

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Experiences of violence among students of public schools

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Abstract

Introduction: School violence is a problem that involves a lot of bad consequences for the lives of students. So preventing and researching about it is very important.

Objective: The objective of this study was identify the experiences of violence of students from public schools participating in the PSE - School Health Program and SPE - Health and Prevention in the Schools of Florianópolis.

Methods: Participants were 871 students from the 9th grade of elementary school to the 3rd year of high school with an average age of 15 years and 6 months.

Results: Regarding the experiences of violence, 81.6% stated that they had already witnessed scenes of violence, with 51.1% of these scenes occurring at school. Besides, 28% of the participants reported having already suffered prejudice at school. There was a significant statistical association between violent behavior and gender (being a boy), having a habit of watching movies and playing video games with violent content, skipping classes and having a regular to bad relationship with teachers.

Conclusions: Violence is part of student's daily activities, involving a broad context and it is pretty much related to school.

Keywords: violence, students, school, teenagers.

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Authors summary

Why was this study done?

This study was conducted to enable health and education professionals who work with prevention of violence in schools, within the scope of the School Health Program, to learn about the main violence that occurs in the school environment. Knowing such data is important so that actions of prevention can be programmed in schools.

What did the researchers do and find?

Such data draw attention to the large number of occurrences of situations of violence (symbolical, verbal, physical) in the school environment.

What do these findings mean?

Such data draw attention to the large number of occurrences of situations of violence in the school environment.

■ INTRODUCTION

In the scope of Brazilian schools, partnership between the Health and Education Ministries have been made with the intention of providing health prevention acts in all spheres of public management, represented by the Program Prevention and Health in Schools (PSE - Programa de Saúde na Escola), in public Schools. The initiatives of both programs are articulated by approaches of health promotion and prevention of diseases, besides themes related to reproductive and sexual health. The actions in health directed towards the students are relevant once that this public lives most of their significant SOCIAL experiences and interactions at school.

Violence has been highlighted as one of the biggest problems in worldwide public health, in a way that in 2015 it was listed as priority agenda for UN (United Nations). The World Health Organization – WHO¹ defines violence as "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, bad development, or deprivation".

Therefore, violence is a multidimensional phenomenon, that reaches the physical, psychic, emotional and symbolical integrity of individuals or groups and that happens in public or private space. It is also important to highlight that nowadays violence has been related to events that previously were considered normal practice regulated in social relations, as violence inside the family, against women or children and symbolic violence against groups, social categories or ethnics².

Among the violence occurring in a public space there is school violence. According to Charlot³, school violence may present itself in several ways: violence at school, violence against the school, and violence of the school. While the first two kinds are violence put by the students, the last one points to an institutional violence. According to the author, violence at school happens inside this space, but it is not connected to the activities of the institution. This approach refers to several forms of violence that symbolically are determinate in and for the school environment. This study intends to discuss the first kind of violence, violence at school, through prejudice, bullying and physical violence occurred among the students, as well as leisure habits of the participants that are associated with violence outside the school context.

Trevisol and Uberti⁴, made a research in a small town in Santa Catarina, Brazil and one of the conclusion

points that school has been a stage of aggressions and conflicts, mainly bullying. According to Nogueira⁵, this phenomenon is defined as a cruel and intrinsic behavior in social relationships, in what the strongest ones make the weakest their objects of fun and pleasure, using jokes that disguise the purpose of repeatedly abuse and intimidate.

Studies show that bullying is usually aimed towards groups with specific characteristics, being those physical, socioeconomic, ethnic and sexual orientation. Students that are obese^{6,7} and overweight⁸, homosexual and homosexual sons⁹⁻¹¹ are more susceptible to suffer bullying.

Considering this thoughts, even though the concepts of bullying and prejudice are distinct, on this research they will be argued together, because it is observed that the concept of bullying nears the concept of prejudice, as long as social factors determinate target-groups, as well as those who will have the power to harass the others. Therefore, bullying is understood as a result of a prejudice process^{12,13}.

Prejudice has in its essence the lack of respect toward the difference, or better, the lack of respect from "me" toward the "other", and establishes individual and social behavior models that put the different under the optic of "bad", "inadequate" or "inferior". The other would be an intruder who would bring chaos and so, would need to be shut up¹⁴.

Initially, prejudice was studied by psychology as a psychological characteristic of the individual¹⁵, neglecting socio economical factors that many times are powerful in determining this phenomenon¹⁶. However, in a social and more recent perspective, that analyses the intergroup relations inside the context where the conflicts are born, the prejudice has been seen as an organized form of intergroup relationship rounding power relations between groups. Here, ideological representations are produced to justify aggressive and negative attitudes regarding members of groups considered minority^{17,18}.

Social learning theory affirms that individual tend to copy the behavior based on aggressive models that they observe¹⁹. The sons of parents who adopt violent punishment, being physical or verbal, tend to use the same resources when interact with other people^{20,21}. The data from Trevisol and Uberti⁴ research about bullying dialogue with the Social Learning Theory because one of the conclusions of this study is that one of the main reasons that lead individual to practice bullying is related to their personal characteristics, that is, the nature of the





aggressions is personal, coming from the experiences live by them. Besides violent punishment, exposure to inconsistent discipline, little supervision, rejection and/or nonchalance when parents are with their children are factors that may constitute more aggressive adults²²⁻²⁵.

Considering the theoretical framework that the development results from several levels of interaction between risk and protection factors, present in our society²⁶, a research with adolescents in conflict with the law concluded that family, community and school are essential actors on avoiding teenagers committing an infraction.

Other factors have been linked to aggressive and/ or violent behavior of young people. Gender issues are included, once that is proved by researches that man affirm to feel less guilty and anxiety when they manifest aggressive behavior, while women affirm having more concern with possible retaliation, therefore avoid being aggressive²⁷⁻²⁹. The difference between gender behavior is linked to education and the stimulation that girls and boys are exposed. In general, boys are taught to act in a aggressive and active way, girls are taught to be docile and passive^{28,30}.

Besides, data point that the exposure of young people to violence in media (including movies and videogames with violent content) may be an important factor of deflagration of individual and social violence. DeGaetano and Gossman³¹ accomplished a meta-analysis with 3.500 researches about the effects of violence in media and observe that 99.5% demonstrated some kind of negative effect in audience. Further studies corroborated such data^{32,33}. However, it is not possible to adopt a linear causality perspective, linking violent media directly to daily violence. A analysis must be done about the media exposure with content of violent character as a significant factor to the effectiveness of aggressive behaviors³⁴.

From the above, the objective of this study was identify the experiences of violence of students from public schools participating in the SHP - School Health Program and HPS - Health and Prevention in the Schools of Florianopolis.

■ METHODS

This study is quantitative, qualitative and of a descriptive nature³⁵.

Participants

Participated in the survey, 871 students of public schools, since they were matriculated and appointing 9° grade of primary school or 1°, 2° and 3° grade of high school. The subjects were from 12 to 26 years old and the medium age was 15 years and 6 months with pattern deviation of 1.6. Regarding the sex of the participants, 53.6% were girls and 46,4% were boys.

Instrument

It was used a self-applied questionnaire with one block of sociodemographic question content like sex, age, schooling degree and also, with who the students live. The other questions refer to the participation of young people in fights, access to violent games, violent movies and violent scenes, prejudice, among others.

Data da analysis

The objective questions were organized in the called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 17.0, for data analysis. Statistical analysis descriptive and variable association was made. Sub sample comparison (sex, age, fight participation, etc) were analyzed by Contingency table (non-parametric statistical tests) and comparison between averages.

Ethical Aspects

The research was approved in ethical committee for research with Human Beings of Federal University of Santa Catarina with protocol number 2178/11. The evaluation was based on the established determinants by resolution 196/1996 from National Health Council.

RESULTS

Familiar Relationships

Among the students, 55.1% lived with both parents, 20.4% lived only with their mother, 11.6 % with the mother and another tutor, 5.1 % only with their father, 4.1 % with tutors, other than mother and father and 3.7 % with grandparents.

The next investigated topic was familiar relationships. First topic was the relationship with the mother. About those, 84.9% affirm having a good relationship with their mother, 9.6 % said it is regular, 2% does not have contact with their mother, 2% affirm that the relation is bad and 1.5 % said that they do not have a mother. The data about the father were different, 73.8% affirm having a good relationship with their father, 12.2 % said it is regular, 6.8% does not have contact with their father, 4.4% said that they do not have a father and 2.8% affirm that the relation is bad. Third, the relationship between parents, 53.8 % affirm it is good, 26.8 % do not live together, 15.5% say it is regular and 4 % said it is bad. Besides, 30.7 % of the participants declared that someone in the family drinks too much or uses some sort of drugs.

School experiences

Concerning school achievement, 62.8% of the participants affirm never had failed in school, while 27.6% failed once and 9.6% more than twice. About students and teachers relationships, 56,6% affirm it is good, 40,8% regular e 2,6% bad. The relationships with friends, 86.7% of the participants affirm having a good relationship, 11% regular and 2.3% affirm not having friends. Crossing this variable with the sex of the participants, it was observed that girls (64%) refer having a good relationship with the teacher, while most boys (48.9%) refer regular relationship with educators. [$\chi^2 = 21.76$; gl = 2; p = .000]

In reference of participant experiences, 81.6% of them affirm that already presented violence scene, being 51.1% of these scenes occurred at school, 28,2% on the street, 8.9% at home, 6.6% in other places, 4.3% on the neighborhood and 0.9% in leisure places.

Besides, 28% of the participants (12.5% of boys and 15.5% of girls) referred already suffer some kind of prejudice or bullying at school, and among those, 33.6% refers to body weight, 18.7% racial prejudice, 16.8% homophobia, 12.3% referred suffered another kinds of





prejudice, 7.8% due to physical appearance and 4.9% bullying in general. Comparing students by sex, it is concluded that among those who reported suffering that kind of prejudice/bullying, boys reported suffering more ethnic/racial prejudice (69.4% of boys against 30.6% of girls) and homophobia (53.3% against 46.7%), while girls reported suffering more prejudice/bullying about physical appearance (61.9% against 38.1%) and body weight (57.8% against 42.2%) than boys [$\chi^2 = 20.88$; g l= 6; p < .005].

Leisure Habits

The investigation about leisure and violence habits showed that 41.2% of the participants affirm that they are used to watch movies with violent content. Concerning participants sex, according Table 1, 58.9 % of boys and 26.2 % of the girls affirm to watch, in comparison with girls, boys watch more this kind of movies than girls. There was a significant static association between variable indicating that boys watch more this kind of movies than girls. [$\chi^2 = 82.7$; g l= 1; p = .001].

Regarding playing violent video games, 42.3% of the participants affirmed to play this games every day. Crossing this data with sex, it was observed that 60.4% of the boys affirm to play these games, against 26.3% of the girls. There has been a statistically significant difference between boys and girls, being that boys play these games more than girls [$\chi^2 = 98.4$: g l= 1; p = .001].

Risk Behavior

Regarding risk behavior, 34% of the participants affirmed that have already skipped classes, among those, 39.6% are boys and 27.9% girls. There was association Statistically significant between skipping class and sex, demonstrating that boys skipped more classes than girls [$\chi^2 = 11.99$; g l= 1; p=.001].

The topic about juridical questions, 11.9% of the students affirm that have already had problems with justice, among those, 13.5% were boys and 10.5% were girls, without association between variable.

About drugs use 15.3% affirm already consumed some kind of drug (16.3% of boys and 14.5% girls), being 13.24% affirm have already consumed marijuana, 3.3% cocaine and 0.1% crack. About beverages, 65.3% said that have already drinked in a abusive way in a short space of time, being 67.4% boys and 63.3% girls.

Besides, 13% affirmed that have already suffered accidents (15.2% of boys and 11.1% of girls). They reported this kind of accidents: 60.7% by falling, 20.2% by ground transportation, 3.4 by burning and 15.7% other kind of accidents. There was no association statistically significant between variable and sex of the participants.

Other aspect was involvement in fights, 14.8% affirmed that have already be involved in fights. Crossing the sex of the participants with these variable, it was observed that 19.5% of the boys affirm involvement on fights against 10.7% of girls, there was association statistically significant between sex and have participated of fights [$\chi^2 = 11.74$; g l= 1; p = .001], boys participate more than girls in fights (Table 1).

Table 1: Difference between activities related toward violence by the sex of the participants

	Male	Female	р
Watch violent movies	58.9%	26.2%	.001
Play violent games	60.4%	26.3%	.001
Got involved in fights.	19.5%	10.7%	.001

Associations between violent behavior and another variable

When crossing involvement on fights behavior and the habit of watching violent movies, it was observed that 65% from those who affirm have already be involved in fights, also affirm that is used to watch violent movies [$\chi^2 = 34.05$; g l= 1; p=.001]. There was also association between participation in fights and the habit of playing violent games on video, because 65.5% of those who affirm already be involved in fights use to play such games [$\chi^2 = 30.24$; g l= 1; p=.001].

Another association is between participation in fights and skip classes, considering that 63.3% of those

who affirm already be involved in fights use to skip classes. [$\chi^2 = 58.68$; g l= 1; p = .001].

The bad or regular relationship with teachers is another variable associated with previous participation in fights. Among those who have already fought, 53.7% affirm having a regular relationship with teachers and 5.8% a bad relation [$\chi^2 = 19.31$; g l= 2; p=.001].

Another association was between using drugs and been in a fight, once that among the students that affirm have never used drugs, 11.3% reported their participation in fights, while among those who had already used drugs, this percentage goes to 32% [$\chi^2 = 34.18$; g l= 1; p =.001] (Table 2).

Table 2: Association between violent behavior and other variables

	Fight participation	р
Watch violent movies	65%	.001
Play violent games	65.5%	.001
Skip classes	63.3%	.001
Regular relation with teacher	53.7%	.001





DISCUSSION

Most adolescents have already seen violent scenes in several contexts, but the place where they observed most violent scenes was at school, according to them. The school environment has been set as the space where the students encounter, elaborate and experience violence, contradicting the premise that the school must help students building a good relationship with their classmates and have a good conduct³⁶⁻³⁸. Besides, such violence experience at school has been described as predictors of psychological disturbances on adulthood³⁸.

The school also appeared to be a place of living experiences of prejudice and bullying for the participants, once that 28% of the participants affirmed that have already suffered some kind of prejudice on this institution (12.5% boys and 15.5% girls), being that boys referred suffering more racial and homophobic prejudice, while girls affirm suffering more prejudice about their physical appearance. The National Research of Students Health involving 134.310 students of primary school of 9° grade in Brazil at 2015 observed that 7.2% of the students affirmed have already suffered bullying, and most percentage were bigger between, contradicting the data of this study. However, the causes of bullying reported in the quoted research are pretty similar to the ones found in this study, that is, 18,6% of students reported suffer bullying about image or physical appearance, 16.2% appearance, 6,8% race/color, 2.9% sexual orientation, 2.5% religion and 1.7% place of birth, being homophobic and racial prejudice also focused more on boys.

Some studies observe the relation between bullying practice and violence³⁹. Practicing bullying on adolescence has been associated with increased risk of smoking⁴⁰, drinking alcohol in excess^{41,42} using drugs⁴³ and get involved with delinquency and violence^{44,45}, besides the adoption of aggressive behavior on adulthood⁴⁶. And suffering bullying on adolescence increase the risk of develop stress symptoms, depression, low self esteem, anxiety and low school performance⁴⁶. For this reason it is important that schools work with methodologies involving promotion of health and tolerant relationships among students.

It was observed the use of drugs for 15.3% of the participants of this study. About the consume of alcohol beverage, 65.3% Said that already make binge of beverages, those, 67.4% are boys and 63.3% girls. This data is pretty concerning, considering that previous study at the same schools in this town⁴⁷ observed binge use in 35.2% of boys and 25.4% of girls. Such data show a considerable raise of this modality of beverage consume by student in this period. About marijuana consume, there was also an increase when comparing with the previous research⁴⁷ once that 7% of the student had declared Its use and this time were 13.24%.

Researchs have showed lack of effectiveness of actions directed at young people with the objective of preventing the drug use⁴⁸. At scholar context, the more efficient actions are those that promote sociability and give potential to the relations between the students⁴⁹ than actions focused on "say-no" to drugs⁵⁰. Regarding the media campaign about drugs, outcome of Allara *et*

*al.*⁵¹ study pointed the need of precaution, once that this publicity may produce unexpected effects, and even be harmful to the population that it is aimed.

Another issue was the manifestation of violent behavior, that is, INVOLVEMENT in a fight, it was observed the relation with being a boy, skipping classes and having from regular to bad relationship with teachers, as well as having leisure habits associated with violence, such as watching movies and playing games with violent content and using drugs. Therefore, IT IS observed that those risk factors seen to have a multiplicative effect between adolescents, that is, more risk factors, bigger probability of getting involved in violent situations⁵².

The behavior difference between genders is linked with education and the stimulations that girls and boys are exposed. In general, boys are taught to act in an aggressively and active way, while girls are taught to develop a sweet and passive behavior^{28,30}. However, boys and girls get involved in situations of violence at school, but the form of manifesting it is different. Boys are more inclined to physically experience violence and girls engage more in indirect or verbal experiences⁵³⁻⁵⁵.

Regarding the media, when producing a Bibliographic survey about violence in media, Strasburger³⁴, defines the aggressiveness as a learned behavior, in a way that as years pass by, the comprehension of the individual about the adverse consequences of violence tend to increase. Adolescence time is Permeated by various stigmas delimited socially, what may entail in a differential treatment to the adolescent, because this individual isn't a child neither an adult and is in a intense process of body, sexual, social e affective identity structuring⁵⁶. Due to this structuring process, it is necessary to analyze in what way the contents in general, may or not affects the development of individuals on this phase.

Regarding movies with violent content, Batista et al.⁵⁷, produced an experiment aiming to investigate the effects of violent movies in children behavior by measuring the difference of the aggressiveness degree expressed in paper made before and after the movie. The outcomes indicated a higher level of aggressiveness of the students after exposing them to the movie Mortal Kombat for two days. These results are indicative that watching movies with violent content affects the behavior of children of both sex, when evaluated by essays.

It was observed yet that having a good relationship with teachers seen to decrease the manifestation of violent behavior of the students. Study the Marriel et al.58, pointed a relation between having a good relationship with classmates and teacher and students self-esteem. It also showed that students with low self-esteem relate worse to colleagues and teachers than their peers with high self-esteem, besides being more often in the position of victims of violence at school and also have more difficulty of feeling good inside environment school.

Researches yet indicate that in order to prevent violent behavior it would be enough to invest in a optimist representation of itself, recognizing the potential of the adolescent, strengthening their self-esteem and stimulating them to understand their own limits, as well as the limits of the people around them and the society wider⁵⁹.





■ FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Violence is part of student's daily activities, involving a broad context and it is pretty much related to school. School was quoted by the participants as the place where they observed more scenes of violence, besides, some students affirm having suffered bullying and several prejudice on this institution.

The gender issues are related, once violent behavior manifestation through fights, leisure habits associated to violence, watching movies and play games with violent content and using drugs are linked with being a boy. However, girls do not fail to engage with other forms of violence, such as psychological violence through the practice of bullying for example.

In order to build alternatives that will improve students' relationship in school in several levels (individual, group) considering different complexities, it is worth investing in a good relationship between teachers and students, considering that important data of this study points to the fact that having a good relationship with the teachers decreases the possibility of the student to get involved in violent behavior.

Authors' Contribution

AIG - Coordinated the research, elaborated the project, assisted in the collection and typing of data. He carried out the statistical analysis, described and discussed the results.

JLC - Participated in the elaboration of the research project, having submitted it to the UFSC research ethics committee. Final revision of the text.

CDSF - Participated in the elaboration of the research project, assisted in the collection and typing of data. Assisted in the discussion of results. Final revision of the text as well as its translation into English.

NCOM - Participated in the elaboration of the research project, as well as in the data collection and typing. Final revision of the text.

GAW - Participated in the elaboration of the research project as well as data collection and typing. Final revision of the text.

PPN - Assisted in the collection and typing of research data as well as preparing the manuscript in the journal's rules for publication.

VPC - Participated in the preparation of the research project. Participated in data collection and typing.

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Resumo

Introdução: A violência escolar é um problema que envolve muitas consequências ruins para a vida dos alunos Portanto, prevenir e pesquisar sobre isso é muito importante.

Objetivo: Identificar as experiências de violência de alunos de escolas públicas participantes do PSE - Programa de Saúde na Escola e SPE - Saúde e Prevenção nas Escolas de Florianópolis.

Método: Participaram 871 alunos da 9ª série do ensino fundamental ao 3º ano do ensino médio, com média de idade de 15 anos e 6 meses.

Resultados: Em relação às experiências de violência, 81,6% afirmaram já ter presenciado cenas de violência, sendo 51,1% delas na escola. Além disso, 28% dos participantes relataram já ter sofrido preconceito na escola. Houve associação estatisticamente significante entre comportamento violento e ser menino, com o hábito de assistir filmes e jogar videogame com conteúdo violento, matar aulas e ter um relacionamento regular a ruim com os professores.

Conclusão: A violência faz parte das atividades diárias do aluno, envolvendo um contexto amplo e está praticamente relacionada à escola.

Palavras-chave: violência, estudantes, escola, adolescentes.

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