Assessment of Social emotional safety of elementary schools in District 16 of Tehran

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Abstract: *The aim of this study was to investigate the social emotional safety of elementary schools in District 16 of Tehran as one of components of safe schools. In this survey research, among all elementary school teachers in the District 16 of Tehran (420 people), 201 persons were studied in a random classified way based on Cochran's formula. In order to collect the desired data, the researcher-built questionnaire was used. This questionnaire measured aspect of social emotional safety. The face validity was confirmed through an experimental and content implementation by the judgment of experts and a comprehensive literature review and also reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha that it was obtained 0.792 for questionnaire of social emotional security showing acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. The data analysis in this study was performed using SPSS software in descriptive and inferential levels through descriptive statistics (frequency tables, averages, standard deviation and percentage) and inferential statistics such as univariate t-test and Chi-square (Chi 2). The results showed that the social emotional safety of the elementary schools in District 16 of Tehran have been mediocre ($p < 0.05$). This issue needs considerable attention of policymakers and programmers of educational system for school safety.*
Keywords: *Safe School, Social emotional security, Elementary schools.*

I. Introduction

The most important asset of any society is manpower of that society. In Iran, students make up a large percentage of the population. The elementary schools are the first social institution that children come to it and spend an important periods of years of their own life that is simultaneous with their physical and mental growth (Salehpour Dehkourdi et al., 2010). School is considered to be a reliable place for education of humans and plays a very significant role in providing healthy and bracing live and training people with healthy behavior. Students spend a relatively long time of their time in school and any inattention in keeping and supplying their health will cause irreparable injury (Ranjbar et al., 2013), because school after family has the most important role in adolescents' health. Health is one of the most important and elementary rights and needs of human life that is one of the most prominent government programs and to achieve its highest level it should be paid attention to all groups in society. Students have a special importance because they are future of society as well as are a part of the vulnerable groups of society (Ranjbar et al., 2013). A safe, comprehensive and receptor school is a fundamental factor for success and students' health (Mowen, 2013). The school is a special social space that training and growth of today children, that are the future of society, is formed in it (Banning, 2008). Inasmuch as students make up more than 18 million of Iranian population. So, attention to safety in training environments is the most effective and the most fundamental factor of natural growth from physical, mental and learning aspects in students (Nozari et al., 2013). The studies have shown that improper conditions in schools can impose many complications to present people in that environment (Kermani et al., 2013). Salehpour Dehkourdi et al. (2010) and Malekoutian et al. also reported that whenever safety situation of schools are not in an acceptable level, occurrence of events, injury and death of students are possible. Safe schools increase mental safety of students and their families (Hashemi Fesharaki, 2008). Violence and crime in schools affect safety (Kupchik, 2013) and providing healthy social environment depends on creating safe and supporting schools (Maleki, 1388). Educational institutions specially schools as fundamental and character maker ones are of the most sensitive and most important institutions in every country. Because according to large numbers of students as future of the country, any change and revolution about it results in deep transformation in society extent. Whatever schools are close to ideals and result in growth of identity, nature, cultural independence, and life skills, it underlies the presence of successful generation in future and eventually we can observe the development and prosperity of the country. Healthy student makes healthy family and healthy family makes healthy society and undoubtedly, success of educational system in creating a safe environment can underlie the mentioned cases. Slight research has already addressed the safety assessment of schools in the country and most studies have emphasized the physical safety aspects of schools and less investigated the social emotional safety

situation. This study aims to assess the emotional safety of primary schools in Tehran (District 16) from the perspective of teachers and to investigate safety of schools in Tehran from this point of view.

II. Research background

Teman and Osher (2013) in a study that they have conducted in the field of safety of school in South Africa, pointed this that violence among students, poor sanitary conditions, lack of interactions between students and parents, lack of hope, optimism among teachers and students affect the safety of schools. Netshitahame and Vollenhoven (2002) pointed that emotional violence and physical violence are effective on the safety of schools and this affects the mental and physical safety of students. Undoubtedly, if it is not paid attention to these social abnormalities in schools, its consequences will damage families and whole society. Nijs et al. (2014) in a study entitled "perceived school safety is strongly associated with adolescent mental health problems." investigated 1130 guidance school students. The results were analyzed using logistic regression test. Psychopathy was collected through reports of clinical psychologists and also using questionnaires and checklist of disorders. The results showed that perceived school safety is a predictor of problems related to mental health in adolescents. This relation was stronger in girls and girl students with a lower perception about safety in schools showed mental health problems better. This problem also among low-aged adolescents was more visible than others. From their view point, the teacher should help students to understand and should facilitate the environment for students. Also, they have referred to amplification of the emotional issues, care and adequate supervision on students, teaching students comprehensively (scientific and theoretical), attention to individual differences of students, amplification of disciplinary rules, and amplification of positive supporting environment for students. Lacoe (2014) in a study entitled "unequally safe: the race gap in school safety" reported that school safety is a vital issue for school staffs, policymakers, and parents. Attempt for improvement of safety is often focused on decreasing the violence in school and disorder in mental health. But still, there is a little information about how students feel safe in school and how safety is distinguishably known in various schools. In this study, data were collected through polling about population of high school students in a large urban District. The results of this study showed that depending on the breed, students feel different safety in schools and there is a gap in feeling safe in schools among white and black students and among Hispanic and Asian students. The results showed that key characteristics of schools and residence locations of students are related to feeling safe in schools among students and this point has resulted in gap in the field of feeling safe among students. Investigating the feeling of safety among students showed that 65 percent of students do not feel mental safety and know the violence in schools in a high level. Mowen (2013) in a study entitled "parental involvement in school and the role of school security measures" investigated this issue that United States of America has experienced a considerable increase in use of security measures in governmental and private high schools during past three decades. Today, security measures such as utilization of police officers, metal detector, and security cameras are also becoming more common in corridors of U.S. schools. After this enhancement, a number of eager academics investigated to understand the effect of these security measures on students, but still slight studies have examined the effect of these security measures on students' parents. He in this study investigated the relationship of security measures at schools with formal and informal participation of parents. Regression results of this relationship showed that security measures in schools have caused decrease of the formal participation of parents in school security, but this point has not resulted in decrease of the informal participation of parents in security programs outside of the school for students. This means that security measures in U.S. schools have made parents more comfortable and most of them are in an attempt and participation to establish safety for students outside of the school and U.S. must have some measures to increase formal participation of parents in school safety, because school security measures and formal participation of parents together will lead to improvement of the situation and creating more security in schools. Kupchik (2013) in a study referred to this point that today violence and crime in schools and around schools in the USA have been increased and nowadays, security in schools has been considered. In this area, the presence of the police, closed-circuit cameras, and the other measures in governmental schools have had a growing trend. Social science scientists usually have been concerned about security of schools in which poor and non-white students are educating. Warne et al. (2013) in a study in Sweden pointed that an equal and health educational environment provides learning opportunity for students. They investigated schools in Sweden and considered willingness to support, willingness to improve, promotion of the school forces for more training as a necessity for more learning for students with a lower educational advancement. They reported that teachers and school staffs must pay attention to individual differences of students. Van Houtte and Van Maele (2012) in a study reported that confidence among students and confidence between students and teachers are a measure that must be considered by school teachers in order to amplification of school safety and according to current situation and performed investigations, it needs improvement and further investigations by teachers. In order to amplification of school safety in this study, they knew the enhancement of confidence level in schools, between students and teachers and also among students are important.

Nurmi (2012) in a study reported that teachers have fewer involvements against students with a more educational advancement; also these students have less dependence and have close relationships and more

friendly with teachers than the other students. He also reported that teachers have more involvements against students with a lower educational advancement and they observe behavioral problems in them; and there is such a desirable and friendly relationship between teachers and these students. Teachers also need related trainings in the field of reception of students and creating confidence, because existence of confidence and reception feeling of students by teachers is one of the factors creating security in schools. Theoklitou et al. (2012) in a study in Cyprus investigated the physical and emotional abuse by teachers in elementary schools. The results showed that student gender was in a relationship with physical and emotional abuse of students in school; boy students are victims of three harassments including ignoring, physical abuse, and emotional abuse more than girl students. While harassments do not depend on the grade students are educating or the gender of teachers. They reported that these cases severely decrease school safety for students. Van Houtte and Van Maele (2011) in a study investigated 2104 teachers in Belgium and reported that teacher perception from train ability of a student and train ability of student are effective on the confidence between student and the teacher; and whatever teachers assess the students with a better ability, the probability that they trust them and mutual trust formed among them will increase; also the their results showed that teacher trust is effective on the organizational context of school. Elyse Jacobson (2009) in a study investigated the understanding and experiences of students from high school safety. In this study, he examined eighth year students. Their results showed that students feel safe when they can trust their peers and school staffs and there is a good relationship among them; also, students feel safe when school leaders believe in ways and policies and answer students' concerns through significant methods. Sharma (2008) based on a research that he conducted in Nepal, reported that whatever school administration is out of focus and school is administered by parents and parents actively contribute in this field, a better base for creating a safe atmosphere will generated in schools and the probability of educational success and advancement for students will be increased. Gladden (2005) in a study entitled "building school communities and making school safer" has referred to important properties, namely attention to social capitals (more relationships, feeling of respect, empathy and etc) between students and teachers, response to students' feelings, training staffs to deal with violent behaviors, disciplinary policies with mutual respect, respect of school staffs to culture and student community. Gladden (2005) implemented these important properties in Chicago schools and the result of study showed that disciplinary policies and mutual respect have decreased violent behaviors in schools.

III. Method

The method used in this study is descriptive survey, cross sectional and quantitative research from aspect of implementation method, type, and type of data, respectively. Statistical population in this study was the teachers of governmental elementary schools of Tehran (District 16). Number of governmental elementary schools of District 16 of Tehran was 420 based on formal statistics of Education and Training. This statistics was received from Education and Training of Tehran and 201 of them were selected based on Cochran's formula. The sampling method of this study is classified random that has been classified based on boys- and girly-being of schools. 52 percent of teachers and 48 percent of them are employed in girl elementary schools and in boy elementary schools, respectively. According to the ratio of the samples, 104 and 97 questionnaires were distributed in girl schools and boy schools, respectively. In this research, social emotional safety aspect of schools is measured using research-built questionnaire. Social emotional safety has been drawn with 16 questions based on Likert scale (very low, low, medium, high, and very high). This aspect is measured from view point of teachers using questions such as existence of an environment to create trust among students to can easily discuss with teachers and the other school leaders about their needs, concerns, problems, and dreams, trust among students in schools, respectful behavior with students in schools, emotional and verbal abuse of students by the other students in schools, reception of students by educational and executive cadre of school.

Face and content validity were used in this study in order to validate the questionnaire. A test run was applied to assess the face validity so that questionnaire was experimentally distributed among 30 of research samples and it was filled; filling method of questionnaires was assessed. It was found in pilot stage that research samples have accurately understood what has been the purpose of the research and they have assessed what has been the purpose of the research. Questions have been clear for respondents and consequently the questionnaire had face validity. The base of content validity in this study was judgment of experts and literature survey so that in order to investigate the content validity, after drawing questionnaire, each of questions was assessed by masters and experts to connection of items with the variable be measured. After conducted investigations, improper and obscure items were omitted or modified. Reliability measurement or repeatability of questionnaire items were obtained 0.792 using Cronbach's alpha indicating acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. Data analysis in this study was performed using SPSS software in descriptive and inferential levels. Description of data was done using descriptive statistics (frequency table, percentage, average, and standard deviation). Considering measurement level of variables, inferential statistics of single variable t-test and Chi-square (chi 2) were applied to measure hypotheses.

IV. Findings

In this study, 201 teachers from elementary schools were selected from 104 girl schools (51.7 percent) and 97 boy schools (48.3 percent). 176 of teachers was female (87.6 percent) and 25 of them was male (12.4 percent). 30 of respondents (14.9 percent) had diploma, 60 (29.9 percent) of them had associate degree, 100 (49.8 percent) of them had Bachelor of Science, and 11 (5.5 percent) of them had M.Sc.

Table 1- Description of social emotional safety of schools

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Very high	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
High	58	28.6	28.6	32.6
Medium	121	60.4	60.4	93.0
Low	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	201	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen from Table 1, 60%, 33%, and 7% of teachers have assessed social emotional safety aspect from safety aspects of schools of Tehran (District 16) medium, high, and very high, respectively.

Univariate t-test

Univariate t-test was used to assess social emotional safety of schools of Tehran, District 16 from view point of teachers. Univariate investigates the significant difference of average of study variable with a constant number ($\mu 0$ that is given by the researcher). In the current study, this number has been obtained from multiplying 3 (means average assessment) by the number of questions related to hypothesis. The initial assumption (h0) and opposite assumption (h1) in this test are as follows:

$$\begin{cases} h_0 : \mu = \mu_0 \\ h_1 : \mu \neq \mu_0 \end{cases}$$

In which μ is average of the variable examined and $\mu 0$ is a constant.
How is social emotional safety of Tehran schools (District 16) from view point of teachers?

Table 2-Assessment of social emotional safety aspect using univariate t-test

	Average of the test=48					
	Statistics t	Degree of freedom	Significance level	Average difference	Confidence interval of 95%	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Aspect of social emotional safety	-1.898	200	0.058	-0.95	-2.54	1.36

As can be seen from Table 2, the significance level has been obtained more than 0.05 and therefore, the initial assumption is not rejected in level of 0.05. Thus, average of aspect of social emotional; safety does not have a significant difference with average of the test. Consequently, aspect of social emotional safety of elementary schools of Tehran, District 16 has been assessed medium and improper from view point of teachers.

Table 3-Descriptive indices of aspect of social emotional safety

	Average	Standard deviation
Aspect of social emotional safety	47.05	8.132

As can be observed from Table 3, average of the aspect of social emotional safety of elementary schools of Tehran, District 16 has been obtained 47.05 from view point of teachers.

Table 4-Investigating the relationship between gender and assessment of index of social emotional safety from view point of teachers

	Statistics	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Chi-square	0.452	3	0.929
Number	201		

As can be seen from Table 4, the significance level has been obtained more than 0.05 and therefore, gender does not have a significant relationship with assessment of index of social emotional safety of schools in District 16 of Tehran from view point of teachers.

Table 5-Investigating the relationship between education and assessment of index of social emotional safety from view point of teachers

	Statistics	Significance level
Chi-square	0.014	0.847
Number	201	

As can be seen from Table 5, the significance level has been obtained more than 0.05 and therefore, education does not have a significant relationship with assessment of index of social emotional safety of schools in District 16 of Tehran from view point of teachers.

V. Discussion and conclusion

This study has examined the social emotional safety of schools from view point of governmental elementary school teachers in District 16 of Tehran. Accordingly, 201 elementary school teachers in District 16 of Tehran were studied. 60% of teachers have assessed the social emotional safety index from components of elementary school safety in District 16 of Tehran "medium", 32% "high and very high", and 7% "low". Assessment of social emotional aspect of elementary schools in Tehran (District 16) from view point of teachers was measured based on univariate t-test. Results showed that in the significance level of 0.05, the average of the social emotional aspect does not have a significant difference with the average of the test (48). In this research, the average of the social emotional aspect of schools from view point of teachers has been obtained 47.05 and 60% of respondents have reported this aspect "medium". Consequently, social emotional safety aspect of elementary schools in District 16 of Tehran from view point of teachers has been assessed "medium". It was found in this research that elementary schools in District 16 of Tehran have a medium social emotional safety from view point of teachers. Consequently, schools are still far from global standards and ideal level from view point of social emotional safety. In this research, researchers investigated issues such as positive supporting environment, trust among students and between students and teachers, respectful behavior with students and reception of them, emotional, verbal, and physical harassments, use of labels and improper words, and doing team work. It has been reported that social emotional safety aspect of elementary schools In District 16 of Tehran is far from ideal and proper state based on view point of teachers. In this field, Nijs et al. (2014) also studied understood safety of schools with mental health problems in adolescents and reported that understood safety of schools is a predictor of problem related to mental health in adolescents and this problem among low-aged adolescents has been more considered. Social emotional safety aspects of this study are nearly consistent with Nijs et al results (2014). Also, Lacoe (2014) in a study investigated feeling of mental safety in students. It was found that 65% of students do not feel mentally safe and they consider violence in schools in a high level. School safety is a vital issue for school staffs, policymakers, and parents and it needs more attention. Attention to individual differences of students is one of the developed issues in components considered for measuring the social emotional safety aspect in the current study, a point that Nurmi previously has referred to it and has stated that it is necessary to pay attention to create better safety in schools. Also, trust among students, trust between school leaders and students, and trust among teachers have been considered as a necessary point by Van Houtte and Van Maele (2012) in creating better safety in schools. In this study, also social emotional safety aspect of schools was investigated for measurement purpose. Also, Jacobson (2009) reported that student feel safe in schools when they trust their peers and school staffs and there are good relationships among them. In the present study, this issue with more comprehensive details that that of Jacobson (2009) was considered for assessment of school safety. Theoklitou et al. (2012) also considered physical and emotional harassments as a necessary issue for assessment of safety that this issue is consistent with the results of current study. We can also refer to the studies of Westling (2010), Vaillancourt et al. (2010), Gladden (2005), Boyce (2002, quoted by Sereda, 2005) that assessed social emotional safety from school safety aspects and they believed that social emotional safety aspect is not considered well in schools. All studies and researches conducted in the field of social emotional safety aspect are a reason for this issue that social emotional safety aspect is one of important aspects for creating safe schools and this must be considered by school leaders and staffs. Providing a healthy social environment depends on creating a safe and supporting school. Evidences investigated and situation reported indicate that schools are still far from an ideal, standard and high level status and there are some points for improvement and achieving a standard situation. It seems that social emotional safety aspect in Education and Training has received less attention. Undoubtedly, mutual respect of people to each other is firstly formed in the family structure and in second stage, students modeled their own teachers. Probably, psychological interventions on teachers and students can increase the safety of this index. Self-esteem of a student are under effect of people behavior and this is a point that if teachers pay attention to it, it can result in higher social emotional safety in schools and society. Discipline and order in school affairs can be social emotional safety both for students and teachers. What is clear is that a desirable discipline and order are not governed in Education and Training in view point of authors; and there is not supervision on quality of teacher education; perhaps if this important issue received a special attention, it can lead to more safety in social emotional safety aspect. It seems that school space for students to express their own emotional problems is not desirable and a psychologist and consultant do not exist in many schools. If probably every school has some active psychologists and consultants in interaction with students and they closely monitor their behavior, it can be possible to take a step to improve social emotional safety of schools. It is suggested that professional trainings in this field for teachers and leaders be considered to improve social emotional safety in schools every year and they are given necessary education in the field of treating with students, how to interact with students, creating a friendly atmosphere, and how to amplify the self-esteem in students. It is worth noting that the results of the present study can help policymakers and planners of educational system to improve safety in schools, productivity and efficiency of Education and Training, and finally to improve society health.

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