

Proactive, Reactive, and Aggressive Offending of Middle School Students: The Mediating Role of School Climate and Self-Control

SARAH JAWAD KADHIM¹, ARKAN BAHLOL NAJI²

¹MSN, Department of community Health Nursing, College of Nursing, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

²Professor, PhD, Department of community Health Nursing, College of Nursing, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq
Corresponding author: Sarah Jawad Kadhim, Email: Sarra.Jawad1206b@conursing.uobaghdad.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

Background: Violence in schools represents an issue that continues to capture a large measure of public interest. Incidents of interpersonal violence that range from chronic verbal threats to death continue to occur at school when classes are in session; a setting widely regarded as an enclave of safety and security.

Objective(s): The aim of this study is to determine proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending of middle school students: the mediating role of school climate and self-control.

Methodology: The descriptive correlational design has been considered a subtype of correlational research, with its primary purpose being to examine relationships between and among variables and it is referred to occasionally as simple correlational design. (Gray et al., 2017). The study was carried out at public middle schools for males and females in Baghdad City. The study included a convenience sample of male and females middle school students who agreed to participate in this study. The study subjects were recruited from six public middle schools. Thus, the recommended sample size would be 305.

Results: There is no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among gender groups.

Conclusion: Students in all grades are invariants in terms of their practicing of proactive, reactive aggressive offending. The greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the prevalence of bullying.

Recommendations: There is a need for the community health nurses to establish school-based anti-violence health campaigns.

Keywords: Aggressive Offending, Middle School Students, School Climate, Self-Control.

INTRODUCTION

A safe school environment is a priority for many communities and school administrators, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention (Killian, Fish, & Maniago, 2007). There is no single cause for the development of antisocial behaviors among children and adolescents. However, various factors can play a role in the development of these behaviors. It has been suggested that the environment can influence the development and maintenance of antisocial behaviors. This concept can be used to identify potential factors that could lead to school safety and violence. In addition to regular school activities, other factors such as peer interactions and home environments can also affect the development and maintenance of these behaviors (Kilian et al., 2014).

The issue of school violence continues to capture a large portion of the public's attention. In most cases, it occurs when classes are in session, which is a setting that is generally regarded as a safe environment. There have been many cases of verbal threats and chronic violence, which can range from harassment to death threats. The effects of school violence on a student's academic performance are a major issue that educational professionals and parents need to address. This issue is also considered to be a community issue. Early adolescence is a time when many factors can affect a child's development (Kilian et al., 2014).

According to some researchers, school settings can be a source of stress for students. The events and situations that occur during the transition from elementary school to middle school can also contribute to the stress levels of students. Given the various concerns that students might have regarding their safety, it can be difficult to implement effective learning strategies. Although school violence had been around for a long time, during the 1970s, the interest in it started to grow. Many people started to notice the various professional backgrounds and disciplines involved in the problem. Initially, the focus was on the youth. (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

Besides law enforcement officials, researchers, and public health officials also started to look into the increasing number of school shootings. Since schools have historically been a center for the youth, they were an ideal venue for conducting studies related to school violence. During the 1980s, there was a rise in youth homicide. Many of these deaths were caused by gunshot wounds. To prevent these types of injuries, physicians conducted studies on

the possession of school weapons. These studies were then published in various medical journals.

Psychiatrists and psychologists were immediately on board with the research about the development of these behaviors, which they were searching for ways to treat. Schools were then used as the setting for programs aimed at preventing violence (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

The seriousness of the issue of school safety and the reduction of school violence are both understandable. However, it is also important to implement effective prevention strategies. (Volungis & Goodman, 2017). Thus the aim of this study is to determine proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending of middle school students: the mediating role of school climate and self-control.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design: The descriptive correlational design has been considered a subtype of correlational research, with its primary purpose being to examine relationships between and among variables and it is referred to occasionally as simple correlational design (Gray et al., 2017).

The Setting of the Study: The study was carried out at public middle schools for males and females in Baghdad City.

Sample and Sampling: The study included a convenience sample of male and females middle school students who agreed to participate in this study. The study subjects were recruited from six public middle schools.

The sample size was determined using G*Power software based on an effect size of 0.25, alpha error probability of 0.05, a power of 0.95, five groups. Thus, the recommended sample size would be 305. Taking into account an attrition rate of 20%, additional 61 subjects would be required. As such, the recommended sample size would be 365. The final sample size is 415.

Statistical Analyses: Data were analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) for windows, version 28. The statistical measures of frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation, linear regression, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and independent-sample t-test were used.

Ethical Considerations: After receiving the approval of the College of Nursing, University of Baghdad for the study, the Directorate of Education in Baquba City, the student researcher discussed study details with schools' administrators. The student researcher explained to the participants the general purpose of the study, as well as the method by which they can answer the study instrument, to ensure that they understand that participation is optional and that they can withdraw at any time. The student researcher assured subjects that he will securely safeguard and maintain the confidentiality of their data during and following study participation. The student researcher further assured study participants that he will keep their identities in the presentation, reporting, and/or any eventual publication of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among grade groups

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Proactive Aggression | Between Groups | .621 | 2 | .310 | .020 | .980 |
| | Within Groups | 6481.538 | 412 | 15.732 | | |
| | Total | 6482.159 | 414 | | | |
| Reactive Aggression | Between Groups | 15.276 | 2 | 7.638 | .334 | .717 |
| | Within Groups | 9434.955 | 412 | 22.900 | | |
| | Total | 9450.231 | 414 | | | |

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among gender groups.

Table 2: Difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among living arrangements groups

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Proactive Aggression | Between Groups | 44.360 | 3 | 14.787 | .944 | .419 |
| | Within Groups | 6437.799 | 411 | 15.664 | | |
| | Total | 6482.159 | 414 | | | |
| Reactive Aggression | Between Groups | 115.676 | 3 | 38.559 | 1.698 | .167 |
| | Within Groups | 9334.555 | 411 | 22.712 | | |
| | Total | 9450.231 | 414 | | | |

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among living arrangements groups.

Table 5: Difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among family's socioeconomic class groups

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Proactive Aggression | Between Groups | 92.666 | 4 | 23.166 | 1.487 | .205 |
| | Within Groups | 6389.493 | 410 | 15.584 | | |
| | Total | 6482.159 | 414 | | | |
| Reactive Aggression | Between Groups | 69.121 | 4 | 17.280 | .755 | .555 |
| | Within Groups | 9381.110 | 410 | 22.881 | | |
| | Total | 9450.231 | 414 | | | |

df: Degree of freedom; F: F-statistics; Sig.: Significance

There is no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among family's socioeconomic status groups.

DISCUSSION

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive, and aggressive offending among gender groups.

Research has identified a number of correlates associated with aggression in community. Demographic variables associated with aggression include gender and IQ. Males are generally found to be more aggressive than females (Connor, 2002) which is inconsistent with this finding. (Connor et al., 2003) conducted a study to (1) identify gender differences with regards to the prevalence of proactive and reactive aggression and, (2) identify correlates of proactive.

Aggression and reactive aggression in males and females from a convenience sample of clinically referred children and adolescents. The study included a sample from unsolicited consecutive referrals to a residential treatment center (RTC) (inpatients, N = 253), and a pediatric psychopharmacology clinic serving a tertiary hospital and medical school (outpatients, N = 70). The study results revealed that there were no gender differences in aggression frequency or severity that is females were equally as likely as males to be rated as proactive aggressors.

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among living arrangements groups. This finding implies that students; wherever they have been living, are equal in terms of the frequency of experiencing proactive-reactive aggression on the school setting.

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among family's socioeconomic status groups. This finding implies that students; regardless of their socioeconomic class, are almost equal in terms of experiencing proactive and/or reactive aggression. This finding is inconsistent with the literature relevant to school aggression. Proactive and reactive aggression are associated with adolescents' family characteristics (Raine et al., 2006). For example, in a study of adolescent males, boys in families with lower socioeconomic status and poorly educated and unemployed fathers at age 7 had significantly higher rates of proactive aggression at age 16 (Raine et al., 2006).

CONCLUSION

There was no statistically significant difference in proactive, reactive aggressive offending among living arrangements groups. This finding implies that students; irrespective of with whom they have been living, used to practice proactive, reactive aggressive offending on their daily lives. The students regardless of their socioeconomic status, have been used to practice proactive, reactive aggressive offending on their daily lives. Students in all grades are invariants in terms of their practicing of proactive, reactive aggressive offending. The that the greater the willingness to seeking help, the larger the prevalence of bullying.

Recommendations: There is a need for the community health nurses to establish school-based anti-violence health campaigns. There is for the officials in the Ministry of Education to establish school-based zero-tolerance violence policy.

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