

Threatening a teacher among adolescents in secondary schools

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32007/jfacmedbagdad.6311817.

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Control Contro

Abstract:

Background: Threatening teachers increases their stress and impairs their emotional well-being. There are many reasons for violence against teachers. Threatening someone is considered as physical aggression. Aggression is any behavior intended to harm another person who wishes to avoid such harm High rates of aggression were reported recently in Iraq, especially after wars.

Objectives: To estimate the prevalence of students' aggressive act and associated factors towards teachers in secondary schools in an under-privileged residential area in Baghdad.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was carried out in Al-Sadr city in Baghdad. A total of 720 adolescent secondary schools students from both genders were included in the study. They were selected by multistage random sampling. Their age ranged from 13-21 years. Data was collected from 1st of February 2019 to 30th of April 2019 through a self-administrated questionnaire (Aggression-Problem Behavior Frequency Scale).

Results: The mean age of participants was 16.2 ± 2.04 years. Of all participants, 84.3% were assessed to be aggressive. There was a significant difference between aggressive acts (threatening a teacher) and gender, school type, grades, history of absence from school, unemployed mother, and living with one parent (P=0.038, P=0.009, P<0.001,p= 0.02 and p=0.018,P<0.001, respectively). Among male students 10% reported that they threatened a teacher.

Conclusion: the prevalence of aggressive acts towards teachers in secondary schools in an underprivileged residential area in Baghdad was high. Threatening a teacher was dominant among male students, secondary schools, grades, students with history of absence from school, unemployed mother, and living with one parent.

Keywords: Teacher, threatening, students, violence, Iraq.

Introduction:

Threatening teachers increases their stress and impairs their emotional well-being (1). Some studies have shown that student misconduct increases teachers' attrition rates (2). Studies on the effect of stress regarding teaching profession show that it grows with the increase of students' indiscipline in the classroom and can lead to a burnout (3)

There are many reasons for violence against teachers. There are communication errors and conceptual differences in applying the rules that emphasize corporal punishment rather than persuasive punishment. Also, it is related to a parent

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****Dept. of Family and Community Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Baghdad Jawadkadhim.aldiwan376@gmail.com complaint that expresses parents' confidence in the education their child received in school is getting weaker. A teacher's competency is the main thing in his/her teaching base.(4) Violence in schools can be defined as a pattern of aggressive behaviors, which include physical and psychological harm of peers or teachers or the destruction of schools property (5). Threatening someone is considered as a physical aggression.(6) Aggression is any behavior intended to harm another person who wishes to avoid such harm (7). Aggression in the preschool years is a powerful predictor of continuing adolescent aggressive behavior, delinquent behavior, contact with agencies known to deal with delinquents, and suspension from school.(8) Bad parent-child relationships and/or parenting styles that are cruel, forced and inconsistent are related to poor outcomes in children. Parental irritability and depressive symptoms are associated with more adverse interactions with adolescents, leading to abnormalities in emotional, social, and cognitive development.(9)

In adolescence, peer group is a major source of influence over adolescents' attitudes and behaviors.

J Fac Med Baghdad 2021; Vol.63, No.1 Received: Jan. 2021 Accepted: Feb., 2021 Published: May, 2021

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Some studies have shown that students, whose friends engage in negative activities such as drug abuse, dropping out of school and having a lower academic performance, may engage in aggressive activities toward teachers and/or other students. (10).

High rates of aggression were reported recently in Iraq (11-13), especially following wars, with the determinants being massive internal displacement, poor housing conditions, poor environments, increased poverty and mental problems such as depression, which led to a significant spread of violence.(11-13, 14) Students' aggression is an underestimated health problem which is increasing in Iraq, as the health system still employs classical school health strategies, similar to other developing countries. Increasing aggression accompanies skipping school, children labour and child soldiers. (15) Bullying is an aggressive behavior that includes unwanted negative actions. (11) Victims of bullying experience the most serious consequences and are more likely to develop mental health and behavior problems. A high level of bullying can be observed in the low socio-economic area. (11, 12) There is a positive correlation between bullying and crime rate in society. (12) There are very few studies concerning adolescent's aggression in Iraq, (11, 12) which seems to be an increasing but neglected health problem in Iraq due to conflicts. Aggressive acts during childhood is a major concern because of the longterm negative developmental outcomes associated with delinquency. (16) One of the recently raised issues is the role of the media and of parents' aggressive behavior (17). Both appear to have an impact on academic achievement and associated with a wide range of social problems (bullying, substance abuse, crime) (14) and are considered as a risk factors for future delinquency (16). The results of the study will determine the prevalence of students' aggressive acts towards teachers and demonstrate the factors associated with aggression among secondary school students.

Subjects and Methods:

This is a cross sectional, descriptive study, conducted in Al-Sadr city, Al-Rusafa side of Baghdad. Al-Sadr city is one of the most densely packed communities in the Middle East (18). The target population is students (males and females) between the ages of 13 - 21 year attending governmental secondary schools, who are resident in Al-Sadr city. Students who were eligible to participate in the study, were from intermediate schools (1st, 2nd, 3rd grades) and secondary schools (4th, 5th, 6th) in Al-Sadr city.

Exclusion criteria: The internally displaced students. The required sample size for this study was calculated by using the standard equation for calculation of sample size of cross-sectional studies.(19)

$$n = \frac{(Z_{1-\alpha/2})^2 P(1-P)}{d^2}$$

Where:

- n is the sample size.

- Z $1-\alpha/2$ is the standard deviation at a confidence level 95% which is 1.96.

- P is the estimated percentage of probability for the event to be measured. According to study conducted in Iraq P=0.3.(13)

The sample size was calculated by applying the following assumption:

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 0.3(1-0.3)}{0.05^2} = \frac{(3.84)(0.3)(0.7)}{0.0025} = 323$$

The minimally needed sample expected to be of 323 students. By using deff=2(20) to increase the precision of the study, then added 10% of the calculated sample size to compensate the non-response(20); the sample size became 711 which was approximated for 720 students.

The sample was selected by multistage random sampling method:

<u>1st STAGE</u>: There are 80 sectors in Al-Sadr city. Eight sectors were selected randomly and they include 25 schools; 13 intermediate (6 for males and 7 for females) and 12 secondary (6 for males and 6 for females).

<u>2nd STAGE</u>: Eight schools from these 8 sectors were selected randomly

<u>3rd STAGE</u>: Two classes from each grade/school were chosen randomly.

<u>4th STAGE:</u> Finally, 15 students were selected randomly from each class.

The total selected sample size was 720 students.

The selected students were asked to fill a selfadministrated questionnaire. They were informed that they are in research to study the prevalence of aggression with explaining the aim of the study. Explaining the questions to the students was done in details by the investigator. During filling the questionnaire paper, the investigator was there to answer any question.

The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used for both data entry and statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was expressed in (figures, tables), and the Chi square tests was used for analyzing data and independent sample t-test to define the significance of the difference of mean age between students. P value ≤ 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

The instruments: A self-administrated questionnaire which includes two parts:

1. The socio-demographic information about age, sex, type of school, grade of student, and (education, occupation, and status of parents).

2. A scale to measure aggression (Aggression— Problem Behavior Frequency Scale).(6) It was taken from a Compendium of Assessment Tools – Second edition of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for measuring violence-related attitudes, behaviors, and influences among youths. These are intended for use with youths between the age of 11 and 24 years, (CDC).(6)

The Aggression—Problem Behavior Frequency Scale was translated to Arabic form by experts, then the Arabic version was back translated to English by other experts. Validity was tested by experts in community medicine.

The scale consisted of 18 items with three subscales measuring:

- a. Physical aggression
- b. Nonphysical aggression
- c. Relational aggression

Ethical consideration:

1. The approval of scientific board of community medicine –ethical committee was obtained prior to the start of the study.

2. The official agreement was obtained from the Research Ethical Committee in Ministry of Health – Iraq.

3. The official permission was obtained from Directorate of Education of Al-Rusafa Al-Thalitha.

4. The collected data was kept confidential and not be divulging except for the study purpose.

5. A written consent was taken from the participants, school administration, and parents of participating in this study.

A pilot study was carried out on 72 students (10% of sample size)(21) to assess the applicability of questionnaire and the time needed, in addition to identifying any obstacle that may face the investigator and any difficulty in understanding the questionnaire by the respondents. All students answered all the questions in questionnaire list. Those students in the pilot study were excluded from the main study.

Data collection was planned to take about four months, with two months for data analysis and draft.

Results:

The mean age of the participants was 16.2 ± 2.04 years. There were 607 students (84.3%) who were rated as aggressive. The mean age of aggressive students was not significantly different from not aggressive students (P=0.08, P=0.168 respectively), Table 1.

Table 1: Mean age of aggressors and non-
aggressors in the study group:

Aggression		No.	%	Age	Р
				(Mean ∓SD)	value
Aggressive		607	84.3	16.1∓2.1	0.08
Not aggressive		113	15.7	16.5∓1.06	
Threatened	Yes	57	7.9	16.54∓1.862	0.168
to hurt a	No	663	92.1	16.16∓2.056	
teacher					

Figure 1 shows the distribution of aggression types (physical, non-physical, and relational).

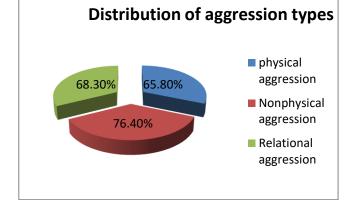


Figure 1: Distribution of aggression types among the studied adolescents

Table 2 shows a significant association between aggressive acts (threatening a teacher within the past month) and student's gender (P=0.038).

The percentage among males (10%) was higher than that among females (5.8%).

Significant associations were also found between aggressive acts (threatening a teacher) and (school type, 4 grade / class, and history of absence from school) (P=0.009, P<0.001, and P= 0.02, respectively), table 2. More than 10% of secondary school students, 20% of 4th grade students, and 11.8% of students with a history of absence from school revealed that they threatened a teacher during a period of one month, table 2.

Table	2:	Distribution	of	threatening	to hur	t a
teache	r ar	nong students	s by	their gender	and sch	ool
related	l va	riables				

Variables		Thre	Threatening a teacher			P value
		No	No		Yes	
		No	%	No	%	-
Gender	Male	32 4	90. 0	36	10. 0	
	Female	33 9	94. 2	21	5.8	
Grade / Class	First	11 6	96. 7	4	3.3	0.00 1
	Second	11 3	94. 2	7	5.8	_
	Third	11 2	93. 3	8	6.7	_
	Fourth	96	80. 0	24	20. 0	
	Fifth	11 4	95. 0	6	5.0	-
	Sixth	11 2	93. 3	8	6.7	-
School Type	Intermediat e	34 1	94. 7	19	5.3	0.00 9
	Secondary	32 2	89. 4	38	10. 6	-
History of	Yes	25 4	88. 2	34	11. 8	0.02
absence from school	No	40 9	94. 7	23	5.3	-
	Success	32 0	91. 2	31	8.8	0.37

Mean academi c score	Failure	34 3	93. 0	26	7.0	
Total		66	92.	57	7.9	

A significant association was found between aggressive acts (threatening a teacher) and (mother's unemployment as well as living with one parent) (P=0.018, P<0.001 respectively), table 3.

Variables		Threaten	Threatening a teacher				
		No		Yes			
		No.	%	No.	%		
Educational	Primary or less	150	89.8	17	10.2	0.085	
level of father	Intermediate	195	90.3	21	9.7		
	Secondary	126	97.7	3	2.3		
	College/Institute	154	91.7	14	8.3		
	University	38	95.0	2	5.0		
Educational	Primary or less	251	92.3	21	7.7	0.877	
level of mother	Intermediate	220	92.1	19	7.9		
	Secondary	87	89.7	10	10.3		
	College/Institute	91	93.8	6	6.2		
	University	14	93.3	1	6.7		
Father's	employed	547	92.6	44	7.4	0.11	
employment	not employed	116	89.9	13	10.1		
Mother's employment	employed	105	97.2	3	2.8	0.018	
	not employed	498	90.2	54	9.8		
Living With	Both parents	585	93.8	39	6.3	< 0.001	
	One parent	52	77.6	15	22.4		
	None of parents	26	89.7	3	10.3		

Discussion:

The observed aggression rate was 84.3%. It is significantly higher than that reported recently in Baghdad-Iraq (24.3%, 30%).(12, 13) The difference between both rates can be explained by the difference in the samples, the tools used to measure aggression, and the residential area studied. The reported figure (12) was the prevalence of bullying in school located in Al- Karkh (western side of Baghdad), whereas our sample was taken from the eastern side of Baghdad, which is a crowded low socioeconomic region that enhance aggression among children.(11). Al-Sadr city is one of the most densely packed community in Middle East and exposed to violence and conflicts since 2003.(18) The rate of perceived aggression (84.4%) is much higher than that recorded in other Arab countries (Jordan 46.6% (22), UAE 43.2% (23), and Egypt 23.7% (24)). The difference can be due to the constant exposure to violence expressed by coups, wars and civil wars. Exposure to violence is a determinant of aggression. (25) Wars in developing countries have heavy human, economic, and social costs and mental issues like post-traumatic stress disorders (26), the observed rate (84.3%) was higher than that of developed countries (27) probably due to the implementation of aggression prevention programs in developed countries which may contribute to this difference. (28) The mean age of the aggressive students was 16.1 ± 2.1 , which is not significantly different from the mean age of nonaggressors (p = 0.08). This result was similar to other studies in Baghdad (13) and Egypt. (24) It is inconsistent with that conducted in India (29) where aggression was significantly associated with adolescence. These differences may be due to the high prevalence of aggression and the limited age range (adolescents) in our study. There were 550

(76.4%) non-physically aggressive students, 492 (68.3%) relationally aggressive students and 474 (65.8%) physically aggressive students. This finding is in agreement with that reported in Croatia.(30) Threatening to hurt a teacher is considered as a physical aggressive act (6); the finding that 65.8% of adolescents were engaged in physically aggressive acts is higher than that reported in Lebanon (45.9%) (31), Jordon (46.6%) (22), Oman (41.6%)(32), and UAE (43.2%) (23). the difference might be attributed to the prolonged heavy exposure to violence over the past decades. Prevalence rates of physical violence and other forms of interpersonal violence in low and middle income countries particularly those experiencing social and political unrest remain elevated and, in some instances, are increasing.(13) In Jordan, physical aggression was found to be dominant among aggressive students.(33) It was found that 10% of male students threatened a teacher during one month. This result is consistent with a study done in Taiwan reporting that the prevalence of violence against teachers differs by student's gender. (34) Males showed higher aggression rates than females, similar to other studies from Iraq (13), and Egypt (24), and in agreement with reports from US.(35) This may be attributed to biological factors (36) and/or the difference in exposure to violence.(35) More than 10% of secondary school students, 20% of 4th grade students, and 11.8% of students with a history of absence from school revealed that they threatened a teacher during a period of one month.This result is consistent with a study done in Taiwan which suggested that violence against teachers is significantly affected by grade, and school type.(34) Aggressive act rate among intermediate school students was convergent, while it was declined

with grade among secondary school students (high aggression rate among 4th grade and low among 5th and 6th grades). This might be explained by the fact that resilience rises with education and age or it might be due to more involvement of students in the homework and examinations to pass this stage to higher education, therefore, they were less engaged in trouble. On the other hand, a study in US documented that aggression increased with grade in secondary school. (37) The high aggression rate in the city might mask this phenomenon or it might be due to difference in cultures. History of absence from school was significantly associated with aggression, and is consistent with that previously reported in Iraq.(10) It was noticed that violence significantly affects the academic outcome in the Arab world (38). Children of unemployed mothers reported that 9.8% of them threatened a teacher during one month, which is contradicted by a study from India where aggression increased among children of employed mother (29). A survey conducted in the USA reported that parents' occupation significantly affected aggression among children.(39) It was shown that aggression among adolescents living in intact families was significantly lower than that of adolescents living among broken families. Intact family (father and mother) is important to have better physical, emotional, academic well-being, raising, and enhance resilience (40). This result is in agreement with that reported in Egypt (24).

Conclusion:

A high prevalence of aggression among students was found. Threatening a teacher was dominant among male students, secondary schools, 4th grade, and students with a history of absence from school, unemployed mothers, and living with one parent.

Authors' contributions:

Dr. Tuka Y. Hassan: Study conception, study design, data analysis, interpretation of data, drafting of manuscript.

Dr. Basma M. Ali: Co-advisor, support Dr. Tuka Younis Hassan in writing introduction and discussion.

Dr. Saeb J. Al-Shuwaili: Support Dr. Tuka Younis Hassan in interpretation of data, drafting of manuscript and performed analytic calculations Jawad K. Al-Diwan: Academic supervisor

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تهديد المعلم بين المراهقين في المدارس الثانوية

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الخلفية؛ يؤدي تهديد المعلمين إلى زيادة الضغط العصبي على المعلم والتأثير على شعوره بالإرتياح. هناك أسباب كثيرة للعنف ضد المعلمين. يعتبر تهديد اي شخص عدوانًا جسديًا و العدوان هو أي سلوك يهدف إلى إيذاء شخص آخر ير غب في تجنب مثل هذا الأذى. تم الإبلاغ عن معدلات عالية من العدوان مؤخرًا في العراق ، خاصة بعد الحروب.

ا**لأهداف**: تقديرُ مدى انتشارُ والعوامل التي تؤدي الى تصرفات الطلاب العدوانية تجاه المعلمين بين المدارس الثانوية في منطقة غير مخدومة إجتماعيا في بغداد.

المُنهجية: أجريت دراسة مقطعية في مدينة الصدر في بغداد. تم تضمين ما مجموعه 720 من طلاب المدارس الثانوية المراهقين من كلا الجنسين في الدراسة. تم اختيار هم بأخذ عينات عشوائية متعددة المراحل. تراوحت أعمار هم بين 13-21 سنة. تم جمع البيانات من 1 فبراير 2019 إلى 30 أبريل 2019 من خلال استبيان يتم ذاتيًا (مقياس تردد سلوك العدوان والمشكلة).

ا**لنتائج**: كان متوسط عمر المشاركين 16.2 ± 2.04 سنة. من بين جميع المشاركين تم تقييم 84.3٪ على أنهم عدوانيون. كانت هناك دلالة احصائية بين الفعل العدواني (تهديد المعلم) والجنس ونوع المدرسة والصف و الغياب عن المدرسة والأم غير العاملة والعيش مع احد الابوين (9.038 P = 0.038 0.009، 0.0001، p = 0.018، p = 0.018, p = 0.018, على التوالي). وقد بين 10٪ من الطلاب الذكور أنهم يهددون المعلم.

الاستنتاج: كان انتشار الأعمال العدوانية تجاه المعلمين في المدارس الثانويَّة في منطقة سكنية محرومة في بغداد مرتفعاً. كان تهديد المعلم هو السائد بين الطلاب الذكور والمدارس الثانوية والصف والطلاب الذين لديهم غياب عن المدرسة والأم غير العاملة والذين يعيشون مع أحد الابوين. ا**لكلمات المفتاحية:** معلم ، تهديد ، طلاب ، عنف ، العراق.