



Evaluation of the factors associated with attitudes of primary school teachers on abuse of students in City of Dorud in year 1394

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was evaluating the factors related to attitudes of primary school teachers in first and second grade of public and private schools on abuse of students in City of Dorud in year 1394. The studied population was comprised of 350 teachers in elementary schools for girls and boys in first and second grades. The research samples were selected randomly and includes 160 teachers with minimum 1 year job experience. For data collection, a questionnaire was used that includes three sections of demographic questions, 20 questions on attitude, and 20 questions regarding factors related to attitudes on abuse. The collected data was analyzed using Pearson correlation, independent t-test, and analysis of variance. Our results showed that various factors such as unfavorable economic conditions, lack of school amenities, dissatisfaction with the administrative processes, and low income are among the most significant factors affecting the teachers' attitude on abuse of students.

Keywords: Attitude, Abuse, Teacher, Student

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important elements of teaching and learning is creating a healthy and appropriate learning environment. Mind and behavior of children and adolescents have remarkable changes in their development stage. Children prefer teachers who respect their personalities, encourage and support instead of punishment, teach well, motivate, and guide their aspirations to the appropriate targets in life. Child abuse is any type of behavior which results into injury to the child or threatening his/her comfort or health [1]. Abuse in the school includes a wide range of physical and psychological harassment behaviors that threaten the health of children and adolescents [2].

National Center for Child Abuse estimates the average age of victims is about 7 years old, while 53% of these victims are girls and 47% of them are boys. In 79% of the cases, children were abused by their parents, while 10% were victim of abuse by their relatives, 5% were abused by strangers, and 2% were abused by their stepfather or stepmother [1]. In addition, it has been studied that 37% of students in Tanzania were physically or verbally abused [3]. Furthermore, teachers in Morocco mentioned that they abused students, while 87% of students confirmed that they had physical abuse by ruler or stick [4].

Having weak and vague character, inability to trust or love and compassion of others, aggressive and illegal behaviors, rage and anger, masochistic behavior and thoughts that can lead them to suicide are some of effects of child abuse [5]. Therefore, this research was studied to investigate the factors associated with teachers' attitudes on abuse of primary school students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was a cross-correlation study and the research population was primary school teachers. The research participants were 160 school teachers randomly selected from teachers with minimum 1 year job experience in elementary schools for boys and girls. For data collection in this study, a questionnaire was used that includes three sections of demographic questions, 20 questions on attitude, and 20 questions regarding factors associated to attitudes on abuse. Grading in attitude section was according to Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree scored 20 to strongly agree scored 100. Grading in section of factors associated to attitude were also based on Likert scale ranging from very low scored 15 to very high scored 75. In order to determine the validity content of the questionnaire, it was revised following comments of 10 faculty members in the Department of Nursing and Midwifery. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated for 10 teachers from the research population who were not among the participants. The reliability of attitude questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha, which resulted to be 0.78, while the factors affecting attitudes resulted 0.80 in Cronbach's alpha assessment.

Data collection and statistical analysis methods

After explaining the objectives of the study, the questionnaires were distributed among the teachers during gym class and 160 questionnaires were collected from the participants. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including t-test and ANOVA were used to describe the questions.

RESULTS

In the questionnaire regarding factors associated to attitudes on abuse, the option "Teaching styles that prohibits punishment are not effective methods" achieved the highest average score with 4.47, while the option "School rules and regulations should not prevent punishment of students" received the lowest average score with 2.28. The questionnaire is provided in the supplementary materials. Furthermore, in the questionnaire used to evaluate the performance of students, the option "Sometimes I allow other students to abuse the offending student" achieved the highest average score of 4.09, and the option "Physical abuse is my first reaction to a student who hasn't worked on his/her homework" received the lowest average score of 2.40. In the questionnaire of factors associated to teachers' attitude and behavior, among the questions related to environmental factors, the question "How satisfied are you with the amenities available in the class, such as ventilation, lighting, etc?" achieved the highest score of 3.23, while the question "How satisfied are you with the quality of the resting area environment?" received the lowest score of 2.99. Also, among the questions related to financial factors affecting attitude and behavior of teachers, the question "How satisfied are you with your job facilities" had the highest score of 3.56 and question "How much was the school able to meet the expectations of teachers in providing educational facilities?" had the lowest score of 3.08. Lastly, among questions related to administrative factors, the question "Does the school principal supervise your performance?" with score of 3.80 was the highest score, while the question "How satisfied are you with conveying the problems to the school principal?" with score of 3.40 received the lowest score.

For evaluation of attitude and behavior of teachers regarding abuse on students, one-sample t-test was used. The standard average score in this test was 60 and the average score of attitude and behavior questionnaires were compared with this standard average and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation of teachers' attitudes to abuse of students

Variable	Average	Standard deviation	Standard average score	t	P
Attitude	71.58	5.62	60	14.77	0.001
Behavior	63.77	6.59	60	5.62	0.001

One-sample t-test showed that the average obtained from the attitude and behavior of teachers was higher as compared to average conditions with significant difference ($p=0.001$).

Table 2. The relationship between financial, environmental and administrative factors with the performance and attitude of teachers on abuse of students

Variable	Financial	
	R	P
Attitude	-0.451	0.001
	Physical and environmental	
	R	P
Attitude	-0.226	0.004
	Administration	
	R	P
Attitude	-0.1985	0.012

Spearman correlation test showed that there is an inverse relationship between attitude and behavior with financial status ($p=0.001$). The calculated r between physical-environmental factors and teachers' behavior (-0.328) and attitude (-0.226) were statistically significant ($p=0.001$ and $p<0.004$). Therefore, it can be concluded that by improving the physical and environmental factors associated with the school, the behavior of teachers toward abuse of students can be diminished. According to the results shown in Table 2, it can be observed that Pearson correlation r between administrative factors and behavior (-0.227) and attitude (-0.198) were statistically significant ($p=0.001$). Thus, it can be concluded that improvement of administrative personnel can decrease the behavior and attitude of teachers to implement abusive practices.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was evaluating the factors related to attitudes of primary teachers in first and second grade of public and private schools on abuse of students in City of Dorud in year 1394. The first finding of this study was that teachers' attitudes towards abuse of students and use of violent methods to correct the offensive behavior of students was more than average. This finding was consistent with previous studies conducted with Abrahams *et al.* (1992), Kenny (2004), and Teklu & Kumar (2015). Teachers in these studies also had a positive attitude toward coercive and punitive behavior in promoting their educational goals. On the other hand, other research studies such as Holden, Brown and Baldwin (2014), Joyce and Moncoco (2014)* showed that teachers did not have a positive attitude toward punishment and use of violence against students.

In this research, according to the responses of the questionnaire, participated teachers believed that coercive and punitive behavior can be the best and most effective decision in eradication of offensive behaviors in undisciplined or delinquent students. In teachers' response, the highest score (4.47) was belong to the question where teachers were opposed to teaching styles that prohibits punishment. In addition, the second highest score in this questionnaire that was evaluating teachers' attitude toward abuse on students was belong to a question mentioning that the lack of abuse in some schools results in highly poor academic performance. Furthermore, most of the participated teachers in this study believed that students' parents should have a positive attitude toward abuse of their undisciplined children in order to improve their academic achievement. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Hecker & Hermenau (2014) and Bazargan *et al.* (1383). However, this finding was against the findings of other studies conducted with Devries *et al.* (2013), and Ajowi & Omboto (2013).

The second finding of our study was that there was a significant negative correlation between the financial and physical-environmental factors and teachers' attitudes toward abuse of students. In a study by Moidfar & Zohani (1384) titled "Job dissatisfaction in teachers and associated factors" concluded that feeling deprived, unsatisfied needs, discrimination, and job prestige directly associated with job satisfaction, which significantly affects their performance. According to the finding of this study, it can be explained that if teachers do not have good financial conditions and their income are not sufficient for living costs, they cannot have the required mental focus to handle the problems at school including undisciplined and offensive students, school administrative, and deficiencies in school amenities. As a result, instead of using alternative scientific methods to handle these problems, they use the most available option of abuse and violence against students to cope with students' disruptive behavior. In addition to the effect of financial conditions on teachers' attitudes, environmental issues and constraints and negative administrative factors such as having poor relations with officials and school administrators is also an important factor in attitude and behavior of teachers.

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Smylie (1988), Somech & Drach-Zahavy (2000), Zombilas *et al.* (2004)*, Bogler (2001), Max & MacMillan (1999), and Fernet *et al.* (2012). For instance, Max & MacMillan (1999) concluded in their study that work environment such as adequate instructional material and equipment affect the job satisfaction in teachers. They believe that the level of motivation and focus to interact with their students is decreased in case of inadequate teaching aid materials, inappropriate school environment and classes and amenities. Furthermore, lack of school facilities and high academic expectations from school principals yield into conflicts in the teacher's behavior, which eventually result in lower performance efficiency.

According to these research studies, it can be mentioned that the major effective factor in the financial condition of teachers is their income. This means that wages can determine a person's level of economic development and increase the predictability about the future. Lastly, based on the findings of this study and the impact of economic factor on attitude and behavior of teachers regarding abuse on students, it is recommended to responsible managers in City of Dorud to consider teachers' financial problems and strategies to help their financial conditions. Moreover, in this study, the amenities available at the school to enrich the teaching and learning were not in the teachers' expected level and it is necessary to take into consideration to provide requested facilities. Since this study showed that primary school teachers were not satisfied with administration processes and considering the impact of

administrative personnel on the attitude of behavior of teachers, it is recommended to school principals to evaluate their management practices.

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