

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Identifying Victims of School Violence: The  
Contribution of Teachers-Students  
Relationships**

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## **Abstract**

Violence at school is an issue that has been getting extensively attention in academic and research literature (Steffgen, Recchia& Viechtbauer, 2013). The definitions of violence are varied and change over time, whereas in the past there were no references of violent forms such as threats and harassment, today there is a tendency to relate to all types of violence (Benbenishty et al., 2006). In general, violence phenomenon is a widespread problem that has a great impact on victim's lives. A review of scientific literature found several factors that characterize victims, including high levels of social anxiety, depressive symptoms, social rejection, extrovert behaviors, low levels of popularity, low self-esteem, and in extreme cases suicide and self-harm (Kaufman, Kretschmer, Huitsing& Veenstra, 2018). Considering these findings, it is agreed that there is a need for effective treatment of violence and victims, including early identifying of victims in order to provide successful treatment to the victims and prevent violence at the school level. However, previous studies, that examine early detection and monitoring of violence in schools, indicated an extensive gap between students and teachers reports on violence and points the difficulty of identifying victims of violence (Ahn, Rodkin& Gest, 2013 ; Yablon, 2017).

The current study focused on teachers' identification of victims of violence. While previous studies compared the responses of students and teachers who were asked about violence and victimization that generally occurs in school, the current study examined the rate of teachers' identification of their students who are victims of violence, while examining teacher-student pairs, and students' reports comparison to their teachers'. The relationship of students with their teachers was investigated as a predictor of teachers successful identification of students who suffered violence. Additional variables examined in the study were types of victimization, rate of victimization, gender, class size, and existence of violence prevention programs at the school level.

As mentioned, the research method meant to examine the teachers' ability to identify violence victims in their class, while comparing between teachers' reports and students self-reports. The research based on a sample of 29 teachers in middle and high schools, aged 27 to 63 ( $M=44.07$ ,  $SD=8.62$ ) and 481 students of the 8th to 11th grade,

aged 13 to 17 ( $M=14.91$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ). The teachers and students asked to respond to series of questionnaires. The data analysis was based on MPLUS analyzes as variable types of victimization were found to be nested (any kind of victimization  $ICC= 0.21$ , Verbal victimization  $ICC= 0.18$ , Physical victimization  $ICC=0.3$  and Social victimization  $ICC=0.14$ ).

The research findings show that teachers are having a difficulty in identifying victims of violence at school. The most identified victims are victims of verbal violence, then victims of physical violence and finally victims of social violence. 54.81% of the students who suffer from any kind of victimization were not identified by their teachers, as well as 57.72% of victims of verbal violence, 78% of victims of physical violence, and 86.61% of victims of social violence.

The findings also shows that the more a student's suffers from verbal and social victimization, the more likely the teacher will identify them as victims. Examining the contribution of teacher-student relationship to teacher's ability identify victims, the research findings shows that this variable wasn't significant. However, a positive correlation was found between the rate of victimization and teacher-student relationship, thus the weaker the relationship with the teacher is, the higher the rate of victimization experienced by the student in all types of victimization. Furthermore, the research shows that there are differences in the rate of identification of males and females as victims of verbal and physical violence, so the probability of correct identifying a victim by a teacher decreases when it comes to females. This finding is critical to victim identification and raises the question why teachers are having troubles identifying females as victims. Another variable that examined is the existence of prevention programs in schools. This variable found as a contributor to the rate of teachers' identification of verbal violent only.