraw at any time. The student researcher assured subjects that he will securely safeguard and maintain the confidentiality of their data during and following study participation. The student researcher further assured study participants that he will keep their identities in the presentation, reporting, and/or any eventual publication of the study.

RESULTS

Table 1

Difference in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among grade groups.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Willingness to Seeking Help	Between Groups	91.431	2	45.715	1.172	.311
	Within Groups	16070.184	412	39.005		
	Total	16161.614	414			
Prevalence of Bullying	Between Groups	18.620	2	9.310	.943	.390
	Within Groups	4069.283	412	9.877		
	Total	4087.904	414			
School Climate	Between Groups	27.681	2	13.840	.251	.778
	Within Groups	22675.452	412	55.038		
	Total	22703.133	414			

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among grade groups.

Table 2

Difference in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among living arrangement groups.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Willingness to Seeking Help	Between Groups	253.418	3	84.473	2.182	.090
	Within Groups	15908.197	411	38.706		
	Total	16161.614	414			
Prevalence of Bullying	Between Groups	17.843	3	5.948	.601	.615
	Within Groups	4070.061	411	9.903		
	Total	4087.904	414			
School Climate	Between Groups	237.511	3	79.170	1.448	.228
	Within Groups	22465.621	411	54.661		

	Total	22703.133	414			
--	-------	-----------	-----	--	--	--

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among living arrangements groups.

Table 3

Difference in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among family's socioeconomic class groups

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Willingness to Seeking Help	Between Groups	43.435	4	10.859	.276	.893
	Within Groups	16118.180	410	39.313		
	Total	16161.614	414			
Prevalence of Bullying	Between Groups	14.099	4	3.525	.355	.841
	Within Groups	4073.804	410	9.936		
	Total	4087.904	414			
School Climate	Between Groups	83.936	4	20.984	.380	.823
	Within Groups	22619.197	410	55.169		
	Total	22703.133	414			

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among family's socioeconomic class.

DISCUSSION

There is no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among living arrangements groups. This finding implies that students, irrespective of wherever they have been living, are invariant in terms of their willingness to seeking help when they encounter an aggressive situation.

There was no statistically significant difference in in willingness to seeking help, prevalence of bullying, school climate among family's socioeconomic class. These finding imply that students, regardless of their families' socioeconomic class, are almost equal in terms of willingness to seeking help, experiencing bullying, and having almost invariant school environment.

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among living arrangements groups. This finding implies that students; wherever they have been living, are equal in terms of the frequency od experiencing proactive-reactive aggression on the school setting.

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among family's socioeconomic status groups. This finding implies that students; regardless of their socioeconomic class, are almost equal in terms of experiencing proactive and/or reactive aggression. This finding is inconsistent with the literature relevant to school aggression. Proactive and reactive aggression are associated with adolescents' family characteristics (Raine et al., 2006). For example, in a study of adolescent males, boys in families with lower socioeconomic status and poorly educated and unemployed fathers at age 7 had significantly higher rates of proactive aggression at age 16 (Raine et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

The larger the reactive aggression, the better the Self-Control. The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the prevalence of bullying. The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the better the school climate. The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the greater the Self-Control. The larger the prevalence of bullying, the better the school climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is for the officials in the Ministry of Education to establish school-based zero-tolerance violence policy. Further research needs to consider the role of school climate and Self-Control in the school-based zero-tolerance violence policy.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL GUIDELINES

This study was completed following obtaining consent from the University of Baghdad.

FUNDING

This research did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Study concept, Writing, Reviewing the final edition by all authors.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:

The authors report no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Astor, R. A., De Pedro, K. T., Gilreath, T. D., Esqueda, M. C., & Benbenishty, R. (2013). The promotional role of school and community contexts for military students. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 16(3), 233-244.
- Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of the associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 425-469.
- Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers college record*, 111(1), 180-213.
- Connor, D. F. (2002). *Aggression and antisocial behavior in children and adolescents: Research and treatment*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Connor, D. F., Steingard, R. J., Anderson, J. J., & Melloni Jr., R. H. (2003). Gender differences in reactive and proactive aggression. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 33(4), 279-294. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.okcu.edu/10.1023/A:1023084112561>
- Connor, D. F., Steingard, R. J., Anderson, J. J., & Melloni, R. H. (2003). Gender differences in reactive and proactive aggression. *Child psychiatry and human development*, 33(4), 279-294.
- Connor, D. F., Steingard, R. J., Cunningham, J. A., Melloni Jr, R. H., & Anderson, J. J. (2004). Proactive and reactive aggression in referred children and adolescents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74(2), 129-136.
- Connor, J. (2002). *The Australian frontier wars, 1788-1838*. UNSW Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Burns, D., Campbell, C., Goodwin, A. L., Hammerness, K., Low, E. L., ... & Zeichner, K. (2017). *Empowered educators: How high-performing systems shape teaching quality around the world*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Deschamps, P. K., Verhulp, E. E., de Castro, B. O., & Matthys, W. (2018). Proactive aggression in early school-aged children with externalizing behavior problems: A longitudinal study on the influence of empathy in response to distress. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 88(3), 346.
- Furlong, M., & Morrison, G. (2000). The school in school violence: Definitions and facts. *Journal of emotional and Behavioral disorders*, 8(2), 71-82.
- Gray, A., Abbena, E., & Salamon, S. (2017). *Modern differential geometry of curves and surfaces with Mathematica®*. Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Jambon, M., & Smetana, J. G. (2018). Individual differences in prototypical moral and conventional judgments and children's proactive and reactive aggression. *Child development*, 89(4), 1343-1359.
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of educational research*, 79(1), 491-525.
- Kilian, J. M., Fish, M. C., & Maniago, E. B. (2007). Making schools safe: A system-wide school intervention to increase student prosocial behaviors and enhance school climate. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 23(1), 1-30.
- Melnick, H., Cook-Harvey, C. M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Encouraging Social and Emotional Learning in the Context of New Accountability*. Learning Policy Institute.

- Raine, A. K., Loeber, D. R., Gatzke-Kopp, L., Lynam, D., Reynolds, C., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., & Liu, J. (2006). The reactive-proactive aggression questionnaire: Differential correlates of reactive and proactive aggression in adolescent boys. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32, 159-171. doi:10.1002/ab.20115
- Volungis, A. M., & Goodman, K. (2017). School violence prevention: Teachers establishing relationships with students using counseling strategies. *Sage open*, 7(1), 2158244017700460.
- Weissberg, R. P., & Cascarino, J. (2013). Academic learning+ social-emotional learning= national priority. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(2), 8-13.