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COMPARING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN BULLY AND NORMAL MALE ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to compare the teacher-student relationship quality in bully and normal students. The study population includes all male students of the first and second high school grade in the academic year 2018-19 in Mianeh, Iran. The students were selected from three schools using a convenience sampling method and two classes were taken from each school. Then, a bullying questionnaire was distributed among them. Among the students with the highest scores, the scores of the top three deciles ($n = 31$) were selected as a bullying student group. The sample included 62 students (bullying group = 31, normal group = 31). The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) (1996) and teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ) by Murray and Zvoch (2011) were used to collect data. Independent t-test and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used for data analysis. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the two normal and bullying groups in terms of the teacher-student relationship quality relationship and its subscales ($P < 0.05$). The quality of relationship was higher in normal students compared to the bullying group (communication and trust subscales were found higher in the normal group and the alienation subscale in the bullying student group).

Keywords: Bullying, Teacher-student relationship, Olweus, Student.

INTRODUCTION

Some issues raised about students, teachers, parents, schools and education in general are very complex and diverse and require more analysis and knowledge. Bullying is one of the major problems faced by people in schools or in their communications (Pourtaieb & Mirnasab, 2016). Researchers around the world have analyzed the causes, impacts, measures of bullying, and its nature, and made an attempt to minimize their negative impacts on student's mental and physical health. As a result, the most basic definition of bullying used at the academic level is the one proposed by Olweus as a pioneer of research on bullying (Cheng, Chen, Chiho, and Choogh, 2011). According to Olweus (1997), bullying in school is intentional aggressive behavior that is carried out repeatedly on the victim by a bully and is defined as an imbalance of power between the victim and the bully. Further, bullying is defined as a specific form of aggression, and described as a situation where the student is exposed to negative actions repeatedly (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is comprehensively defined as aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing by a person or group of people that is carried out repeatedly and over time and involves an imbalance of power between the victim and the bully (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). In addition, much bullying seems to occur without apparent provocation of

the victims (Olweus 1993; Jimerson, Swearer & Espelage 2010; Olweus & Limber, 2010; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). Bullying may occur in different settings; however, the point that received greater attention from education scholars was school bullying, which is semantically associated with school violence and is in milder form (Benbenisty & Astor, 2005 quoted by Chen and Astor, 2010). Olweus (1995) defined three components for bullying: 1) intended negative action, 2) repetition over time, and 3) imbalance of power (quoted by Newgent, Behrand, Bery, Higgins and Lo, 2010). The findings of the previous findings identified three factors in the emergence of bullying behavior such as individual factors, family factors and school factors. However, Olweus (1995) described causes of bullying, including hereditary, emotional, and psychological, social and educational factors. Bullying is a very common problem and the exposure to bullying varied across countries, with estimated exposure rates ranging from 8.6% to 45.2% among boys, and from 4.8% to 35.8% among girls (Rezapour, Suri and Khodakarim, 2013). There is no clear evidence for bullying within the Iranian schools; however, some research has been carried out by researchers in this regard. For instance, the findings of the study by Shiri et al. (2010) among the male junior high school students in Zanjan showed that 18.8% of the students exhibited bullying behavior. Similarly, Ayyoubi et al. (2010) conducted a study on 1064 male high school students in Zanjan in 2011 and the rate of bullying (including bullying and victimization) was estimated to be 26.3% . Therefore, it can be concluded that the rate of bullying in Iran is the same as Western countries based on the general framework (Aghajan Bagloo, 2015). The interaction between teachers and students in the school environment and hours is among the identified factors affecting bullying. Researchers maintain that poor teacher / student relationships may contribute to a sense of frustration or low self-esteem, both of which can lead to student involvement in aggressive and violent school behaviors (Vang, 2004, quoted by Chen and Oester, 2010). Bullying may take place anywhere at school (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Bullying is most likely to occur on the playground, in hallways, classrooms, especially in the absence of the teacher and in the commuting way to school (Sapouna, 2008), indicating the significant role of teacher and other school officials in bullying. In the definition given by Hughes, Gleason and Zhang (2005) regarding the quality of teacher-student relationship, friendly teacher-student relationships suggest the positive teacher-student relationship. In contrast, the high conflict reveals the low quality of student-student relationship. Trusting teacher reflects the teacher's perception, response, acceptance, and tenderness towards the student. Evidence suggests that the poor quality of teacher-student relationship results in anxiety and excitement, lack of impulse control or weakness, and a positive attitude toward school violence (Chen & Astor, 2010); this is because all student's experiences in school have been considered as the main factor for the understanding the dynamics of school bullying. There is a relationship between the perception of school safety, teachers and peers attachment, strategies and techniques for managing class behavior and the dominant culture of school with bullying (Olweus, Limber, 2010; Harl-Fisch et al., 2011).

Roth, Kanat-Maymon, and Bibi (2011) found that students who experience a relationship with teachers that acknowledge their feelings, take their perspective, provide rationale, allow choice, and minimize pressure are more likely to develop and identify internalization of consideration toward classmates, which is, in turn, negatively related to self-reported bullying. Furthermore, a large number of studies, have associated warm and supportive student-teacher



relationships with lower levels of antisocial and aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, and negative student-teacher relationships with an increased involvement in bullying and antisocial behaviors (Gregory et al., 2010; Richard, Schneider & Mallet, 2012; Jalon and Arias, 2013; Lucas-Molina et al., 2015; Wang, Asier, Lembeck, Collins & Berry, 2015; Longobardi, Prino, Fabris And Settanni, 2017). Student-teacher relationships that are characterized by higher levels of conflict or negative expectations have been shown to increase student involvement in bullying related behaviors (Johngert et al., 2016). A large number of studies have already been published concerning the effects of student-teachers relationships on bullying. The results of the study by Beyrami and Hashemi (2012) entitled as “traditional and cyber bullying in female adolescents of junior high school and the role of teacher-student relationship quality” showed that there is a positive relationship between the quality of teacher-student relationship and school bullying and 19% of the bullying change is predictable due to two factors of trusting teacher and alienation. Likewise, the findings of the study by Dinarie, Hemmatie, Shahmoradie and Sheikhie (2018) entitled as “the relationship between parenting styles and the teacher-student's relationship with bullying in male high school students in Abdanan” showed a correlation between the teacher-student relationship's quality (teacher trust, teacher relationship and alienation) with bullying. A negative and significant relationship was also found between the variables of communication and the teacher's trust with bullying. In another study by Longobardi et al. (2017) regarding the relationship between teacher-student relationship and bullying behavior, it was found that the abhorrent communication between the teacher and the student is associated with the bullying and provocative behaviors. Furthermore, a large number of studies such Debura (2013) and Lucas-Molina (2015) have associated warm and supportive student-teacher relationships with lower levels of antisocial and aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, and negative student-teacher relationships with an increased involvement in bullying and antisocial behaviors. The overall aim of the study was to compare the teacher-student relationship quality in bully and normal students and is analyzed based on the three subscales of teacher-student relationship quality (trust-communication-alienation). The hypothesis is that there is a difference between bullying and normal male adolescent students in terms of the quality of teacher-teacher relationship, teacher trust, teacher communication and alienation. Based on the above descriptions, the main question of the present research is that is there any difference between bullying and normal male adolescent students in terms of student -teacher relationship quality.



METHOD

The present study used a causal-comparative research design because it compares the bullying and normal male adolescent students in terms of the teacher-student relationship quality and both independent and dependent variables after an action or event has already occurred. The study population includes all bully and normal male high school students ($n = 4430$) in Mianeh, Iran, in the academic year 2018-19. To select the sample size, 300 high school students were chosen using Morgan table via convenience sampling method. From two selected regions, three schools and two classes from each school were included in the study. Then, a bullying questionnaire was distributed among them. Among the students with the highest scores, the scores of the top three deciles ($n = 31$) were selected as a bullying student

group (bullying rate was confirmed by the principle and assistant principal). The sample included 62 students (bullying group = 31, normal group = 31). The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) (1996) and teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ) by Murray and Zvoch (2011) were used to collect data.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of statistical sample based on group student membership

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Bully students	31	50%
Normal students	31	50%
Total	62	100

According to Table (1), the statistical sample was divided into bully (n = 50) and normal (n = 50) students. After choosing the statistical sample, the Olweus bully/victim questionnaires were distributed among 300 students and, they were asked to answer after giving some explanations by the researcher. The normal students were separated from bully or victim ones and were matched with bully students in terms of school criteria, field of study and grade, family, educational, economic and social status and students completed the questionnaire. The used tools included the revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996) and the revised teacher-student relationship questionnaire.

Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (1996)

The Bully / Victim Questionnaire is among the self-reported questionnaire series developed in 1986 by Don Olweus and revised in 1996. The items include questions taking many different types of bullying including physical, verbal, direct, racial, and gender. The dimensions of this questionnaire include exposure to various bullying behaviors, extent of bullying behaviors, place of bullying behaviors occurrence, attitudes supporting the aggressive behaviors, and the awareness and reactions of the social environment, such as teachers, peers and parents. The purpose of this questionnaire is to achieve descriptive data and the prevalence of bullying behaviors from the perspective of students. The internal consistency coefficient of the scales was reported 0.85 to 0.90 by Olweus et al. (2005). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 for bullying and 0.76 for the victimization scale. All of the responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1) It hasn't happened to me in the past couple months, 2) only once or twice, 3) two or three times a month, 4) once a week, 5) a few times a week for each scale with 10 items for committing bullying and 10 victim items (Hamburger & Basile, 2011). People who reported bullying behavior at least 2-3 times a month are identified bully and people who have been bullied 2-3 times a month as victims (Pontzer, 2010). Olweus, Limber, Flerx, Mullin et al. (2005, quoted by Raymond, 2009) calculated its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha (0.87). In addition, in Iran, Hesami, Shahni Yeilagh, Morrваты and Pourbirgani calculated the reliability coefficients of the questionnaire 0.75 using Cronbach's alpha method (2016). The variance of the two subscales was estimated 0.56 and the range of factor loads for two scales was obtained between 0.32 and 0.93.

Revised teacher-student relationship questionnaire (IT-SR)

The self-report teacher-student relationship was created by Murray & Zvoch (2011) by adapting 19 items from the widely used Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and its revised form (Murray and Zvoch, 2011) includes 17 items. The results of factor



analysis (IT-SR) revealed three factors of communication (8 items), trust (5 items) and alienation (4 items), proving that these factors are parallel to parental and peer factors. Items 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17 belong to the communication subscale, items 1, 2, 3, 7 and 13 to the trust subscale and 5, 6, 14, and 16 to alienation subscale. The items were scored based on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Never, 2) some times and 4) Always. The sum of the individual items will be added together to earn points for each dimension. In addition, all the questionnaire items will be collected together to obtain the overall score. The points range between 17 and 67, indicating that the higher points build greater teacher-student relationship and trusting teacher. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for three subscales of communication, trust, and alienation in the study by Murray and Zvoch (2011) was calculated 0.89, 0.84 and 0.72, respectively, indicating a good internal consistency. The coefficients of reliability of the questionnaire and each of the components were reported 0.89, 0.84, and 0.72, respectively. In addition to the analysis of content validity, Deliri et al. (2012) reported the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire higher than (0.7), which was acceptable. For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, variance, standard deviation) and inferential tests (independent t-test and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)) were used in accordance with the goals and assumptions of the research.

FINDINGS

Descriptive findings

The data regarding the variables of self-image and the quality of teacher-student relationship with its subscales has been presented by groups in Table (2).



Table 2. Descriptive indices of the sample groups of research variables

Scale	Subscale	Bully		Normal		Total ample	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Quality of teacher-student relationship	Trust	12.26	2.22	16.50	1.59	14.3	2.90
	Communication	15.76	2.80	24.20	3.08	19.98	5.16
	Alienation	13.26	1.22	5.70	1.23	9.48	4.00
Quality of teacher-student relationship		41.20	4.59	46.40	4.06	43.80	5.03

As shown in Table (2), the average scores of bullying students in subscales of trust and communication were lower than normal students. However, the mean score of bullying students in the alienation with the teacher subscale was higher than the average normal student scores.

Inferential Findings

Independent t-test was used to analyze the quality of teacher-student relationship variables and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for analyzing the data obtained from teacher-student relationship subscales.

Assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices

Table 3. Box test results on the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix in teacher-student-teacher relationship-quality subscales

Sig	df2	df1	F	Box's M
0.649	24373.132	6	0.701	4.456

Mbox test was used to analyze the homogeneity assumption of the variance matrix and the covariance of student-teacher relationship subscales with the aim of investigating the correlation between dependent variables in the studied groups. The results of Table (3) show a significant level greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the homogeneity of the variance and covariance matrix is violated in these data.

The assumption of homogeneity of intergroup variances

Table 4. Levene test results based on the assumption of the homogeneity of variances in student-teacher relationship quality subscales

Subscale	F statistics	Degree of freedom 1	Degree of freedom 2	significance
Trust	4.399	1	58	0.040
Communication	0.108	1	58	0.744
Alienation	0.132	1	58	0.718

Based on the data presented in Table (4), Levene test results to analyze the variance of variables of the two groups of variables show that the significance level in the subscales of communication and alienation is greater than 0.05 ($05 / OP >$). Therefore, the homogeneity of variance is not violated. The significance level of the trust subscale should not be greater than 0.05. Therefore, the homogeneity of variance is not violated.

Table 5. Levene test results based on the assumption of the homogeneity of variances in the student-teacher relationship quality variables

Scale	F Statistics	Significance
Teacher relationship quality-the student	0.468	0.497

As shown in Table (5), the significance level of Levene test on the teacher-student relationship is greater than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$); therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. The purpose of this assumption is to determine whether the variance of two groups is homogeneous for the given variable.

Hypotheses analysis

Table 6. Independent t-test results for teacher-student relationship quality variable

Scale	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level
Teacher-student relationship quality	Bully	41.20	4.59	4.64	58	0.000
	Normal	46.60	4.06			

As the Table 6 shows, the significance level of independent t-test in teacher-student relationship quality variables is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). This implies that the difference between the two bullying and normal groups is significant in terms of teacher-student relationship quality. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the research is confirmed by the difference between bullying and normal students in terms of the teacher-student relationship quality.

Table 7. Multiple test results in multivariate analysis of variance of student-teacher relationship quality subscales

Statistical index	Value	Ratio (F)	(Degree of freedom) df	Error (df)	(Significance level (P))
Wilk's Lambda	0.064	271.071	3	56	0.000

According to the results of multivariate analysis of variance (Table 7), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the two groups of bullying and normal students in terms of the teacher-student relationship quality subscale based on the Wilks Lambda results ($P < 0.05$). In what follows, the inter-subject impacts of the research variables using multivariate analysis have been presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Multivariate analysis results of variance of student-teacher relationship quality subscales

	subscale	sum of squares (S/S)	Degree of freedom (df)	Mean squares (MS)	(F) ratio	Significance level
Group	Trust	281.667	1	281.667	75.054	0.000
	Communication	1066.817	1	1066.817	122.28	0.000
	Alienation	858.817	1	858.817	564.968	0.000
Error	Trust	217.667	58	3.753		
	Communication	504.167	58	8.693		
	Alienation	88.167	58	1.520		
Total	Trust	12826.000	60			
	Communication	25531.000	60			
	Alienation	6343.000	60			

According to the data in Table (8), there is a significant difference between the two bully and normal groups in terms of teacher trust subscale, with 1 degree of freedom and F ratio 75.054 ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, the second hypothesis of the research confirms the difference between bully and normal students in terms of the element of teacher trust. In addition, as shown in the table, a significant difference was found between the two bully and normal groups in terms of communication with the teacher, with 1 degree of freedom and F ratio 122.728 ($P < 0.05$). Thus, the third hypothesis confirms the difference between bully and normal students in terms of teacher trust component. The fourth hypothesis states that there is a significant difference between the two bully and normal groups in terms of alienation of teacher subscale, with 1 degree of freedom and F ratio 564.968 ($P < 0.05$). Based



on Table (8), the significance level is less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$), and therefore the fourth hypothesis is also confirmed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

First hypothesis

According to the first hypothesis, the findings showed a significant difference bully and normal male adolescent students in terms of the quality of teacher-student relationship ($P < 0.05$). This finding are in agreement with the results of the studies by Beirami and Hashemi (2012), Dinari, Hemmati, Shahmoradi and Sheikhi (2017), as well as Debura (2013), Deborah and Robert (2014), Lucas Milenna et al. (2015), Burchard & Smith (2016), Longobardi et al. (2017), Longobardi & Luty, and Jaggert & Stanley (2018). Their findings revealed a significant negative correlation between teacher-student relationship and school bullying; in addition, hostile communications between teacher and student are associated with bullying and provocative behaviors and strong relationships between teacher and student minimize impulsive behaviors among students regarding the peers. Warm and supportive student-teacher relationships are associated with lower levels of antisocial and aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, and negative student-teacher relationships with an increased involvement in bullying and antisocial behaviors (Gregory et al., 2010; Richard, Schneider & Mallet, 2012; Debura, 2013; Jalon and Arias, 2013; Lucas-Molina et al., 2015; Wang, Asier, Lembeck, Collins & Berry, 2015; Longobardi, Prino, Fabris And Settanni, 2017). Moreover, student-teacher relationships that are characterized by higher levels of conflict or negative expectations have been shown to increase student involvement in bullying related behaviors (Johngert et al., 2016). According to Anderszewski and Davis (2008), building teacher-student relationships is a critical part of educational mission; Kadima et al. (2010) emphasized that emotional interaction between teachers and students alleviates behavioral problems that trigger or fuel these bullying behaviors. The implication of the finding is that warm and friendly teacher-student relationships contribute to the high self-confidence (Anderszewski and Davis, 2008) and the experience leads to greater compatibility with school and individuals. People who are unable to create good relationships with students struggle to develop their self-esteem through bullying behaviors and humiliating others.

Second hypothesis

Our findings suggest a significant difference between bully and normal male adolescent students in terms of teacher trust component. The hypothesis is statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05. The implication is that warm and supportive student-teacher relationships are associated with lower levels of antisocial and aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, and negative student-teacher relationships with an increased involvement in bullying and antisocial behaviors. They also concluded that a positive student-teacher relationship is a key factor in dealing with the bullying circumstances. In fact, establishing more positive student-teacher interactions and developing a greater sense of trust will decrease the emergence of bullying hostile behavior (Beiramie et al., 2012). An implication is that improved student-teacher relationships are linked to trustful relationship; this positive relationship together with the low levels of incompatibility can enhance the internal and external motivation of the students to accept school rules and avoid bullying behaviors (Johngert et al., 2016, Roth &



Bobby, 2009). In contrast, students with warm and compatible relationship with teachers are less likely to involve in bullying behaviors due to the possibility of internalization of humanitarian values and avoiding compromising relationship with the teacher (Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007). The internalized humanitarian values enhance dignity resulting in the prevention of aberrant behavior and alleviate the harassment and discomfort to others.

Third hypothesis

The statistical findings show that there is a significant difference between bully and normal male adolescent students in terms of teacher relationship component. The hypothesis is statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05. The results revealed a relationship between the quality of teacher -student relationship (relationship with teacher, teacher trust and alienation of teacher) and bullying. A negative and significant association was also found between the variables of relationship and the teacher's trust with bullying. These results support the idea that the perceived and warm student - teacher relationship creates a sense of school belonging contributing to the perception of a general merit. This may encourage the student to achieve academic achievement and display adaptive behaviors (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caparara, Pastorellie, Furrer, Skinner & Pajares, 1996 quoted by Wu, Hughes and Kwok, 2010).

Fourth hypothesis

According to the findings, there is a significant difference between the adolescent bully and normal male students in terms of teacher alienation component ($P < 0.05$). The weak teacher and student relationships lead to the spark of anger and bullying behavior (Chen & Aster, 2010). Moreover, poor teacher - student relationships may contribute to a sense of frustration or low self-esteem, both of which can lead to student involvement in aggressive and violent school behaviors (Vang, 2004, quoted by Chen and Oester, 2010). The implication is that the students that do not have an intimate relationship with their teachers, and have not experienced this relationship, will not develop an internalized value of personality, and an external motivation to respect school rules and avoid bullying will be lacking. Therefore, given the poor quality of relationship with teachers, for these students bullying could represent a way to get attention and to reach recognition and consideration at least among schoolmates (Pellegrini, 1998; Smokowski and Kopasz, 2005).



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