

BAR ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Willingness to Seek Help for Dealing with
School Violence among Students with Mental
Retardation: The Contribution of the Helper's
Availability and Ability to Assist**

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Abstract

Violence in schools threatens the safety of students and teachers and affects the educational process.

Many investigators emphasize the negative consequences of violence on the physical and emotional well-being of the students (Felix, Furlong, & Austin, 2009) and the entire pedagogical process (Kracke & Hahn, 2008). In addition, students who are not directly involved in cases of violence, also suffer from the negative results (Henry, 2000).

While the subjects of violence in schools have been widely studied, there are not enough studies on this topic in special educational programs (e.g: Bryen, Carey, & Frantz, 2003; Flynt & Morton, 2004; Reiter, Bryen, & Shachar, 2007). Those few studies show that people with various disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities and communication disorders, suffer more from violence than ordinary population (Bryen et al., 2003; Reiter et al., 2007).

This study focuses on students with intellectual disabilities. The purpose of this study was to examine how students with intellectual disabilities studying in special education frames, are dealing with violence in general and their willingness to ask for help in particular. Previous studies, conducted among students in a general education, show a low rate of those asking for help, despite the fact that calling for help in that case, may promote the well-being of the student. It should be mentioned that among those who are seeking help, there is a preference to turn first to the peer group, the parents after, and only at the end they would appeal to official sources (2003, יבלין).

In this study students' willingness to seek help in cases of physical, verbal and social violence, was examined. The research hypotheses dealt with the relationship between willingness to seek help, and the student's perception of the source having the ability to help, as well as the perception of the student's belief that the help from the assisting factor is available.

The study included 50 students with intellectual disabilities, 23 boys (46%) and 27 girls (54%) at the age from 10 to 21, the average age 15.02. The research findings revealed that there is a high level of violence in schools for a special education. They found that the number of students who called for help was higher than those who didn't. In addition, it was found that the seeking for help did not depend on the nature of the violence. It didn't matter whether it was verbal, physical or social violence. It was also found that the scale of appealing for help, after all forms of violence, goes from the class educator (the highest level) to an assistant and finally to a consultant. The relationship between the perception of an assisting factor having the ability and availability to help, and the willingness of the applicant to seek help from that factor has been examined. As a result it was found that the students who feel that those who they turn for help have the ability to help and are available, express a greater

willingness to seek help compared to students who don't. In addition, it was found that there is a positive correlation between the availability of a factor that helps and the perception from him as one that has the ability to help, except in the cases of a social violence. In addition, differences in age and gender of those turning for help because of verbal, physical and social violence, were examined. It was found that the average age of applicants for help in case of verbal abuse is significantly lower than the age of students who don't call for help. However, in cases of physical and social violence there were no significant differences. In terms of testing the relationship between gender and the level of seeking for help in case of violence of any type, there were no differences between boys and girls.

Summarizing, we can say that there is possibility to increase the role of the student counselor. It also shows that the role of the classroom teacher is very important.

Another importance was given to the assistant. These findings contribute to the understanding of each of the assistance factors' potential and giving them more power in the educational system. As to the other teachers, this study shows their importance in a call for help, yet it seems that there is much more to examine in the field of their contribution and see how we can turn them into a help factor both available and more significant than now.