Deanship of Scientific Research

Peer Victimization among Young Children in Jordan and their Coping Strategies

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of self-perceived peer victimization among early elementary school children in Jordan. The study also aimed at finding out the school settings where most victimization acts occur, the characteristics of the perpetrators, and the coping strategies of the victimized children.

Methods: To achieve the study purposes, 242 students from first, second, and third grades were included in this study. For data collection purposes, an 18-item questionnaire was constructed to measure the prevalence of physical, verbal, and psychological victimization amongst the study participants. Collected data was then analyzed quantitatively using frequencies and percentages.

Results: Results of the current study revealed that high percentages of students reported being cursed, hit, threatened, and prevented from playing with others. Psychological victimization was the most prevalent form (53.1%) followed by physical victimization (49.3 %) and verbal victimization (37.26 %). Furthermore, this study found that the classroom and the school yard are potential victimization settings, most forms of victimization were performed by boys of the same age group of the victims, and most victimized participants responded by complaining to their teachers or by doing nothing.

Recommendations: In light of the findings, the study recommended that schools should adopt research-evident strategies and programs of victimization prevention in addition to conducting further research related to the topic of the study.

Keywords: Peer victimization, bullying, antisocial behaviors, coping strategies.

مدى انتشار إيذاء الأقران بين الأطفال الصغار في الأردن واستراتيجيات تكيفهم

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ملخّص

الأهداف: هدفت الدراسة لاستقصاء مدى انتشار إيذاء الأقران بين أطفال الصفوف الأولى في المدارس الابتدائية في الأردن حسب تصورهم. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى معرفة البيئات المدرسية التي غالبا ما تحدث فيها أفعال الإيذاء، وخصائص الجناة، واستراتيجيات التكيف لدى الأطفال الضحايا.

المنهجية: ولتحقيق أغراض الدراسة، تم تضمين عينة مكونة من (242) طالبا من الصفوف الأول والثاني والثالث في هذه الدراسة. ولغايات جمع البيانات، تم بناء استبانة مكونة من 18 فقرة لقياس مدى انتشار الإيذاء الجسدي واللفظي والنفسي بين المشاركين في الدراسة، ومن ثم تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها كميا باستخدام التكرارات والنسب المئوية.

النتائج: كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن نسبا عالية من الطلاب أفادوا بأنهم تعرضوا للشتم والضرب والتهديد والمنع من اللعب مع الآخرين. وكان الإيذاء النفسي هو الشكل الأكثر انتشارا (53.1%) يليه الإيذاء الجسدي (49.3 %) والإيذاء اللفظي (37.26 %). وبالإضافة لذلك، فقد أظهرت الدراسة أن الفصل الدراسي وساحة المدرسة هي أكثر الأماكن احتمالا لوقوع الإيذاء بين الأطفال في المدرسة، وأن معظم أشكال الإيذاء تم القيام بها من قبل أطفال ذكور بنفس المرحلة العمرية للضحايا. كما بينت النتائج أن معظم الضحايا المشاركين في الدراسة استجابوا بالشكوى إلى معلميهم أو بعدم القيام بأي أمر.

الخلاصة: خلصت الدراسة إلى انتشار أشكال مختلفة من الإيذاء بين الأطفال في المدارس، وأوصت بضرورة الاهتمام بموضوع الإيذاء بين الأقران دراسةً وتطبيقاً من خلال تبني استراتيجيات وبرامج مستندة للأدلة ونتائج البحثو للوقاية من الإيذاء، بالإضافة إلى إجراء المزيد من البحوث المرتبطة بموضوع الدراسة.

الكلمات الدالة: إيذاء الأقران، التنمر، السلوكيات الاجتماعية السلبية، استراتيجيات التكيف.

Introduction

The investigation of children's violent behavior continues to gain increased attention among researchers and educators since it is recognized as a persistent and serious phenomenon that can promote more severe antisocial behaviors in adulthood (Ttofi et al., 2012). Bullying and non-bullying types of peer aggression are considered as highly prevalent forms of violent behaviors that lead to victimization.

According to Olweus (1995), bullying is a vicious behavior executed by an individual or a group with the intention to harm a weak person. Furthermore, it has been defined as the forcing of others to perform acts that further the bully's private interests through the assertion of dominance and power (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). The dominators, also known as bully-perpetrators often feel defensible in their actions (Bullock, 2002). These children may exert power and control over peers to compensate for their sense of inferiority as suggested by the study of Almahsnih (2019).

Repetition, intent, and power imbalance between perpetrators and victims has long been identified as the underpinning criteria that define bulling and distinguish it from other forms of aggression (Olweus, 1995). According to Menesini and Salmivalli (2017), different factors may lead to the dominators' sense of power; namely physical power, group size of the perpetrators, and social class. Victims, on the other hand, were found to exhibit lower perceived social identity, lack of problem-solving skills, lower levels of parental and teachers' support, and poorer self-esteem (Cassidy, 2009).

From a different angle, none-bullying peer aggression refers to a general antisocial behavior that fluctuates in intentions and social functions. In an attempt to understand the distinction between aggression and bullying among school peers, Palacios and Berger (2016) examined the influence of normative beliefs of peer groups about aggression and bullying and social status correlates of both. They found that while bullying was negatively correlated with popularity and social preference, aggression was influenced by the normative beliefs that are associated with what is accepted and socially preferred among peer groups.

Despite the differences between the two terms in definition, bullying and none-bulling forms of victimization are equivalent with regard to the serious influence they have on victimized children. Different forms of peer victimization, such as emotional victimization and physical assault were found to be associated with trauma symptoms (Turner et al., 2011). Children who were victimized reported avoiding school attendance and disliking of school (Al-Bitar et al., 2013). According to Kumpulainen and Räsänen (2000), children who experienced victimization due to bullying in their early school life were more likely to develop deviant behaviors in the future than non-involved children. From a different angle, Yen et al. (2013) studied the association between bullying involvement and multiple dimensional symptoms of anxiety in 5537 adolescents. Yen et al. found that students who were subjected to verbal and relational bullying reported more severe anxiety symptoms than non-bullied subjects. Moreover, peer's victimization during childhood years was found to be a precursor for constant depression symptoms (Zwierzynska et al., 2013). Therefore, it must be acknowledged that all forms of violent behaviors pose a serious threat to schools and the communities if not prevented. The danger of victimization lies in the fact that it influences the victims psychologically and makes them feel miserable. These effects may persist during adulthood and maturity among those who had been victimized in their earlier life stages (Leadbeater et al., 2014).

Purpose of the Study

Peer victimization in the Arab countries is understudied in comparison to western countries (Kazarian & Ammar, 2013). Few research studies have been conducted to investigate victimization among school children within the context of Jordan (e.g., Al Ali et al., 2017; Al-Bitar et al., 2013; Almahasnih, 2019; Al-Omari et al., 2014; Shahrour et al., 2020). These studies, albeit informative, did not focus on children as young as the first three school grades as their samples included children from late elementary, middle, or secondary stages. Therefore, this study was carried out to explore the pervasiveness of victimization among young children. The study also aimed at finding out Jordanian children's coping strategies against peer victimization. The specific research queries are:

1.   To what extent bullying and none-bullying victimization prevails among early elementary school children in Jordan?
2.   Where do most forms of victimization occur within the early elementary school settings?

3.   What are the coping techniques of early elementary children who experience victimization?

4.   Who are the perpetrators as perceived by early elementary school children who experienced victimization?

Definition of Terms

Peer Victimization: the adopted definition of peer victimization in the current study focuses on direct personal exposure to threat or harm or even witnessing such incidents at school (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). It was operationally defined through a developed questionnaire that measures three types of victimization (i.e., Physical, verbal, and relational).

Bullying victimization: bullying victimization has been defined as children's exposure to repeated threat or harm (Nolin,1995). Therefore, children were only considered victimized due to bullying if they indicate that they have experienced any form of victimization repeatedly.

Literature Review

In general, research have shown that victimization manifests among children in different types and forms. For example, earlier attempts (e.g., Crick & Grotpeter, 1996) to study peer victimization have operationally defined the construct by both overt direct types like physical victimization and covert indirect types such as relational victimization. However, more recent literature (e.g., Bradshaw, 2015; Wang, 2009) examined four common types of victimization, namely verbal, physical, relational and cyber. Physical victimization takes an overt form, such as hitting, pushing, and biting. Verbal victimization, on the other hand, may include oral actions such as threatening, name calling, insulting, and ridiculing. Relational victimization is a type of psychological victimizations through which children may be prevented from playing or communicating with peers by force. Finally, cyber victimization represents a platform through which children can be victimized by somebody posting pictures or annoying messages about them.

Many international studies were conducted to examine the stretch of peer victimization among school children. For example, Jansen et al. (2012) examined the pervasiveness of bullying and victimization among 5–6-year-old children. They have utilized a national survey data of teacher and parent reports about 6379 students in Netherland and found that the majority of elementary school children were not involved in bullying nor in victimization. Only 8 % of their study sample were involved in physical victimization, 11 % were involved in verbal victimization and 9 % were involved in relational victimization. Furthermore, Jansen et al. found that while relational bullying and victimization was common among girls, all other forms of bullying and victimization were more prevalent among boys than girls.

In a different context, Panayiotis et al. (2010), examined the prevalence rates of bullying and victimization among Cyprus children at the elementary and high school and found that 88.7% of the children who participated in their study were not involved in victimization and that only a conservative percentage of Cypriot children were. Panayiotis et al. found out that boys were significantly more involved in bullying than girls.

Another study conducted by Wolke et al. (2001) compared the victimization and bullying rates among 6- and 8- year-old school children between south Germany and south England. They found that students in both countries experienced similar common forms of victimization, such as name calling and being beaten or hit. However, they also found some differences in the prevalence rates of some forms of victimization and bullying. For example, they found that children in England experienced more lies spread about them than German children who in turn reported being called nasty names more often than children in England. In addition, children in England experienced a higher rate of victimization than children in Germany.

In the US, it was found by a national scale study carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1993 that 12 % of the 6th through 12th grade students surveyed stated having been personally victimized at school, 8 % of which reported experiencing physical attack and 4% reported experiencing a repeated form of harm or threat indicating bullying incidents (Nolin, 1995). Yet, the rate of victimization among school children in the US schools has declined over the years (Finkelhor, 2014) suggesting that the trend of bullying can be decreased when deliberate efforts are taken to tackle this issue at the schools.

International studies have shown that the estimates of victimization fluctuate among countries and age groups. For example, in a wide scale study to examine the prevalence of victimization in the six World Health Organization (WHO) regions, Biswas et al. (2020) found that the prevalence rate of victimization varied among the countries studied. The highest prevalence rate was observed in the Eastern Mediterranean Region followed by the African region, and the lowest was observed in Europe. Since victimization rates varied among different countries as reported by earlier studies, this study was carried out to examine the prevalence of victimization in the local context of early elementary schools in Jordan.

The rate of victimization also varies among different age groups of students. In a study conducted by Lebrun-Harris et al. (2019), it was found that while 22.7% of US children and teenagers were victimized due to bullying, victimization was more common among 6–11-year-old children than among 12–17-year-old children. Other research studies (e.g., Fleming & Jacobsen, 2009; Genta et al., 1996) reported that victimization declined in older students.

Interest in exploring peer victimization among school children is growing in the context of Jordan. In 2009, Fleming and Jacobsen examined the pervasiveness of bully victimization among children in middle schools of 19 countries. Fleming and Jacobsen found that the rate of victimization among Jordanian middle school students was the highest among the middle Eastern countries studied. Likewise, Al-Bitar et al. (2013) reported a high prevalence rate of victimization due to bullying among sixth grade students in Jordan. Other studies were performed to examine the phenomenon of victimization in Jordan. Yet, as mentioned earlier, there is a scarcity of research about the prevalence of peer victimization among young children. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the prevalence of three types of peer victimization, namely; physical, verbal, and psychological among early elementary school children.

From a different angle, research studies found that students vary with regard to their coping strategies against victimization. Some of these strategies are considered adaptive and are claimed to improve students' well-being while others are maladaptive and may extend the psychological effects on students. For example, college-age students who experienced a history of victimization relied on avoidant coping strategies more than those who did not face victimization in their adolescence (Newman et al., 2011). Avoidant coping was considered maladaptive since it prolonged the feelings of stress among students (Newman et al., 2011).

On the other hand, Xie et al. (2020) studied the coping strategies among Chinese children against bullying. They found that children use three coping strategies to respond to bullying. These are: seeking social help and support, avoidance, and self-defense. Seeking the help of external support was found to be associated with lower levels of depression. Xie et al. (2020) pointed out that self-defense coping strategy becomes more effective in minimizing the effects of bullying with increased bullying victimization.

Many other research studies have explored the coping strategies of school students who face victimization (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). These studies have important implications for school-based programs that intend to lessen the effects of peer victimization. Therefore, the current study examined the coping strategy of early elementary school children in response to victimization.

Methodology

This study followed the quantitative methodology approach to examine self-perceptions of elementary school children toward peer victimization in schools in Jordan. The quantitative approach was chosen since the study is exploratory in nature and data were collected though questionnaires developed to achieve the purpose of this study.

Data Collection Process

To answer the research questions set forth for this study, a questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was carefully considered as a viable data collection method because it elicits students' short answers whereas interviewing children may evoke painful memories and make them feel uncomfortable.

Since study participants were young children in the first, second, and third grades, data collection process was facilitated through a team of 25 female college students who were trained by the researchers to record the responses communicated to them by the child. The process of data collection took three weeks.

A general letter was sent to parents informing them about the study purpose and pointing out that participating in the study is voluntary and that students' identifying data will be kept confidential. Parents were also asked to communicate with the teachers in case they do not want their child to participate in the study. The participating children were told to visit the research team in the library at any time during the day after receiving the teacher's permission or go within a break. Participants were informed that all the questions will be about their school experience and the following introduction was read and explained to them:

We aim in our research to make the school more pleasant for students. Therefore, we need your help in telling us some information about your daily experience at school by answering some questions. Your cooperation is voluntary; do you like to contribute? We are thankful for your help. The school generally is a nice place but sometimes unpleasant and annoying behaviors occur. Please tell me about the annoying behaviors that happen to you in school. What do you do in such cases?

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire developed by the research team collected information about each student's gender, age, and grade. It also contained 18 items that measured the prevalence of three types of peer victimization and bullying. These types were: verbal (measured through 6 items), physical (measured through 6 items), and psychological (measured through 6 items). The questionnaire was a three-level Likert-scale ranging from "never occurred," to "occurred once," and "occurred more than once." The respective scores for each quality ranged from (1-3). A Cronbach's Alpha of (.78) was found which is considered as an adequate reliability estimate.

When students indicated that the form of victimization measured by a certain item occurred at least once, they were asked to respond to three other questions about each form of victimization. In the first question, students were asked about where each form of victimization happened by asking them to choose from a list that accommodates the majority of the potential locations (i.e., classroom, hallway, school yard, or bathroom). In the second question, students were asked to define their coping strategy to the victimization incident by selecting from these choices (seeking help by complaining to the parents or the teacher, emotional coping by telling a friend or crying alone; avoidance coping by doing nothing, or doing the same).

In the third question, students were asked to identify the perpetrator by selecting from these choices (a girl older, a girl the same age as the respondent, a boy older, or a boy of the same age as the respondent child).

Study Participants

The sample for this study was a sample of convenience and consisted of 242 students in the first, second, and third grades from the public schools in Jordan. The sample was made available with the help of the volunteering students and the cooperation that was established with the classroom teachers, school administrators, and parents.

Out of the participating students, 49.6% were boys and 50.4% were girls. As to students' age, 12.4 % were 6 years old, 28.9% were 7 years old, 34.3 % were 8 years old, 22.3 were 9 years old and 2.1 were 10 years old. Thirty-one percent of the participating students were in the first grade, while 34.3% were in the second grade, and 34.7 % were in the third grade.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, the researchers utilized the SPSS package to calculate the descriptive statistics; mainly (frequency and percentages).

Results

Rates of Victimization among Early Elementary School Children

In order to answer the first research question, students were asked to indicate the frequency of experiencing different forms of physical, verbal, and psychological peer victimization. Table 1 presents the results of the first research question.

Table 1. Victimization Prevalence Rates

	Item	Happened only once %	Happened more than once %	Total victimization prevalence rate %
1. 1	Someone took your stuff without your permission	19.8	30.2	50
2. 2	Took your food without your permission	11.6	12.8	24.4
3. 3	Hit you	16.9	52.5	69.4
4. 4	Broke your stuff in purpose	19.4	16.1	35.5
5. 5	Stole your stuff	23.1	26.4	49.6
6. 6	Pushed you down	22.3	44.6	66.9
7.	Average physical victimization			49.3
8. 7	Cursed you	14.9	56.2	71.1
9. 8	Accused you of things you didn't do	19.0	21.1	40.1
10. 9	Threatened you	11.6	16.9	28.5
11. 10	Made fun of your name or your family name	15.3	16.5	31.8
12. 11	Made fun of your appearance or your clothes	12.4	11.2	23.6
13. 12	Mocked your way of talking	14.0	14.5	28.5
14.	Average verbal victimization			37.26
15. 13	Prevented you from playing with others	21.1	31.4	52.9
16. 14	Prevented others from talking to you	19.4	24.4	43.8
17. 15	Gazed you mockingly/sarcastically	14.5	14.5	28.9
18. 16	Spread out your secret	13.2	13.6	26.9
19. 17	You witnessed a student being beaten up	10.3	82.2	93
20. 18	You witnessed a student being mocked	13.6	59.5	73.1
21.	Average psychological victimization			53.1

As shown in table 1, all forms of peer victimization are prevalent to some extent among early elementary school children in Jordan. Psychological victimization is the highest prevalent form with an average rate of 53.1 %. For example, ninety-three % of all the respondents said that they have witnessed a student being beaten up, out of whom 82 % indicated they experienced this form of victimization more than once. Another form of the psychological victimization that children experienced is witnessing a student being mocked. Seventy three percent of the respondents agreed that they have experienced this form with around 60 % of them indicating that they experienced it more than once.

On the other hand, a high percentage of the students indicated that they experienced even more visible forms of peer victimization. The average prevalence rate of physical victimization was the second highest (49%). For example, 69% of

them reported that they experienced hitting and 70% experienced being pushed down. Results in Table 1 also show that considerable percentages of children experience different forms of physical victimization more than once indicating that students experienced bullying in specific.

Some verbal forms of peer victimization were also more prevalent than others. For example, 71% percent of all the respondents experienced being cursed and 56% of them indicated experiencing this form of victimization more than once.

School Settings Where Most Victimization Occur

Our purpose in the second research question was to explore where most forms of peer victimization occur within the school. Table 2 presents the results of this research question.

Table 2. School Settings Where Most Victimization Occur

		Item	Classroom %	Yard %	Bathroom %	Hallways %
22.	1	Someone took your stuff without your permission	81.8	15.7	1.6	0.82
23.	2	Took your food without your permission	45	55	00.00	00.00
24.	3	Hit you	43.45	52.97	0.59	2.97
25.	4	Broke your stuff in purpose	94.18	2.32	00.00	3.48
26.	5	Stole your stuff	89.16	9.16	00.00	1.66
27.	6	Pushed you down	22.22	56.79	1.23	19.75
28.	7	Cursed you	53.48	39.53	1.74	5.23
29.	8	Accused you of things you didn't do	76.28	19.58	3.09	1.03
30.	9	Threatened you	43.47	46.37	4.34	5.79
31.	10	Made fun of your name or your family name	75.32	22.07	00.00	2.59
32.	11	Made fun of your appearance or your clothes	61.40	35.08	1.75	1.75
33.	12	Mocked your way of talking	72.46	24.63	00.00	2.89
34.	13	Prevented you from playing with others	10.76	88.46	00.00	.76
35.	14	Prevented others from talking to you	56.60	40.56	00.00	2.83
36.	15	Gazed you mockingly/sarcastically	38.57	60	00.00	1.42
37.	16	Spread out your secret	72.30	21.53	00.00	6.15
38.	17	You witnessed a student being beaten up	28.31	67.69	.88	3.09
39.	18	You witnessed a student being mocked	36.11	60	1.11	2.77
40.		Average	55.60	39.85	.90	3.61

As can be seen from Table 2, most forms of peer victimization took place in both the classroom (55.60 %) and the yard (39.8 %). For example, of those who experienced being hit, 43 % indicated that this happened inside the classroom and 55% said it happened in the yard.

Furthermore, students who reported being hit by other students said that this happened mostly in the classroom (43%) and in the yard (52%). For those who experienced being cursed, 53 % of the students reported that this happened inside the classroom compared to around 40 % who experienced it in the yard and only 7% experienced it in other places.

Coping Strategies of Victimized Children

In this research question, we attempted to investigate how students react to or cope against peer victimization. We have asked students who experienced certain forms of victimization about their coping strategies. The results of the third research question are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Coping Strategies of Victimized Children

	Item	Complain to teachers	Complain to parents	Telling a friend	Did the same	Cried alone	Did nothing
41. 1	Someone took your stuff without your permission	63.63	11.57	.82	9.09	5.78	8.26
42. 2	Took your food without your permission	38.33	16.66	6.66	6.66	5	26.66
43. 3	Hit you	52.97	11.30	1.19	21.42	6.54	6.54
44. 4	Broke your stuff in purpose	58.13	9.30	1.16	19.76	2.32	9.30
45. 5	Stole your stuff	66.66	16.66	.83	4.16	5	6.66
46. 6	Pushed you down	41.97	9.25	1.23	28.39	6.17	12.96
47.	Average for physical victimization	53.61	12.45	1.98	14.91	5.13	11.73
48. 7	Cursed you	52.90	7.55	.58	22.67	3.48	12.79
49. 8	Accused you of things you didn't do	59.79	10.30	3.09	7.21	3.09	16.49
50. 9	Threatened you	30.88	26.47	1.47	19.11	5.88	16.17
51. 10	Made fun of your name or your family name	41.55	18.18	0	23.37	5.19	11.68
52. 11	Made fun of your appearance or your clothes	31.57	12.28	1.75	33.33	3.50	17.54
53. 12	Mocked your way of talking	49.27	13.04	1.44	14.49	8.69	13.04
54.	Average for verbal victimization	44.32	14.63	1.38	20.03	4.97	14.61
55. 13	Prevented you from playing with others	26.92	4.61	5.38	10.76	5.38	46.92
56. 14	Prevented others from talking to you	29.24	8.49	0	16.03	5.66	40.56
57. 15	Gazed you mockingly/sarcastically	22.85	10	4.28	28.57	7.14	27.14
58. 16	Spread out your secret	18.46	6.15	10.76	21.53	7.69	35.38
59. 17	You witnessed a student being beaten up	32.88	3.11	1.77	6.66	0.88	54.66
60. 18	You witnessed a student being mocked	21.11	2.77	3.33	5.55	1.11	66.11
61.	Average for psychological victimization	25.24	5.855	4.25	14.85	4.64	45.12
62.	Total average	41.06	10.98	2.54	16.59	4.9	23.82

The results presented in Table 3 show that many students sought help through complaining to their teachers. The average rate for using this coping strategy across the three types of victimization was (41.06 %). For example, around 64% of those who experienced someone taking their stuff without permission, 49 % of those who experienced being mocked for their way of talking, and around 53% of those who experienced being hit reported that they complained to their teachers and seek their help.

On the other hand, considerable percentages of students chose avoidance coping by doing nothing when they experienced victimization. The average rate for using these coping techniques came the second across all three types of victimization (23.82 %). Yet, it is worth noting that when students experienced psychological victimization in specific, they relied on avoidance coping more than on seeking the help of their classroom teacher. To further clarify this point, the average rate for using avoidance coping when children faced psychological victimization was 45.12% compared to 25.24 % of students who reported seeking the help of teachers when they faced the same victimization type.

Occasionally, early elementary school students in this study indicated that they did the same action to the child who

victimized them. Thirty three percent of the students who experienced somebody made fun of their appearance, and 28 % of those who experienced being pushed down and 21% of those who were hit by somebody chose to do the same to their peers as their responsive and coping strategy.

The Characteristics of the Perpetrators

The aim of this research questions was to find out who the perpetrators are as perceived by the early elementary school children. Children who experienced victimization were asked to indicate whether the perpetrator was a boy older, a boy of the same age as they are, a girl older or a girl of their same age. Results of the fourth research question are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of the Perpetrators

	Item	Boy older	Boy same age	Girl older	Girl same age
63. 1	Someone took your stuff without your permission	9.91	50.41	7.43	32.23
64. 2	Took your food without your permission	21.66	45	5	28.33
65. 3	Hit you	25.59	41.66	10.11	22.61
66. 4	Broke your stuff in purpose	6.97	58.13	3.48	31.39
67. 5	Stole your stuff	12.5	47.5	3.33	36.66
68. 6	Pushed you down	27.16	38.27	14.19	20.37
7	Cursed you	20.93	42.44	8.13	28.48
69. 8	Accused you of things you didn't do	10.30	49.48	1.03	39.17
70. 9	Threatened you	26.08	37.68	5.79	30.43
71. 10	Made fun of your name or your family name	6.49	54.54	1.29	37.66
72. 11	Made fun of your appearance or your clothes	8.77	52.63	14.03	24.56
73. 12	Mocked your way of talking	8.69	57.97	5.79	27.53
74. 13	Prevented you from playing with others	17.69	33.84	13.07	35.38
75. 14	Prevented others from talking to you	5.66	40.56	.94	52.83
76. 15	Gazed you mockingly/sarcastically	21.42	32.85	17.14	28.57
77. 16	Spread out your secret	3.07	44.61	3.07	49.23
78. 17	You witnessed a student being beaten up	43.11	27.11	16	13.77
79. 18	You witnessed a student being mocked	34.44	31.66	17.22	16.11
80.	Average rate	17.24	43.68	8.17	30.85

Results in table 4 show that for almost all forms of victimization, higher percentages of students who were victimized said that the perpetrator was a boy of their same age. The average rate was around 44 %. For example, 50% of the students who experienced somebody taking their stuff without their permission, said that the doer was a boy of their same age compared to 32% who indicated that the doer was a girl of their same age. For only three forms of victimization, a higher percentage of students reported that the doer was a girl of their same age compared to those who reported that the doer is a

boy of their same age. These forms are: someone prevented you from playing with others (around 35 %), someone prevented others from talking to you (around 53%), and someone spread out your secret (around 49%). A high percentage of students who reported witnessing a student being beaten up or mocked reported that these forms of victimization were performed by a boy older than they are.

Discussion

Discussion of First Research Question

The spread of victimization among school children is alarming because of the negative and lasting effects that victimization leaves on young children when they grow up. Results of this study have shown that substantial percentages of early elementary students in Jordan face many forms of psychological, physical, and verbal victimization. For example, early elementary school children reported being hit, pushed down, cursed and prevented from playing with peers.

Looking at this result contextually, we find that it comes in harmony with the results reported by previous studies conducted on older Jordanian children. For instance, Al-Bitar et al. (2013) reported a high rate of 47% of bullying victimization among 11–12-year-old children. Similar high percentages were reported by Fleming and Jacobsen (2009) who found a prevalence rate of 44.2% of peer victimization among Jordanian adolescents.

Psychological victimization through which students are subjected to social exclusion or witnessing harm was more prevalent than physical and verbal victimization among Jordanian elementary school children. Variations in the prevalence rates of verbal, physical, and relational or psychological victimization was documented in studies conducted in different countries. For example, the pervasiveness rate of verbal victimization was higher than physical and relational victimization in Turkey (Ates & Yagmurlu, 2010) whereas psycho-emotional victimization was more common than other forms among school students in Mexico (Sánchez-Pérez et al., 2021).

The variations in the total rates of peer victimization and its forms amongst studies may be attributed to the discrepancy in the adopted definition of the concept of victimization or to the different measures used (Panayiotis et al., 2010). From a different angle, findings of previous studies suggest that teachers perceive relational victimization and social exclusion as not as serious as verbal and physical victimization (Duy, 2013). Yet, it is worth noting that indirect victimization including psychological and relational types should not be underestimated since they were found to have a major impact on children's depressive cognitions (Sinclair et al., 2012).

When located within the scope of the results of international studies, the rate of victimization experienced by early elementary school children in Jordan seems to be higher than those reported by other studies conducted in Europe and the US (e.g., Fekkes et al., 2005; Jansen et al., 2012; Panayiotis et al., 2010). The high prevalence rate of almost all forms of victimization among early elementary school children in Jordan can be viewed as a continuation of the culture of violence that seems to be widespread in other Jordanian settings such as homes and neighborhoods. In 2007, UNICEF conducted a study about violence perpetrated against children aged (8 – 17) in Jordan and found that the majority of Jordanian children experience violence and victimization at homes, schools, and neighborhoods as most authority figures rely on it to discipline children. Most Jordanian children were found to be punished by school teachers and administrators and may become victims of verbal abuse by their parents, school teachers, administrators, and peers (Elayyan, 2007).

According to Unnever and Cornell (2003), a culture of bullying denotes the existence of shared beliefs within the school that sustain violent and bullying acts without intervention or interruption. Teachers and school administrators are key personnel to either stop or strengthen peer victimization. Unfortunately, not all teachers who are aware of the occurrence of such incidents among their students intervene to stop it. For example, Ates and Yagmurlu, (2010) found that only 60% of the Turkish teachers intervened when bullying incidents occurred in their classroom. Teachers also did not converse with the bullies about their behaviors when they witness active incidents of bullying (Fekkes et al., 2005). Elayyan (2007) found that teachers, administrators and other authority figures are the perpetrators of most violent acts children face in Jordan. This may suggest that teachers in Jordan not only are tolerant toward bullying and none-bullying victimization, but also do not intervene when it happens which may in turn empower the perpetrators to sustain their aggressive and bullying acts.

Discussion of Second and Third Research Question

The majority of victimization acts in this study occurred in the classroom and school yard where children are expected to be totally supervised and monitored by their class teachers. Similarly, previous studies (e.g., Fekkes, 2005; Genta et al., 1996) have also found that the classroom and the playground are potential places for victimization to occur.

From a different angle, the current study found that victimized children relied mostly on seeking their teacher's help to handle victimization. Seeking the help of an adult, such as teachers was common among victimized students in previous research studies (e.g., Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Tenenbaum et al., 2011). This coping strategy was especially preferable by students of lower grades than upper school grades (Cava et al., 2021; Kristensen & Smith, 2003). Calling upon social support from parents, teachers or friends is considered an adaptive coping strategy that lessen the adverse psychological effects on victimized students (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Ma et al., 2018; Spiekerman, et al. 2021).

Yet, it is worth noting that when students experienced psychological victimization in specific, they relied on avoidance coping more than on seeking the help of their classroom teacher. According to Tenenbaum et al. (2011, p266), avoidance coping involves "staying away from the stressor and escaping the threatening stimuli." Avoidance coping may help students succeed in escaping the immediate effects of the stressor, however may lead to increased and prolonged adverse psychological effects in the future (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004).

Discussion of Fourth Research Question

Another important finding of the current study highlights the characteristics of the perpetrators of victimization. The majority of early elementary students in this study reported that the perpetrator of the victimization acts is mostly a boy of their same age and to a lesser degree a girl of their same age. Likewise, other research studies (e.g., Craig & Pepler, 1998; Jaradat, 2017) have found that victimization acts are most likely committed by boys. In addition, this finding comes in harmony with results of other studies (e.g., Craig & Pepler, 1998; Genta et al.,1996) who found that victimization is perpetrated by children of equal or comparable age as the victims giving further evidence that it happens mostly inside the class and not outside the classroom.

Conclusion

The discussion of victimization has to come to the forefront of public discourse in Jordan to stop the long-lasting negative effects on children and to provide them with more positive learning experiences. Thus, there is an urgent need to gear national Jordanian efforts to develop intervention programs and school-wide training programs to diminish the effects of peer victimization. The focus of these efforts should be on raising the awareness of school teachers, administrators, and other staff members on the danger of both direct and indirect peer victimization on school children. Training programs that help school teachers identify and stop victimization acts are expected to reap great benefits. Schools can also take precaution measures that help decrease peer victimization within the different school settings. For instance, it was found that smaller number of students reported being victimized when schools hire staff to monitor hallways and other school settings (DeVoe, & Kaffenberger, 2005).

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that early elementary school children in Jordan require interventions that help them react and cope to victimization in more adaptive manners. Students should be trained on how to seek social support when they need it. Other adaptive coping mechanisms such as approach and problem-solving coping and emotion regulation mechanisms should be introduced to young children through developmentally appropriate activities. For example, Flanagan et al. (2013) suggest to integrate healthy and adaptive coping strategies in children's literature.

Since this study relied on a self-report instrument, the researchers suggest that future research overcome this limitation through combining report obtained through peer and teacher identification measures to validate prevalence data. It is also recommended that future research use qualitative research methodology to understand the coping strategies utilized by school children thoroughly.

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