

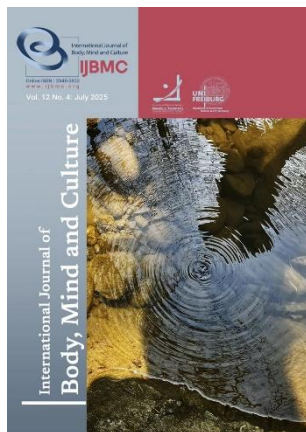
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Educators' Understanding and Perspectives Toward Child Violence in Specific Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess educators' understanding and perspectives toward violence among their students in primary schools. To ascertain the connection between the sociodemographic traits of the educators and their knowledge and viewpoints on child violence.

Methods and Materials: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at governmental primary schools in Al-Basrah City, Iraq, with a random (Systematic Sampling) of 350 educators chosen. The total number of primary schools was 41 during the period from October 31, 2023, to April 30, 2024. After a thorough examination of pertinent literature, the researcher created a questionnaire and adopted and modified scales.

Findings: The results demonstrate that educators have a fair level of understanding and positive perspectives toward school violence. However, the statistics showed there is a significant difference between educators' understanding and perspectives about school violence. Moreover, there is a significant difference between their educators' understanding and their experience in dealing with children exposed to violence and between educators' perspectives and their years of experience.

Conclusion: According to the study's findings, the majority of educators who took part in it had a high opinion and a fair comprehension of school violence, and there was no statistically significant difference in their views with their sociodemographic data except educators' understanding of dealing child exposed to violence and educators' perspectives with their years of experience.

Keywords: Educators, Understanding, Perspectives, Child violence, Primary Schools.

Introduction

The threat or actual use of force to inflict injury at school or during school-related activities is known as school violence (Gallego et al., 2019). Students in elementary school can use their imaginations. This type of imagination, as opposed to fantasy play, joyfully ponders (DeMause, 2015).

The use of physical force to harm others or property is known as violence. Others who physically experience violence may suffer from bodily pain, while others who see or endure violence may suffer from emotional discomfort. Violence affects people, families, communities, workplaces, schools, society, and the environment (Krug et al., 2016).

Three general categories can be used to classify violence: Self-directed violence is defined as violence in which the victim and the perpetrator are the same individual. The term "interpersonal violence" refers to violence that occurs between people; this category includes elder abuse, intimate partner violence, and child abuse. Collective violence, which can be classified as social, political, or economic violence, is violence perpetrated by states or by larger groups of people (Smihula & Daniel, 2015).

Physical harm and anguish inflicted by a specific individual are referred to as direct violence. Although it can also manifest as verbal and psychological abuse, the most evident forms of direct violence are beatings and killings in interpersonal settings. While indirect violence can be just as deadly as direct violence, it is far less noticeable. It is typically invisible because it is so ordinary and commonplace that it is unlikely to stand out, not because it is uncommon or concealed (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2015).

Intentional acts of violence that give a child the depressing impression that they are worthless, unloved, or undesirable are referred to as emotional or psychological violence. The deliberate use of physical force against a child that causes bodily injury to that child's health is known as physical violence (Zeanah & Humphreysunyan, 2018).

By posing questions and gathering relevant data, educators can help address the issue of student violence. Teachers may also witness acts of violence occurring without any children speaking up. Teachers should always take kids' infractions seriously and report them

according to the rules, but how can they carry out this duty if they lack knowledge on the matter (Poreddi et al., 2016)?

Educators' perspectives toward and confidence in implementing antiviolence programs differ greatly, according to studies, with educators' beliefs about violence having an impact on how quickly they intervene after a violent incident (López et al., 2022).

Due to its high prevalence—up to three out of ten students experience it—and the related consequences for both victims and offenders, school violence is a social issue that has been researched extensively throughout the world (López et al., 2022). At least 32% of children worldwide have experienced violence, according to UNICEF. The percentages, however, vary depending on the type of violence employed. There are more known causes of school violence (social, familial, school, parent-related, personal, etc.) than there are educators' opinions on the subject (UNESCO, 2119). Between the first and second half of 2015, there was a surge in violence against children, with the number of children in Iraq who were victims of serious violations more than five times increasing from 202 between January and June to 1,020 between July and December (Elsayed, 2020)

According to the researcher, the goal of the current study was to create a database regarding the issue of school violence among children and the role of educators in early detection and management of the problem.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

At governmental primary schools in Al-Basrah City, Iraq, a descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to examine teachers' perceptions and understanding of school violence. The study period was extended from October 31, 2023, to April 30, 2024. The data-gathering timeframe was extended from December 3, 2023, to March 18, 2024. Randomly (or systematically), the majority of primary school teachers (N = 350) comprise the sample. For the pilot study, thirty educators were excluded from the research.

Instruments

The researcher created a questionnaire to achieve the study's goals and obtained permission from the author

to use the English version by emailing the author. It consists of three parts. The educators' demographic information is presented in the first section, and the second section focuses on understanding school violence (15 items). Each question was evaluated as follows: 1 for know, 0 for not sure, and 0 for don't know.

This scale is categorized into Poor (0–5), Fair (5.1–10), and Good (10.1–15). The second part consists of perspectives about school violence (15 items). Each question was assessed as three items (Agree, Neutral, and Disagree) and scored as (3 for Agree, 2 for Neutral, and 1 for Disagree). This scale was categorized as follows: Negative (15 –25), Neutral (25.1 –35), and Positive (35.1 –45). The questionnaire takes roughly fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.

The Cronbach's alpha approach was used to assess the instrument's reliability for 30 items. A list of eight experts was used to determine the validity of the study instrument. The professionals had worked in their fields for at least ten years. A copy of the study instrument was provided to these specialists, who were asked to examine and test it for material clarity and suitability for examining the questionnaire's content.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and statistical inferential analysis were employed to determine the disparities

between the educators' demographic characteristics and their knowledge and viewpoints. Version 26.0 of the SPSS software was used to analyze the data.

Findings and Results

Most educators were female, 30-39 years old, with a bachelor's education level, 1-5 years of experience, and only 29.1% of educators reported that they had dealt previously with children exposed to violence at schools (Table 1).

The majority of educators had a fair level of understanding about school violence, as reported by 64.6% of them, and held high perspectives toward school violence, as reported by 88% of them (Table 2).

The experience and comprehension of educators were significantly correlated in dealing with children exposed to violence at the p-value.004, while no association was reported with educators' age, sex, level of education, and years of experience (Table 3).

A strong correlation was found between their years of experience and their perspectives (p-value = .031). However, no significant correlation was found between the perspectives of instructors and their age, sex, level of education, or experience dealing with children exposed to violence (Table 4).

Table 1

Study Sample Distribution by Socio-Demographic Factors

| No. | Characteristics | | F | % |
|-----|---|--------------|-----|------|
| 1 | Age (year)M±SD= 40.5±9 | 20 – 29 | 42 | 12 |
| | | 30 – 39 | 128 | 36.6 |
| | | 40 – 49 | 111 | 31.7 |
| | | 50 – 59 | 65 | 18.6 |
| | | 60 ≤ | 4 | 1.1 |
| | | Total | 350 | 100 |
| 2 | Sex | Male | 95 | 27.1 |
| | | Female | 225 | 72.9 |
| | | Total | 350 | 100 |
| 3 | Level of education | Diploma | 150 | 42.9 |
| | | Bachelor | 187 | 53.4 |
| | | Postgraduate | 13 | 3.7 |
| | | Total | 350 | 100 |
| 4 | Years of experienceM±SD= 14±9 | 1 – 5 | 85 | 24.3 |
| | | 6 – 10 | 84 | 24 |
| | | 11 – 15 | 54 | 15.4 |
| | | 16 – 20 | 42 | 12 |
| | | 21 ≤ | 85 | 24.3 |
| | | Total | 350 | 100 |
| 5 | Previously dealt with a child exposed to violence | No | 248 | 70.9 |
| | | Yes | 102 | 29.1 |

| | | | |
|--|-------|-----|-----|
| | Total | 350 | 100 |
|--|-------|-----|-----|

Table 2

Overall assessment of educators' understanding and perspectives about school violence

| Understanding | f | % | M | SD | Assessment |
|---------------|-----|------|-------|-------|------------|
| Poor | 22 | 6.3 | 9.40 | 2.548 | Fair |
| Fair | 226 | 64.6 | | | |
| Good | 102 | 29.1 | | | |
| Total | 350 | 100 | | | |
| Perspectives | f | % | M | SD | Assessment |
| Negative | 2 | .6 | 39.69 | 3.754 | Positive |
| Neutral | 40 | 11.4 | | | |
| Positive | 308 | 88 | | | |
| Total | 350 | 100 | | | |

Table 3

Significant association between educators' understanding and their sociodemographic characteristics

| Variables | | Understanding | | | | Significant Association |
|--|--------------|---------------|-------|------|-------|-------------------------|
| | | Poor | Faire | Good | Total | |
| Age (year) | 20 – 29 | 3 | 29 | 10 | 42 | r = .049 |
| | 30 – 39 | 8 | 86 | 34 | 128 | P-value= .357 |
| | 40 – 49 | 6 | 70 | 35 | 111 | Sig= N.S |
| | 50 – 59 | 5 | 38 | 22 | 65 | |
| | 60 ≤ | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 | |
| | Total | 22 | 226 | 102 | 350 | |
| Sex | Male | 5 | 56 | 34 | 95 | r= .056 |
| | Female | 17 | 170 | 68 | 255 | P-value= .296 |
| | Total | 22 | 226 | 102 | 350 | Sig= N.S |
| Level of education | Diploma | 8 | 97 | 45 | 150 | r = .045 |
| | Bachelor | 12 | 123 | 52 | 187 | P-value= .404 |
| | Postgraduate | 2 | 6 | 5 | 13 | Sig= N.S |
| | Total | 22 | 226 | 102 | 350 | |
| Years of experience | 1 – 5 | 7 | 49 | 29 | 85 | r = .094 |
| | 6 – 10 | 6 | 51 | 27 | 84 | P-value= .078 |
| | 11 – 15 | 2 | 40 | 12 | 54 | Sig= N.S |
| | 16 – 20 | 0 | 28 | 14 | 42 | |
| | 21 ≤ | 7 | 58 | 20 | 85 | |
| | Total | 22 | 226 | 102 | 350 | |
| Dealt with a child exposed to violence | No | 18 | 168 | 62 | 248 | r= .152 |
| | | | | | | P-value= .004 |
| | | | | | | Sig= H.S |

Table 4

Significant association among educators' perspectives and their sociodemographic characteristics

| Variables | | Perspectives | | | | Significant Association |
|--------------------|----------|--------------|---------|----------|-------|-------------------------|
| | | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Total | |
| Age (year) | 20 – 29 | 0 | 6 | 36 | 42 | r = .014 |
| | 30 – 39 | 2 | 12 | 114 | 128 | P-value= .792 |
| | 40 – 49 | 0 | 14 | 97 | 111 | Sig= N.S |
| | 50 – 59 | 0 | 8 | 57 | 65 | |
| | 60 ≤ | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | |
| | Total | 2 | 40 | 308 | 350 | |
| Sex | Male | 0 | 11 | 84 | 95 | r= .104 |
| | Female | 2 | 29 | 224 | 255 | P-value= .156 |
| | Total | 2 | | | | Sig= N.S |
| Level of education | Diploma | 1 | 40 | 308 | 350 | r = .083 |
| | Bachelor | 1 | 18 | 168 | 187 | P-value= .119 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|----|-----|-----|---------------|
| | Postgraduate | 0 | 3 | 10 | 13 | Sig= N.S |
| | Total | 2 | 40 | 308 | 350 | |
| Years of experience | 1 – 5 | 1 | 14 | 70 | 85 | r = .116 |
| | 6 – 10 | 0 | 6 | 78 | 84 | P-value= .031 |
| | 11 – 15 | 0 | 5 | 49 | 54 | Sig= S |
| | 16 – 20 | 0 | 6 | 36 | 42 | |
| | 21 ≤ | 1 | 9 | 75 | 85 | |
| | Total | 2 | 40 | 308 | 350 | |
| Dealt with a child exposed to violence | No | 2 | 29 | 217 | 248 | r= .048 |
| | | | | | | P-value= .370 |
| | | | | | | Sig= N.S |

Discussion and Conclusion

Some Socio-demographic data of educators can affect their management at school, especially their experience in dealing with children exposed to violence, in addition to enrolling in training sessions. For this reason, these factors were included in the current study to investigate their relationship with the educators' managers. The statistics showed that the highest percentage of educators fell between thirty and thirty-nine years, with a mean age of 40.5 Years ($M \pm SD$). This finding was supported by numerous studies, which reported that less than half of the participants were between thirty and forty years of age (Bachi & Kadhim, 2021; Kadhim et al., 2023; Nida et al., 2019). Regarding the gender of educators, the study revealed that more than half of the educators were female. This result is comparable to many studies that have shown a majority of educators to be females (Abd El-Aziz et al., 2018; Hussein et al., 2022; M. Mohammad et al., 2024; Mohammad, Al-Timary, et al., 2023; Zainel et al., 2022). Concerning participants at the educational level, the study revealed that more than half of the educators have a Bachelor's degree. This finding was approved by many studies (Abbas Alshammari, 2020; Dawood et al., 2023; Jassim et al., 2023; Mohammad, Jassim, et al., 2023), which claimed that just a tiny percentage of the sample held diplomas and master's degrees, while the majority held bachelor's degrees. Regarding the years of experience, the study documented that more than half of them have more than five years of experience. This finding was supported by several studies (Jabbar et al., 2023; M. A. Mohammad et al., 2024; Tiryag et al., 2022, 2023), which stated that the study sample had more than ten years of experience. Regarding the training courses about school violence, according to the current study's findings, the majority of teachers have not participated in training sessions. From

the researcher's point of view, participation in training sessions about school violence is limited due to the lack of continuing education sessions about school violence.

Educators' understanding is fundamental in recognizing indications of victimization and aiding students in reporting threats and disrupting the schools. Primary school teachers would be less able to shield a child from assault if they were unable to acquire the knowledge. The present finding reflected that most educators had a fair level of understanding about school violence; the statistical data demonstrated a fair level of expertise in 7 items and a good level of knowledge in item eight only. From the researcher's point of view, this result might be related to the fact that it may be attributed to a lack of educational programs for educators about child violence (Sela-Shayovitz, 2009).

Educators' perspectives about violence also affect the rate at which they will intervene following a violent occurrence, which is defined as a predisposition to behave in a non-deliberate manner, thereby maximizing the attitude-behavior relationship. The present findings reflect that educators hold positive perspectives toward school violence; the statistical demonstration shows positive perspectives toward school violence among all items except item 1, which indicates neutral perspectives. A Study by Mohammed and Khudairin in 2019, conducted in Iraq, to assess the level of educators' perception and attitudes toward child violence, revealed that they had a positive attitude toward child violence (Al-Amarei & Mohamedan, 2020). This finding disagreed with a 2022 study by Abdulrazaq and Al-Rubaie, which was conducted in Iraq to assess the perspectives of primary school educators toward school violence. Their findings revealed negative perspectives toward school violence (Mohammed & Khudair, 2019).

The results of this study indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between sociodemographic information and educators'

understanding and perspectives, except for educators' understanding of dealing with children exposed to violence and educators' perspectives based on their years of experience. From the researcher's point of view, the current findings can be justified because the vast majority of educators did not participate in any training on child violence prevention, which may have influenced their understanding and perspectives on sociodemographic characteristics. This finding was approved by Elywy and others in 2020 and supported the current finding, of their study conducted in Iraq, to assess the knowledge of elementary school teachers regarding the detection and reporting of child abuse their finding mentioned that educators' understanding was not related to their demographic characteristics (Elywy et al., 2020). Another study by Zhang and others in 2015, conducted in China, reported that their research on child violence showed the findings were not significantly related to the understanding and perspectives of educators, including those with different genders, educational levels, teaching years, and urban and rural backgrounds (Zhang et al., 2015). Regarding educators' understanding of their experiences in dealing with children exposed to violence, a study by Hynniewta and a 2017 study conducted in India confirmed a strong positive association between educators who had attended training programs and their improved understanding (Hynniewta et al., 2017).

There was no statistically significant difference, according to the study's findings, and the majority of educators who took part had a fair understanding and positive outlook regarding school violence between educators' knowledge and perspectives with their sociodemographic data except educators' knowledge of with dealing child exposed to violence and educators' perspectives with their years of experience.

The study advises concentrating on raising awareness of school violence, making use of resources like posters that discuss the many forms, causes, and consequences of school violence.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

By the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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