



School pressure and its relation to violence and academic achievement among secondary school students in Mosul

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Abstract

Background: The school is considered a psycho-social environment that has an impact on the psychological and social life of students. The dynamic pressure inside it due to psychological, educational and physical changes may associate with violence and affect the academic achievement.

Aim: to find the correlation between school pressure, violence and academic achievement, also the difference between males and females concerning pressure and violence.

Materials and Methods: school-based cross-sectional study adopted and conducted in four secondary school, involving (825) student of both gender in 3rd secondary class. Two questionnaire forms are used. SPSS, Version 18 was used for statistical analysis, and the percentages, Mean, standard deviation, t-test, correlation and p-value were calculated.

Results: the present study reveals a high significant correlation between school pressure and the violence behavior ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$), and negative ($r = -.021$) but also significant relation ($p < 0.05$) between school pressure and academic achievement. Moreover, the male-gender shows highly statistically significant association with school pressure and violence ($p < 0.0001$).

Conclusion: A correlative, statistically significant relationship between school stress with the violent behavior and an inverse correlation between school stress and academic achievement are found. Furthermore the gender differences regarding both school pressure and violence are clear in favor of males.

Recommendation: The school should be a safer place for the students, thus there should be some administrative policies to overcome the psychological and mental health problems, so more studies needed to find out the risk factors of school pressure and to identify the most appropriate ways to deal with.

Keywords: school pressure, school violence, academic achievement, secondary students

Introduction

The school is considered a psycho-social environment that has an impact on the psychological and social life of students. It is the second educational institution after the family, tries to build people with the ability to achieve their goals, their aspirations, and themselves, in an effort to understand their environments in order to overcome the difficulties they may face ^[1, 2]. Throughout the different stages of education, students experience many changes on the psychological, educational and physical levels, especially at the secondary level as a result of the association with adolescence, which consider by the specialists as the stage of many different changes as physical, cognitive, social, emotional and academic ^[3, 4]. According to the cognitive-transactional model of stress, stress is the dynamic relationship between an individual and the environment in which a stimulus (whatever it is) disturbs an individual's homeostasis, causing him/her to respond to the situation with all available resources ^[5, 6]. Abdul-Basit⁷ defines the school pressure as: "A multi-dimensional psychological phenomenon that results from the various psychosocial relationships and environmental conditions that the student interacts with and recognizes as a source of tension and anxiety".

The pressure could be of two types ^[8]; positive pressure makes the body ready for action, directing the mental

abilities towards risk assessment and the ability of using the potential to overcome the problem by finding the solutions.⁹ While the pressure that cause the students to withdraw from learning is called negative pressure. This type of pressure must be prevented and avoided ^[10]. Physical symptoms of pressure include sleep disturbance ^[11], sweating, muscle fatigue, back pain, headache and loss of energy¹². Emotionally being anxious, troublesome, fear, irritability. The most important is the mental symptoms, which appear as difficulties in concentrating, difficulties in making decision, forgetfulness, confusion, lack of competence and interest with decrease educational performance, attendance problems, and school violence ^[13, 14]. Social symptoms of stress include, trust issues, blaming others, being extremely defensive ^[15].

In the secondary stage the development of physical and mental aspect of students was completed. This stage requires special care for the student, because failure in coping with increasing stress, the students exhibit a wide range of responses, from internalizing all their fears and frustrations and becoming depressed, to externalizing everything and being hyperactive, inattentive so at this stage of adolescence, school violence among students may develop and spread. The consequence starting from the family, neighbors, relatives, friends, to the public environment and the environment in which the student lives

[16, 17].The school violence includes any behavior aimed at inflicting physical and/or emotional harm to a person or their school belongings [18, 19].Violence at school is not a new phenomenon; there has been growing alarm socially and scientifically about this problem in recent years [20]. The World Health Organization reports that 40 %, 38 % and 36 % of 13year olds from 35 countries had respectively fought, bullied others, and been bullied by others at school [21]. Although an optimal level of stress and pressure may require boosting the education [22], stress in higher intensity can lead to learning problem [23, 24].

Non-violence is closely linked to educational attainment, and therefore the student plays an active role within the school and achieves the goal of the educational process. It is the first duties and responsibilities of the school administration and teachers to create the right atmosphere and provide all that will reduce the pressure of the school so as to increase the student's love for his school and teachers. Cooperation, take responsibility and good deal with others [25].

The aim of the study was to find out the correlation between the factors causing school stress (pressure) and the behavior of violence in the students and its impact on their academic achievement in Mosul. And knowing the differences between male and female students, as it was not previously addressed such a topic in Nineveh, despite the numerous reviews of available data.

Subjects and Methods

A school-based cross sectional study design was adopted to achieve the study objectives. The study conducted in 4 secondary schools chosen by a simple stratified randomization technique in right sector of Mosul city; two schools for females' students (Aqeelat Beny Hashem and Khaola Bent Al-Azwer) and two for males (Abu-Baker Al-Seddeeq and Bader Al-Kubraa). The total students in 3rd secondary class in these schools were 825. Data were collected using two questionnaire forms; one⁷ for measuring school pressure and the other for evaluating school violence [26].

These forms offered to psychological committee for evaluation and judgment. After accepting with some modification and rephrasing, a pilot study had done involving 40 students (10 from each school) to evaluate the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The validity and reliability of school pressures questionnaire was (0.91, 0.83) respectively, and that for violence form was (0.97, 0.94). The data about the academic achievement was obtained from the school administration. The period of study started from 15/2/2014 to 15/5/2014; including the pilot study. Formal consent from students was taken, and the questionnaire forms given to each student and collected by the researchers. Statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 18 for Windows), and the percentages, Mean, standard deviation, t-test, correlation and p-value were calculated.

Results

Table 3: comparison between males and females students Means in school pressure.

| School pressure | Gender | No. | Mean X | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value | 95% CI |
|-----------------|--------|-----|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|----------------|
| | Males | 450 | 131.4 | 16.52 | 21.176 | 0.0001 | 19.59 to 23.60 |
| | Female | 375 | 109.8 | 11.86 | | | |

Figure (1) shows that the study sample dispersed 54.5% as males and 45.5% as females.

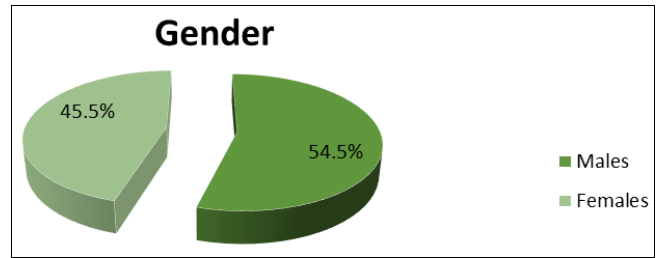


Fig 1: Distribution of study sample according to Gender

Figure (2) shows the number of students in the 3rd class to those in the 1st and 2nd secondary class for each school; represent 53.8%, 40.0%, 39.6% and 41.3% of total students in the same order shows in the figure.

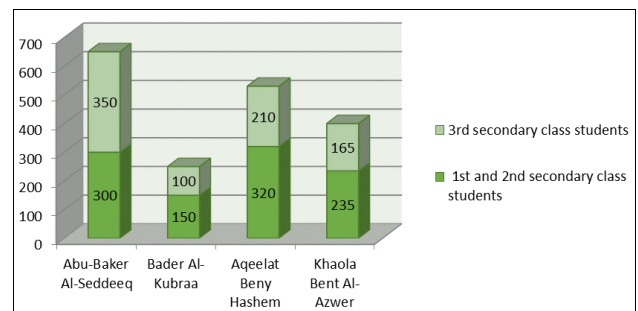


Fig 2: shows the number of students in 3rd class in relation to those in other classes.

Table (1) describes the correlation between school pressure and school violence and shows a positive association (r= 0.37), which is statistically significant with p-value= 0.01.

Table 1: the correlation between school pressure and school violence

| Person correlation | School pressure | School violence |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 0.37* | |

*p-value = 0.01

Table (2) describes the correlation between school pressure and academic achievement and reveals a reverse association (r= -0.21), which is statistically significant with p-value= 0.05.

Table 2: the correlation between school pressure and academic achievement.

| Person correlation | School pressure | academic achievement |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | -0.21* | |

*p-value = 0.05

Table (3) illustrates the comparison between males and females students Means regarding the school pressure and displays a high significant statistically difference at p< 0.0001.

Table (4) demonstrates the comparison between males and females students' Means concerning the violence and

represents a high significant difference with $p < 0.0001$.

Table 4: comparison between males and females students Means in violence.

| Violence | Gender | No. | Mean X | Standard deviation | t-value | p-value | 95% CI |
|----------|--------|-----|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| | Males | 450 | 71.3 | 17.43 | | | |
| | Female | 375 | 60.6 | 15.75 | | | |

Discussion

Although the anxiety and stress in school students has begun to receive great attention recently, it still under estimated. In the present study as demonstrated in table (1), the relation between the school pressure and the violence was very high, in that the more pressure the students face the more level of the violence they reach and fail to cope. This finding was similar to Gustave study [27] in which a high correlation found between developments of violence as a consequence of defect in the seats that needed leading to the spread of clutter in order to search for the missing seat. Other researches revealed elevated rates of student aggressive attitudes in schools located in impoverished, risky urban areas [28, 29].

In another researches, a relationship between the school social environment i.e. (school management policies, positive social interactions in the classroom, students' feelings of belonging, students' feelings of teacher support, students' belief in the fairness of rules, and students' involvement in school) and the escalating of violence has been supported [30, 31]. Moreover in a survey of 498 students from guidance school in Tehran indicates a high prevalence of verbal aggression among the students due to harsh and unpleasant communication styles of school authorities with students, and workload of school homework [32]. Furthermore, the narcissism as one of the personality trait in a comparative study [33] where 274 nonaggressive adolescent females evaluated with 257 aggressive females and showed that the latter group scored higher. In table (2) the school pressure and academic achievement were correlated in a high significant association but in inverse manner. This result was disagreeing with the findings of a study done by Rajni Kumari and Radhakanta Gartia [34] at 2012 which showed a positive correlation between stress and academic achievement so students with the high stress perform the academic achievement better. This can be explained by the fact that the people differ in their perceiving the pressure and in their responses toward it. Similar positive relation established in other studies [35, 36]. While the finding of present study concurs with findings in the other studies [37, 39] which implies the negative relationship between stress and academic achievement. This controversy in the studies outcomes can be clarified by the fact that there is an optimal level of stress can enhance learning ability, any degree beyond could drop off the education achievement [22]. Gender [40] as a variable has been found to influence stress experience. A significant statistical difference found out in the level of school pressure attributed to gender in the finding of the current work, as displays in Table (3) in which male students had a higher stress level than female students, this result agree with other studies [41, 42]. The males in our locality were expected to respond to the life burdens according to certain social expectations that have been set and that sharing feelings is a sign of weakness whereas the females are more emotional as compared to males; thus share feelings more freely and readily with their

family and friends, so the social status and roles relative to men and these strains contribute to higher stress perhaps could reveal the finding of this study. On the contrarily several studies [43, 48] noted that females are more likely to express school pressure than males. Other studies [49, 50] did not find any significant gender difference. The effect of gender difference on the violence behavior was studied in the present work pointed-up in the table (4), which showed that the male students were more prone to develop violent attitudes than the females and the difference was highly significant, this finding was consistent with the outcomes of several studies [51, 58]. In Nansel *et al* study [59], the physical bullying (which is a specific type of violence) was clear that the boys found to be usually bullied by boys, while girls are bullied equally by both genders. The boys generally engage in more violence and unruly behavior in school than girls' do [60]. All these results can be explained by the nature of society and sex roles [61].

Conclusion

A correlative, statistically significant relationship between school stress with the violent behavior and an inverse correlation between school stress and academic achievement are found. Furthermore the gender differences regarding both school pressure and violence are clear in favor of males.

Recommendation

The school should be a safer place for the students, thus there should be some administrative policies to overcome the psychological and mental health problems, so more studies needed to find out the risk factors of school pressure and to identify the most appropriate ways to deal with.

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