

Domestic Violence and its Effect on the Academic Performance of Students in Jordan

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the effect of domestic violence on the academic performance of students from the advisors' point of view, and also to know the effect of experience, gender, qualification of educational advisors and the students' financial level.

The sample of the study consisted of 90 educational advisors, 46 males and 44 females from Jordanian public schools in Amman, Irbid and Karak. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results.

Results showed that there are statistically significant differences in educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement, it also shows that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in their attitudes due to experience variable, and no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in their attitudes due to gender variable, there are a clear statistically significant differences in educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement due to their qualification and the students' financial level variables.

Key words: Educational Advisors, Domestic Violence, Academic Achievement

Introduction

The developmental growth of children and youth is affected by their exposure to domestic violence experience whether emotional, mental, and social damage. In fact, some children lose the ability to feel empathy for others. Others feel unable to make friends as easily due to social discomfort or confusion over what is acceptable, simply, they feel socially isolated. child welfare professionals need to understand overwhelming issues associated with domestic violence and know how to identify them as well as assess and provide treatment to children and youth affected by domestic violence and this must be done in order to respond to the overwhelming issues associated with domestic violence.

Domestic violence was named as a primary cause of homelessness in nine of the 25 cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2003 (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2003). These statistics were supported by subjective accounts from legal service providers and other advocates, suggesting that a disproportionate number of women who seek emergency shelter—often with their children—do so because they are fleeing immediate or very recent experiences of domestic violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). In fact, in some regions of the country, nearly one-third of all homeless children are homeless at least in part due to domestic abuse.(Wilder Research Center, 2004)

In fact, many barriers were faced by children and youth who flee violent homes with a parent survivor and who become homeless. Young people who flee violent homes are at heightened risk for emotional and behavioral problems.(Linda L. Baker et al., 2002) They may be more likely than their peers to experience or to participate in emotional or physical abuse themselves.(Linda L. Baker et al., 2002) These effects can have a pronounced impact on children's adjustment in school, including their ability to learn and their concentration levels.(Linda L. Baker et al., 2002)

Children exposed to domestic violence not only have more disciplinary problems at school, they perform considerably worse in math and reading than other students. They also have a negative effect on their classroom peers, resulting in decreased test scores and increased disciplinary problems according to a new study by economists Scott Carrell of the University of California–Davis and Mark Hoekstra of the University of Pittsburgh, published in the summer issue of *Education Next*.

Investigating the effects of domestic violence on high school students is a study of significance for several reasons. First, as educators, we are constantly pressured to enhance student achievement. This study would help educators better understand students with low achievement, and would in turn help them to better meet students' needs and raise student achievement. Educators would gain a deeper understanding of students who traditionally might have “fallen between the cracks” and could attempt to educate the whole child if we knew more about how certain factors affected achievement level. Also, if low student achievement is indeed a result of domestic violence, that would provide educators with a “symptom” to watch for, thus enabling the educator to better watch out for student welfare and to get families the help they need dealing with internal problems before it is too late. After reviewing the literature, the need for studying the effects of domestic violence on school students became especially apparent because as Foreman (1995) laments, few studies have been done on the effects of

domestic violence on student achievement; rather, the focus has been on studying the effects of domestic violence on student behavior. This dearth of research in the area still holds true more than a decade later.

Significance of the Study

In most homes where there is domestic violence, and children are living there. ‘Research on children who witness family violence is a special case of counting the hard-to-count and measuring the hard-to-measure...’ (Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriana, Atkins & Marcus, 1997; p.121), so, to be definitive about the number of families affected is impossible. However, several studies have found that children were present and children were also abused during the violent incident in about 50% of those cases in 85-90% of the time when a violent incident took place in a domestic situation (Fleischer, 2000).

In western culture as well as eastern culture, childhood is regarded as a period of special protection and rights. In order to have a perfect children’s development it has to be happened within a secure and nurturing environment.

All the normal tasks of growing up are likely to be adversely affected when the environment is infected by violence and fear. For example, ‘regressive’ symptoms such as delayed language development, increased bedwetting and more anxiety over separation from parents can be resulted by exposure to violence (Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

These symptoms may affect children’s ability to concentrate in school or to learn to get along with other children.

Evidence has shown how strongly the experience of violence is associated with adverse outcomes for children’s development and this evidence has been shown by a widespread survey of the research (Zeanah, Danis, Hirshberg, Benoit, Miller & Heller, 1999; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). The strongest risk factor for behavioral problems was found to be marital conflict (Marshall & Watt, 1999). Marital conflict was extensively connected with externalizing and internalizing behaviors and social, attention and thought problems when children were assessed at the age of five. And the more frequent and intense episodes of inter parental conflict were, the more likely it was that children exhibited problem behaviors.

Problem of the Study

Children exposed to domestic violence perform considerably worse in math and reading and other topics than other students. In addition, they have more disciplinary problems at school. They also have a negative effect on their classroom peers, resulting in decreased test scores and increased disciplinary problems according to some studies conducted by many researchers. The researcher tried to investigate the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement because this is a valuable topic to be studied and evidence from reports written by Educational advisors shows that there is a considerable number of students’ face violence in their families. The researcher here hope that the results of this study may shed some light on problems facing abused children especially problems relating their academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of domestic violence on the academic performance of students from educational advisors’ point of view, and also to know the effect of experience, gender, qualification of educational advisors and the students’ financial level.

Questions of the Study

- 1- What are the attitudes of the Educational Advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement?
- 2- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of Educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement due to their gender (Male, Female)?
- 3- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement due to their experience (less than 5 years, 5 years or above)?
- 4- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement due to their qualification (bachelor degree, master degree)?
- 5- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students’ achievement due to the students’ financial level (High, Mid, Low)?

Operational Definitions:

Domestic violence: “an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another

person. This violence refers to the classic forms of violence towards wives, children, sibling violence and violence towards parents. Finally, violence can occur between those who share a domestic relationship by virtue of sharing the same household”

Academic achievement: The operational definition of academic achievement is performance on academic achievement tests (Cunningham, 2003).

Literature Review

Research on the effects of domestic violence on student achievement has proved contradictory. Some researchers have reported that domestic violence did not affect a student’s cognitive level. However, a study on the effectiveness of Head Start did report findings that parents who were experiencing domestic violence in the home tended to be more depressed, and children of depressed parents were more problematic behaviorally, more aggressive, more hyperactive, and showed less cognitive outcomes in the areas of one-to-one counting, early math activities, and creativity. Therefore, the findings are inconsistent. If depression is correlated to domestic violence and if children of depressed families have lower cognitive function, and then it follows that children exposed to domestic violence may have lowered cognitive functions. Strauss (1990) proposed that children who witness domestic violence as a result experience learning problems. Also, Wildin, Williamson, and Wilson (1991) conducted a study that explored the academic achievement of primary grades children who witnessed domestic violence and found that “a high rate (46%) of the parents reported academic problems, including grade repetition, failing grades, and a need for special school services” (p. 299). Foreman conducted a study in middle school aimed at providing remediation for the family and the students who were victims of domestic violence and to test the effects this remediation had on student achievement. She found that the 12-week period her study was conducted in was not enough time to make significant gains. However, the anecdotal evidence her study provided is that 12 of the 20 students identified at this metropolitan middle school as being victims of domestic violence had a “D” or an ‘F’ in at least one subject. Interestingly, 20 out of 55 students referred to Foreman for low academic performance were victims of domestic violence (1994).

Carrell and Hoekstra find that adding one troubled student to a classroom of 20 students decreases student reading and math test scores by more than two-thirds of a percentile point and increases misbehavior among other students in the classroom by 16 percent.

The researchers found that troubled peers have a large and statistically significant negative effect on the math and reading achievement of higher income children, but only a small and statistically insignificant effect on the achievement of low-income children. The pattern is opposite for disciplinary outcomes. The presence of troubled peers increases problem behavior of low-income children, but does not significantly increase the disciplinary problems of higher income children.

Carrell and Hoekstra also found that the effect differed by race and gender. The negative test-score effect is large and statistically significant for white boys, but statistically insignificant for black boys. The test-score effects on girls are negligible regardless of race. Disciplinary problems, however, increase for all subgroups except white girls. The effects are largest for black girls. One troubled peer added to a classroom of 20 students increases the probability that a black girl commits a disciplinary infraction by as much as 10 percent.

Carrell and Hoekstra also examined whether troubled boys affect their peers differently than do troubled girls. Across all outcome variables, both academic and behavioral, the negative peer effects appear to be driven primarily by the troubled boys, and these effects are largest on other boys in the classroom.

The results indicate that adding one troubled boy to a classroom of 20 students increases the probability that a boy will commit a disciplinary infraction by 17 percent and decreases boys’ test scores by nearly 2 percentile points — or 7 percent of a standard deviation — each year.

Methodology

Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all educational advisors at public schools in Jordan.

Sample of the study

The sample of the study consisted of 90 educational advisors, 46 males and 44 females from public schools in Amman, Irbid and Karak, a questionnaire was distributed among them.

Instrument of the study

A questionnaire was distributed among the educational advisors in public schools in Jordan and this questionnaire was designed by the researcher herself, it consisted of 25 items. Many variables were included such as the gender of the educational advisor, experience, qualification and the financial level of the student.

Reliability of the instrument

To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (20) educational advisors excluded from the study sample in the same schools from which the sample was chosen with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using correlation coefficient and it was found 0, 87 which is considered suitable to conduct such a study.

Procedures of the study

A questionnaire about educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement was given to 90 educational advisors (46 male, and 44 female). After that the researcher collected the questionnaires and collected data, and then this data was analyzed statistically.

Statistical analysis

The results were analyzed for each item in the questionnaire using suitable statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The researcher also used figures to clarify the results more.

Findings of the study

The study aimed at investigating the educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement, and also to know the effect of experience, gender, qualification of educational advisors and the students' financial level on the educational advisors' attitudes. A questionnaire was distributed among 90 educational advisors, 46 males and 44 females from Jordanian public schools in Amman, Irbid and Karak. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results

Table 1: educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	4.61	.698
Q2	4.49	.715
Q3	4.42	.805
Q4	4.49	.858
Q5	4.33	.848
Q6	4.32	.767
Q7	4.59	.693
Q8	4.51	.732
Q9	4.18	.907
Q10	4.43	.877
Q11	3.97	1.000
Q12	4.23	.884
Q13	4.47	.905
Q14	4.46	.880
Q15	4.30	.837
Q16	4.41	.806
Q17	4.47	.759
Q18	4.39	.879
Q19	4.54	.741
Q20	4.44	.784
Q21	4.33	.945
Q22	4.63	.679
Q23	4.52	.755
Q24	4.54	.672
Q25	4.42	.812
QALL	4.42	.584

To answer the first question about educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement at public schools: What are the attitudes of the Educational Advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement? A questionnaire was distributed among them and means and standard deviation were calculated. Results were shown in table 1

Table 1 shows there are statistically significant differences in educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) educational advisors about their attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that question 22 got the highest mean which was (4.63); question 11 comes next with a mean of (3.97).

Standard deviation for question 22 was (0.679) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for question 11 was nearly the same; it was (1.000) which is also statistically significant.

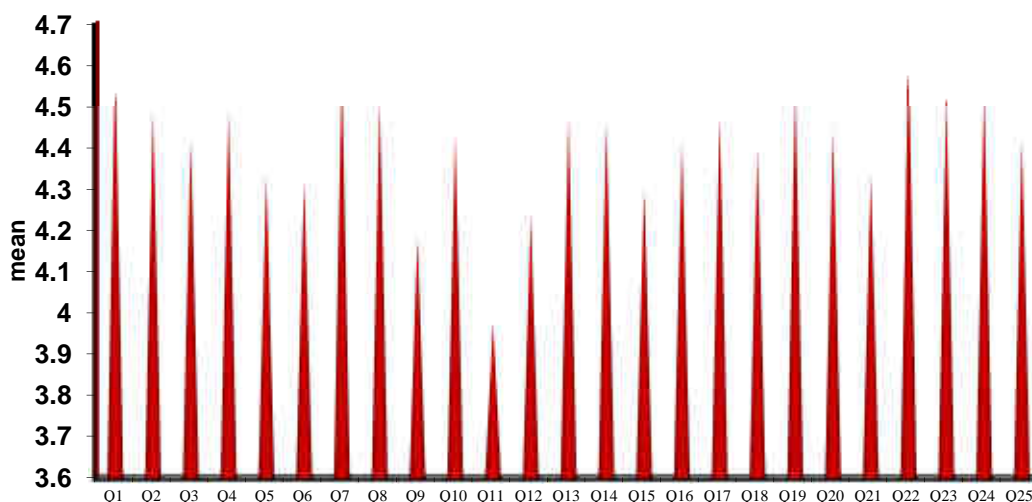


Diagram 1: educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement

It is clear in the diagram that the mean of question 22 was the highest mean, question 1 comes next. The mean of the (4, 8, 19, and 24) are nearly the same, so educational advisors' attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement are positive attitudes.

To answer the second question about educational advisors' attitudes and gender: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of Educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement due to their gender (Male, Female)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender variable

gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	46	4.31	.685	-2.542	168	.012
Female	44	4.53	.425			

Table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences due to academic level variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) educational advisors about their attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that female educational advisors got a higher mean than male educational advisors which was (4.53, and 4.31) respectively; this indicates that the academic level have an effect on educational advisors' attitudes.

Standard deviation for female educational advisors was (0.425) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for male educational advisors was higher; it was (0.685) which is also statistically significant. So, table 2 shows there are statistically significant differences due to gender variable in favor of females.

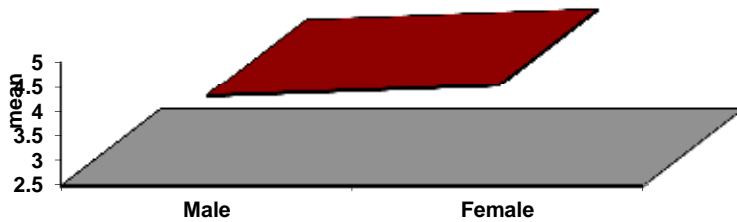


Diagram 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender variable

Diagram 2 shows that male educational advisors got lower positive attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement than female educational advisors.

To answer the third question about educational advisors' attitudes and experience: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement due to their experience (less than 5 years, 5 years or above)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to experience variable

Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Less than 5 years	42	4.26	.722	-3.387	168	.001
5 years or above	48	4.55	.385			

Table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to experience variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) educational advisors about their attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that educational advisors whose experience less than 5 years got a lower mean than educational advisors whose experience above 5 years which was (4.26, and 4.55) respectively; this indicates that experience have an effect on educational advisors' attitudes.

Standard deviation for educational advisors whose experience less than 5 years was (0.722) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for educational advisors whose experience above 5 years was lower; it was (0.385) which is also statistically significant. So, table 3 shows there are statistically significant differences due to experience variable in favor of five years or above.



Diagram 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to experience variable

Diagram 3 shows that educational advisors whose experience is 5 years or above got more positive attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement than educational advisors whose experience less than 5 years.

To answer the fourth question about educational advisors' attitudes and their qualification: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement due to their qualification (bachelor degree, master degree)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to qualification variable

Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Bachelor degree	20	4.22	.853	-2.299	168	.023
Master degree	70	4.47	.482			

Table 4 shows there are statistically significant differences due to qualification variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) educational advisors about their attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that educational advisors who hold master degree got a higher mean than educational advisors who hold bachelor degree which was (4.47, and 4.22) respectively; this indicates that qualification have an effect on educational advisors' attitudes.

Standard deviation for educational advisors who hold master degree was (0.482) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for educational advisors who hold bachelor degree was higher; it was (0.853) which is also not statistically significant. So, table 4 shows there are statistically significant differences due to qualification variable in favor of educational advisors who hold master degree.

So, table above shows there are statistically significant differences in educational advisors' attitudes due to qualification variable in favor of educational advisors who hold master degree.



Diagram 4: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to qualification variable

Diagram 4 shows that educational advisors who hold master degree got more positive attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement than educational advisors who hold bachelor degree.

To answer the fifth question about educational advisors' attitudes and the students' financial level: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of educational advisors towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement due to the students' financial level (High, Mid, Low)? Means and standard deviations were computed and table 4 shows the results.

Table 5: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to students' financial level variable

Financial level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
High	46	4.30	.657
Mid	28	4.51	.509
Low	16	4.65	.296
Total	90	4.42	.584

Table 5 shows there are statistically significant differences due to students' financial level variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (90) educational advisors about their attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement in Jordanian public schools. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that high financial level students got the lowest mean, next comes the Mid financial level students, and finally low financial level students got the highest mean which was (4.30,4.51 and 4.65) respectively; this indicates that students' financial level have an effect on educational advisors' attitudes.

Standard deviation for high financial students was (0.657) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is not statistically significant. Standard deviation for the Mid financial level students was lower; it was (0.509)

which is also not statistically significant. Standard deviation for low financial level students was the lowest; it was (0.296) so, table 5 shows there are statistically significant differences due to students' financial level variable in favor of low financial level students.

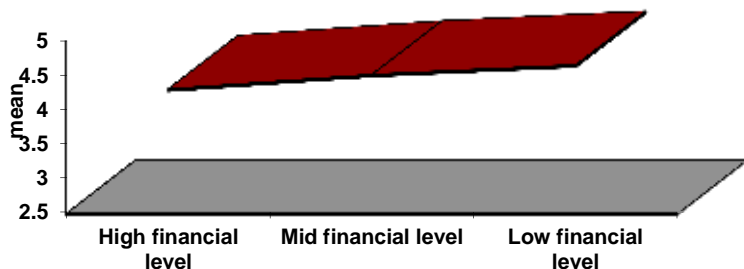


Diagram 5: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to students' financial level variable

Diagram 5 shows that low financial level students got the most positive attitudes towards the effect of domestic violence on students' achievement.

The researcher also used post Hoc comparison to show the difference between the three groups: High financial level, Mid financial level, Low financial level. Table 6 shows the analysis

Table 6: Post Hoc comparison between the groups

Financial level	Financial Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
High	Mid	-.21(*)	.098	.030
	Low	-.35(*)	.129	.008
Mid	High	.21(*)	.098	.030
	Low	-.13	.138	.329
Low	High	.35(*)	.129	.008
	Mid	.13	.138	.329

Table 6 shows that the mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Conclusion

There is a great deal of research on children and domestic violence, an increasing amount of it is conducted in western countries, but in the Arab world there is a lack of such studies. Recently, professionals worry about children who are living with domestic violence because they thought they will become the partners and parents of the future. The message from research, however, is that the experience of living with domestic violence may affect many children in future and can also give some children and young people an insight into adult relationships which other young people do not share at least in the short to medium term. Educational advisers felt this problem and indicated that it must be dealt with as a great issue.

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