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The Effectiveness of Religious Counseling in Reducing Verbal and Physical Aggression among University Students: A Field Study at the University of M'Sila

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Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the effectiveness of religious counseling in reducing verbal and physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach, with data collected via a structured questionnaire administered to a random sample of 90 Master's students.

The results revealed a statistically significant inverse correlation between religious counseling and aggressive behavior. Specifically, the findings indicated that religious counseling programs contribute to a moderate reduction in verbal aggression, while their impact on physical aggression ranged from weak to moderate. Furthermore, the study recommends the integration of religious counseling programs into university activities as an effective mechanism for fostering positive behavior and self-control among Students.

Keywords: Counseling, Religious Counseling, Aggressive Behavior, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aggressive behavior is one of the most significant challenges within the university environment, due to its negative impact on peer relationships, academic performance, and psychological adjustment. Aggression manifests in various forms according to different theoretical frameworks and contexts. Amidst the escalating psychological and social pressures students encounter during their academic journey, this aggression may be verbal, encompassing insults and the spread of rumors, or physical, such as assault and property destruction. Consequently, there is an urgent need for effective interventions to help students cope with these stressors positively and maintain a healthy, balanced educational environment.

Addressing this phenomenon requires integrated therapeutic interventions covering both psychological and behavioral dimensions. In this context, religious counseling emerges as a potent tool for enhancing psychological and social equilibrium. It aims to build a well-adjusted personality grounded in ethical principles through spiritual guidance and the cultivation of virtues such as justice and self-discipline (إبراهيم، 2018، ص 13). As an effective pedagogical approach, religious counseling contributes to behavior modification by instilling moral values, developing self-control skills, and fostering positive social interaction and tolerance. These elements collectively contribute to mitigating aggressive behavior and creating a more harmonious and respectful university atmosphere.

With rapid social and cultural developments, the demand for religious counseling services within universities has intensified, especially given the diverse psychosocial challenges that may drive some students toward aggressive behavioral patterns. Religious counseling is an essential component of the educational process; it assists students in self-understanding, discovering their potential, and skill development, enabling them to face academic and personal challenges within an ethical and social framework. Furthermore, it enhances students' self-awareness, fosters effective strategies for emotional regulation and impulse control, and strengthens social bonds by entrenching mutual respect, thereby reducing conflicts within the campus.

2. Study problem:

In recent years, the university environment has witnessed a notable increase in manifestations of aggressive behavior, in both its verbal and physical forms. This trend adversely affects the academic climate as well as the students' psycho-social adjustment. In this context, religious counseling emerges as a significant educational and psychological approach aimed at enhancing self-discipline, consolidating ethical values, and developing religious and behavioral awareness among students. Such an approach contributes to behavior modification and the mitigation of behavioral deviations within the university setting.

Aggressive behavior is a phenomenon that negatively affects both the individual and society, with impacts extending to psychological, social, and health dimensions. This necessitates diverse therapeutic interventions, including psychological,

behavioral, social, religious, and medical approaches (Berkowitz, 1989, p. 62). For the victim, the effects of aggression manifest as emotional trauma, loss of a sense of security and self-confidence, as well as feelings of guilt or self-blame and blaming others, which requires psychological and social support to overcome these consequences (Dodge & Coie, 1987, p. 1150). Regarding the aggressor, engaging in aggressive behavior increases the likelihood of its recurrence in the future through observational learning. Aggression also negatively impacts academic and social performance, raises health risks such as cardiovascular disorders, and repeated exposure to violence may lead to emotional desensitization and reduced empathy toward others (Bandura, 1973, p. 95).

Numerous previous studies have confirmed the positive role of religious counseling in behavior modification and the promotion of mental health. Al-Hashimi (2018) found that religious counseling contributes to reducing aggressive behavior among university students by instilling values of tolerance and positive dialogue. Similarly, Al-Anzi (2020) demonstrated that counseling based on religious values helps students cope with psychological pressures and reduces their recourse to aggression as a means of emotional release. Furthermore, Al-Mahdi (2017) revealed that students receiving regular religious counseling exhibit higher levels of self-control and emotional regulation compared to their peers. In the same vein, Al-Zoubi (2015) noted a decline in verbal and physical violence rates in educational institutions that integrate religious counseling into their pedagogical practices.

Other research, such as studies by Al-Hour (2016) and Al-Hams (2005), has shown the effectiveness of psycho-religious counseling in reducing depression and psychological disorders, while Koenig (2012) emphasized that religiosity serves as a cognitive framework that helps individuals face life's stressors and challenges. Despite the diversity of these studies and their positive findings, most have focused on therapeutic intervention programs or addressed specific groups in non-university contexts. Additionally, some focused on general psychological variables without directly addressing both verbal and physical aggression within the university milieu.

Notwithstanding these scientific contributions, there is a noticeable scarcity of studies investigating the effectiveness of religious counseling as it is actually practiced and measured within universities, particularly through the application of scientific scales to uncover its relationship with aggressive behavior in the Algerian university context. This highlights a research gap that necessitates investigation and analysis, given the growing need for preventive and educational mechanisms that contribute to building a safe and stable university environment.

Based on the aforementioned, the present study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of religious counseling in reducing verbal and physical aggression among students at the University of M'Sila. By utilizing scientific measures, the study aims to determine the nature of the relationship between these two variables and provide scientific data that can be utilized to develop counseling practices within the university.

Accordingly, the research problem is formulated in the following primary question: **Main Question: To what extent does religious counseling contribute to the reduction of verbal and physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila?**

Sub-questions:

1. To what extent is religious counseling effective in reducing verbal aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila?
2. To what extent is religious counseling effective in reducing physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila?

3. Study Hypotheses

General Hypothesis: Religious counseling is effective in reducing verbal and physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila.

Sub-hypotheses:

1. Religious counseling is effective in reducing verbal aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila.
2. Religious counseling is effective in reducing physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila.

4. Study Objectives

The present study aims to:

1. Investigate the effectiveness of religious counseling in reducing aggressive behavior among university students at the University of M'Sila.
2. Determine the extent to which religious counseling reduces verbal aggression among university students.
3. Determine the extent to which religious counseling reduces physical aggression among university students.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is manifested in the following points:

1. **Theoretical Significance:** Addressing the increasing academic need to understand the correlation between religious counseling and the reduction of aggressive behavior within higher education.
2. **Practical Significance:** Developing effective solutions within the university environment to mitigate the negative impacts of aggression on academic achievement and psychological adjustment.
3. **Educational Role:** Highlighting the role of religious counseling as a pedagogical tool in guiding students toward positive behaviors by promoting tolerance and self-control.

4. **Institutional Impact:** Providing a scientific framework for educational counselors and policymakers to develop impactful strategies that foster a stable and safe university environment.

6. Study Concepts

6.1 Religious Counseling

- **Linguistic Definition:**

  Derived from the verb *Rashada*, meaning to be guided and to maintain integrity. Linguistically, it refers to guidance and rectitude (السهل، 2002، ص 261).

- **Scientific Definition:**

  Mortensen defined counseling as a means of behavior modification focused on prevention and growth, helping students understand their life experiences to become productive individuals (صبحى، 1988، ص 20).

Religious Counseling:

A process based on the principle that religion is a fundamental pillar of human life, aiming to develop a free individual who achieves high levels of psychological health (زهران، 1999، ص 36).

- **Operational Definition:**

A systematic guiding process based on spiritual foundations to achieve psychological balance; it is measured by the score obtained by the student on the scale used in the current study.

6.2 Aggressive Behavior

- **Linguistic Definition:** Injustice and exceeding established limits.
- **Scientific Definition:** Craig (1983) defined aggression as behavior aimed at causing harm or destruction, whether through physical or verbal means, directly or indirectly (موسى، 1993، ص 12).
- **Physical Aggression:** A form of aggression involving the use of physical force (hitting, kicking, etc.) to harm others or property (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).
- **Verbal Aggression:**Manifests through shouting, foul language, insults, name-calling, or using threatening sentences (زهران، 1999، ص 126).
- **Operational Definition:** A set of intentional verbal and physical behaviors aimed at inflicting harm; it is measured by the score obtained by the student on the scale used in the current study

7. Methodological Procedures of the Study:

7.1 Research Methodology

This study adopted the Descriptive-Analytical Approach, as it is the most suitable method for the nature of the research and its primary objectives.

7.2 Study Sample

The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 90 male and female students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, at the University of M'Sila. The participants were selected using the Convenience Sampling method.

7.3 Study Limitations

- **Spatial Limits:** The study was conducted at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'Sila, specifically within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Psychology.
- **Human Limits:** The sample included students from the Department of Psychology, specifically those in their second year of the Master's program.
- **Temporal Limits:** The study was carried out during the academic year 2024/2025.

7. 4. Statistical Methods

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical techniques were used:

- Frequencies and percentages.
- Arithmetic mean.
- Standard deviation.
- Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).
- One-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (to assess normality).
- Pearson correlation coefficient (to examine relationships between study variables); correlation results were interpreted with caution given the deviation from normality in one variable.

7. 5. Research Tools

The researcher utilized a Questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection, specifically designed for students at the University of M'Sila. The development of this tool was based on the theoretical framework, a comprehensive review of relevant literature, and consultations with academic experts to ensure accuracy and suitability.

The study focused on two main variables:

1-Religious Counseling: Based on previous studies and reformulated into **18 items** distributed across two dimensions:

-**Worship Dimension:** Items 1–8.

-**Transactions Dimension:** Items 9–18.

2-Aggressive Behavior: Comprising **28 items** distributed across two dimensions:

-Physical Aggressive Behavior: Items 1–14.

-Verbal Aggressive Behavior: Items 15–28.

Measurement Scale: Responses were measured using a 5-point **Likert Scale**, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

7. 6. Psychometric Properties of the Research Tools

The psychometric properties of the research instrument—validity and reliability—were assessed using the following statistical procedures:

- Reliability: Assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to evaluate internal consistency.
- Validity: Assessed using item–total correlation coefficients (Pearson correlations) to examine the association between each item and the total score of its corresponding scale.
- Normality test: Prior to the main analyses, data distribution was examined using the one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (N = 90). Based on the normality results, correlation findings were interpreted with caution.

.1 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Initial verification of the questionnaire's reliability and validity yielded the following results:

A. Reliability

- **Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha):** The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using the internal consistency method. This method estimates the average correlation between all items in the scale, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 1: Reliability Test Results for Each Scale and the Total Questionnaire

Scale	**Number of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient**
Religious Counseling Scale	18	0.860
Aggressive Behavior Scale	28	0.930
Overall Questionnaire	46	**0.889**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs.

2. Normality Test

Table 2: Results of the Normality Test

	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
Variable	N	Test Statistic	Significance Level (Sig.)	

Religious Counseling	90	0.145	0.001	
Aggressive Behavior	90	0.097	0.200	

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output (2025).

-Analysis of Normality and Internal Consistency Test Results

Based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test presented in Table 2, the following was observed:

-Religious Counseling Scale: The significance value (Sig.) is 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the data does not follow a normal distribution; consequently, non-parametric statistical methods will be employed for its analysis.

-Aggressive Behavior Scale: The significance value (Sig.) is 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data follows a normal distribution; therefore, it will be analyzed using parametric statistical methods.

Internal Consistency Measurement

To measure the internal consistency of the research instruments:

-The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated for the Aggressive Behavior scale, as its data follows a normal distribution.

-The Spearman Correlation Coefficient was calculated for the Religious Counseling scale, as its data does not follow a normal distribution.

Analysis of the Questionnaire's Validity and Internal Consistency

Statistical analysis results indicate that the questionnaire items possess a high degree of validity, demonstrating statistically significant correlations with the total score of each scale as follows:

-Religious Counseling Scale: Correlation coefficients ranged between 0.584 and 0.717, indicating strong internal consistency between the items and the scale's total score.

-Aggressive Behavior Scale: Correlation coefficients ranged between 0.495 and 0.805, reflecting a high degree of internal consistency for the scale.

Based on these results, it is confirmed that the questionnaire demonstrates robust internal consistency validity, ensuring that it measures the targeted constructs accurately and coherently.

Table 3: Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test

Scale	Number of Items	Correlation Coefficient
First Scale (Religious Counseling)	18	0.355**

Second Scale (Aggressive Behavior)	28	0.687**
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level		

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS output.

Analysis of Table 3

Based on Table 3, it is observed that all questionnaire scales are significantly correlated with the total score of the questionnaire. The correlation values ranged from a minimum of **0.355** to a maximum of 0.687. These represent high correlation values, trending toward 1.0, which indicates a strong relationship.

8. Analysis and Interpretation of the Study Results

8.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the General Hypothesis:

The general hypothesis states that: " Religious counseling is effective in reducing verbal and physical aggression among university students at the University of M'Sila." To verify this hypothesis, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated, and the results are presented in the following table:

Table 4: Results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test (N=90)

Variables	**Sample Size (N)**	Pearson Correlati	Sig. Value	Significance	Relationship Type

		on			
Aggressive Behavior and Religious Counseling	90	-.436	p < 0.001	Significant	Inverse (Negative)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS

-The results in Table 4 show a statistically significant inverse (negative) relationship between religious counseling and aggressive behavior, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.436.

- The statistical significance value was $p < 0.001$, indicating that the relationship was statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

-Based on these findings, the Alternative Hypothesis (H1), which states that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables, is accepted.

Interpretation of the Results*:*

The results support the hypothesis that religious counseling is effective in reducing aggressive behavior among students at the University of M'sila, albeit with a moderate effect. It is evident that only a small percentage of students effectively apply religious guidance as a means to regulate their behavior and enhance psychological tranquility.

In contrast, a portion of students does not rely on religious counseling for behavioral control; instead, they resort to aggressive behavior as a means to achieve their goals or as part of social interaction during activities such as play.

Based on the above, the validity of the hypothesis can be confirmed: there is an effectiveness of religious counseling in reducing aggressive behavior among students at the University of M'sila, even though its impact is moderate.

8.2Analysis and Interpretation of the First Sub-Hypothesis

The first sub-hypothesis states that: ″ Religious counseling is effective in reducing **verbal aggression** among university students at the University of M'Sila.″ To test the validity of this hypothesis, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was utilized. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 5: Results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test (N=90)

Variables	**Sample Size (N)**	Pearson Correlation	Sig. Value	Significance	Relationship Type
Aggressive Behavior & Religious Counseling	90	**-.479**.	$p < 0.001$	Significant	Inverse (Negative)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs

The results in Table 5 revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between religious counseling and verbal aggressive behavior, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -.479. The statistical significance value was $p < .001$, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis (H1), which states that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables, was accepted These findings indicate that religious counseling plays a moderate role in reducing verbal aggressive behavior among students. Religious counseling enhances an individual's self-control and discourages verbal aggression by instilling Islamic teachings that promote noble character. This includes practices such as reciting the Quran, seeking forgiveness (*Istighfar*), and the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), as well as fostering Islamic etiquette and a love for moral virtues.

However, the results also suggest that the average university student still resorts to verbal aggression in certain situations, whether within the campus environment or outside it. Based on the aforementioned data, the hypothesis of a statistically significant inverse relationship between religious counseling and verbal aggressive behavior is confirmed. While religious counseling helps mitigate verbal aggression, its effect remains moderate, highlighting the need to strengthen such programs and implement them more effectively within university institutions.

8.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Second Sub-Hypothesis

The second sub-hypothesis states: ″ Religious counseling is effective in reducing **physical aggression** among university students at the University of M'Sila.″ To test this, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used:

Table 6: Results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test (N=90)

Variables	**Sample Size (N)**	Pearson Correlation	Sig. Value	Significance	Relationship Type
Physical Aggression & Religious Counseling	90	**-.316**	**.009**	Significant	Inverse (Negative)

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs

As shown in Table 6, the Pearson correlation coefficient was -.316. The statistical significance value was p = .009, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted, confirming that religious counseling contributes to reducing physical aggressive behavior among students.

The results indicate that a certain segment of students does not fully adhere to religious counseling instructions regarding self-control and may still resort to physical violence. The relatively weak to moderate impact of religious counseling in curbing physical aggression may be attributed to the absence of strict

disciplinary measures and a lack of communication with parents when violent incidents occur.

Proposed Solutions: Efforts should be directed toward strengthening the role of religious counseling in educational institutions by:

- Organizing awareness campaigns on the dangers of all forms of aggression.
- Promoting the concept of tolerance and its positive impact on individuals and society.
- Clarifying the negative consequences of physical aggressive behavior on the individual, family, and community levels.

In conclusion, while the hypothesis that religious counseling effectively reduces physical aggressive behavior among University of M'Sila students is confirmed, its impact remains in the weak to moderate range. Therefore, there is a pressing need to enhance counseling programs and link them to more influential practices within university environments.

8-4 Discussion of Study Results in Light of Previous Literature

The results of the current study revealed a statistically significant inverse correlation between religious counseling and aggressive behavior among students at the University of M'Sila. The findings indicate that higher levels of religious counseling are associated with a decrease in both verbal and physical

aggression, with an overall moderate effect size. This result generally aligns with several previous studies that have confirmed the positive role of religious counseling in behavior modification and the enhancement of students' self-discipline.

Specifically, the current findings are consistent with the study by Al-Hashimi (2018), which affirmed that religious counseling contributes to reducing aggressive behavior among university students by instilling values of tolerance and positive dialogue. This explains the inverse relationship uncovered in the present study. Similarly, the results concur with Al-Anzi (2020), who illustrated that counseling based on religious values assists students in adapting to psychological pressures and limits their recourse to aggressive behavior as a means of emotional release.

Furthermore, the results agree with Adam (2018), who highlighted the role of religious counseling in fostering psychological balance and behavioral control. The present study confirms that students with higher engagement in religious counseling exhibit lower levels of aggressive behavior, particularly in its verbal form. These findings are also in harmony with Al-Zoubi (2015), who recorded a decline in verbal and physical violence rates within educational institutions that integrate religious counseling into their pedagogical practices.

In the same vein, the current results support the findings of Al-Hour (2016) and Al-Hams (2005), both of whom emphasized the effectiveness of psycho-religious counseling in improving mental health and reducing emotional disorders, which positively

reflects on general behavior and mitigates aggressive tendencies. Additionally, the results intersect with the theoretical framework of Koenig (2012), who considered religiosity a cognitive framework that helps individuals face life stressors adaptively, thereby reducing negative behaviors such as aggression.

Despite this general consensus, the current study reveals some points of divergence from previous literature. Most notably, the impact of religious counseling on verbal aggression was stronger than its impact on physical aggression, with the latter ranging from weak to moderate. This partially differs from some prior studies that suggested a strong impact of religious counseling on aggressive behavior in general, without a precise distinction between its patterns. This variation may be attributed to the methodology of the current study, which did not employ therapeutic intervention programs but rather measured religious counseling as it is naturally practiced among students using scientific scales.

Moreover, while most previous studies focused on intervention programs or different samples (non-university or clinical), the current study is distinguished by its focus on the Algerian university environment and its reliance on measurement rather than direct intervention. This may explain the moderate effect size compared to some previous results.

Consequently, the findings of the present study reaffirm the importance of religious counseling in reducing aggressive behavior as established in previous literature. Simultaneously, it adds a new analytical dimension by revealing the varying impact

of religious counseling between verbal and physical aggression, which necessitates the development of more integrated counseling mechanisms within the university.

9. CONCLUSION

Aggressive behavior remains a significant challenge within university environments due to its negative impact on students' psychological and social adjustment. Accordingly, this study investigated "The Effectiveness of Religious Counseling Programs in Reducing Verbal and Physical Aggression" among university students at the University of M'Sila.

The results revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between religious counseling and aggressive behavior. The findings indicated that religious counseling contributes to reducing both verbal and physical aggression, with a stronger influence on verbal aggression than on physical aggression. These results highlight that spiritual guidance can support character development and self-control, and its impact may be enhanced when combined with the roles of the family and the wider social environment.

Based on the findings, the researcher suggests the following:

1. Strengthening counseling programs: Developing and integrating religious values into university curricula and activities, while activating the role of religious scholars and speakers within educational institutions.

2. Digital awareness and family engagement: Organizing awareness campaigns via social media regarding the dangers of aggression and involving families in counseling programs to reinforce self-control.
3. Future research: Conducting further studies on the impact of religious counseling in reducing modern forms of aggression, such as cyberbullying, and investigating gender differences in response to counseling interventions.

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