The relationship of social desirability and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavior among female students of middle school

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Abstract

The behavioral patterns of the children and adolescents are the main concerns of educational systems and families in every society. Based on this belief, the purpose of the present study is to analyze the existing relationship of social acceptance and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavior among female students of middle school. This study was conducted on 2310 female students of middle school, in the city of Gonabad, from whom 320 individuals selected through cluster sampling method completed the following questionnaires: Olweus Bullying questionnaire, Morgan-Jinks educational self-efficacy scale and marlowe-crowne social desirability scale. The obtained data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation Coefficient and enter regression statistical methods by SPSS-20. This study indicated the positive relationship of social acceptance and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavioral occurrences. Moreover, there were significant correlations between social acceptance and educational self-efficacy. These correlations mean that bullying behavior increased with the growth of social desirability and educational self-efficacy.

Keywords: Bullying, Self-Efficacy, Social Desirability, Student

Introduction

Concerns and problems of students, teachers, parents, and generally those of schools and education office are quite manifold and complicated, demanding further assessment and recognition. Among these problems, bullying behavior exists almost in every school worldwide. Being a widespread problem in recent decades, bullying has received massive attention from many educational trainers, urging different formal institutions of many countries to take prompt reactions in understanding and analyzing the causes and factors involved in bullying at school and society along with discovering methods to prevent this phenomenon. [1]

The U.S. Department of Education stated that having been so prevailingly dominant at schools and society at large, bullying behavior was regarded as part of one's mental development. Considering the serious impacts of bullying behavior in recent years, it is recognized now as a social problem among the youth [2]. Based on Olweus,

bullying behavior comprises wide destructive behavioral patterns that occur regularly over time, it is commonly demonstrated in three forms: verbal, physical and emotional [3].

According to Olweus, there are two major types of bullying behavior: direct bullying which is a type of physical or verbal attacks, and indirect bullying, i.e. social/relational bullying, which is omission or intentional seclusion of the individual (from his/her society or community) [3]. Harris and Harton [4]believe indirect form of bullying might as well include acts of backbiting, accusing, gossiping, or even having friends in order to intimidate and to belittle others. A bully is someone who intentionally and repeatedly harms the weaker person. [5] People with aggressive behavior are unable to manage their emotional reactions in relation to distress, and they lack sense of shame [6]. Swearer [7] believes that bullying is related to anger, hostility, aggression or violence, hyperactivity and crime. Bullies and victims of bullying have a poorer psychosocial function than their peers. Teenagers bullying others are interested to show a more positive attitude towards aggression, often need to control and dominate over others, suffer from high depression and anxiety levels, mostly demonstrate loneliness and sadness, have physical and psychological signs, and suffer from low self-esteem and social desirability [2]. Some research has proven that contrary to the victims of bullying, bullies enjoy better skills in leadership, higher self-esteem and more friends around [8]. Amy Bellmore, a professor of educational psychology from Wisconsin University, holds that kid bullies are aware of their "classroom hierarchy of power", thus choose the secluded individuals (victimized students) as subjects of their bullying behaviors to maintain their social position [9]. Also, Hault and Splug [10] maintain that bullies receive more social support and more social desirability among their peers [12,11]. Swearer et al. [7] state that a bully is weak at resolving social issues and problems. Boss Worth et al. [13] support the fact that aggression in kids and teenagers result from their lack of basic social skills,

while interacting with their fellow peers. Elderfer et al. found that teenagers who treat their peers aggressively received less social acceptance as compared to other teenagers. In addition, other studies have demonstrated the correlation between bullying behavior and positive social competence including high social intellect, being seen by other peers, and gaining recognition as an accepted and strong individual. villancourt's study [15] proved that bullying teenagers are perceived as more attractive and better leaders at school by their other peers. For the dominant aggressive culture within the peers' community, the teenager has to adopt and demonstrate the same aggressive behaviors to comply with peers [16]. Hilton et al. [17] believe that bullying is an adaptive behavior taken by the individual in order to conform to the new peer group and define their position there. Torch et al. [18] also indicate that bullying is a group phenomenon resulting from a social context. In addition, there is a significant relationship between maladaptive friends and aggressive behavior. In this study, educational self-efficacy was evaluated as the second research variable. Educational self-efficacy refers to confidence in doing school homework like reading textbooks, asking questions in the classroom, and preparing for examinations [19]. Different studies have been conducted with regard to the relationship between educational self-efficacy and involvement in risky behavior. Johnson et al. [20] and Azer et al. [21] observed a negative relationship between educational self-efficacy and involvement in risky behavior, meaning that the person with high self-efficiency is more sociable and shows less bullying behavior. Harris and Harton [4], and Moun et al. [22] suggest that bully students show lower rates of self-efficacy as well as low educational performance. Kimiayee [23] reports early dropout as a consequence have discovered that bullies enjoy higher levels of self-confidence. Therefore, short-term consequences of bullying behavior are early school dropouts and decreased self-confidence, while a long-term consequence

is known to be addiction. Teachers and consultants need to be educated about the long-term consequences and mental or psychological pressure associated with this phenomenon in order to adopt proper strategies to confront this behavior because it is important students study in an environment free of any tension. The present study aims to investigate the relationship of social desirability and educational self-efficacy with bullying in female students of middle school in the city of Gonabad, Iran.

Method
This Cross-Sectional study was conducted on all the 2013 female students of middle school in the city of Gonabad, Khorasan Razavi Province, Iran, during academic year 2012-2013. Sample size was estimated 320 people with regard to the type of study, the number of variables, and Morgan table. They were selected through cluster sampling. Out of 14 middle schools in the city of Gonabad, 8 schools were randomly selected, 2 classes were randomly selected from the total number of classes .Then questionnaires were distributed among them. In this study, three types of tools were utilized to collect data. Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES), designed by Jink & Morgan (1999), comprises three subscales of talent, effort and context. The designers applied Cronbach's alpha and found its reliability as 82% for the whole scale, and 78% for talent, 70% for context and 66% for effort. Mirjalili [23] reported a reliability of 72% for the whole scale, and 66%, 76% and 73%, respectively for talent, effort and context. In the present study, reliability was found 59%, 93%, 92% and 79% for the whole scale, and subscales of talent, context and effort, respectively. The second tool was Marlowe- Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD) (1960) containing 33 true-false items. According to the findings of Hotfield (2002), the reliability coefficient of (MCSD) was above 80% using retest. This scale showed a high and acceptable correlation with other psychological tools utilized in measuring social acceptance. Its reliability coefficient in Samari and Lalifaz's study was 74% using Cronbach's alpha [24].

The third tool was the Farsi version of Olweus Bullying Questionnaire to assess bullying at schools. Bully/Victims Questionnaire (BVQ) is a self-report questionnaire developed by Dan Olweus in 1986 and revised in 1996. This questionnaire includes 40 Likert style items regarding bullying (verbal, relational, physical, coercive, racial and indirect) in the past two months (all actions intended to harm people's social reputation and/or to humiliate them like: making offensive and bold jokes or encouraging others to socially isolate people), sexual, and cyber-bullying (verbal or indirect bullying behaviors using digital technologies like cellphones, setting up an offensive personal website, or even depriving someone from access to social networks).
The questionnaire validity and reliability were assessed among 5000 boy and girl students, 11 to 16 years of age, from Norway, and reported as 8% and 9% using internal consistency in 1994. In 2010, the same questionnaire was also assessed in Iran by Shahriyarfar for 280 boy and girl students, aged 13 to 15, and the reliability was reported 65% and 74% for victims scale and 74% and 78%, respectively, for bullying scale using test-retest and internal consistency. In that order, the reliability of this questionnaire was evaluated by content validity and correlation of the subscales. The subscales had a satisfactory correlation [1]. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was 84% for victim and 61% for bullying scales. For data analysis and hypothesis evaluation, the relationship of social desirability and educational self-efficacy as predicting variables and bullying as the criterion variable was simultaneously analyzed in regression equation using a statistical package for the social science (SPSS: SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) version 20.

Results
Table 1 shows the subjects' statistical indicators based on the points of social desirability, educational self-efficacy and bullying behavior. Table 2 shows mean and standard deviation of different bullying

behaviors. Table 3, shows the results of correlation matrix analysis regarding social desirability, educational self-efficacy and bullying behavior.

Table 1 *Mean and standard deviation of social desirability, educational self-efficacy and bullying*

		M	SD
1	Social desirability	136.8	740.5
2	Educational self-efficacy	260.6	1732.5
3	Bullying	11.4	4.8

Mean values were 136.81 for social acceptance, 260.69 for educational self-efficacy, and 11.41 for bullying.

Table 2 *Mean and standard deviation of each type of bullying*

	M	SD
Verbal	4.61	56.57
Social exclusion	4.56	56.57
Physical	2.41	1.21
coercive	1.28	79.
Racial	1.28	77.
Indirect	1.25	70.
Sexual	1.24	70.
Cyberbullying	1.19	64.

There was a significant relationship between social desirability and educational self-efficacy (p<0.01).

Table 3 *Pearson's correlationcoefficient among variables*

		1	2
1	Social desirability		
2	Educational self-efficacy	912.**	
3	Bullying	262.**	258.**

**P <0.01

To determine the impact of each variable (social desirability and educational self-efficacy) on bullying behavior, social desirability and educational self-efficacy were assigned as predicting variables, whereas bullying at school was considered as the criterion variable in the regression equation. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 5 shows that there was a positive and significant relationship between bullying behavior and social desirability -with a coefficient of 0.165, and educational self-efficacy -with a coefficient of 0.104.

Discussion

The results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between social desirability and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavior, meaning that with an increase in social desirability and educational self-efficacy, bullying behavior also escalated. Furthermore, simultaneous regression analysis proved that the social desirability and educational self-efficacy variables could predict up to 0.70 of the bullying behavior occurrence.

Table 4 *Summary of enter regression analysis to explain variable on the basis of predictor variables*

Model		SS	MS	df	R²	R	F
Enter	Regression	499.2	249.6	2	070.	264.	11.249
	Residual	6657.8	22.1	300			
	Total	7157.1					

Table 5 *Regression confidence for predicting criterion variable*

	B	β	T
Social desirability	001.	165.	1.029*
Educational self-efficacy	000.	104.	647.*

*P <0.10

The present study aimed to study the relationship of social desirability and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavior in female students of middle school in the city of Gonabad. The results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between social desirability and educational self-efficacy with bullying behavior, meaning that with an increase in social desirability and educational self-efficacy, bullying behavior also escalated. Furthermore, simultaneous regression analysis proved that the social desirability and educational self-efficacy variables could predict up to 0.70 of the bullying behavior occurrence.

To confirm the relationship between social desirability and bullying behavior, Vaillancourt [15], Amy Bellmore [9], Jill [9] Holt and Splug [10] studies can be mentioned. They believe bullies receive more support and popularity from their peers. Higher social intelligence helps the individual to have more desirability and attraction among others. The research conducted in this field have also revealed some contradictory findings [2,7,12]. Some studies have attributed teenagers' and children's aggression to their lack of social skills while interacting with their peers. As various studies have shown, peer pressure affects spreading bullying behavior (Hilton et al. [17] and Andow et al. [16]. It could be concluded that behavior is shaped through a social process and interaction. This finding can be further explained the fact that achieving social recognition or peer approval through dominance are important behavior reinforcers. Hilton et al. believe that bullying behavior serves as an adaptive function adopted by the individual in order to establish his or her position within the group.

In different studies, a negative relationship was observed between educational self-efficacy and risky behavior, indicating that when an individual is more self-efficient and sociable, he/she reacts without (showing) any bullying behavior. However, in this study, there was a relatioship between educational self-efficacy and bullying behavior. Kokino [8] observed that bullies enjoy a high self-confidence. This complies with the findings by Youn et al. [25],

in which they stated that the non-rejected, violent children demonstrated more self-efficacy as compared to the rejected, violent kids. From this point of view, both self-efficacy and self-confidence consist mainly of the comprehension of one's abilities and skills, therefore, it could be explained that bullies are more self-efficient individuals.

Studying different bulling behaviors revealed that verbal behavior as well as relational behavior had the highest frequency rates. This finding corresponds with that of Sapona [26]. The ratio of cyber-bullying was less with regard to other behaviors. This could be attributed to the fact that the sample students did not use cell phones and the Internet, resulting in less spread of such type of bullying.

Conclusion

Given that adolescents have more tendency toward their peers, we can emphasize the effective role of peers during adolescence. Parents and teachers spend less time with adolescents; therefore, there is more chance for bullying behavior. Teachers and consultants need to be trained about the long-term consequences and mental or psychological pressure associated with this phenomenon in order to obtain proper strategies to confront this type of behavior because it is important students study in an environment free of any tension. Furthermore, given the frequency of bullying behavior differs in various communities and cultures, it is suggested to conduct such studies in different cities. Moreover, it is recommended that interviews and observation techniques be applied in future studies in order to observe the frequency rate of individual's bullying behavior in different grades and to compare the data with those of the present study. Since the research findings are based on self-report scales, they are likely to be biased, which can influence study results. Furthermore, the current research is correlational; therefore, the relationships found here could not be interpreted as cause-and-effect. This issue

should be considered in future studies.

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Contributions

Study design: MZ, ASH
Data collection and analysis:AT
Manuscript preparation: AT

Conflict of interest

"The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

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