# SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE BASED ON GENDER IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: A FIELD STUDY AT RIZAK MOHAMED ESSGHIR HIGH SCHOOL, AIN SINOUR, SOUK AHRAS.

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to identify the levels of symbolic violence among students at the Rizak Muhammad Al-Saghir Secondary School in Ain Sennour, Souk Ahras, with its three dimensions represented by "symbols, signs, and meanings." The first dimension consists of 5 phrases, the second dimension "hidden and shadowed violence and suppression" consists of 5 phrases, and the third dimension, "freedom violations," consists of 3 phrases. The study sample included 159 students from different academic specializations, including scientific, literary, and technical disciplines. We adopted a descriptive approach to achieve the objectives of this study. In this research, we used a questionnaire developed based on theoretical literature, and we calculated its reliability and validity. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 23, utilizing statistical methods such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The study showed that the level of symbolic violence based on gender was high among the study sample, with a total mean of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.7, with no statistically significant differences attributed to the gender variable.

Keywords: violence, symbolic violence, gender, school environment

#### 1. Introduction

In the context of the nation-state, the school has become the sole option for individuals to educate their children and provide them with principles and values aimed at producing a coherent and integrated generation within their society and environment. The school also serves as a reflective mirror of social dynamics, as it encompasses various social categories that constitute social fields. It is influenced by the interactions and dynamics occurring in society, giving rise to diverse social phenomena with variable outcomes.

Pierre Bourdieu, in his sociological research on education, particularly focused on the school, presenting his unique concepts and theories formulated by synthesizing the theoretical heritage of sociology. He developed a critical social theory that aims to transcend symbolic violence, in addition to addressing male dominance and its relation to the emergence of feminism as a movement that challenges the unequal and subordinate position of women in society. This study seeks to apply Bourdieu's theories and examine the manifestations of gender-based symbolic violence in the school environment.

#### 2. Research Problem and Questions

Violence is one of the most important social phenomena that sociologists are interested in. Violence within educational institutions has witnessed a significant increase, as evident from lived experiences. Violence is the result of interactions between individuals and groups, and therefore, it can be approached from various perspectives, such as psychological and legal perspectives. Additionally, violence becomes more pronounced based on gender.

The sociological legitimacy of this topic lies in the sociological approach adopted by the sociological researcher. The sociological dimension differs in its levels between what is visible and sensory perceptible, and what is hidden and understood through meanings and symbols. Pierre Bourdieu labeled this hidden dimension as "symbolic violence." Therefore, we have decided to examine this type of violence through its presence and manifestations among

students at Rizak Muhammad Al-Saghir High School in Ain Sinour, Souk Ahras. This leads us to the following question: What are the manifestations of symbolic violence towards gender in Rizak Muhammad Al-Saghir High School, Ain Sinour, Souk Ahras?

From this main question, the following sub-questions arise, which we seek to answer:

- ➤ What are the attitudes of high school students towards the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the school environment based on gender?
- ➤ Are there statistically significant differences, at a significance level of 0.05, in the forms of symbolic violence attributed to gender?

# **B. Study Hypotheses:**

Attitudes of high school students towards the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the school environment are characterized by negativity.

There are no statistically significant differences, at a significance level of 0.05, in the forms of symbolic violence attributed to gender.

# C. Study Objectives:

To identify the nature of attitudes of high school students towards the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the school environment.

To determine the existence of a statistically significant correlation in the forms of symbolic violence attributed to gender.

# 3. Defining the concepts of the study:

**A. Definition of violence:** Ibn Manzur stated in his book Lisan Al-Arab that violence is derived from "unfairness" and it is the opposite of kindness. It refers to someone who is harsh and not compassionate in his actions. "To enforce" means to take something forcefully. In a saying, it is mentioned that God gives more importance to kindness than to violence, indicating that violence stems from intensity and hardship.

In English and French, violence is derived from the Latin words "Violence" and "Violentai," which refers to the unlawful use of force. Violence is the use of force without legal justification, rejecting law, justice, and submission to any authority. It is a characteristic of a person who is fierce, and it includes meanings of punishment, rape, and interfering with the freedoms of others. It is also defined as "the use of physical force (such as hitting, imprisonment, or execution) or the exertion of social pressure, and its legitimacy depends on societal recognition" (Semestre, 1993).

In terms of terminology, scientists have provided various definitions for "violence." However, they agree that it is a complex social phenomenon and a mechanism for self-defense against the dangers faced by humans for survival and continuity in life. This defensive mechanism is one of the innate instincts that awaken and activate in defensive or aggressive situations, where both humans and animals are equal.

Adler defines violence as a compensatory response to the feeling of deficiency or weakness (Al-Zain, 1986: 194).

Levinas believes that violence is "any act in which the individual behaves as if they alone exist, as if the world around them exists only to receive this act of violence" (Levinas, 1948: 20-23).

According to the Dictionary of Social Science Terminology, violence is "a strict expression of force exercised to compel an individual or a group to perform specific actions desired by another individual or group. Violence can take a physical form (such as hitting, imprisonment, or execution) or take the form of social pressure, and its legitimacy depends on social recognition" (Mohammed et al., 1985).

**B- Symbolic violence**: Pierre Bourdieu defines it as "any influence that succeeds in imposing specific meanings and imposing them through legitimate meanings, thus obscuring the power relations that underlie its own power, adding power relations to this specific,

symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1994: 5). The aim of symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is to impose domination and control over others, with the response of the other being voluntary based on their belief in the legitimacy recognized by the individual.

Bourdieu also sees symbolic violence as "hidden, unnoticed violence that affects the ideological and mental level and succeeds in imposing social representations by giving them legitimacy for domination" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). The practice of violence is invisible and imposed on individuals through these social representations, which are the means to confer legitimacy to dominance and control through the imposition of meanings by legitimate force.

**C- Definition of gender:** Gender is a social concept used to refer to "social relations between sexes" or "socially and culturally constructed relationships between women and men." When we talk about gender, we are referring to social gender, which is socially constructed through socialization and encourages specific behaviours or attitudes. In other words, gender refers to the social and cultural classification between masculinity and femininity.

**Gender** is associated with behaviour that transmits social and cultural understanding of self as male or female. It is something acquired through life according to the social and cultural attributes assigned to masculinity and femininity.

**D- Definition of the school environment:** It refers to the school building in terms of space, division, location, and its surrounding environment. It includes the design of classrooms, ventilation, lighting, heating, and everything related to the external courtyard. On the other hand, the school environment includes the set of conditions and factors available within the school (teachers, curriculum, activities, diverse services, peer group, buildings, facilities, etc.), as well as the internal relationships and other factors related to the student that influence and affect them with the aim of forming a comprehensive and interactive personality with the surrounding environment (Razaiqia, 2022).

#### 4. Previous Studies

Study 1: "Perceived Symbolic Violence and its Relationship to Learned Helplessness Among University Students" by Ali Hussein Ayid aimed to explore "perceived symbolic violence and its relationship to learned helplessness among students of the College of Arts at Al-Qadisiyah University." The study conducted a field survey on a sample of 200 randomly selected male and female students. The data collection instrument consisted of a 22-item scale for measuring perceived symbolic violence and a 24-item scale for measuring learned helplessness. The researcher employed appropriate statistical methods to analyze the data and reached several conclusions at the end of the study, including the existence of differences in perceived symbolic violence attributed to the variable gender. This study shares the independent variable, which is symbolic violence, and the use of a data collection instrument with our current study, although the populations' study differs.

Study 2: "Attitudes of Secondary School Students Towards Violence in the School Environment in Light of the Gender and Academic Specialization Variables" by Ali Mohammed aimed to examine "the attitudes of secondary school students towards violence in the school environment" and perceive differences in students' attitudes towards violence based on the gender and academic specialization variables. The sample consisted of 146 male and female students from L'aroussi Arab Secondary School in the Tiarat province, who were randomly selected during the 2018-2019 academic year. A questionnaire was used to measure attitudes towards violence in the school environment. The study found negative attitudes among students towards violence in the school environment, with males exhibiting more violent attitudes compared to females and literary students exhibiting more violent attitudes compared to scientific students. This study aligns with our study in terms of the research community and the data collection instrument, which relied on the symbolic violence scale, referring to the theoretical heritage of the variable. However, the results differed in terms of

students' attitudes towards symbolic violence, with males exhibiting more violent attitudes compared to females.

**Study 3: Pierre Bourdieu's study titled "Symbolic Violence"** in French secondary schools in 1972 is one of Bourdieu's most important propositions. Bourdieu's study reveals that there is violence practised by the official institution represented by the school through the entrenchment of arbitrariness and cultural domination experienced by learners within this social field. Bourdieu believes that the implicit goals of the school serve the integration between the school and the dominant class by highlighting mechanisms that reproduce social structures and legitimize class divisions within society.

# 5. Study Methodology

**A. Used Methodology:** This study aims to shed light on the phenomenon under study, which is symbolic violence in the school environment. To achieve this, the researcher employed a descriptive methodology, by obtaining and analyzing the respondents' answers and interpreting the phenomenon.

**B- Spatial and Temporal Boundaries of the Study:** Spatial Boundaries: The researcher conducted this study at Rizak Mohammed El Saghir Ibn Omar Secondary School in Ain Sennour. Temporal Boundaries: The field study was conducted during the months of January and February of the academic year 2022/2023.

**C-Study Population and Sample:** The study population consists of secondary school students at Rizak Mohammed El Saghir Ibn Omar Secondary School in Ain Sennour, Souk Ahras province, with a total of 357 male and female students for the academic year 2022/2023. Three key characteristics of the sample were identified, which are believed to have an impact on the study results: gender, academic level, and specialization.

Regarding the sample, a stratified sample of 159 male and female students was selected from the study population. This was done using the statistical equation (K. Thompson, 2012, pages 59-60) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1-p)}{\left[ [N-1(d^2 \div z^2)] + p(1-p) \right]}$$

This study deals with students ranging in age from 16 years and above 18 years. They represent the first, second, and third year of secondary school, with a total of 159 male and female students. They are distributed according to personal information as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Individuals by Personal Information

Gender		male	%	feminine	%	total
Gender		48	30.18	111	69.81	159
	scientific	34	53.12	30	46.87	64
Specialization	literary	10	11.76	75	88.23	85
	Technical	4	40	6	60	10
	The first is secondary	16	23.52	52	76.47	68
Educational level	The second is secondary	22	43.13	29	56.86	51
	third year in high school	10	25	30	74	40

Source: Prepared by researchers

**A. Statistical Methods Used in the Study:** In order to answer the research questions, after the field application stage, the researcher collected and processed the questionnaires using statistical software known as SPSS version 23. The following statistical methods were employed:

- $\checkmark$  Cronbach's alpha and Spearman's correlation coefficient for reliability and validity.
- ✓ Frequency distribution and percentages to describe the responses of the sample individuals.
  - ✓ Mean calculation for obtaining the weighted arithmetic mean.
- ✓ Standard deviation to measure the dispersion of the respondents' answers around the mean.
- ✓ One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine the significance of differences among means of three or more groups on a single dependent variable.
- **B. Study Instruments:** The researcher utilized two instruments according to the study requirements:

**Symbolic Violence Scale:** Pierre Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as "subtle, invisible violence that remains unrecognized by its perpetrators and victims simultaneously. It manifests in values, emotions, ethics, and culture, employing symbolic tools such as language, images, signs, meanings, and frequently occurs through ethical symbolic practice against victims." Based on this, the dimensions of symbolic violence can be identified as follows:

Set of symbols, signs, and meanings: Imposing power or authority indirectly to assert the legitimacy of rights and the legitimacy of symbolic violence.

Limiting freedoms: Imposing compliance and submission on individuals subjected to symbolic violence, aiming to establish social beliefs and consolidate them in their minds.

Hidden justified violence and despotism: Violence that, along with other forms of violence, causes harm and damage to others. It differs in its performance and appearance as it is hidden and not clear.

The questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection tool because it aims to consult the respondents on the topic and, based on the theoretical literature, measures symbolic violence. Some of the relevant scales used were:

Al-Saadi's scale for symbolic interaction.

Scale by Buthaina Mansour Al-Hulu and Faten Abdul Jabbar Al-Khazraji.

The adapted questionnaire consisted of 13 statements formulated in a descriptive style, each of which was answered on a five-point Likert scale, as shown in the following table:

Table 2: Types of Response and Degree in the Symbolic Violence Scale

Adoption	Approve	Approve	Neutral	Disapprove	Strongly
Rate	Strongly				Disapprove
Estimation	5	4	3	2	1

- $\checkmark$  The first dimension, "Symbols, Signs, and Meanings," consists of the following items: 1, 3, 4, 10, 12.
- ✓ The second dimension, ". Hidden Projected Violence and Oppression," consists of the following items: 6, 7, 8, 11, 13.
- $\checkmark$  While the third dimension, "Violation of Freedoms," consists of the following items: 2, 5, 9

## **C- Psychometric properties of the study instruments:**

Reliability of the measurement tool: The reliability of the measurement tool was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient as an indicator of the tool's consistency. The results obtained are presented in the following table:

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Reliability

Domains	Expressions	The Cronbach's alpha
Symbolic Violence	13	0,84

Source: Prepared by researchers based on SPSS 23 output

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the items of Symbolic Violence is 0.84, which exceeds the threshold of 0.70. Therefore, the measurement tool demonstrates a high degree of reliability and is suitable for study and analysis. It can be inferred that the scale exhibits high validity and reliability, making it appropriate for data collection.

Internal consistency: Internal consistency is based on the correlation between each item and the total score of the dimension. The Spearman correlation coefficient was calculated to assess its significance statistically, as follows

Table 4: shows the correlation coefficients with the whole questionnaire

Expressions	Correlation coefficient	Expressions	Correlation coefficient	Expressions	Correlation coefficient	
1	,538**	6	,626**	11	,754**	
2	,384**	7	,477**	12	,577**	
3	,678**	8	,565**	13	**655,	
4	,721**	9	,607**			
5	,497**	10	,624**	]		

Source: Prepared by researchers based on spss 23 output

Based on Table 4 we can observe that all correlation coefficients are positive, indicating a strong positive monotonic relationship, as they approach +1. This is statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05.

#### 6. Analysis of the descriptive study results:

First, let's present and discuss the results of the first hypothesis, which states that the attitudes of secondary school students towards the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the school environment are predominantly positive. To test the validity of this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation were used. The test results are shown in Table (5).

Table 5 illustrates the attitudes of secondary school students towards the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the school environment based on gender

		ions ns.								ıte	
The number.	The phrases.	The repetition and proportions.	Approve Strongly	Approve	Neutral	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	Mean	Standard Deviation	Adoption Rate	. Order
1	My colleagues ignore the individual who	ك	63	72	24	/	/	4,24	0,7	.ge	6
1	they perceive as seeking to bother them.	%	39,6	45,3	15,1	/	/	4,24	0,7	_	U
2	My colleagues deliberately provoke	ك	50	54	55	/	/	3,96	0,18	.ge	13
2	others under the pretext of joking	%	31,4	34	34,5	/	/	3,90	0,10	Г	13
3	My colleagues turn their faces away to	ك	56	72	31	/	/	4,15	0,72	e Large Large Large	11
3	express their rejection of others.	%	35,2	45,3	19,5	/	/	4,13	0,72		11
4	My colleagues express mockery through	ك	70	64	25	/	/	4,28	0,72	rge	5
7	contemptuous glances to insult others.	%	44	40,3	15,7	/	/	7,20	0,72	Laı	J
	My colleagues disregard the presence of	ك	75	56	28	/	/			d)	
5	others who are of lower status than them.	%	47,2	35,2	17,6	/	/	4,29	0,75	Large	4
6	My colleagues succeed in belittling their		63	65	31	/	/	4,2	0,74	.ge	0
U	opponents who disagree with them.	%	39,6	40,9	19,5	/	/	4,4	0,74	Laı	0

Revista Universitara de Sociologie – Issue 3/2023

7	Minimizing the significance of others makes it easier to control them.	<u>ئ</u> %	70 44	67 42,1	22 13,8	/	/	4,3	0,7	Large	3
8	My colleagues believe that many people	<u>ئ</u>	58	71	30	/	/	4,17	0,72	arge	10
Ü	deserve to be ridiculed.	%	36,5	44,7	18,9	/	/	1,17	0,7 2	La	
0	My colleagues interrupt the conversation	ك	60	77	22	/	/	4,23	0,67	arge	7
9	of those who disagree with them.	%	37,7	48,4	13,8	/	/	4,23	0,07	Laı	<b>'</b>
10	My colleagues use body language	ك	52	55	22	/	/	4,18	0,65	arge	q
10	to express their anger.	%	32,7	53,5	13,8	/	/	4,10	0,03	Laı	9
11	My colleagues feel happy when they	এ	77	64	18	/	/	4,37	0,68	arge	2
11	mock someone in front of others.	%	48,4	40,3	11,3	/	/	4,37	0,00	Laı	
12	My colleagues tend to convey their	ك	38	102	19	/	/	4,11	0,58	arge	12
12	ideas through hand gestures.	%	23,9	64,2	11,9	/	/	4,11	0,36	Laı	12
13	My colleagues put others in	ك	96	56	7	/	/	4,55	0.50	·ge	1
13	embarrassing situations to mock them	%	0,4	5,2	,4			4,55	0,58	Lar	1
The weight	The weighted arithmetic mean.									La rg	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS program.

Table 5 shows the results of the SPSS program using descriptive statistics, indicating that the mean of symbolic violence in the school environment is 4.23, with a standard deviation of 0.7. This indicates that the level of symbolic violence among secondary school students at Rizak Mohammed Al-Saghir Intermediate School is positive and high, which confirms the first hypothesis stating the level of symbolic violence practiced by the studied sample.

The thirteenth phrase ranked first in terms of frequency with an average of 4.55 and a standard deviation of 0.58. The eleventh phrase ranked second with an average of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.68. In the third rank, the seventh phrase had an average of 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.7, followed by the fifth phrase with an average of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.75. The fourth phrase came next with an average of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.72. The sixth rank was occupied by the first phrase with an average of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.7. In the seventh rank, the ninth phrase had an average of 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.67. The sixth phrase came in the eighth rank with an average of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.74, followed by the tenth phrase in the ninth rank with an average of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 0.72. In the eleventh rank, the phrase had an average of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.72, followed by the twelfth phrase with an average of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 0.58. The last rank returned to the second phrase with an average of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.18.

This can be explained by considering the spatial location of the institution and the nature of the area. Despite not being an urban area, its proximity to the state headquarters, which is only 9 km away, allowed the residents of this village to have more interaction and dealings with the state headquarters. This led to the simulation of urban living and the adoption of the same behaviours. This also resulted in a lack of social relationships among its members, which was reflected in the school community, specifically secondary school students. The researcher observed that they tried to keep up with urbanization and were fascinated by it. Their behaviour was characterized by symbolic violence, which aims to assert and prove their existence and control over others. This aligns with the adolescent stage, which is characterized by personality development and the assertion of one's existence as a symbol of maturity and freedom.

These results contradict the study by "Ali Mohammed" entitled "Attitudes of Secondary School Students towards the Phenomenon of Violence in the School Environment in light of the variables of gender and academic specialization." The study found a negative orientation of the researched individuals towards violence in general in the school environment. However, it agreed with the study by Ali Hussein titled "Perceived Symbolic

Violence and Its Relationship to Learned Helplessness among University Students (Abed A., 2016, pp. 337-377)."

This result can be interpreted according to Bourdieu's theory that students perceive the forms of symbolic violence they are subjected to by their peers. The students' responses to the research questionnaire revealed that they suffer from their peers' lack of interest in them and their attempts to impose their opinions and ideas without providing them with an opportunity to discuss or participate in decision-making. This has led the students to experience symbolic violence and indirect violent practices directed towards them, which affects their psychological and social well-being.

These findings indicate the need for intervention programs and educational initiatives that promote positive interactions, empathy, and conflict resolution skills among secondary school students. Additionally, raising awareness about the consequences of symbolic violence and its impact on individuals' mental health and overall well-being is crucial for creating a safe and respectful school environment.

As for the second hypothesis, which posits that there are statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level attributed to the gender variable, to test the validity of this hypothesis, the following method was used:

One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine the significance of differences among means of three or more groups on a single dependent variable, The test results are shown in Table 6.

Table No. 6: Represents the results of the differences, in the forms of symbolic violence attributed to gender

Statistical treatment dimension	gender	sample	Arithmeti c mean	standard deviation	D. Freedo-m	significanc e level	Sig value	estimation			
Symbols, Signs,	males	48	4.20	0,36	3,08	0,05	0.025	"Statistically			
and Meanings	females	111	4.19	0,44				significant"			
Hidden Projected	males	48	4.34	0.39	5.63	0,05	0.42	"Statistically insignificant"			
Violence and Oppression	females	111	4.31	0.49							
"Violation of	males	48	4.18	0.51	2.19	0,05	0.022	"Statistically			
Freedoms	females	111	4.16	0.44							insignificant"

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS program.

The average score for males in the dimension of "Symbols, Signs, and Meanings" was 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.36. For females, the average score was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.44. The independent t-test revealed a calculated p-value of 0.025, indicating statistically significant differences in symbolic violence attributed to the gender variable.

Regarding the dimension of "Hidden Legitimized Violence," the average score for males was 4.34 with a standard deviation of 0.39, while for females, the average score was 4.31 with a standard deviation of 0.49. The independent t-test resulted in a calculated p-value of 0.42, indicating no statistically significant differences in this dimension based on gender.

However, in the third dimension, "Violation of Freedoms," the average score for males was 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.51, and for females, the average score was 4.16 with a

standard deviation of 0.44. The independent t-test revealed a calculated p-value of 0.022, indicating statistically significant differences in the dimension of violating freedoms based on gender.

In summary, the study found significant differences attributed to gender in the dimensions of "Symbols, Signs, and Meanings" and "Violation of Freedoms," with males scoring higher than females in both dimensions. The school environment faces challenges in shaping individuals' behaviour and integrating them into their external environment due to factors such as social upbringing, media openness, and social media.

# 7. Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be made:

Direct the educational staff to improve positive interaction among students, particularly in the third year of secondary school, and reduce academic pressures and burdens. Engage guidance counselors in addressing and mitigating the psychological and social effects of symbolic violence. Highlight the importance of addressing hidden forms of violence and their impact on individual development and adaptation to the environment. Explore the relationship between symbolic violence and other variables, particularly inputs and outcomes of the educational process.

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