

STUDENT SCHOOL VICTIMIZATION IN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PRIZREN

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ABSTRACT

The study is designed to explore school victimization and its relation with school factors in the secondary schools in Prizren. This study involved 1050 student participants. The mean age of students reported in this study was $M = 15$ years ($SD = 1.8$). Out of 1050 participants, 13.2% or 139 children were under age 18, 13.1% or 138 were age 17, 13.9% or 146 were age 16, 17.5% or 184 participants were age 15, 20.2% or 212 were age 14, 15% or 157 were age 13, and 7% or 74 students were age 12. The participants were selected through multistage cluster sampling. The school victimization was assessed with Victimization Scale which has been translated and validated into the Albanian language. The results of our study have shown that the mean reported experiencing of victimization was higher in children there were feeling un safety at school and was more frequent in children living in urban area compare with those living in rural parts. This study did not find a correlation between victimization and the number of students in the classroom. The study shows that victimization is a complex phenomenon, and there are needs for more research especially in different cultures.

Keywords: Victimization, age, violence, adolescence, school.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Manu studies have shown that adolescents have higher rates of crime and victimization, and male adolescents are more predisposed than female adolescents, while females are more frequent bullies of other females. This trend was reflected by Jenson & Howard (1999a), Ilola & Sourander, (2013).

Meanwhile, the objects of our study were the school related factors. The climate in the school is based on the models of school life experiences of numerous generations and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relations, knowledge and learning methods, as well as the organizational structure of the school.

A stable and positive school climate fosters the development of the students and their learning, necessary for a productive and satisfying democratic life. In such a climate students feel involved and respected, and capable of building personal and social values, and a sense of safety as a key drive of their learning.

Over the past two decades research studies from a range of fields have tried to contribute to the field of school climate and have included fields such as school reform, prevention, health promotion, mental health and social-emotional learning, identifying evidence-based guidelines for the improvement of the school climate (Benninga et al, 2003;. Thapa et all, 2012, Greenberg et al, 2003)

Every school should have policies on the prevention of victimization, thus raising the awareness about this phenomenon is seen as an important factor which would also model the school violence prevention strategies. The lack of a vision on the prevention of this phenomenon would put the school at risk of an unsafe climate not only among students, but among the staff employed at the school, as well (Olweus et al., 1999).

Research shows that the lack of teachers' response to bullying in schools creates a sense of unsafety among children. In addition, peer reaction to group or individual bullies and solidarity with the victim affect the reduction of bullying at school.

Building a positive climate in the school has a direct impact on creating a sense of safety among students. The school climate is not created only by the physical environment, but also by the relations among all the stakeholders in the school. Wang et al., (2014) claims that schools with negative school climate tend to be less focused on academic achievements, their students are less satisfied with the school life and teachers are also less clear about the procedures of responding to violence.

Schools should have clear rules on responding to cases of violence, in order for every person who is faced with it to know where to seek support. Also, rules should be such as to enable students a positive development when they are victimized, but also when they are the bullies. In addition to supporting students in their learning, teachers should support, counsel and help students whenever necessary, so that they could overcome problems they may face in the school.

The number of students in the school is also related with the presence of violence in the school. Schools with larger numbers of students are at more risk of having more violence (Kaiser, 2005; Leung & Ferris, 2008) and not only is it difficult to keep up the students' motivation for learning, but the teachers also find it very difficult to manage classes with large numbers of students, and above all they find it very difficult to focus on what they should.

Schools with a large numbers of students may have problems with organizational issues, which cause students to have difficulties with tests and assessment, which may be related to students' dissatisfaction with the school and lead to the increase of student absence. A study carried out in the US found that schools with large numbers of students have lower scores on tests. The study also reported lower rates of violence in schools with lower numbers of students. Research findings have shown that as school size increases, students tend to report lower levels of school satisfaction and poorer interpersonal relationships with teachers (Bowen et al 2000, Fowler & Walberg, 1991, Resnick et al., 2004). Some studies have also found that the students' connectedness to the school is lower in larger schools (Kearney, 2008; McNeely et al, 2002; Thompson et al, 2006.). Research findings have also shown that the more connected to their school the students feel the less likely they are to involve in negative, disruptive or antisocial behaviors (Brookmeyer et al, 2006; Miller, H., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This study involved 1050 student participants. The author of the study administered the instrument in the school facilities. For the participation of the students in the study permission was obtained in advance from their homeroom teacher. Students responded voluntarily. The mean age of students reported in this study was $M = 15$ years ($SD = 1.8$). Out

of 1050 participants, 13.2% or 139 children were under age 18, 13.1% or 138 were age 17, 13.9% or 146 were age 16, 17.5% or 184 participants were age 15, 20.2 % or 212 were age 14, 15% or 157 were age 13, and 7% or 74 students were age 12. Victimization was measured on a Victimization Scale. It consists of ten questions rated by 0 (never) up to 6 (more than 6 times). The more points they gathered on the questionnaire, the more victimized the students were. The second standard deviation was used to identify children with high victimization. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) was used as the index of internal consistency of the questionnaire. The Internal Consistency for the Victimization rate was $\alpha = .78$ and no differences were found across gender - (boys $\alpha = .79$) and (girls $\alpha = .77$).

RESULTS

This study included 1050 student subjects. The gender distribution among children was 52.9% or 555 female students and 47.1% or 495 male students. Students responded to questions on whether they had experienced victimization by other students in the school. The Victimization Scale reported the mean value $M = 4.1$, $SD = 6.2$.

The results of the T-Test, used to determine the differences in reporting the mean victimization rate based on student gender, have shown that the mean value reported by boys was higher ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 6.5$) in comparison to girls ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 6.0$), however, this difference did not reach the statistical significance ($t(949) = -1.13$, $p = .258$).

The T-Test was performed in order to compare the Victimization Scale mean rates of the students attending private school and those attending public school. The T-Test results show that the difference between those two groups is significant ($t(949) = -2.3$, $p = .025$). Students attending private schools reported a higher mean of victimization ($M = 5.1$, $DS = 6.1$) in comparison to students attending public schools ($M = 3.8$, $DS = 6.6$).

It was also found that students from urban areas attending private schools had a higher victimization rate ($M = 5.4$, $DS = 6.9$), in comparison to those coming from rural areas ($M = 2.9$, $DS = 4.7$), while among children attending public schools no differences were noted in reporting mean victimization in relation to their place of residence. ANOVA 2 x 2 found no interaction effects between those two variables ($F(1) = 3.1$, $p = .083$ with the victimization rate. The victimization rate was found to be affected by the time of attending the classes.

The study analyzed the correlation between the reporting of the victimization and the number of highest performing students and found a negative correlation ($r = -.014$), showing that with the increase in the number of highest performing students the rate of victimization reduced. The correlation rate found between those two variables was weak and insignificant. In the meantime, a positive correlation ($r = .075$) was found between the number of underperforming students and the rate of reporting victimization. The results show that the reported victimization rate increased with the increase of the number of underperforming students in the class, and that this correlation achieved the statistical significance ($p = .04$). T-Test was used to determine the difference between the victimization rate reported by students who had absence from school because they felt unsafe on their way to the school or at the school and those who did not have absence. The result of the T-Test was a significant $t(949) = 3.7$, $p = .003$, overturning the zero hypothesis of this study, according to which the victimization rate among the population that felt unsafe at school and those who felt safe was the same. This study found that there were significant differences in reporting the victimization rate, since it was higher among students who had absence from school because

they felt unsafe ($M = 5.4$, $SD = 8.4$) in comparison to students who did not report absence ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 5.4$) because of unsafety at school.

Table Results of the T-Test on Victimization Rate and School Absence because of unsafety.

Variable	t	df	p	Have you been absent from school because of unsafety at school			
				YES		NO	
				M	SD	M	SD
Victimization rate	3.75	949	.003	5.4	8.4	3.6	5.4

The ANOVA on the victimization rate and the lack of taking measures in school against violent acts has shown that students who have reported that violent acts were never ignored in their school reported a lower mean of victimization ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 4.9$) in comparison to students in schools where violent acts were very often ignored ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 9.1$). This difference was found to be statistically significant ($F(4) = 7.06$, $p = .001$, $\eta = .030$)

Table Description of the mean and standard deviations of the victimization rate according to categories of measures taken by the school against violent students

		Leaving school for a certain time	Reduction of conduct grade	of School expulsion	Temporary punishment	Violent students change class	Violent students change school
Victimization							
Normal	$M(SD)$	2.4(1.4)	3.6(1.4)	2.6(1.2)	2.6(1.2)	2.2(1.2)	2.9(1.3)
Medium	$M(SD)$	2.7(1.5)	3.2(1.4)	2.8(1.1)	2.6(1.3)	2.1(1.2)	2.7(1.3)
Abnormal	$M(SD)$	2.41.4	3.1(1.5)	2.9(1.2)	2.6(1.5)	2.1(1.2)	2.7(1.4)

The presence of police officers, the police visits to schools; armed security patrols of classrooms; arrests of violent persons; one armed police officer placed in the school - were not found to have had significant impact in reporting the victimization rate.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that no correlation was found between the measures taken by the school against violent acts and the victimization. (Zaykowski & Gunter, 2012) also found that victimization was not correlated to school climate indicators in a group of secondary school students.

Those results can be explained by the fact that our schools might not be transparent and consistent with the measures they take against violent children, and secondly Kosovo does not have enough psychologists for all students, since even in the towns where there are psychologists the numbers are insufficient for them to be effective in preventing victimization. The role of the psychologist would be important in creating a climate of safety in schools, improving school-student relations and particularly in dealing professionally with the cases of victimization. In addition, our schools do not have clear victimization prevention plans and are more focused on administrative measures, which according to this study proved

to be inefficient in preventing violence and victimization. School related factors were an important object of this study, since this field has never been studied before in Kosovo, and there is quite a lot of contradictory data from previous studies in other cultures.

This study found no correlation between bullying and the number of students in the class, but an interesting finding is that victimization was found to be more related to smaller classes, since the correlation between the number of students and victimization was found to be negative. O'Moore et al. (1997) in his study in Ireland found the same tendency. The correlation of victimization and students' place of residence has been studied by many authors, however their findings were mixed. This study found that children who lived in towns were more likely to be absent because of the feeling of unsafety, and at the same time showed a higher mean of the reported victimization rate.

The study has identified that the police is not an appropriate measure for preventing victimization and violence in the school. Certainly, this study does not dismiss the importance of police, security or fence in the schools covered by this study, but the students did not consider those measures effective in reducing the rate of victimization.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study gives more arguments that the field of school violence and particularly student victimization is a phenomenon which is often covered by normal behaviors of adolescents caused by their hormones. Student victimization should be seen in its continuity as a phenomenon by addressing not only physical and psychological wellbeing of students, but by also addressing the stances of the school management, the measures schools take against violence and at the same time the teachers' approach to punishment. In particular, studies should continue examining the influence of gender, different cultural groups, socio-economic factors and the types of programs in the schools.

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