

Religiosity, Social Support, Self-Control and Happiness as Moderating Factors of Physical Violence among Arab Adolescents in Israel

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This study examines the correlation among a number of personal and environmental resources that can reduce violence among Arab adolescents in Israel. These are: religiosity, happiness, social support, and self-control. The participants in the study consisted of 225 Palestinian Arab teenagers living in Israel participated in this study. The participants study in grades 8 and 9, in state schools in the northern part of The Triangle. The findings indicate that all the resources that were examined contribute to reducing the level of violence; in other words, significant negative correlations were found between the level of religiosity, happiness, social support and self-control on the one hand, and the level of violence on the other hand. These findings are consistent with those of other studies conducted elsewhere in the world on different populations (Christian and Jewish, as well as Muslim). The present study and its findings are, however, the first to address the understanding of violence among the populace in question. The findings were discussed in accordance with a number of different theories.

Keywords: Arab Adolescents; Violence; Religiosity; Happiness; Social Support; Self-Control

Introduction

Over recent years, violence in all its facets, and particularly physical violence, has become a common phenomenon in the State of Israel, appearing in almost every environment in which people live: in family and society, within the framework of studies and employment, on the roads, at recreation venues and on the sports field.

One of the frameworks in which we are witness to many types of physical violence is the educational system, where both children and adults are affected (Ben-Baruch, 2005; Benbenishty, 2002). Although studies have pointed to a decrease in incidents of violence in schools between 1990-2000 (Benbenishty, Khoury-Kassabri, & Astor, 2006), studies undertaken in Israel among adolescents have shown that close to 40% of all Israeli students in public and high schools have reported encountering many incidents of bullying and harassment at school (Benbenishty, 2002; Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2000; Rolider, 2007); more than 16% of the children reported that they had stayed away from school due to a fear that they would be harassed, and others reported on great physical injury (Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2008).

The issue of violence has been the subject of extensive global research. Some studies have focused on the incidence, description and scope of violence in society (Benbenishty, 2002; Benbenishty et al., 2000; Rolider, 2007). Other studies have referred to the phenomenon of violence in relation to gender

(Ronen, Rahav, & Moldawsky, 2007; Warman & Cohen, 2000).

This present study focuses on the physical violence of Arab teenagers at school. Benbenishty et al.'s research (2006) reveals that more Arab students have reported on a violent atmosphere at school (49.8%) than the Jewish sector (40.6%). In addition, it was revealed that Jewish students have a better feeling about their schools coping with physical behavior than do Arab students (81.6% compared to 67.4% respectively); Jewish students also felt more of a kinship to their schools than Arab students (75.4% compared to 67.7% respectively).

According to various studies undertaken in Israel (Benbenishty et al., 2006; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005), physical violence and hooliganism at school were found to have a significant correlation with poverty, low educational levels and low socio-economic status. According to data in the Bituach Leumi report on poverty for 2009, approximately 57% of Arab families are under the poverty line (Israeli National Insurance Institute, 2010). This data points to the existing liability among this population to behave in a violent manner.

Aside from the above, it is important to stress the significance of the maturation process of Arabs in an Israeli society. As aforesaid, Arab teenagers live in a developing society which is undergoing an accelerated process of modernization that is linked to the Israelization process, on the one hand (Alhaj, 1996) and with counterparty processes of assimilation, expressed in Palestinianization processes, on the other (Samuha, 2004). Inherent in each of these processes is a system of different norms

and values. Life in the shadow of these contradictions makes it difficult for these teenagers to consolidate their identities. There is a significant confusion between the adoption of a modern orientation influenced by Jewish society and the adherence to norms and values in Arabic tradition—Islam. In light of this, there is room for examination of the degree, if any, that western models referring to the phenomenon of physical violence in reference to Arab teenagers can be generalized and implemented.

The core question of this study is: To what degree do measures of religiosity, social support, well-being and skills of self-control moderate physical violence among Arab teenagers?

Violence

Violence has received a wide range of definitions. The traditional concept of violence has stressed the results of behavior and has defined violence as behavior whose results harm a person or property, where the harm may be psychological (diminishing value and humiliation) or physical (Bandura, 1973).

Despite this concept, the trend over the last decade has actually been to stress physical behavior as being linked to the attacker's intentions, i.e. the reference to violence is to behavior directed towards another with the intention of causing harm (Joireman, Anderson, & Strathman, 2003).

As with the variety of definitions, there have also been a variety of explanations for violent behavior. Traditional explanations have pointed to violence being an inherent instinct in everyone (Freud, 1924; Lorenz, 1966). In contrast, there are explanations that view violent behavior as being a result of frustration, where, when the individual feels frustration, the likelihood increases that violent behavior may be expressed (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939).

The present study is based on the definition of Buss & Perry (1992), which corresponds to definitions of the cognitive-behavioral approach, and sees physical violence as behavior linked to an individual's misguided hostile thoughts and negative feelings (Bandura et al., 2001). A number of emphases on the problem's development appear in this approach. Those based on social learning stress violent behavior being a social behavior acquired in the learning process via conditioning or imitation (Bandura, 1973), and linked to this is that undesired behavior, i.e. violence, has desired results that reinforce its continuation (Rolidier, 2007). More modern explanations stress the cognitive aspect of behavior (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Pastorelli, 2001), stressing violent behavior as stemming from the absence of the self-efficacy of the individual in a personal, academic and social sphere.

Crick & Dodge (1996) propose a model of social learning and stress violent behavior as being behavior stemming from problems linked to the individual's process of processing information. According to their model, the process begins from the receipt of social cues and proceeds as far as the expression of violent behavior. It includes six stages: the selective encoding of internal and social cues that cause a violent child to receive negative cues; the interpretation of these cues in a negative and hostile manner; a reduction in one's ability to seek out an appropriate response; lack of evaluation of so important a response in the case of violent behavior; making an incorrect decision that is not based on objective observation and proper evaluation; and action that leads to violent behavior. In accordance with this model, violent behavior will be linked to distur-

tions in each of the stages in the processing of information (Dodge & Coie, 1987).

Whether the explanation emphasizes more the result of undesired behavior, the beliefs, the thoughts and processing of information or one's feelings, according to the cognitive-behavioral approach—violent behavior is linked to the elements of thought, feelings and behavior together.

In an attempt to examine the elements linked to violent behavior, Buss & Perry (1992) have developed a model that explains the tendency to develop violent behavior in accordance with the cognitive-behavioral model, with reference to the process of thought, feelings and behavior.

The thinking process, i.e. the cognitive element, includes the hostile thoughts of an individual who conceives of the world around him as being hostile. This cognitive element is linked to negative feelings of anger, which constitute the emotional element in the trend towards violent behavior. According to the authors, hostile thoughts and negative feelings lead to the expression of violent behavior, which include two parts: violent verbal behavior and violent physical behavior (Buss & Perry, 1992).

With reference to the hostile-cognitive element, it is linked to continual negative thinking of the individual about his surroundings (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This negative thinking is characterized by a conception that the world is threatening and unfair, that people act out of selfish motives and cannot be trusted (Buss, 1961). This element is expressed according to the model for social information processing by Dodge and his colleagues (Dodge, Laird, Lochman, & Zelli, 2002) in a hostile interpretation of the cues received by the individual from his surroundings. People with hostile thoughts will interpret situations in a negative manner, and will tend more to assign hostile intentions to others and react with violence accordingly (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Hubbard, Dodge, Cillessen, & Coie Schwartz, 2001). A number of studies have indicated a correlation between hostile thoughts and violent behavior among students (Bandura et al., 2001; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Hubbard et al., 2001).

The emotional element, anger, is an emotional reaction accompanied by physiological stimulation. Anger is stimulated by frustration, provocation and, often, anxiety (Buss, 1961). In addition, anger increases sensitivity to frustrating situations or obstacles, stimulates assertive thoughts and can encourage action against the threatening source (Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995). Anger is thought to be a predictor of a tendency for violent behavior (Arsenio, Cooperman, & Lover, 2000).

The element of behavior includes both physical and verbal violence. Physical violence is defined as bodily harm of another with the objective of causing pain to the other (Buss, 1961). Verbal violence refers to a verbal message uttered to another, in an attempt to incur mental pain, and damage another's position and self-esteem (Infante, 1995).

The tool developed by Buss & Perry (1992) enables the examination of violence as one parcel and to examine its overall score or separate it into different components (hostility, anger, verbal violence and physical violence), where each component earns a separate score that enables it to be examined as an element in itself.

In the present study, we have decided to examine the element of physical violence and the manner in which this violence is linked to hostile thoughts and feelings of anger, both due to our principal interest being in physical violence and the fact that the

reliability of tools to examine verbal violence is poor (Weisburd, Rosenbaum, & Ronen, 2009; Ronen & Devik, 2009; Ronen & Rosenbaum, 2010).

Degree of Religiosity

Over recent years, we have been witness to a renewed awakening of the contribution of religion and spirituality to human behavior. Psychologists are beginning to recognize the idea that religion and spirituality can contribute to an improvement of well-being. Psychology has a traditionally negative position towards spirituality; indeed, psychologists and psychiatrists from Freud to Ellis have regarded religious orientation as being “irrational” and “a mechanism for people that are unable to cope with life” (Clay, 1996: p. 1).

In spite of this, there has been an increase over recent years in studies that indicate the importance of religious faith in providing meaning to life and in improving one’s well-being. Spirituality and religion may improve well-being (Witter, Stock, Okun, & Haring, 1985), self-esteem (Falbo & Shepperd, 1986), physical health (Gottlieb & Green, 1984) and satisfaction in married life (Glenn & Weaver, 1978).

The correlation between the degree of religiosity and mental health & psychopathology has prompted much research (Al-Issa, 2000; Maltby, Lewis & Day, 1999; Thorson, 1998). This correlation can be seen to be complex, where various explanations have been offered, such as “religiosity may repress the symptoms and encourage conventional forms of thought and behavior that are more socially accepted. This may provide sources for a wider development of perspectives and a fuller realization of individual capabilities” (Wulff, 1997: p. 244).

Many studies have indicated a positive correlation between lack of spirituality and a number of negative psychological situations, such as depression (Wright, Frost & Wisecarver, 1993), drug use (Maton & Zimmerman, 1992) and anxiety and suicide (Gartner, Larson, & Allen, 1991).

Ellison (1991) attempted to explain how spirituality and religiosity may promote happiness and well-being, in that religious observance (e.g. attending church services) may increase social integration and support. In addition, the development of a deep belief in God may promote happiness by reducing stress and improving strategies for coping. Moreover, religiosity and spirituality may provide meaning, solidarity and goals in life.

It should be noted that the vast majority of research on this subject has been conducted in the west, with participants mainly from Jewish and Christian populations. There have been few studies on Muslims and Arabs. This correlation has not been researched among Palestinian Arabs, and this study is considered to be pioneering in the research on Arab Muslims and Christians who live in a Jewish country.

Studies undertaken around the world on Muslim populations have indicated clear and positive correlations between religiosity and a strong sense of well-being (Hussein, 1988; Abdel-Khalek, 2002, 2005; Alakandari, 2003; Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004), with less psychosomatic symptoms and more motivation (Hussein, 1998), with less anxiety (Abdel-Khalek, 2002) and with physical health and optimism (Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007). One study on the correlation between degree of religiosity and violence has been undertaken by Watkins (2003), where the correlation between a high or low degree of religiosity and five measures of violence was studied. Results revealed that high grades in the degree of religiosity resulted in low grades in

the degree of violence.

Social Support

Environmental resources include the individual’s social support system (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This system is attributed to all those individuals who have personal, social and familial relationships with others (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990), and it refers to four major types of support: informative, instrumental, emotional and companionship support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). These types of support make it easier for the individual to cope with sources of stress (House, 1981).

Professional literature presents two major forms of influence of social support on well-being. One form is the main effect, where social support has a direct positive effect on an individual’s well-being regardless of stress. The basic claim is that the support has the power to develop and increase feelings of ability, self-esteem and self-efficacies. These feelings enable the individual to successfully cope with life’s challenges. The second form is the buffer effect, where social support has an indirect effect on an individual’s well-being via the reduction of negative implications in the response to feelings of stress (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1994; Cohen & Wills, 1985). In this manner, the support constitutes a coping strategy (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1994).

Social support can moderate stress by affecting first or second impressions of an event (Cohen & Edwards, 1989). When the individual gains access to a support network that is available to him, it may suppress impressions of potential threat stemming from the event, encourage the individual to believe in his/her ability to cope with the event and/or encourage the use of opportunistic coping strategies, such as: problem-solving and positive re-evaluation (Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Cohen & McKay, 1984).

Various studies address the significance of social support for children and teenagers in situations of stress in general and situations of war in particular. For children experiencing a crisis, the family constitutes the main support system. During a crisis, the family provides its members with feedback on feelings, ideas and behavior. This determines the child’s understanding of the nature and significance of a stressful environment (Zeidner et al., 1993).

Approximately 80% of Jewish students and approximately 64% of Arab students in this study turn to parents or family members during crises; approximately 25% of Jews and 50% of Arabs turn to their teacher or someone on the school staff; approximately 16% of Jews and 38% of Arabs turn to school counselors, and approximately 75% of teenagers turn to friends when in distress (Harel et al., 2004).

Aside from family support, friends’ and teachers’ support also have a curbing effect on the psychological difficulties stemming from war (Klingman, 2001; Klingman et al., 1993; Swenson & Klingman, 1993; Zeidner et al., 1993). Studies by Greenbaum, Erlich, & Toubiana (1993), examining the utilization of sources of support among children during the Gulf War revealed that utilization of support originating from parents and friends is relatively higher than support originating at school and from telephone hot lines.

While family support has greater importance during childhood, friends and non-family members become a more significant source of support during teenage years (Cotterell, 1994). Most teenagers turn to friends their own age more than to their

parents for shared entertainment, friendship and understanding (Blyth, Hill, & Theil, 1982), and for feedback, practical information and emotional support (Jaffe, 1998). A peer group serves as a source for powerful social rewards, including prestige, acceptance, status and popularity, which promote a teenager's self-esteem (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995). Relationships with one's peers during teenage years are more characterized by intimacy and support than in early childhood (Jaffe, 1998); they play a crucial role in the promotion of normal psychological development (Steinberg, 2002) and constitute a protective element during times of stress (Montemayor & Van Komen, 1980).

Chen & Wei's study (2013) examines how social support of peers mediates the correlation between school victimization and well-being among 1650 junior high school students in Taiwan, and later on examines how gender and ethnicity differ in reciprocal relations of violence at school, social support and well-being. Findings show that in general, students with a high level of well-being are not significantly linked with victimization by students in mediation of social support among peers.

Another study by Benhorin & McMahon (2008) examines the effect of social support on the correlation between exposure to violence and aggressive behavior. Findings demonstrate the negative effect of exposure to violence on aggressive behavior and the comprehensive contribution of social support in these relationships. Specifically, support from parents, teachers and close friends has been found to be positively linked to lower levels of aggressive behavior.

Self-Control

The term "self-control" describes behavior out of free choice, while relinquishing more appealing behavior for the sake of more desired behavior (Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974). This definition comprises two aspects: free choice, i.e. behavior that one chooses to express from the recognition that this behavior is important. This choice is not due to pressure from one's external surroundings or through lack of choice. And the second aspect—choice between two opposing behaviors, where one has a number of choices and must decide and select the more important (or efficient) behavior over the more desired behavior at that particular moment (Ronen, 1997).

Rosenbaum (1993, 1998) describes self-control as a system of cognitive, goal-oriented skills that enable people to act to attain their goals, to overcome difficulties linked to thoughts, feelings and behaviors; to delay gratification and cope with pressure.

According to Ronen & Rosenbaum (2001), the skill of self-control will be actuated only when the individual faces different obstacles that are difficult for him to overcome and hamper the attainment of his goals. This means that his goals and the obstacles in his way to attaining them are the ones that will determine whether he will actuate his skills of self-control. Therefore, a teenager who does not see his aggressive behavior as being a problem and who may even obtain reinforcement from it, will not actuate his skills of self-control.

In the present study, the use of the term "self-control skills" refers to the actuation of a group of skills to attain a desired goal. This group includes: cognitions and self-instructions for coping with various emotional and physiological responses, the use of strategies for problem-solving, the ability to delay gratification and the belief that one can control oneself during in-

ternal events (Rosenbaum, 1980).

In a number of studies conducted on children and teenagers, it was found that those characterized with skills of self-control like delaying gratification, problem-solving and cognitive construction express less aggressive behavior (Blair et al., 2000; Ayduk et al., 2000; Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004; Gyurak & Ayduk, 2008; Weisbrod, 2007). In addition, it was revealed that high levels of self-control are more linked with success in social relations, with more adaptive emotional responses to pressure situations and with fewer reports on psychopathology (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004).

Studies by Agbaria, Ronen & Hamama (2012), examine the correlation between self-control and the incidence of psychopathological symptoms following the exposure of teenagers to war. Findings point to the moderating contribution of skills of self-control in the decrease of depression, anxiety and other psychopathological symptoms.

In a study examining the correlation between self-control and anxiety/loneliness among siblings of children with cancer, a significant correlation was found between self-control as a coping skill and anxiety/loneliness as an emotional stress response; i.e., siblings reporting on higher levels of self-control experienced lower levels of anxiety and loneliness (Hamama, Ronen, & Feigin, 2009).

In another study examining the moderating effect of skills of self-control among women with a history of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, and with post-traumatic symptoms, it was found that women characterized by high levels of self-control reported on a lower intensity of post-traumatic signs in comparison to women with low self-control (Walter, Gunstad, & Hobfoll, 2010). A study undertaken by Agbaria & Ronen (2010), focused on aggressive behavior among Palestinian Arab youths in Israel. 397 teenagers from grades 7 to 12 participated in the study. One of the research theories addressed personal and social resources and examined the contribution of self-control and social acceptance in the reduction of violence; researchers found that skills of self-control will moderate the correlation between subjective well-being and violence.

A study undertaken by Denson, Capper, Oaten, Friese & Schofield (2011), examined the belief that self-control over time might reduce anger and violence as a response to provocation. Participants comprised B.A./B.Sc. students who underwent coaching on self-control for two weeks. Research data found that violence was reduced among participants with high levels of violent behavior, following coaching on self-control.

Various studies support the claim that skills of self-control enable one to attain a balance between oneself, one's environment and one's goals. Those who succeed in this balance succeed in adapting themselves to environmental requirements and in coping efficiently with situations of pressure and stress (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982).

Happiness

Happiness, defined by philosophers as exaltation, is very difficult to pin down and define. Over recent decades, happiness has been the center of many studies, with renewed classification under more specific titles, such as subjective well-being, positive effect and satisfaction from life (Diener, 2009).

Despite the resemblance between happiness and subjective well-being, most writers avoid the first term due to the variety of meanings to which it may refer (Diener, 2009). The most

popular term in the field today—subjective well-being—refers to the individual's subjective appreciation of his quality of life (Diener, 1984, 2009) and includes the elements of satisfaction with life (cognitive element) and the correlation between positive and negative feelings (emotional element) (Diener, 2009). The term gains significance primarily in situations of great pressure and distress that may be detrimental to one's well-being (Hobfoll, 1989; Natving, Albrektsen, & Quarnstrom, 2001; Torsheim & Wold, 2001).

The term "subjective well-being" refers to the individual's subjective appreciation of his quality of life, his happiness and gratification, as well as the quality of his inner experiences, with reference to various areas of life (Diener, 1984). Subjective well-being includes elements like happiness, satisfaction, gratification and quality of life; these elements refer to cognitive and effective responses by an individual towards life experiences (Diener, 1984; Veenhoven, 1991). Those with a high sense of well-being feel more control over their lives and cope effectively with life's pressures, setting themselves goals in life (Keyes & Ryff, 2000; Veenhoven, 1991).

A number of studies have indicated positive correlations between well-being and a sense of control over life (Veenhoven, 1991; McConnell et al., 2005), an ability to cope with pressures and conflicts (Argyle, 1987) and a tendency to experience fewer negative feelings (Fordyce, 1988). In addition, a positive correlation was found between social acceptance and physical and spiritual well-being (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000; Spiegel, Bloom, Kraemer, & Gottheil, 1989).

According to research literature, experiences with chronic and stressful life events affect the manner in which one evaluates life satisfaction, as well as, correspondingly, with well-being (Ash & Huebner, 2001; Headey & Wearing, 1989), where there is a correlation between feelings of anxiety and stress experienced as a result of stressful life events (political, economic, social and familial) and a low sense of well-being (Campbell, 1981). Several studies indicate a negative correlation between life satisfaction and the development of post-traumatic symptoms among different populations, e.g. veteran soldiers (Merriitt, Kashdan, Julian, & Uswatte, 2006), those with a background of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) (Eglington & Cheung Chung, 2011) and those with a background of drug use (Ouimette, Goodwin, & Brown, 2006).

One study examined the correlation between being victims of violence and feelings of well-being among teenagers. In this study, students from 190 high schools, ranging in age from 13 - 19, participated. Research results showed that boys and girls who were victims of violence reported on lower levels of life satisfaction (Callahan, Tolman, & Saunders, 2003).

Another study focused on aggressive behavior among Palestinian Arab youths in Israel. In this study, 397 teenagers in grades 7 to 12 participated, and the correlation between well-being and violence was studied. Results showed a negative correlation between the two (Agbaria & Ronen, 2010).

Hypothesis

There is a negative correlation between self-control and physical violence.

There is a negative correlation between support and physical violence.

There is a negative correlation between degree of religiosity and physical violence.

There is a negative correlation between well-being and physical violence.

Method

Sample

225 Palestinian Arab teenagers living in Israel participated in this study. The participants study in grades 8 and 9, in state schools in the northern part of The Triangle. We know that in the northern part of the Triangle resides a Muslim population defined for the most part as a traditional society with intermediate socioeconomic status. It is important to note that the sampling method was convenience sampling. Approximately 80% of participants were grade 8 students, with approximately 20% in grade 9; 58.2% of participants were male and 41.8% were female.

Tools

Subjective Happiness Scale: (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)

On the 4-item subjective happiness scale, participants circled the number that best characterized them on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (characterizing low levels of happiness) to 7 (characterizing high levels of happiness); for example, "In general I consider myself not a very happy person (1) to "a very happy person" (7) or "Compared to most of my peers I consider myself less happy" (1) to "very happy" (7).

1) Attitudes Regarding Religion Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Kendler, Liu, Gardner, McCullough, Larson and Prescott, 2003. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic and adapted to a Muslim Arab population; 5 items were deleted from the questionnaire and 12 items were added. The validity of the questionnaire was examined by 5 judges, and the preliminary format was corrected until the final format was attained. Cronbach's alpha values for the different dimensions obtained were high and ranged from ($\alpha = 0.86$ to 0.93).

The questionnaire examines various Attitudes on religion and includes 63 items expressing 5 measures of positions on religion: religiosity in general (spirituality), social religiosity, forgiveness, God as Judge and lack of desire for revenge.

Each participant was asked to evaluate every one of the items on a scale of 5 levels (1-never; 2-rarely; 3-sometimes; 4-often; 5-always). The present study made use only of the first dimension which included 31 items, and which reflected more elements of spirituality and understanding of one's place in the universe, in addition to the contribution of the correlation with God as expressed in activities in daily life and during crises.

2) Adolescence Self Control Scale Questionnaire

This questionnaire was originally developed by Rosenbaum (1980) in order to evaluate the individual differences in skills of self-control. The questionnaire examines self-reporting on the use of cognition (eg. self-instructions) and the implementation of problem-solving strategies to cope with emotional and physiological responses. The questionnaire was adapted for children and teenagers by Rosenbaum & Ronen (1991), and includes 32 items expressing different parameters in skills of self-control: repressing gratification, getting over pain, planning abilities, use of self-instructions, etc. The participant would evaluate each one of the items on a six-level Likert scale, from (1-"very uncharacteristic of me" to 6-"very characteristic of me"). The questionnaire was reviewed according to a scale ranging from

(-3) to (3) points, representing the degree at which the participant evaluates the item as being characteristic of him. The questionnaire contained 9 reverse items.

In a test on questionnaire reliability with teenagers and adults (Rosenbaum, 1998), Cronbach's alpha values for adults were found to be relatively high (0.87), where for children they were lower (0.69) (Hamama, 1996). In actuality, the older the child, the higher the alpha values.

3) Social Support Questionnaire

This questionnaire was evaluated using the Interpersonal Support Evaluate List (ISEL) developed by Cohen, Mermelstrin, Karmarck & Hoberman (1985), concerning the perceived availability of potential social resources. The original scale consists of 40 items, with 4 subscales (Appraisal, Belonging, Tangible Support and Self-esteem Support). The reliability of the ISEL is $\alpha = 0.90$. In this study, we administered a brief version of this scale (12 items), including the first 3 subscales mentioned above, with 4 items in each. For example: "I feel that there is no one I can share my most private worries and fears with". The items were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) definitely false to (4) definitely true. Higher scores reflected greater perceived support.

4) Violence Questionnaire (AGQ)

This questionnaire was developed by Buss & Perry (1992), to evaluate the various elements in the trend towards violent behavior among teenagers. The questionnaire contains 28 items testing 4 elements of violence: physical violence (8 items), e.g. "If I am sufficiently provoked, I may hit another kid"; verbal violence (5 items), e.g.: "When other kids provoke me, I tell them what I think about them"; anger (7 items), e.g.: "Sometimes I feel like I'm going to explode"; hostility (8 items), e.g.: "I know that other kids talk about me behind my back". Each participant was asked to evaluate to what degree each of the items were characteristic of him, via a 5-level Likert scale, from (1) "very much disagree" to (5) "very much agree".

For each participant, a grade was calculated for each of the scales representing the elements of violence (physical violence, verbal violence, anger and hostility). The grade was calculated as an average of all of the items included in the relevant subscale, taking into account reverse items (3 reverse items). In the evaluation of questionnaire reliability in Hebrew, a Cronbach alpha value of $\alpha = 0.77$ was found for "hostility", $\alpha = 0.78$ was found for anger, and $\alpha = 0.72$ for verbal and physical violence (Zomer, 2002).

Research Process

The research questionnaires were approved by the Ministry of Education's Chief Scientist, and then the questionnaires were distributed at designated schools. With the approval of school management, a letter was forwarded to parents explaining the objective of the research, and they were asked to approve or disapprove of their children's participation in filling out the questionnaire. In the last stage, the primary researcher visited the schools on a regular study day. He entered the classes and explained the objective in filling out the questionnaires to the students, stressing that everything would be anonymous and that the findings would be utilized for research only. The level of participation was very high, with all students present agreeing to fill out the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed in Arabic (they had been translated at an earlier stage and utilized for previous research).

Findings

Statistical analyses were conducted in order to check correlations among the study's variables and to test the research hypotheses. **Table 1** describes Means, Standard Deviation, Range and Reliability of Research tools.

As one can see from the **Table 2**, clear, negative correlations were found between physical violence and the other variables (self-control, religiosity, happiness and social support); for example, there is a clear, negative correlation between self-control and physical violence ($r = -0.44, p < 0.01$) and a negative correlation between religiosity and physical violence ($r = -0.51, p < .01$).

To examine the research hypotheses, Pearson correlations were calculated and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted.

The first hypothesis focused on the correlation between self control and physical violence, and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted here as well. It was found that self control clearly contributes to decrease Physical Violence (BETA = $-0.14, p < 0.05$). This confirmed the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis focused on the correlation between social support and Physical violence, and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted here as well. In the hierarchical regression analysis that examined Physical violence as a dependent variable in relation to social support, it was found that it clearly contributes to the explanation of the variance in Physical violence (BETA = $-0.23, p < .01$). This confirmed the second hypothesis. See **Table 3**.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation, range and reliability of research tools (N=225).

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Range	Reliability
Happiness	4.93	1.25	5.00	6.00	.59
Social Support	3.13	.73	3.16	3.33	.71
Religiosity	4.03	.94	4.20	4.00	.91
Self-control	3.88	.94	3.87	5.00	.81
Anger	2.81	.83	2.85	3.86	.53
Physical violence	2.39	1.01	2.44	4.00	.81
Hostility	2.88	.85	2.83	3.83	.53
Verbal violence	2.97	.79	3.00	4.00	.50

Table 2. Correlations between the variables, based on Pearson correlations.

	Happiness 1	Social Support 2	Religiosity 3	Self Control 4	Physical Violence 5
1	---				
2	.62**	---			
3	.45**	.64**	---		
4	.44**	.45**	.48**	---	
5	-.47**	-.54**	-.51**	-.44**	---

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .005$; *** $p < .001$; N = 225.

Table 3.
Regression Analysis of Physical violence.

	Beta	Adjusted R-square
Step 1		.11
Sex	-.31**	
Grade	.05	
Step 2		.41
Self-control	-.14*	
Social support	-.23**	
Religiosity	-.15*	
Happiness	-.16*	

Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Sex: 0-male, 1-female; Grade: 0-grade 8, 1-grade 9.

The third hypothesis focused on the correlation between religiosity and Physical violence. From **Table 2** (correlations), one can see that there is a clear, negative correlation between religiosity and Physical violence. In the hierarchical regression analysis, it was found that religiosity clearly contributes to the explanation of the variance in Physical violence (BETA = $-.15$, $p < .05$). From here, we can conclude that the third hypothesis is confirmed.

The fourth research hypothesis addressed the correlation between happiness and Physical violence. **Table 2** indicates a clear, negative correlation between happiness and Physical violence, a clear, positive correlation between negative feelings and Physical violence. In the hierarchical regression analysis conducted on Physical violence, there was a clear contribution to the explanation of the variance in Physical violence (BETA = $-.16$, $p < .05$). From here, we can conclude that the research hypothesis was confirmed.

This analysis found that sex contributes to explaining the variance in Physical violence. The contribution of gender was statistically significant. And found that among boys, the level of Physical violence is higher than among girls ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The present study was conducted among Arab junior high and high school students in Israel, and for the first time, examined violence among Arab students, with reference to the variables of well-being, social support, religiosity and self-control. In general, one can say that the present study's findings support most of the theories. In addition, they correspond to and reinforce findings from previous studies obtained among other populations in Israel and across the world. For example, (Ronen, 2003, 2005; Baron, 2003; Ozden & Koksoy, 2009; Stuart & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005).

Self-Control

The results of this study point to a clear, negative correlation between skills of self-control and Physical violence; i.e. it was found that among teenagers who exhibit skills of self-control, the level of Physical violence was lower, in addition to the mediating effect of self-control on the correlation between expo-

sure to Physical violence in the family and Physical violence. This finding is consistent with other studies in which a negative correlation was found between Physical violence and self-control (Agbaria et al., 2013).

A possible explanation for the finding is linked to the manner in which the skills of self-control are actioned, i.e. the ability of the teenager to identify automatic thoughts, to use diversions and alternative thinking, and to find alternative solutions which are skills of self-control, will lead him to choose controlled, planned, adaptive and less impulsive behavior. An additional explanation relies on Dodge et al.'s model for social information processing (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Dodge & Coie, 1987). According to this model, the ability to process information in a more balanced (less distorted) manner is dependent upon applying the appropriate interpretation to social and internal clues encoded by the individual. This interpretation will lead to a choice of controlled and adaptive behavior. The choice of this behavior rather than physically violent behavior is an expression of the application of skills of self-control.

Degree of Religiosity

This study's findings indicated a clear, negative correlation between religiosity and Physical violence. Research findings correspond to previous findings in research conducted on the subject (Koeing, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Kaldestad, 1996; Thoresen & Harris, 2002; Khodayarifard, Ghoobaribonab, & Shokohiyekta, 2000; Francis et al., 2004; Shehni, Yeylagh, Movahhed, & Shokrkon, 2002; Zimmeran, McDermut, & Mattia, 2000; Amrai, Zalani, Arfai, & Sharifian, 2011).

This correlation between religiosity and Physical violence can be explained via various behavioral and cognitive approaches. According to this approach, an individual's behavior is a product of interpretations he applies to events he experiences. Therefore, every event that occurs obtains an interpretation that awakens different feelings, and these lead to behavior (Beck, 1995). From this explanation, we can conclude that religious people sustain beliefs and schema that provide them with a great deal of meaning in life—meaning that makes it easier for them to apply interpretations that will result in a calmer life management, and schema that can assist them in attaining self-control and well-being. In a preliminary qualitative study on a religious teenage population, the following schema arose: "In the end, God will help me"; "I don't permit myself behaviors that might anger God"; "More acceptance and patience in crises will earn me more divine rewards", together with many schema based on chapters from the Koran or sayings by the prophet Muhammed, such as "Look for seventy excuses for your brother before you judge him"; "Strength is not seen through force but rather in holding back when angry"; "One must accept all of God's decrees" (Agbaria & Wattad, 2011).

These schema render time an integral portion of the believing person's cognitive-behavioral repertoire and they will begin to influence and guide his behavior in various situations. In addition to the behavioral portion of religious belief expressed in doing good deeds, prayers, visits to mosques, religious ceremonies, donations, classes and the social support represented in these activities, they can improve one's spirit and increase a sense of belonging while providing meaning to life.

Social Support

This study's findings reveal a clear, negative correlation

between social support and Physical violence. This finding is consistent with previous research in the field, where most report on a positive contribution to social support in an improvement in mental health and reduction in levels of violence (Irwin, LaGory, Ritchey, & Fitzpatrick; 2008; Marroquin, 2011) and suicidal thoughts (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Harris & Molock, 2000; Paykel, 1994; Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004; Talaie, Fayyazi, & Ardani, 2009; Travis, Lyness, Shields, King, & Cox, 2004).

Social support is linked to an increase in the sense of one's belonging, where it is likely to decrease the feeling of pressure through a response to the need for a bond with others via the distraction from worries linked to the situation or via alleviation in one's mood (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Professional literature presents two principal types of effect of social support on well-being. One is the main effect, according to which social support has a direct positive effect on an individual's well-being regardless of pressure situations. The basic claim is that support has the power to develop and increase feelings of ability, self-worth or self-efficacies. These feelings enable the individual to successfully cope with life's challenges. The second type is the buffer effect, according to which social support has an indirect effect on the individual's well-being, via the decrease of negative implications in response to feelings of pressure (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1994; Cohen & Wills, 1985). In this manner, social support constitutes a coping strategy (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1994).

Social support can mediate pressure by affecting preliminary or secondary assessments of an event (Cohen & Edwards, 1989). When the individual sees the support network as being available to him, it may suppress assessments of potential threats stemming from the event; to encourage the individual to believe in his ability to cope with the event and/or to encourage use of adaptive coping strategies, such as: problem-solving and positive reassessment (Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Cohen & McKay, 1984). Therefore, and according to Lazarus & Folkman's model (1984), social support is conceived as an environmental resource that can assist in coping with pressure and difficult life situations.

Well-Being

Study results reveal a negative correlation between well-being and violence. This finding adds to the knowledge accumulated in previous studies, which have pointed to an inverse correlation between well-being and violence among teenagers (Farrell & Bruce, 1997; Agbaria et al., 2013). A possible explanation for this finding is based on the significance found in the level of happiness in the acceleration of flexible thinking that leads to efficiency in problem-solving, to self-control, to thinking ahead, and to caution in risky situations (Aspinwall, 1998; Isen & Reeve, 2005). In other words, positive feelings contribute to less impulsive and more controlled and planned behavior. In addition, previous studies (Aresenio et al., 2000) reveal that positive feelings decrease frustration and anxiety, i.e. happy teenagers can better cope with frustration. They can develop social and interpersonal skills that serve as a defense against frustrating and provocative events.

Conclusion

In conclusion, study findings point to the contribution of a

number of resources in mediating violence among Arab teenagers. The research sheds light on the significance of personal resources like self-control, religiosity and well-being, together with environmental resources like social support, in a decrease in the levels of violence. These study findings provide a theoretical contribution to knowledge accumulated in reference to violence among teenagers and students, alongside a contribution to its implementation, expressed in the development of coaching programs and programs on the use of skills that stress the importance of developing self-control, happiness and the developing of means to attain social support, together with an emphasis on the significance of attaining various religious values to improve social behavior and decrease the tendency for violence.

A number of factors limit the generalizability of this study. One of them is linked to the sampling. This study is based on a convenience sample that is not probabilistic and includes Muslim Arab teenagers from The Triangle only. The Triangle region in Israel constitutes approximately 20% of the total Muslim Arab population. The sampling does not include representation of Christians, Druze and Bedouin (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009) and therefore it is recommended to undertake this study on a more representative sampling in future.

In addition, the present study utilizes self-report questionnaires. These questionnaires provide the student's perspective, but other elements, like groups of parents or peers may provide different information. In the present study, all study variables involve the teenager's personal, internal elements. Thoughts and feelings cannot be evaluated via the teenager's external environment. However, one must remember that the basis of self-reporting is limited and points to a tendency only. Therefore it is recommended in future to utilize additional research tools, such as questionnaires to teachers and peer groups. Another limitation linked to the aspect of self-report questionnaires touches on social desirability.

Continued studies may refine a portion of the findings in this study and may shed light on the relevant issues in this study, such as: economic status and study achievements.

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