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Research Article

Comparison of Social Competence, Anxiety and Academic Performance of Bullying and Non-bullying Students

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Bullying is one of the problems of school children's adaptation and appears in various forms, such as; physical, psychological, sexual and electronic harassment. The objective of this study was to compare the social competence, anxiety and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students. **Materials and Methods:** The statistical population of this research includes all male High School students in Khorramabad high schools in the academic year of 2017. The research subjects included 322 students who were selected by available sampling method. For data collection, social competence questionnaire, depression scale, anxiety, stress, bullying questionnaire and first grade semester were used as a criterion for academic performance. Data analysis was performed using multivariate analysis of variance and one variable. **Results:** The results showed that there was a significant difference between students of bullying and non-bullying students in terms of social competence and anxiety, but there was no significant difference between the students in terms of academic performance. The results of this study showed that the social competence of bullying students is less than non-bullying students and their degree of anxiety is higher than non-bullying students and there is no difference between them in terms of academic performance. **Conclusion:** The results of this study showed that increasing social competence and reducing anxiety in students could reduce their bullying.

Key words: Social competence, anxiety, academic performance, non-bullying, depression scale

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Data Availability: All relevant data are within the paper and its supporting information files.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the controversial debates that in recent years have attracted the attention of many scholars, as it is described as a global problem and dating back to the 1970s^{1,2}. And, with the publication of the famous work of Olweus³, is referred to as aggression in schools. Regarding the prevalence of bullying, some researchers, during a study showed that one out of every three people was the victim of bullying behavior⁴. Several studies showed that bullying is an aggressive behavior that occurs predominantly among school students^{5,6}.

In the past, bullying and non-bullying in the classroom occurred traditionally through real-life and face-to-face interaction, but in the 21st century, bully people used more recent methods such as; telephone harassment, image publishing, real or unrealistic content about them in the online environment that is known as non-cyber bullying or cyber bullying⁷, meaning the practice of a series of intentional and repetitive harassing behaviors is defined through computers, phones and other electronic devices⁸. Because in decade, telecommunications technology i.e. (telephone and the internet) have spread rapidly due to usage of humans to communicate⁹.

Research evidence suggests that bullying students are those who usually target other students and impose many psychological and physical injuries, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, using ugly titles and scoffing at others¹⁰. Bullying is a harrowing behavior that a person or group of people exercises over a period of time, including a power imbalance. In other words, regular abuse of power is called bullying¹¹.

Some studies reported a prevalence of bullying among students in different countries^{12,13} of nearly 50%. In this regard, Olweus³ claimed that the prevalence of bullying in secondary school is decreasing. The study of Nansel *et al.*¹⁴ also found that the prevalence of bullying among sixth to eighth grade students was higher than that of the ninth and tenth grade students. On the other hand, the results showed that bullying among boys is more than girls and boys are more likely to be bullied than girls^{15,16}. Some scholars claimed that bullying in the school environment was semantically related to school violence¹⁷ and it is considered a milder form and includes bullying with targeted, repetitive and imbalanced behaviors^{14,18,19}.

According to research evidence, bullying and non-bullying people use different methods to harass others. In this regard, argue that bullying may be physically (bullying, pushing, kicking and knocking), verbal (swearing, threatening and backstage) playing social ugly

rumors (removing bully people from the game and the group by force, not inviting or ignoring them from friends), sexual (sexual expression or displaying sexual movements) and cyber (sending unwanted electronic messages via telephone and computer) appears^{3,20}.

On the other hand, the results of some foreign studies showed that harassment of adolescents leads to lower academic performance than other peers and also signs of depression in boys students are more likely than girls and those who were not harassed²¹. Another study reported that bullying had an impact on student's academic achievement²². It was concluded that anxiety was higher in the two groups compared to normal group during the research that focused on the characteristics of harassing and harassed students²³.

Abusive students are more likely to be socially protected because of low self-esteem and having poor relationships with their peers and are often worried and anxious. There are studies reporting that children who exposed to bullying need more psychological help, have higher level of depression and anxiety and have a lower self-esteem²⁴. The results showed that the prevalence of bullying in both malicious and malicious groups was higher in boys than in girls, as well as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem in these groups than their counterparts normal has been more²⁵. Based on the above introduction to the present research, the question was whether or not there was a difference between students of bullying and non-bullying in terms of anxiety, social competence and academic performance?

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was the comparison of social competence, anxiety and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population and sample: The target population of the study consisted of 2nd grade secondary school students who were studying in Khorramabad Secondary Education Districts in year 2018-2019, where 322 students (100 boys and 222 girls) were volunteered as volunteers were chosen. At first, a list of all boys of high schools in the two regions of Khorramabad was prepared as a sampling frame. Based on this list, five district high schools were randomly selected from each district (total 10 high schools) and from each high school randomly distributed a number of questionnaires among school children. All students were divided into two groups according to the bullying questionnaire score and their mean difference in social competence, anxiety and academic performance were analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

Instruments:

- **Depression, anxiety and stress scale:** To measure these variables, the Lovibond and Lovibond²⁶ questionnaires were used. The questionnaire has 21 questions (each subscale has 7 items). Validity and validity of this questionnaire in Iran were studied by Samani and Jokar²⁷. Cronbach's alpha for the depression scale was 0.81, for anxiety 0.74 and for stress 0.78. Validity was determined and verified by confirmatory factor analysis
- **Social competence questionnaire:** A researcher made questionnaire of 11 items was used to measure social competence. The questionnaire was compiled by studying the sources and findings of foreign research and some of the extraterritorial questionnaires. This questionnaire consists of 11 questions and two factors. The scoring method is done in the form of a four degree scale from very disagreeable 1 to very agreeable 4. Meanwhile, the question one is scored in reverse order. Reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale 0.78, for the first factor 0.70 and for the second factor 0.74. Meanwhile, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis ($X^2 = 83.18$, $DF = 42$, $GFI = 0.91$, $CFI = 0.90$, $RMSEA = 0.081$)
- **Academic performance:** In this study, the total score of the first turn of the 2017 academic year was considered as the academic performance of male students of the second grade secondary school (3rd year) of Khorramabad city
- **Bullying:** In order to measure bullying, 19 questionnaires were used for three factors (bullying with 6 items, bullying with 9 items and bullying with 4 items)²⁸. Females are scored on a four scale (1 point), very low (2), high (3) and very high (4). The questionnaire was compiled through factor analysis on 200 male and female students. Reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire 0.95, for the bullying 0.88, for physical bullying 0.91 and for electronic bullying 0.82 was obtained. Validity of the questionnaire was determined and verified by confirmatory factor analysis, so that the fitting goodness indicators (GFI) were equal to 0.90. The mean square error approximation (RMSEA) is equal to 0.061. The growing fitness index (IFI) is 0.92 and the Comparative Fitness Index (CFI) is 0.94

RESULTS

This study is descriptive and causal-comparative. Table 1 and 2 shows the mean and standard deviation and frequency of social competence, anxiety and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students.

Table 1 contents shown that bullying students with the lowest (116%) and non-bullying (206%) students had the lowest and highest rates, respectively.

Table 2 shows that the mean and standard deviation of bullying and non-bullying students were respectively 10.9 (8.35) and 8.41 (5.83) for anxiety; for competencies 29.85 (5.53) and 31.16 (5.81) and for academic performance 16.12 (2) and 16.35 (2.17).

Before using the parametric test of multivariate analysis of variance, the assumptions of homogeneity of variances were tested with Levin test and covariance homogeneity by Box test. Based on the results, the homogeneity of variances was confirmed by social competence, anxiety and academic performance in both groups.

This test was not significant for any of the variables. The results of the M Box test (7.12 and 0.33) also confirmed the covariance homogeneity assumption, meaning that the difference between the covariances was not statistically significant. The multiplicative F-test, Pillai's trace was 4.40 and the linear combination of social competence, anxiety and academic performance $p < 0.005$ was statistically significant as shown in Table 4. According to the results, using one-way analysis of variance or the same relationships among the subjects is presented in Table 4.

As shown in Table 3, the significance levels of all tests indicate that there is a significant difference between bully and non-bullying students in terms of one of the dependent variables (anxiety, competence and academic performance). To ensure the difference, the results of the variance analysis of a variable in the Manova text are presented in Table 4.

Table 1: Frequency of bullying and non-bullying students

Students	Frequency
Bullying	116
Non-bullying	206
Total	322

Table 2: Statistical indexes (minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation) of anxiety, competency and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students

Variables	Students	Mean \pm SD
Anxiety	Bullying	10.90 \pm 8.35
	Non-bullying	8.41 \pm 5.83
Social competence	Bullying	29.85 \pm 5.53
	Non-bullying	31.16 \pm 5.81
Academic performance	Bullying	16.12 \pm 2.00
	Non-bullying	16.35 \pm 2.17

Table 3: Results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on anxiety scores, competency and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students

Tests	Value	Hypothesis df	Error df	F-value	Significance
Pillai's trace	0.04	3	318	4.40	0.005
Wilk's lambda	0.96	3	318	4.40	0.005
Hotelling's trace	0.042	3	318	4.40	0.005
Roy's largest root	0.042	3	318	4.40	0.005

Table 4: Results of one-variable variance analysis in manova text on the mean scores of anxiety, social competency and academic performance of bullying and non-bullying students

Variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-value	Significance
Anxiety	461.06	1	309.02	8.68	0.003
Social competence	133.06	1	258.33	4.37	0.037
Academic performance	3.71	1	12.28	0.86	0.35

As shown in Table 4, the first and second hypotheses are confirmed, meaning that there is a significant difference between the students of the bully and non-belittling groups in terms of anxiety and competency. But there is no difference between the students in terms of academic performance. Consequently, the third hypothesis is not confirmed.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between students with bullying and non-bullying students in terms of social competence ($F = 4.37, p = 0.037$). Accordingly, the second hypothesis is confirmed and the results of testing this hypothesis with the results of some the findings are consistent with Kodzopeljic *et al.*²³ and Yang *et al.*²⁵. As shown in the results, students with bullying have a lower level of competence than non-traditional students. In this regard, Brown believes that the basis of social competence is having social skills²². Social skills are critical to success in your personal and educational life. The lack of social skills among bully students leads to intermediate difficulties in finding friends, working in groups and controlling themselves. Social cohesion allows individuals to work in their social relationships in an efficient way. Behave in social relationships; one must be aware of the characteristics of himself and others. Social competence, the ability to respond to a suitable and flexible way in social conditions and a proper assessment of a person from his social position is formed on the basis of perceptions of social interactions in the past. Social competence seems to change in the process of growth and adult social behaviors are rooted in the process of socializing the childhood period. Social competence includes factors such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, communication skills and decision-making responsibility. The central core of social competence is communication skills because it is acquired through communication skills of other components. Generally, there are many problems in interpersonal relationships with students with learning

disabilities. These students seem to have less social competence than their peers in common with their peers. Social competence allows one to behave in an effective manner in his social relationships. In social relationships, one must be aware of the characteristics of himself and others.

Another finding of the present research is that there is a significant difference between students of bullying and non-bullying students in terms of anxiety ($F = 8.68, p = 0.003$). Based on this hypothesis, the hypothesis was confirmed and the results of testing this hypothesis with the results of some findings are consistent with Craig²⁴. As it was observed in the results, non-student students had a lower level of anxiety compared to bullying students. Bullying students do not have the necessary social reinforcement because of low social support and feelings of loneliness and show more anxiety patterns than non-bullying students. Anxiety refers to a person's reaction to a potentially distressing and threatening position, a position that is affected by the increase of excitement, whether external or internal and the person is incapacitated and weak in its containment. In other words, anxiety is an unknown and unclear agent that causes mental disturbance and causes symptoms of heart disease, including palpitations. In the process of anxiety, contrary to natural fear, there is no real or fearful or harmful factor, but only self-conscious and self-consciously aware of the human mind and when the mind is exposed to mental stress and nervous stress and an unpleasant incident that happens to us in our lives is often out of the ordinary level and anxiety is becoming more sensitive to future and potential occurrences. The causes of anxiety are hereditary factors, the bitter experiences of past years and the uneasy and nervous environment. Devastating effects on thought impair attention, eliminates the power of decision-making and will from human beings, makes him pessimistic and makes another human being fruitful not beneficial or excessively to some things (Obsessive-compulsive) or social and occupational discomfort or over estimates the importance of important affairs (state of indifference), decreases self-esteem, the overall sense

of fear becomes his It can be due to fears of various risks, pains and diseases. Those who do not have the ability to control are severely angry and feel inferior and unable to cope with problems or illnesses. The body is unable to maintain its peace of mind, it is easy to sleep and feel tired. Bodily harm and physical weakness and is nervous and irritated and becomes unreasonably angry. Headache, chest pain, leg or hand pain, abdominal pain and sore throat and some appetite caused by anxiety. Although anxiety is a prevalent phenomenon of our age, it also has a history of all human history. At the same time, human history has shown that the man of "religion" has a long history. It can be proof by studying the human societies and the history of civilizations, man always encounter streaks of religion and religious beliefs²⁴.

According to the findings, it was found that there is no difference between students of bullying and non-bullying students in terms of academic performance ($F = 0.86, p = 0.35$). Accordingly, the third hypothesis is rejected. The results of this finding are not consistent with the results of Taylor and Brown²⁹. The reasons for rejecting this hypothesis are factors such as intelligence, personality traits, motivation and interest in students to science and academic achievement and so on. Academic performance is influenced by factors such as intelligence, personality traits, motivation and interest in the school etc. In this study, this hypothesis may be rejected due to the high intelligence of students of bullying and non-bullying has no effect on the process of performance they have no education. Another contributing factor to the hypothesis is that the subjects are unlikely to be honest about their academic performance.

This study also has some limitations. The most important limitations of this research are as follows; Considering the fact that the research has been carried out on high school students of secondary school in Khorramabad city, can be extended to other students of other cultures and cities will not be different. Given that the subjects of this study were high school students, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all academic backgrounds. The only source for collecting information in this research was a questionnaire that has a self-report and students are willing to respond to it, so there may be a bias in their responses.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, there was a significant difference between students of bullying and non-bullying students in terms of social competence and anxiety, but there was no significant difference between the students in terms of academic performance. The results of this study showed that

the social competence of bullying students is less than non-bullying students and their degree of anxiety is higher than non-bullying students and there is no difference between them in terms of academic performance.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Difference is present between the two groups of bully and ordinary people in terms of merit, social acceptance, academic performance and anxiety. These behaviors are especially prevalent in the school. This is why researchers in the area of bullying emphasize the importance of the role of teachers and peers in overcoming the negative consequences associated with bullying. In addition to bullying behavior, students' social competence is also affected by peers' and teachers' reactions. Their anxiety is also higher. This study helps the researcher provide appropriate solutions to reduce bullying behaviors.

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