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

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ABSTRACT

School bullying is a common, problematic behavior among children that can have long-term adverse consequences for the victims of bullying. School bullying may take many forms, such as physical, verbal, and relational or social. So the purpose of this study was to compare physical victimization among male and female high school 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 physical victimization among students thus boys had meaningfully higher average scores than girls.

Key words: Bullying; Physical; Victimization

INTRODUCTION

Mazlow’s character theory is formed from the healthiest characters that he could find. Mazlow lists five main needs on the hierarchy of needs, and the need for safety sits after primary physiological needs in this listing. Satisfying the need for safety requires sustainability, security, and freedom from fear and anxiety. In the meantime, bullying is one of the most common problems that threaten the security of students and all schools in every country are faced with (Orpinas, Horne, 2006). In fact bullying is a serious social problem that can negatively affect children's psychosocial development and school adjustment, and may have lasting effects for victims (Son, Parish & Peterson, 2012). Around the world between 15 to 30 percent of students are exposed to bullying and its consequences (Curdearu, Jacob, Abalasei, 2009). More recent research estimates the prevalence of bullying among students in different countries to be close to 50% (Black, Weinles, Washington, 2010; Henningham, Gardner, SusanWalker, 2009). Also the 2012 Indicators of School Crime and Safety survey of high school students found that 28% reported bullying victimization (Olsen et al., 2014). 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, bullying 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 themselves physically and verbally. Hence, they are often aimed at bullies' aggression with no reason (Turner, Fenkelhor & Emrood,
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 Physical bullying is one of the most important ways of those (Rothon, Head, Klineberg, & Stansfeld, 2011). Physical victimization requires direct and tangible physical contact between the victim and bully, and takes several forms such as hitting, pushing, bumping, kicking and so on (Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010). In simpler terms, physical victimization requiers damaging to the victim’s body or his property. The perpetrators of physical bullying may attempt to do it for a variety of reasons, including the desire to have more control over their peers or using these situations as Breaking out their negative emotions on victims. Physical victimization is visible by its outcomes and so is considered as a direct bullying form. (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, Fan, 2010). In addition, physical victimization is one of the most common ways of bullying. Research such as Kepenekci, & Çinkur (2006) has reported that physical victimization had the highest prevalence compared to other ways of victimization. In relation to the victimization rate 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, Pipjers, 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 physical and verbal tools (Barzegar Befrooe’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 Befrooe’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. Cheraghi and Pishkan (2011) also showed that Iranian male students are mainly victimized by physical bullying.

**Research Objective:**
As mentioned Already the research on the prevalence of victimization in Iran, specially physical 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 examin physical 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 years 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 physical victimization area is $r = 0.98$ that indicates high reliability of this scale. Its validity was assessed using construct validity on the range of 0.85 to 0.94 showing that all items of subscales assessed physical victimization (Moradi, 2009).

FINDINGS AND RESULT

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Highest score</th>
<th>Lowest score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>13/7/8</td>
<td>12/068</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>16/96</td>
<td>12/55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>15/37</td>
<td>12/406</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 1, the mean score of male students in the variables of physical 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.

### Table 2: Levene test to examine variance consistency in physical victimization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Between-group df</th>
<th>Within-group df</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0/09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>2/852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

### Table 3: One-way variance analysis test for physical 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 physical victimization in students under study.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study indicated that the rate of physical 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 physical and verbal bullying. It is also consistent with the Crick, & Grot彼得er (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), also with Olweus(1978) who found that boys, more than girls, are involved and victimized in the physical forms of bullying. 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 why boys have a higher tendency to physical bullying and consequently, become more victimized in this way, it can be stated that undoubtedly their physical strength, as well as psychological and basic personality features such as power-seeking and being impulsive are a main factors. In fact, having these physical abilities as well as personality characteristics causes that they use direct forms of bullying. So boys often as the opportunity comes up and in a sudden compulsive way uses physical bullying and consequently physical victimization more.
than girls. But the more important factor seems Returns to the role of culture. In Eastern cultures such as Iranian culture, boys have more freedom to express their feelings and use 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. 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 bully 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, feelings and memories and this problem can 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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