
***Self-perceived problems among lebanese students
in public high schools:
implications for school counseling***

Mohamad Bassam SUKARIYAH

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education

Lebanese University

E-mail address: msukariyah@ul.edu.lb

Ghada ASSAAD

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education

Lebanese University

E-mail address: ghadaassaad70@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined self-perceived problems among Lebanese students in public high schools. Participants were 329 students from different regional areas in Lebanon who responded to a revised version of Mooney Problem Checklist in order to explore their personal problems in seven domains. Students reported highest rates of problems in Future: Vocation & Education, and Curriculum & Teaching domains followed by Morals-Religion, Personal-Psychological Relations, Adjustment to School, Social-Psychological Relations, and Home-Family areas respectively. Further, girls reported significant higher levels of social, personal, family, and school adjustment problems than boys. Moreover, older students tended to be more problem ridden than their younger peers particularly in social, personal, religion, family, and future areas. In addition, students living in large towns reported more problems than those living in cities in social, religion, family, curriculum/teaching, and future domains. These findings highlight the importance of considering group differences when planning for guidance and counseling programs to address the needs of high school students.

Keywords

Lebanese students, adolescent problems, problem checklist, counseling needs, developmental differences.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استطلاع مشكلات الطلاب في التعليم الثانوي الرسمي في لبنان. شملت العينة ٣٢٩ طالباً من مناطق مختلفة في لبنان حيث اجابوا على لوائح معدلة من "قائمة موني للمشكلات" بهدف التعرف على مشكلاتهم في سبعة مجالات. وقد بينت اجابات الطلاب وجود اعلى معدلات للمشكلات في مجالي التوجيه والمناهج/التعليم وتبعها بعد ذلك المشكلات في المجالات الدينية/الاخلاقية والعلاقات الشخصية والتكيف المدرسي والعلاقات الاجتماعية والعلاقات الاسرية بالترتيب. بالاضافة الى ذلك اظهرت النتائج وجود درجة اعلى من المشكلات عند الطلاب الاكبر سناً وخاصة في النواحي الاجتماعية والانفعالية والدينية. وكذلك تبين وجود درجة اعلى من المشكلات عند البنات مقارنة مع الصبيان في المجالات الاجتماعية والشخصية والاسرية والدراسية. اما من حيث مكان السكن فقد اشارت النتائج الى وجود مستوى اعلى من المشكلات الاجتماعية والدينية والاسرية والمدرسية والمستقبلية عند الطلاب المقيمين في بلدة كبيرة مقارنة مع طلاب المدينة. تؤكد هذه النتائج اهمية الاخذ بالاعتبار للفروقات العمرية والجنسية والمناطقية عند التخطيط للبرامج التوجيهية والارشادية التي تلي حاجات الطلاب في التعليم الثانوي.

كلمات مفتاحية

الطلاب اللبنانيون، مشكلات المرهقة، قائمة المشكلات، الحاجات الارشادية، الفروقات النمائية.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à explorer les problèmes perçus par les élèves libanais du secondaire dans les écoles publiques. Trois cents vingt-neuf

élèves appartenant à différentes régions du Liban ont répondu à une version révisée de la Liste des problèmes de Mooney afin d'explorer leurs problèmes personnels dans sept domaines. Les taux les plus élevés de problèmes ont été relevés dans les domaines de l'orientation/éducation et des curricula/enseignement, suivis de ceux des domaines religieux/moral, les relations personnelles, l'adaptation scolaire, les relations sociales et les relations familiales, respectivement. De plus, un niveau plus élevé de problèmes a été retenu chez les filles dans les domaines social, personnel, familial et scolaire. En outre, les élèves les plus âgés ont manifesté plus de problèmes en comparaison avec leurs collègues les plus jeunes, en particulier dans les domaines social, personnel, familial et religieux. Concernant le paramètre « lieu de résidence », les résultats indiquent un niveau plus élevé de problèmes d'ordre social, religieux, familial, scolaire et en lien avec l'avenir chez les élèves des grands villages en comparaison avec ceux des villes. Ces résultats soulignent l'importance de la prise en compte des différences d'âge, de sexe et de région, lors de la planification des programmes d'orientation et de conseil pour répondre aux besoins des élèves de l'enseignement secondaire.

Mots-clés

Elèves libanais, problèmes de l'adolescence, liste des problèmes, besoins en conseil, différences développementales

1- Introduction

The adolescent years are characterized by the maturation of emotional and cognitive abilities that provide the developing individual with capacities needed for independent functioning during adulthood (Kirk Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder Jr, 2011; Tsang, Wong, & Lo, 2012; Fotiou et al, 2017). During adolescence, maturing individuals show increasing capacity to attend selectively to information and control their behavior (McLeod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012). This period of growth is marked by an increased ability to read social and emotional cues and an increased appreciation and dependence on interpersonal relationships (McLeod, Uemura, & Rohman, 2012; Marceau, Ruttle, Shirtcliff, Essex,

& Susman, 2015). However, adolescents at this stage face a number of unique developmental challenges, such as adjusting to changes in their bodies, managing their sexual interests, forming new kinds of relationships, and planning their academic and occupational futures (Couture, 2002; McClure & Teyber, 2003; Bor, Dean, Najman, & Hayatbakhsh, 2014). Furthermore, adolescents live in a society where they have to adapt to technological advances and feel obliged to think of their financial security (Rice, 1996; Bor et al, 2014; Derpuis & Newby-Clark, 2016). If the needs of youth are not addressed, they are at risk of having lower academic achievement, dropping out of school, or getting trapped in “identity diffusion” (Mainous, Martin, Oler, Richardson, & Haney, 1996; Vander Zanden, 1997; McLeod, Uemura, & Rohman, 2012). The role of schools is to prepare adolescents for this ever-changing environment and prepare comprehensive programs that address the needs of students throughout their development (Couture, 2002; Thomas, McLellan, & Perera, 2013).

In the last two decades, school guidance and counselling services have begun to shift from a “therapeutic, position-focused model” that caters to specific student populations, to a more comprehensive model that follows guidance programs and serves all students (Couture, 2002; Gysbers & Henderson, 1988; Prior, 2012). Such comprehensive guidance programs are predicated on the concept of life career development, defined as self-development through the integration of roles, settings, and events in a person’s life (Gysbers & Moore, 1975; Prior, 2012; McArthur, Cooper, & Berdondini, 2016). The programs emphasize three domains of human growth in life career development: self-knowledge and interpersonal skills; life roles, settings, and events; and life career planning (McArthur, Cooper, & Berdondini, 2016; *Alfawaer*, 2014; Gysbers & Moore, 1975; *Rizk*, 2008).

Furthermore, it is important to note that these comprehensive guidance programs are developmental in nature (Westergaard, 2013; Senyonyi, Ochieng, & Sells, 2012; Gysbers & Moore, 1975; Gysbers & Henderson, 1997). A developmental program means that it is proactive and preventive. It teaches students knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for their normal stage development (Westergaard, 2013;

Couture, 2002). This requires determining the skills students need at each stage and applying the programs that enhance these skills at each developmental stage.

Several studies examining the needs of high school students found that academic concerns increase with age (Tsang, Wong, & Lo, 2012; Lau, 1990; Sahin & Sahin, 1995). Older students place greater emphasis on future-oriented concerns related to careers, academics, and self-management (Davidson & Adams, 2013; Tsang, Wong, & Lo, 2012; Couture, 2002; Lau, 1990; Sahin & Sahin, 1995). Another study (Clements & Oelke, 1967) in which 720 students responded to the Mooney Problem Checklist revealed that students in communities with unstable populations reported significantly more problems in the areas of social-psychological relations and adjustment to school work. In terms of sex differences, males expressed greater concern than females with problems in the area of the future: vocational and educational. Furthermore, students who expressed the greatest concern in the area of morals and religion were the ones who most often expressed a desire to talk with someone about their problems. Finally, the research concluded that students attending schools that had no organized counseling program reported more problems than students attending schools that had such programs.

Another study using a Persian version of Mooney problem Checklist investigated Iranian adolescents' perceptions of their problems before and after the Islamic revolution (Ghazi, 1988). Whether before or after the revolution, Iranian adolescents reported highest rates in boys/girls relations; schooling; personal; and "money, job, and future" concerns and lowest rates in social, home-family, and health/physical development domains. However, there was a noticeable increase in boys/girls relation concerns and personal problems and decrease in home-family concerns after the revolution. Although not statistically significant, Ghazi (1988) reported higher female rates in all problem areas except "money, job, and future" before the revolution and a reverse gender pattern after the revolution in all seven domains. The study concluded by stressing the importance of providing guidance and counseling services to Iranian adolescents.

On the other hand, studies conducted in Arab countries other than Lebanon focused mostly on the population of college students. (e.g. *Al Fawaeer*, 2014; *Ramadan*, 2013; *Samadi & Merea*, 2012; *Arabiyyat*, 2011; *Al Moushrif*, 2008). Our search located three studies that involved high school students: one in Saudi Arabia (*Al Harithi*, 2014), one in Syria (*Rizk*, 2008), and one in Gaza, Palestine (*Issead*, 2003). *Al Harithi* (2014) asked teachers to identify problems among Saudi students in male-only high schools. The study found that academic problems came first followed by social and moral problems respectively. According to *Rizk* (2008), Syrian high school students reported experiencing problems in this order of priority: academic, emotional/personal, familial, social, and finally health. The study reported significant grade differences where 12th grade students declared more problems in academic, emotional/personal, and health areas. Yet, the study did not find any significant differences between male and female students nor between the two academic tracks (scientific or humanities). *Issead* (2003) surveyed problems in a sample of 705 Palestinian students in 11th grade in Gaza Strip who reported experiencing problems in this order of importance: leisure time, academic, emotional, sexual, and social/moral problems. The study found that humanity track students had significantly more academic, emotional, sexual, and social/moral problems than scientific track students, who in turn exhibited more leisure time problems. Further, female students reported more emotional problems whereas male students showed more sexual problems. Gender differences were not found in leisure time, academic, and social/moral problems. As for Lebanon, our search did not locate any recent study surveying students' needs and problems in high schools.

2- Problem of the Study

Ayyash-Abdo, Alamuddin, and Mukallid (2010) examined the state of school counseling in Lebanon. They reiterated the need for the development of school counseling services in Lebanon given the psychological consequences of the rapid social change, including the political instability, on students. It is argued that the lack of any formal guidance programs in schools might explain why students were making

immature career decisions (Mc Leod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012; Pattison & Harris, 2006; Theodory, 1982). Further, progress in developing school counseling programs or in providing quality school counseling services is relatively slow particularly in public high schools where guidance and counseling services are completely absent. (Ayyash-Abdo, Alamuddin, & Mukallid, 2010). This study is an attempt to contribute to the development of quality school counseling services by surveying students' needs and problems in public high schools in Lebanon. The results of this study would help to highlight the importance of considering developmental aspects related to adolescence when planning and implementing educational and counseling programs in high schools. Given the exploratory nature of this study, no hypotheses were introduced. Instead, the study seeks to obtain data to help in providing answers to the following questions:

1. What are the pressing problems and concerns of Lebanese high school students in public schools?
2. What influences do such factors as age, sex, grade level, and location of residence have on these concerns?

3- Methodology

3-1 Design and Participants

A non-experimental, cross sectional design was used. The data analyzed in this study were drawn from the high school population in public schools in Lebanon during the academic year of 2014-2015. A convenient sample consisting of 329 students enrolled in public high schools (grades 10, 11, and 12) was used. The sample included 146 males aged between 14 and 20 years ($M = 16.80$, $SD = 1.30$), and 182 females aged between 14 and 20 years ($M = 16.80$, $SD = 1.30$). The sample was relatively well distributed across different areas in Lebanon: 31.6%, 19.7%, 8.2%, 10.9%, 15.2%, and 14.3% from Greater Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, South Lebanon, Baalbek, and West Bekaa respectively.

3-2 Measures

A revised version of the Mooney Problem Check Lists (MPCL) for high school students was used as the main instrument for collecting data about students' problems. In addition, demographic data about sex, age, and locale of residence were collected. The Mooney Problem Check Lists were originally developed by Ross L. Mooney and Leonard V. Gordon to help individuals express their personal problems. (Mooney & Gordon, 1950). There are four forms of the Problem Check Lists; Adult, College, High School and Junior High School. The Mooney Check Lists had been translated into Arabic and adapted to many Arabic countries (e.g. *Hilmee*, 1965; *Najati*, 1974). The adapted Arabic version of the High School form used in this study covers grades 10 through 12 in Lebanese schools, and comprises 168 items in seven domains of 24 items each: Social-Psychological Relations; Personal-Psychological Relations; Morals and Religion; Home and Family; Future: Vocational and Educational; Adjustment to School Work; and Curriculum and Teaching Procedures. Some items were amended slightly to conform to Lebanese culture. Students were instructed to determine the severity of the problem in every item at three levels: severe problem, regular problem, not a problem. These three levels were coded as 2, 1, and 0 respectively. Total scores and mean total scores were calculated for every one of the seven domains and they ranged from 0 to 48 points and from 0 to 2 respectively. Descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted using mean item scores and mean total scores for the seven domains.

Evidence for the validity of the instrument came from interviews with 5 students and 5 teachers in one of the participating high schools who stated that items do cover well the kinds of problems students may encounter in their life in each domain. In addition, Cronbach's alpha assessing the internal consistency of each of the seven checklists was relatively high ranging from .813 to .906.

3-3 Procedures

Prior to data collection, a group of cooperating high school teachers were oriented about the purpose of the study and were trained to administer the Mooney Check List to a group of their students after

obtaining appropriate consent from their guardians. Students were aware of the voluntary nature of this activity and completed the questionnaire anonymously in about 45 minutes. After data collection, the responses were screened out for unusual patterns in responding and for incomplete data. As a result, 31 cases were excluded from the analysis, leaving 329 respondents as the actual sample.

3-4 Data Analysis

Data entry and analysis were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS, version 20). A 2*4*3 (sex*age*locale) ANOVA analysis was performed but all interaction terms came out insignificant. Thus, separate Student *t*-test and ANOVA tests were used to examine group differences in the seven domains. The Bonferroni test was used to conduct post hoc comparisons following significant F ratios. An alpha level of .05 was applied to all statistical tests in this study.

4- Results

Two stages to examine the results were conducted. First, the item scores in each domain and the seven domain scores were rank-ordered according to mean score for the whole sample and for each sex separately. Second, *t*-test and ANOVA tests were conducted to examine group differences related to sex, age, and locale.

4-1 Descriptive Results

The three highest ranking items in every one of the seven domains were defined as representing the most problematic issues. Accordingly, the following items were found to represent the most troubling problems in students' life for both sexes combined:

1. Social-Psychological Relations

- Feeling that no one understands me
- Sometimes talking or behaving without thinking
- Difficulty talking about my problems

2. Personal-Psychological Relations
 - losing my temper easily
 - Worrying too much
 - Being very stubborn
3. Morals-Religion
 - Fearing God's punishment after life
 - Not forgetting some of my mistakes
 - Being upset by religious prejudice
4. Home-Family
 - Being concerned about a family member
 - My parents sacrificing too much for me
 - Disagreeing often with my parents
5. Curriculum & Teaching Procedures
 - Teachers not being considerate of students' feelings
 - Exams being very hard
 - Exam grades being unfair measures of ability
6. Future: Vocation & Education
 - Worrying about the economic conditions in the country
 - Worrying about the political situation in the country
 - Fear of not having equal opportunity after graduation
7. Adjustment to School Work
 - Worrying about examinations
 - Not spending enough time studying
 - Fear of failing in school work

Further, when the three highest ranking items in every domains were reanalyzed for each sex separately, the results came out similar for both sexes except for "too easily moved to tears" item in Personal-Psychological Relations domain where girls but not boys rank it among the top three.

In addition, the seven domain scores were rank-ordered according to mean total score. As can be seen in Table 1, students reported highest rates of problems in Future: Vocation & Education and Curriculum & Teaching domains followed by Morals-Religion, Personal-Psychological Relations, Adjustment to School Work, Social-Psychological Relations, and Home-Family respectively. However, the ranking order came out somewhat different for boys and girls except for the Future: Vocation & Education and Home-Family domains that showed the highest and the lowest mean total and for both sexes respectively. Otherwise, girls showed the second highest ranking for Personal-Psychological Relations followed by Curriculum & Teaching, Morals-Religion, Adjustment to School, and Social-Psychological Relations respectively. Boys, on the other hand, reported the second highest ranking for Curriculum & Teaching followed by Morals-Religion, Personal-Psychological Relations, Social-Psychological Relations, and Adjustment to School respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the mean total scores of the seven problem domains rank-ordered by mean

	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Future: Vocation & Education	.04	1.81	1.0818	.37674
Curriculum & Teaching	.00	2.00	1.0153	.37319
Morals – Religion	.00	1.88	.9781	.35879
Personal-Psych Relations	.04	1.75	.9511	.36015
Adjustment to School	.00	1.96	.9187	.45100
Social-Psych Relations	.00	1.75	.9064	.35227
Home – Family	.00	1.79	.8387	.47444

4-2 Sex Differences

Sex related differences in the seven problem domains were investigated by a series of independent samples t-tests. As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, female students reported significant higher levels of Social-Psychological Relations, Personal-Psychological Relations, Home-Family, and School Adjustment problems than their male peers. The two sexes did not exhibit significant differences in Morals-Religion, Curriculum & Teaching, and Future Vocation & Education domains.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for boys and girls in the seven problem domains

	Sex	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Social-Psych Relations	Male	146	.8554	.34398
	Female	182	.9454	.35469
Personal-Psych Relations	Male	146	.8846	.35753
	Female	182	1.0009	.35267
Morals – Religion	Male	146	.9622	.36477
	Female	182	.9879	.35339
Home – Family	Male	146	.7754	.46152
	Female	182	.8853	.47819
Curriculum & Teaching	Male	146	1.0405	.40284
	Female	182	.9947	.34845
Future: Vocation & Education	Male	146	1.0614	.38819
	Female	182	1.0956	.36715
Adjustment to School	Male	146	.8469	.42953
	Female	182	.9714	.45786

Table 3. Independent samples *t* – tests comparing boys and girls in the seven problem domains

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Social-Psych Relations	-2.314	326	.021 [*]	-.08999	-.16648	-.01350
Personal-Psych Relations	-2.951	326	.003 [*]	-.11634	-.19390	-.03878
Morals – Religion	-.646	326	.519	-.02572	-.10408	.05264
Home – Family	-2.100	326	.036 [*]	-.10987	-.21278	-.00696
Curriculum & Teaching	1.103	326	.271	.04577	-.03589	.12743
Future: Vocation & Education	-.817	326	.414	-.03421	-.11653	.04812
Adjustment to School	-2.516	326	.012 [*]	-.12451	-.22188	-.02714

^{*} $p \leq .05$.

4-3 Age Differences

Four age groups (14-15 years, 16-17 years, 18 years, and 19-20 years) were compared in the seven problem domains by a series of ANOVA tests. As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, older students tended to be significantly more problem ridden than their younger peers in social relations, personal relations, religion, family, and future vocation & education domains. Although reaching only near significance, the same pattern was observed for curriculum & teaching ($p = .067$) and school adjustment ($p = .073$). A series of Bonferroni post-hoc tests found significantly higher levels of problems among 19-20 year old students than 14-15 year old students in social relations, personal relations, family, and future vocation & education domains. Along the same line, 19-20 year old students conveyed significantly higher levels of problems than 18 year old students in social relations and religion domains.

4-4 Locale Differences

Three localities (city, big town, and small town) were compared in the seven problem domains by a series of ANOVA tests (see Tables 6 and 7) and Bonferroni post-hoc tests. Results indicated that students residing in big towns reported significantly more problems than city students in social relations, religion, family, curriculum & teaching, and future vocation & education. Further, big town students also conveyed more problems than small town students in religion, family, and future vocation & education.

5. Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to explore the kinds of pressing problems that public high school students in Lebanon encounter in their life. In addition, the study also aimed at investigating group differences related to sex, age, and location. The results of the study highlighted the importance of considering developmental aspects related to adolescence when planning and implementing educational and counseling programs in high schools (Senyonyi, Ochieng, & Sells, 2012; Pattison & Harris, 2006). Consistent with the findings of the study conducted by *Rizk* (2008), descriptive results indicated that boys and girls have similar ratings of the top three pressing issues in every problem domain. Most importantly, public high school students were particularly worried about the economic and political conditions in the country and the lack of equal opportunities after graduation from high school. These results reflect the political and economic difficulties that Lebanon has been experiencing in the last few decades. Students were also concerned about exams, failure, studying time, religious prejudice, and inconsiderate teachers. Notably, Lebanese students seem to be particularly alarmed by the levels of religious prejudice which results from the denominational political discourse that characterized Lebanese politics in recent history. Further, students were upset about lack of understanding from others, difficulty talking about their problems, disagreeing often with parents, worrying too much, losing their temper, being stubborn, and fearing God's punishment.

*Table 4. Descriptive statistics for age groups
in the seven problem domains*

	Age in years	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social-Psych Relations	14-15	63	.8494	.33427
	16-17	175	.9239	.36660
	18	59	.8355	.32857
	19-20	29	1.0652	.31762
	Total	326	.9061	.35381
Personal-Psych Relations	14-15	63	.8700	.36539
	16-17	175	.9774	.36656
	18	59	.8808	.32331
	19-20	29	1.0919	.33861
	Total	326	.9494	.36091
Morals – Religion	14-15	63	.9471	.37154
	16-17	175	.9955	.34780
	18	59	.8938	.35436
	19-20	29	1.1215	.37883
	Total	326	.9790	.35965
Home – Family	14-15	63	.7495	.41612
	16-17	175	.8617	.48738
	18	59	.7726	.48150
	19-20	29	1.0347	.45308
	Total	326	.8393	.47468
Curriculum & Teaching	14-15	63	.9200	.37393
	16-17	175	1.0172	.37323
	18	59	1.0846	.38882
	19-20	29	1.0832	.29844
	Total	326	1.0165	.37276
Future: Vocation & Education	14-15	63	.9447	.37465
	16-17	175	1.0871	.37831
	18	59	1.1698	.34356
	19-20	29	1.1514	.37696
	Total	326	1.0803	.37710
Adjustment to School	14-15	63	.8071	.48822
	16-17	175	.9431	.45319
	18	59	.9023	.36961
	19-20	29	1.0502	.46479
	Total	326	.9189	.45028

Table 5. One-way ANOVA tests comparing age groups in the seven problem domains

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social-Psych Relations	Between	1.286	3	.429	3.503	.016*
	Within	39.399	322	.122		
	Total	40.684	325			
Personal-Psych Relations	Between	1.401	3	.467	3.675	.013*
	Within	40.931	322	.127		
	Total	42.332	325			
Morals – Religion	Between	1.129	3	.376	2.962	.032*
	Within	40.908	322	.127		
	Total	42.037	325			
Home – Family	Between	1.967	3	.656	2.962	.032*
	Within	71.262	322	.221		
	Total	73.229	325			
Curriculum & Teaching	Between	.990	3	.330	2.405	.067
	Within	44.170	322	.137		
	Total	45.160	325			
Future: Vocation & Education	Between	1.786	3	.595	4.315	.005*
	Within	44.430	322	.138		
	Total	46.216	325			
Adjustment to School	Between	1.406	3	.469	2.340	.073
	Within	64.487	322	.200		
	Total	65.894	325			

* $p \leq .05$.

Furthermore, even though the rank ordering of the seven domains came out somewhat different for boys and girls, both sexes gave the same highest and the lowest ratings for the future vocation & education and

home-family domains respectively. These results are consistent with those obtained by *Al Harithi* (2014), *Issead* (2003), and *Ghazi* (1988) who rated academic problems as more pressing than social and emotional ones. Students seem to be mostly concerned about their future and the need for vocational and educational guidance and least concerned about home-family domains. These results are different from those reported by *Clements & Oelke* (1967), which showed that males had greater concern than females in the area of the future vocation and education. These conflicting results may be due to the timing gap of the two studies and the progress made worldwide during the last decades in reducing the gender gap in terms of vocational and educational aspirations (OECD; 2015).

Further, girls reported significant higher levels of social relations, personal relations, home-family, and school adjustment problems than their male peers. However, the two sexes did not differ in morals and religion, future vocational and educational, and curriculum and teaching domains. These results partly agree with those obtained by *Rizk* (2008) and *Ghazi* (1988) who reported the lack of significant sex differences among high school students in various problem domains although *Ghazi* (1988) found higher female rates in all problem areas except "money, job, and future" before the revolution and a reverse gender pattern after the revolution in all seven domains. These results also partly agree with those obtained by *Issead* (2003), who reported more emotional problems for females and more sexual problems for males whereas the two gender did not differ in leisure time, academic, and social/moral problems. However, our results are consistent with prevailing gender stereotypes where females are socialized to hold a responsibility or care perspective on morality that leads them to be more concerned than men with human relationships and caring for others (*Vander Zanden*, 1997). Thus, given our cultural norms and expectations, girls in Lebanon, as well as in other Arab countries, are more likely than boys to be under social pressures and restrictions during adolescence, resulting in the experience of more problems in social relations, personal relations, home-family, and school adjustment. Nonetheless, the two sexes were equally concerned about morals-religion, curriculum & teaching, and future vocation & education domains.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for residence locale groups in the seven problem domains

	Residence Locale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social-Psych Relations	city	114	.8355	.35825
	big town	79	.9993	.35430
	small town	134	.9107	.33734
	Total	327	.9059	.35328
Personal-Psych Relations	city	114	.8884	.36286
	big town	79	.9984	.36223
	small town	134	.9786	.35397
	Total	327	.9519	.36108
Morals – Religion	city	114	.9234	.33483
	big town	79	1.0921	.38495
	small town	134	.9631	.34983
	Total	327	.9804	.35850
Home – Family	city	114	.7673	.43824
	big town	79	1.0057	.44998
	small town	134	.8015	.49906
	Total	327	.8389	.47512
Curriculum & Teaching	city	114	.9312	.40944
	big town	79	1.1305	.32366
	small town	134	1.0215	.35383
	Total	327	1.0163	.37410
Future: Vocation & Education	city	114	.9990	.39334
	big town	79	1.1420	.37727
	small town	134	1.1145	.35323
	Total	327	1.0809	.37723
Adjustment to School	city	114	.8701	.47706
	big town	79	.9931	.45783
	small town	134	.9151	.42422
	Total	327	.9183	.45236

Table 7. One-way ANOVA tests comparing residence locale groups in the seven problem domains

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social-Psych Relations	Between	1.257	2	.629	5.165	.006*
	Within	39.429	324	.122		
	Total	40.686	326			
Personal-Psych Relations	Between	.726	2	.363	2.816	.061
	Within	41.777	324	.129		
	Total	42.504	326			
Morals - Religion	Between	1.395	2	.698	5.581	.004*
	Within	40.503	324	.125		
	Total	41.899	326			
Home - Family	Between	2.970	2	1.485	6.814	.001*
	Within	70.621	324	.218		
	Total	73.591	326			
Curriculum & Teaching	Between	1.859	2	.930	6.882	.001*
	Within	43.766	324	.135		
	Total	45.625	326			
Future: Vocation & Education	Between	1.212	2	.606	4.345	.014*
	Within	45.180	324	.139		
	Total	46.391	326			
Adjustment to School	Between	.708	2	.354	1.737	.178
	Within	66.001	324	.204		
	Total	66.709	326			

* $p \leq .05$.

Age differences were also observed. Students who are 19-20 year old reported more problems than 14-15 year old students in social relations, personal relations, family, and future vocation & education domains. In addition, 19-20 years old students had more problems than

18 years old students in social relations and religion domains. Interestingly, ANOVA test did not reveal any grade differences (grades 10, 11, and 12) in the seven problem domains contradicting results found by Clements & Oelke (1967), and Rizk (2008) who reported significant grade differences showing more in higher grades. A crosstab of age groups by grade showed that 19-20 year old students were found in 11th grade (27.6%) and 12th grade (72.4%). Obviously, these students were at least one to two years behind as compared to the expected age of high school graduation. This state of affairs may explain why older students expressed more intense degrees of problems than younger ones. It seems that age matters more than grade when it comes to the kinds of problems students face in high schools.

Residence locality was also an important factor in surveying problems. Big town students conveyed significantly more problems than those residing in cities or small towns in religion, family, and future vocation & education. Big town students also reported higher levels of problems than city students in social relations and curriculum & teaching. If we assume that students in big town populations subjectively experience more population changes than small town or city, these results are consistent with Clements and Oelke (1967) who found that students in communities with unstable populations reported significantly more problems in the areas of social-psychological relations and adjustment to school work. Furthermore, it may be argued that students in large towns may be experiencing a double disadvantage. They are no longer enjoying the simplicity and solidarity characteristics of small towns and at the same time are not appreciating the richness and variation characteristics of large cities. On the other hand, these findings are hardly surprising given the fact that the changes associated with adolescence typically extend over a period of time, and allow adolescents ample opportunity to adjust to them (Rice, 1996; Derpuis & Newby-Clark). The adolescents in this study still need more time to adapt to changes they are passing through. In fact, they need a comprehensive guidance program that would help them pass the “stress and storm” developmental period.

6. Conclusion

A noteworthy finding in this study was that both boys and girls have similar ratings of the top three pressing issues in every problem domain and seemed to be mostly concerned about their future and the need for vocational and educational guidance. They were particularly worried about the economic and political conditions in the country and their implications for the future. Another notable finding was that students were concerned about religious prejudice, and are particularly upset by inconsiderate teachers. Further, they were distressed about lack of understanding from others and felt difficulty talking about their problems. In addition, older students tended to be significantly more problem ridden than their younger peers while big town students conveyed significantly more problems than those residing in cities or small towns

The results of the study underline the importance of considering developmental aspects related to adolescence when planning and implementing educational and counseling programs in high schools. Understanding that concerns of high school students may vary depending on sex, age, and location enable school counselors, school psychologists, and other school health professionals to design more effective programs for responding to the pressing needs among high school students.

In conclusion, the current study contributed to closing the gap in the literature regarding self-perceived problems among Lebanese adolescents in high schools. However, students in private high schools and in some areas in Lebanon were not represented in this study, which limits the generalizability of the results. In addition, the perspective of teachers, school counselors, and parents in identifying pressing and emerging problems among high school students was not observed in this study. Future research would benefit from using a larger, more representative sample inspecting students' problems from various perspectives using quantitative and qualitative research in order to better understand the factors and processes involved in the study of students' needs and concerns.

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