



ELSEVIER

 JOURNAL OF
 ADOLESCENT
 HEALTH

www.jahonline.org

Original article

Structural Determinants of Youth Bullying and Fighting in 79 Countries

Frank J. Elgar, Ph.D.^{a,*}, Britt McKinnon, Ph.D.^a, Sophie D. Walsh, Ph.D.^b, John Freeman, Ph.D.^c, Peter D. Donnelly, M.D.^d, Margarida Gaspar de Matos, Ph.D.^e, Genevieve Gariepy, Ph.D.^a, Aixa Y. Aleman-Diaz, M.P.P.^f, William Pickett, Ph.D.^g, Michal Molcho, Ph.D.^h, and Candace Currie, Ph.D.^f

^aInstitute for Health and Social Policy, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada^bDepartment of Criminology, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel^cFaculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada^dPublic Health Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada^eCentre of Health Promotion and Education, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal^fChild and Adolescent Health Research Unit, School of Medicine, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland^gDepartment of Public Health Sciences, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada^hSchool of Health Sciences, National University of Ireland, Galway, Republic of Ireland

Article history: Received June 9, 2015; Accepted August 10, 2015

Keywords: Youth violence; Bullying; Physical fighting; Income inequality; Health Behaviour in School-aged Children; Global School-based Health Survey

 A B S T R A C T

Purpose: The prevention of youth violence is a public health priority in many countries. We examined the prevalence of bullying victimization and physical fighting in youths in 79 high- and low-income countries and the relations between structural determinants of adolescent health (country wealth, income inequality, and government spending on education) and international differences in youth violence.

Methods: Cross-sectional surveys were administered in schools between 2003 and 2011. These surveys provided national prevalence rates of bullying victimization ($n = 334,736$) and four or more episodes of physical fighting in the past year ($n = 342,312$) in eligible and consenting 11–16 year olds. Contextual measures included per capita income, income inequality, and government expenditures on education. We used meta-regression to examine relations between country characteristics and youth violence.

Results: Approximately 30% of adolescents reported bullying victimization and 10.7% of males and 2.7% of females were involved in frequent physical fighting. More youth were exposed to violence in African and Eastern Mediterranean countries than in Europe and Asia. Violence directly related to country wealth; a 1 standard deviation increase in per capita income corresponded to less bullying (–3.9% in males and –4.2% in females) and less fighting (–2.9% in males and –1.0% in females). Income inequality and education spending modified the relation between country wealth and fighting; where inequality was high, country wealth related more closely to fighting if education spending was also high.

Conclusions: Country wealth is a robust determinant of youth violence. Fighting in affluent but economically unequal countries might be reduced through increased government spending on education.

© 2015 Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. All rights reserved.

 IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

Youth violence is a public health concern in many countries. Bullying and physical fighting are more prevalent in less affluent countries, however, income inequality and government investment in education modify the association between country wealth and fighting. Understanding the structural determinants of violence facilitates policy efforts to promote adolescent health and well being.

* Address correspondence to: Frank J. Elgar, Ph.D., Institute for Health and Social Policy, McGill University, 1130 Pine Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H3A 1A3, Canada.

E-mail address: frank.elgar@mcgill.ca (F.J. Elgar).

Youth violence is a major public health concern in many countries [1]. Exposure to violence early in life contributes to chronic health problems, risk behaviors, and psychosocial and

academic difficulties [2–4]. Moreover, youth victimization is a human rights issue and contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that young people should be “brought up in the spirit... of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality, and solidarity” [5]. Yet, recent international surveys have found that 20%–50% of adolescents were physically attacked in the past year [1], one in three adolescents was involved in a physical fight in the past year [6], and one in three was victimized by physical or verbal bullying in the past two months [7].

Understanding the contextual determinants of youth violence on a global level is important to projecting its economic burden and future demands on public services and to importing and tailoring antiviolence policy [1,8,9]. Most of the available evidence about common forms of violence in youth (e.g., bullying and fighting) consists of local and national survey results from North America and Europe, which have limited applicability to low-income countries. International studies on this topic are rare because they require large coordinated surveys, standardized assessments in multiple languages, and international networks of surveyors. Such research cannot rely solely on police and hospital records or vital statistics because most violent episodes do not result in arrest, formal medical treatment, or death. Consequently, the structural determinants of youth violence have not been adequately examined at an international level [6].

To date, two major international surveys have measured violence in adolescents, the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) and Global School-based Health Survey (GSHS). The HBSC measures violence in mostly high-income countries in Europe and North America [10,11]. Its research has found that bullying and physical fighting both negatively relate to national wealth (measured by per capita income or gross national product), and that bullying positively relates to income inequality [12–15]. The GSHS has facilitated some descriptive analysis of youth violence in low- and middle-income countries but not on its determinants [16–18]. To our knowledge, only two studies combined HBSC and GSHS data to describe cross-national differences in the prevalence of bullying but neither of these examined the origins of these differences [6,7].

Globally, the primary structural determinants of adolescent health include national wealth, income inequality, and access to education services [19]. We hypothesized that these are also determinants of youth violence because of their complex influences on public safety, social stratification and hierarchy, and social mobility. Epidemiological studies of violent crime in the general population have found that income inequality relates to higher rates of homicide, physical assault, and gun violence [20–22]. The prevailing interpretation of this link is that inequality intensifies social hierarchies, reduces social control over violence, and fosters a harsher social environment where conflict is more likely to occur [14,20,21]. We expected to find similar links between income inequality and youth violence and that the psychosocial impacts of inequality would intensify with fewer material resources supporting adolescent health [19]. Building on a recent analysis by the United Nations Children’s Fund [6], we estimated the prevalence of bullying and fighting in as many countries as possible and then examined their direct and interactive links to country wealth, income inequality, and public spending on education.

Methods

Individual data

Data on physical fighting and school bullying were retrieved through the 2003–2011 GSHS and 2006 and 2010 HBSC surveys. Most surveys recruited nationally representative samples, with the exception of HBSC surveys in Belgium and United Kingdom and GSHS surveys in Barbados, Chile, China, Columbia, Ecuador, Mauritius, Tanzania, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, for which we combined regional samples. A complete list of surveys, consent rates, and participating students is shown in a [Supplementary Table 1](#). The average total (school X student) consent rate across these surveys was 75.4%.

The GSHS was supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control, United Nations Children’s Fund, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [23,24]. Standardized questionnaires collected data from 13- to 16-year olds in 71 countries between 2003 and 2011 using two-stage cluster sampling of schools. We used the most recent data in countries that carried out more than one GSHS survey. Students responded to the questionnaire using computer scan sheets [24].

The GSHS questionnaire included a definitional assessment of bullying:

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students say or do bad and unpleasant things to another student. It is also bullying when a student is teased a lot in an unpleasant way or when a student is left out of things on purpose. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or when teasing is done in a friendly and fun way.

This description was followed by the question, “In past 30 days, on how many days were you bullied (0, 1–2, 3–5, 6–9, 10–19, 20–29, all 30)?” Fighting was measured with the item, “In past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight (0, 1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10–11, 12 or more)?”

The HBSC surveys nationally representative samples of 11-, 13-, and 15-year olds in North America and most European countries using a standardized questionnaire and survey protocol [25]. We used data from 33 countries in the 2010 survey plus three countries in the 2006 survey that were missing 2010 data on bullying and fighting (Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey). The HBSC used a two-stage cluster sampling of schools representing the regional, economic, and public/private distribution of schools in each country. Like the GSHS, questionnaires were distributed to students in classroom settings [26]. Bullying was measured using the following definition:

We say a student is being bullied when another student, or a group of students, say or do nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she does not like or when he or she is deliberately left out of things. But it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight. It is also not bullying when a student is teased in a friendly and playful way.

This description was followed by the question, “How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months (none, once or twice, 2–3 times a month, about once a week,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10511410>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10511410>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)