

Family and Socio-Demographic Background of Violence Among Adolescent Population in Dubai, UAE

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Abstract

Backgrounds: Adolescent violence is a broader public health problem. Adolescent violence is the intentional use of physical force or power by a young person, between the ages of 10 and 24, against another person, group, or community, with the youth's behavior likely to cause physical or psychological harm. **Objectives:** To study the family and socio-demographic background of violence among adolescent population in Dubai. **Methodology:** This is a cross sectional study. The study was conducted among students in preparatory and secondary schools "Governmental and Private" in Dubai city in U.A.E. Computer program EPI-Info version "6.04" was used for calculation of the minimum sample size required. It was 1046. A sample of 1,046 students was randomly selected from preparatory and secondary schools in Dubai. A stratified random sampling was used. The strata were based upon geographical districts (Bur Dubai and Diera). **Results:** The violence was significantly highest among students less than 13 years (OR = 1.94) which decreased gradually as age gets older. Males have significantly 1.64 times the likelihood of committing violence and students from Bur Dubai had also about 3 times the risk of committing violence compared to those from Deira. Also local students had double the likelihood of committing violence in contrast to non locals. Last ranked students among siblings had significantly. living with one parent due to separation affects significantly the risk of committing violence (OR = 2.33). Those who reported fear of father or older brother/sister had significantly higher risk of committing violence compared to those who said that they love them (2.51 and 2.60 times risk respectively). **Conclusions:** Family circumstances and school environment as another possible contributing factors elaborated important relations with violence among schoolchildren in this study. Violence prevention and intervention program to be targeting adolescents at higher risk of involvement in violence as those with family problems, and low school performance. Close supervision of the students at the school, is essential for prevention and early management of violence incidents.

Keywords

Family Background, Violence, Adolescent, Dubai

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1. Introduction

Adolescent violence is a broader public health problem. Adolescent violence is the intentional use of physical force or power by a young person, between the ages of 10 and 24,

against another person, group, or community, with the youth's behavior likely to cause physical or psychological harm. (1)

The World Health Organization is very concerned with this problem, as evinced by this statement: The children of today

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are the adults of tomorrow. They deserve to inherit a safer, fairer and healthier world. There is no task more important than safeguarding their environment. (2)

The public health approach to violence is based on scientific method. In moving from problem to solution, there are four key steps. First, systematic collection of data on the magnitude, scope, characteristics and consequences of violence at local, national and international levels. Second, investigating why violence occurs. Third, exploring ways to prevent violence. Fourthly, implementing interventions and determining cost effectiveness of the programs. (3)

Adolescents – young people between the ages of 10 and 19 years – are often thought of as a healthy group. Nevertheless, many adolescents do die prematurely due to accidents, suicide, violence, pregnancy related complications and other illnesses that are either preventable or treatable. (4)

Two current trends, which are negatively affecting students' educational experience and quality of life, are violence and suicide. Juvenile violence and suicide are becoming increasingly commonplace across the United States. The number of incidents of violence and the severity of these acts have dramatically increased over the past 5 to 7 years. (5)

During and after school hours, children and teens are more likely to become victims of violent crime than at other times. For teens aged 12 to 17, this risk peaks at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the end of the school day. Violence by teens also peaks in the hours immediately after school. Many teens get involved in dangerous and risky activities during and after-school hours. Millions of children and teens spend the hours after school unsupervised. Unfortunately, children and teens that are not supervised by adults or involved in structured activities after school are much more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, drop out of school, engage in risky sexual activity, get arrested, and carry and use weapons. (6)

Effective programs have been developed to reduce bullying in schools. Research has found that bullying is most likely to occur in schools where there is a lack of adult supervision during breaks, where teachers and students are indifferent to or accept bullying behavior, and where rules against bullying are not consistently enforced. (7)

Violent deaths are tragic events that affect not only the individuals and their families directly involved, but also everyone in the schools where they occur. In US, from July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999, there were 47 school-associated violent deaths. Thirty-eight of these violent deaths were homicides, six were suicides. (8) Some studies state that violent crimes at school have declined, and fewer students are carrying weapons to school or getting into fights. A 2001 national survey of high school students in US reported that 6%

of students said they had carried a weapon to school in the last month - a decrease of 45% since 1993. Almost 13% said that they had been involved in a physical fight on school property in the past year - a decrease of 23% since 1993. However, students told us that bullying continued to be a serious problem, particularly in middle schools. The 2001 survey also found 9% of students had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past year. Almost 7% said they had missed at least one day of school in the last month because they felt unsafe at school or when traveling to or from school - an increase of 50% from 1993. (9) Although, school violence is a problem in many nations, and rates of school violence in the United States are not among the highest in the world, national systems of education that produce greater achievement differences between high-achieving and low-achieving students tend to record more violence. (10)

The extent of bullying among Australian school children and attitudes toward victims of bullying were investigated in a survey of Australian school children between the ages of 6 and 16 years. Boys reported being bullied more often than girls, who tended to be more supportive of victims. With increasing age, there was a slight but significant decline in reported bullying; notably, however, attitudes toward victims became less supportive. (11) In Alexandria, Egypt, violent behavior among school students was investigated by Youssef et al in 1999 (12). They found that 4.4% of the Alexandrian students attending the emergency hospital were seeking medical care for injuries resulting from physical fighting. This figure reflects only incidents that resulted in serious outcomes, it is assumed that many more incidents take place which may not result in any injury or may result in only minor injuries. In Assuit, Egypt, prevalence of violence among preparatory school students was estimated to be 35% for violent traits and 11.7% for violent behavior. (13)

Many researches have been done to investigate the problem of violence among school children in Arab countries, 'communities'. A survey carried out on 22 schools and involving 1,920 students in The Republic of Yemen reported that violence was exhibited on both sides—teachers and students. While around 38% indicated exposure to violence from their teachers, 53% admitted to the witnessing of neighborhood violence. In this case, adult behavior is responsible for students turning to violence and criminal behavior. (14)

A survey in Saudi Arabia has revealed that violence exists in all settings—government schools, private institutions and international schools. The survey also showed that international schools tend to be the most violent, followed by government schools and then private schools. Victims include fellow pupils, schoolteachers, administration

personnel, security guards and tea boys. (15) In Kuwait, a research proposal has put forth a national plan to counter increasing violence at Kuwaiti schools. The aim was to detect factors leading to acts of violence and to provide a nurturing and safe educational environment that would curb the frequency of violent incidents that break social norms and values. (16)

As recently as in June, the Abu Dhabi Members of the Federal National Council or FNC came together to discuss the serious issue of prevailing violence in schools. They found that young children did not hesitate to perform serious crimes. There was a complaint against the Ministry of Education for not doing its job properly; after all, if Dubai had to exhibit educational excellence, its schools had to be safe and ensure a productive learning atmosphere for the children. (17)

A report in 2010 showed about 63 per cent of male students in the UAE had a physical fight once or more in the past 12 months. Federal national Council had announced 200 students were involved in knife fights in Ajman alone. UAE is now drafting a bill to regulate the entry of weapons such as daggers, sticks and batons into the country. (18)

Parents' direct influence on behavior is largely eclipsed by peer influence during adolescence than during childhood. Not surprisingly, therefore, most family risk factors diminish in importance, including the influence of antisocial parents and low socioeconomic status, the most powerful early risk factors. Although parents can and do influence their adolescents' behavior, they do so largely indirectly. The kind of peers chosen by young people, for example, is related to the relationship they have with their parents. (19) In terms of family background, Youssef *et al.*, (1999) (20) stated that independent determinants of violence among school students are a large number of offspring, high crowding index, unfavorable economic circumstances as well as parental smoking, consumption of alcoholic beverages or use of psychoactive substances.

Inadequate supervision and monitoring of young people's activities and low parental involvement are important factors. Broken homes and parental abuse also exert some effects. Other adverse family conditions present a risk factor; for example, some studies have found that family conflict is a risk factor for violence among adolescent males. (21)

Neighborhoods and communities provide the context for school violence. Communities with high rates of crime and drug use teach youth the violent behaviors that are carried into schools. (22) Dilapidated housing in the neighborhood of the school has been found to be associated with school violence. (23)

Teacher assault was more likely to occur in schools located in high-crime neighborhoods. Research has shown that poverty and high population densities are associated with higher rates of school violence. Well controlled longitudinal research indicates that children's exposure to community violence during the early elementary school years increases the risk of aggression later in elementary school, as reported by teachers and classmates. Neighborhood gangs are thought to contribute to dangerous school environments. Gangs use the social environment of the school to recruit members and interact with opposing groups, with gang violence carrying over from neighborhoods into some schools. (24)

2. Objectives

To study the family and socio-demographic background of violence among adolescent population in Dubai.

3. Methodology

This is a cross sectional study. The study was conducted among students in preparatory and secondary schools "Governmental and Private" in Dubai city in U.A.E. The total number of schools in Dubai is 183, in Deira and Bur Dubai. In Diera there are 72 private schools and 21 governmental schools (preparatory and secondary) which cover both the males and females. In Bur Dubai there are 69 private schools and 21 governmental schools (preparatory and secondary) which cover both the males and females. In 2010-2011 the total number of students in governmental preparatory and secondary schools is 8,211 for males and 12,078 for females with a total of 20,289. While in private schools the total number for both male and female students in all grades (preparatory and secondary) was 56,829 students, (numbers of male and female students for the private schools were not available). The total number of preparatory and secondary school students in governmental and private schools is 77,118. Computer program EPI-Info version "6.04" and medical statistics book (25) were used for calculation of the minimum sample size required. According to a recent study (26), the prevalence of physical violence was found to be 57%, so using 3% degree of precision and 95% confident interval, the minimum sample size required was 1046. A sample of 1,046 students was randomly selected from preparatory and secondary schools in Dubai. A stratified random sample was used. The strata were based upon geographical districts (Bur Dubai and Diera), type of schools (governmental and private), educational grade (7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th) and sex (males and females). The number of governmental schools was less than that of private schools (42 and 141 respectively). According to the numbers of schools, a proportional allocation technique was used to

determine the required number. A total of 16 private schools (8 from Bur Dubai and 8 from Diera), with 4 schools of boys and 4 schools of girls for each district were randomly selected. Also, 4 governmental schools (2 from Bur Dubai and 2 from Diera), with one school for each gender from each district, were randomly selected. From each school one class was selected randomly from each educational grade. All the students in the selected classes were invited to participate in the study.

4. Results

Table (1): Violence was significantly highest among students less than 13 years of age (OR = 1.94) which decreased

gradually as age gets older. Males have significantly 1.64 times the likelihood of committing violence and students from Bur Dubai had also about 3 times the risk of committing violence compared to those from Deira. Also local students had double the likelihood of committing violence in contrast to non locals. Last ranked students among siblings had significantly.

Table (2) demonstrates that living with one parent due to separation affects significantly the risk of committing violence (OR = 2.33). Those who reported fear of father or older brother/sister had significantly higher risk of committing violence compared to those who said that they love them (2.51 and 2.60 times risk respectively).

Table 1. Incidence of physical violence acts committed by study students in relation to socio-demographic data (Dubai, 2010).

Socio-demographic data	Total	Violence within past 4 weeks				OR	95% CI		
		Yes (n = 412)		No (n = 642)			LCL	UCL	
		No.	%	No.	%				
Age (Years)	11-	97	44	45.4	53	54.6	1.94*	1.17	3.21
	13-	396	164	41.4	232	58.6	1.65*	1.14	2.39
	15-	371	147	39.6	224	60.4	1.53*	1.05	2.22
	17-21	190	57	30.0	133	70.0	1.00		
Sex	Male	588	260	44.2	328	55.8	1.64*	1.27	2.11
	Female	466	152	32.6	314	67.4	1.00		
School	Governmental	705	282	40.0	423	60.0	1.12	0.86	1.46
	Private	349	130	37.2	219	62.8	1.00		
Level	Preparatory	359	137	38.2	222	61.8	1.00		
	Secondary	695	275	39.6	420	60.4	1.06	0.82	1.38
Area	Deira	499	136	27.3	363	72.7	1.00		
	Bur Dubai	555	276	49.7	279	50.3	2.64*	2.04	3.42
Nationality	Non local	673	222	33.0	451	67.0	1.00		
	Local	381	190	49.9	191	50.1	2.02*	1.56	2.61
Birth order	First	273	110	40.3	163	59.7	1.27	0.93	1.72
	Middle	481	167	34.7	314	65.3	1.00		
	Last	300	135	45.0	165	55.0	1.54*	1.15	2.07

Number of students = 1054

* P < 0.05

Table 2. Incidence of physical violence acts committed by study students in relation to family background (Dubai, 2010).

Family background	Total	Violence within past 4 weeks				OR	95% CI	
		Yes (n = 412)		No (n = 642)			LCL	UCL
		No.	%	No.	%			
Live with								
Both parents	895	346	38.7	549	61.3	1.36	0.84	2.20
One due to separation	77	40	51.9	37	48.1	2.33*	1.22	4.44
One due to death	82	26	31.7	56	68.3	1.00		
Feelings toward mother								
Love	939	358	38.1	581	61.9	1.00		
Fear	23	13	56.5	10	43.5	2.11	0.92	4.86
Normal	83	36	43.4	47	56.6	1.24	0.79	1.96
Feelings toward father								
Love	804	297	36.9	507	63.1	1.00		

Family background	Total	Violence within past 4 weeks				OR	95% CI	
		Yes (n = 412)		No (n = 642)			LCL	UCL
		No.	%	No.	%			
Fear	42	25	59.5	17	40.5	2.51*	1.33	4.73
normal	135	69	51.1	66	48.9	1.78	1.24	2.57
Feelings toward older brother/sister								
Love	510	180	35.3	330	64.7	1.00		
Fear	29	17	58.6	12	41.4	2.60*	1.21	5.56
normal	242	105	43.4	137	56.6	1.41	1.03	1.92
Feelings toward baby sitter								
Love	161	73	45.3	88	54.7	1.00		
Fear	15	8	53.3	7	46.7	1.38	0.48	3.98
normal	519	193	37.2	326	62.8	0.71	0.50	1.02

Number of students = 1054

Note: 9 students with dead mother, 73 with dead father, 273 without older brother/sister, 359 without baby sitter.

* P < 0.05

5. Discussion

The age of the study students ranged from 11 to 21 years with a mean age of 14.81 ± 1.79 years. Just over half of the selected students were males; about two thirds were secondary school pupils while the rest were in preparatory schools, with a preponderance of private school students over governmental. More than half of students were local.

The incidence of violence either in the form of beating against study students, witnessed or committed by the study students were 27.8%, 49.3% and 39.4% respectively with almost same characters. Cloths pulling, boxing, slapping or kicking constituted the common forms of beating which were usually occurring at school with nearly same frequency of beating (times of beating). In a study done in KSA (27), to determine the prevalence of bullying among middle school male students in Riyadh city it was found that, the prevalence of being exposed to bullying (18.6%) was slightly higher, compared to committing bullying (14.4%). A small percentage (4.4%) of the students was both exposed to and committed bullying.

The prevalence of bullying is widely variable, according to Craig *et al.*, (2009) (28) exposure to bullying varied across countries, with estimates ranging from 8.6% to 45.2% among boys. Meanwhile, Analitis *et al.*, (2009) (29) found the prevalence of bullying among children and adolescents in 11 European countries to be 20.6% for the whole sample, ranging from 10.5% in Hungary to 29.6% in the United Kingdom. Aricak *et al.*, (2008) (30) highlighted that bullying is a serious problem in schools in Turkey, and found that of the total of 692 students, everyone reported having been bullied. Similarly, Rivers and Noret (2010) (31) found that the majority of students in North England schools were involved in bullying behavior as victims, bullies, bystanders,

or a combination of all three, which is much higher compared to the current study findings.

Similarly, among the non physical forms of aggressive actions; stealing, insulting, spitting and circulating rumors were reported either committed by or against the study students. Students who commit non physical violation such as stealing, insulting, spitting or circulating rumors against their colleagues were certainly found at higher risk of being beaten by their colleagues, (round 2-3 times risk). Seals and Young (2003) (32), declared that 13.5% of their studied students reported being called hurtful names, and 10.8% of them reported being hit or kicked. In a study done among Korean middle school students, it was found that the common types of victimization were verbal abuse followed by physical abuse they defined "physical abuse victim" as "person who get beaten up often". (33) A study done by El-Dosoky 2010 (34) to investigate the types of violent acts to which victimized students were exposed, demonstrated that the most common subtype of victimization was direct verbal attacks followed by beating.

In our study, almost half of the victims of physical violence were injured. A cross sectional survey upon preparatory and secondary school students enrolled in the mainstream governmental schools in Alexandria declared that the violent assaults most frequently ended by inflicting wound on victims, followed by causing contusions then fractures (12). In a study done among school children in Egypt it was found that 40.9% of the beaten students were injured with wounds, contusions or even fractures. (34)

It was evidently clear that boys are highly likely more prone to be indulged in violence acts with 4 times the risk of being beaten and almost two times of being perpetrator of violence. The study done by El-Dosoky 2010 (34) revealed that boys at both public and private schools were victimized at higher percentage than girls; the majority of studied boys were both

"victims and perpetrators". An international cross-sectional survey included 123,227 students 11, 13 and 15 years of age from a nationally representative sample of schools in 28 countries was done in Europe and North America, to examine the association between bullying and physical and psychological symptoms among adolescents. They found that the proportion of students who reported being bullied were higher among boys than girls. (35)

A study done in Massachusetts (2009) (36) found that among both middle school and high school students, a greater percentage of males than females were categorized as bullies. However, a greater percentage of females than males were categorized as victims. No significant difference between males and females was observed in the percentage categorized as bully-victims, either in middle school or high school. On the other hand, a study carried out postwar among school children in Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that girls were more often victims than boys. (37) The explanation of these results may be due to the negative attitude and behavior of victimized females. Many studies have proved that violence among girls has been recently on rise during the past few years. By all indications, violence among girls is reaching record levels and appears to be growing at a faster rate than incidents among boys, and because it's a relatively new social concern, teachers, schools and communities are only just learning how to address the problem. (38,39)

Age of student evinced to be very important risk factor in violence acts, the younger the student the higher the risk of being a candidate of violence either by committing violence or being a victim. Young students were more likely to be victims of beating with a risk of almost 4 times compared with older colleagues. As expected, those young pupils who were beaten may vent their fury and anger in the form of beating others, so the risk of committing violence against their colleagues was also high among those young students. Consistent with that finding, preparatory students were at higher risk of beating compared to secondary students. Age range of 12-17 years is very important due to the physiological, biological and psychological changes that accompany this stage of life course and expose individuals to many stressors that affect their behavior. (32)

In a research done in Massachusetts (2009) (36), a greater percentage of middle school students than high school students were categorized as victims of bullying, and for both groups of students, the percentage of victims was greater than the percentage of bullies and bully-victims. A significantly smaller percentage of middle school students than high school students were categorized as neither bullies nor victims.

With no consistent form, birth order revealed possible

relation that might affect violence. Although those with middle order had high risk of being victims, yet those with last order had high risk of perpetrating violence against others. According to culture some families usually grant kids with last order an extra care which in what is seen can create a spoiled child with inconsiderate personality. This child usually imagines that all must respond to him same way as his family which is usually met with resistance from others, consequently he should face others by violence. At odd of that some other families treat their last order kids with much less care, those children may be aggressive with others as a response to compensate feeling of dislike from their families.

Although not apparent regarding committing violence, students in governmental schools had almost four times the risk of being violated in comparison with students in private schools. Local students had two times the risk of being violence perpetrators against their colleagues. The local students as the native residents usually have the feeling "it is their home" with a feeling of superiority and confidence that nobody can harm them, subsequently some of them usually hammer out their problems with others using different forms of violence. Family circumstances as another possible contributing factor elaborated important relations with physical violence among schoolchildren in this study. While the majority of the study sample live with both parents, it was found that students living with one of them only due to separation had two times the risk of committing violence against others. Although love was the most common feeling of the study students towards their family members, feeling of fear towards one of the parents put the student at a higher risk of being a victim of violence while fear towards father or older brother or sister was a risk factor of pushing students to commit violence against others.

The role of family structure and parent supervision were investigated by many researchers. Yousef et al., (1999) (12) declared that the risk of adopting violent behavior was higher among children whose family was disrupted by divorce or separation. These results were also confirmed by Meeks et al., (2007) (40) who said that aggressive students came from homes with less parents' supervision and more family discord.

6. Conclusion

Family circumstances and school environment as another possible contributing factors elaborated important relations with violence among schoolchildren in this study. Violence prevention and intervention program to be targeting adolescents at higher risk of involvement in violence as those with family problems, and low school performance. Close supervision of the students at the school, is essential for prevention and early management of violence incidents.

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