



# New evidence in physical violent behaviors among school-aged children: A multiple disadvantages model



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## ABSTRACT

The present study of school-aged children examined physical violent behaviors' relationships with disadvantageous, social relationship, mental health, and other factors. This study employed a sample of 11,585 school-aged children extracted from a cross-sectional data set, the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC), 2009–2010. Physical violent behaviors in the present study referred that school-aged children exhibited physical aggression and fighting, threatened or attempted to hurt other students in school, and carried or used weapons on school property. The empirical results of multivariate regression model revealed that male students, delinquent peer affiliation, weak parental monitoring, poor school performance, educational pressure, any drug use, alcohol use, daily computer/videogame usage were all positively associated with physical violent behaviors among school-aged children.

## 1. Introduction

Youth violence has become a growing concern of public health in the United States. Physical violence-related behaviors are important risk factors that threaten public health and influence children's development. According to a nationwide survey in 2013, almost 25% of school-aged students were involved in physical fights in the past 12 months (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). More specifically, about 8% of ninth to twelfth grade students were engaged in a physical fight on school property (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). About 18% of school-aged students who took the survey carried a weapon to school in the previous 30 days (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Moreover, 5.1% of school-aged children carried a gun to school at least one day (Kann et al., 2016). It was, therefore, important to identify the risk factors of physical violent behaviors for those school-aged children.

Youth violence is an important factor of the development for children and adolescents in the United States. However, youth violence became a national issue because of the mass shootings and stabbings in Columbine, Newtown, and Blacksburg. In addition, youth violence is acknowledged as a major public health issue in the US. Multiple studies indicated several risk factors contributing to violent behaviors among school-aged children, such as gender (Brennan & Moore, 2009; Esselmont, 2014), race/ethnicity (Boggess, 2013; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Goldweber, & Johnson, 2013; Brennan & Moore, 2009; Graham,

Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009), age (Brennan & Moore, 2009; Brooks-Russell, Farhat, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2013; Bushman et al., 2016; Chan & Chui, 2015a, 2015b), family relationships (Begue, Roche, & Duke, 2016; Chan & Chui, 2015a, 2015b), school performance/achievement (Benbenishty, Avi Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016), delinquent peers (Begue et al., 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2013), bullied victimization (Begue et al., 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Chan & Wong, 2015), depression (Brennan & Moore, 2009; Espelage, Hong, Rao, & Low, 2013), suicidal ideation (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002), self-hate (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002), and mental health problems (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Brooks-Russell et al., 2013).

The current study applied the multiple disadvantages model that elucidated homicide victimization (Lo, Howell, & Cheng, 2015), intimate partner violence (Cheng & Lo, 2014), and adolescents' drug abuse (Cheng & Lo, 2016), and adolescent delinquent behaviors (Cheng & Li, 2017). In this study, the model was utilized to explore and present the risk factors of physical violence among school-aged children that would be cultivated by disadvantageous social structural, social relationships, mental health problems and other factors. The multiple disadvantage model assumed that certain delinquent risk factors, such as low family income, ethnic-minority students, poor school performance, delinquent peer affiliation, weak parental monitoring, and substance use would be related to the physical violent behavior among school-aged children.

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## 2. Demographic characteristic

Violent behaviors are highly associated with gender. Researched revealed that physical violent-related behaviors were more common for boys than girls (Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, & Scheidt, 2003). Another recent gender-based research also revealed the similar result that there was a significant difference between boys and girls in physical violence (Ledwell & King, 2015). A recent study demonstrated that girls who were engaged in bullying behaviors were 3.21 times more likely to exhibit sexual violent behaviors to other girls compared to boys, but boys who were engaged in bullying behaviors were not significantly associated with sexual violent behaviors to other boys (Espelage, Basile, De La Rue, & Hamburger, 2015). On the other hand, boys who were more frequently involved in physical fights and resulted in injuries were strongly associated with exhibiting bullying behaviors and being bullied in school (Nansel et al., 2003).

Studies showed different results on ethnic-minority students related to the violent behaviors. Research demonstrated that compared to White students, ethnic-minority students were more likely to be involved in violent behaviors (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Black students who exhibited more violent behaviors, comparing to White students, were related to lower family income and associated with delinquent peers at school (Haggerty, Skinner, McGlynn-Wright, Catalano, & Crutchfield, 2013). On the other hand, research explored on the socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics of violent behaviors in school revealed that ethnic-minority students were not significantly associated with physical violence among school-aged children, compared to White students (Logan, Vagi, & Gorman-Smith, 2016). Similarly, multiple nationwide studies showed school-aged children in different ethnic groups were not significantly associated with physical violent behaviors in school, compared to White students (Vaughn, Nelson, Salas-Wright, DeLisi, & Qian, 2016; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010).

## 3. Social relationship

Parental monitoring plays an important role in violent behaviors among children. Children who receive stronger monitoring from their parents tend to be stronger emotionally, physically and psychologically in pro-social behaviors than those who lack of monitoring from their parents (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). A study showed that a high level of monitoring from parents could help moderate the effects of bullying on internalizing the problem among children who were in grades 6 through 10 (Ledwell & King, 2015). Strong parental monitoring can protect students from bullying in physical, verbal, relational, and cyber environments; in other words, stronger parental monitoring related negatively with bullying behaviors among school-aged children who were 10–17 years old (Wang et al., 2009). A strong parent-child relationship was another protective factor of violent behaviors (Fulkerson, Pasch, Perry, & Komro, 2008), even carrying a weapon to school among 12–17 years old children (Vaughn et al., 2016). Another study indicated that students who were in 7th to 12th grades and from two-parent households had a lower likelihood to exhibit violent behavior than those who did not have a two-parent household (Bailey, Flewelling, & Rosenbaum, 1997; May, 1999).

Victims of bullying are a significant risk factor for delinquent and aggressive behaviors among children. Students who experienced bullying by their peer group have a greater likelihood for physical violent behaviors (Begue et al., 2016). Children who reported the higher levels of violent behavior had higher likelihood of exposure to violence and violence victimization, especially for physical bullying which was strongly and positively associated with delinquent and violent behaviors (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). Moreover, students who had more delinquent peers had greater likelihood of exhibiting violent behaviors (Brennan & Moore, 2009). Also, recent research revealed that children who reported less violent behaviors had less deviant peer affiliations

(Bernat, Oakes, Pettingell, & Resnick, 2012). Studies demonstrated that students who had more pro-delinquent beliefs or delinquent peers tend to have more physical violent behaviors (Begue et al., 2016; Shetgiri, Boots, Lin, & Cheng, 2016).

School performance was examined as a significant factor associated with violence among school-aged children in previous studies. Prior study revealed that poor academic performance in schools was positively associated with violent behaviors (Bernat et al., 2012; Smith, Park, Ireland, Elwyn, & Thornberry, 2013). Students who had difficulties in completing school assignments were more likely to be involved in violent behaviors (Katsiyannis, Thompson, Barrett, & Kingree, 2013). Similarly, students involved in physical violence were more likely to present poor school performance than those who were not involved in delinquent behaviors (Burdick-Will, 2013; Ronis & Borduin, 2007).

## 4. Mental health and other risk factors

Carrying weapons and using drugs were highly associated with physical violent behaviors and crimes in the past years in US (Brennan & Moore, 2009). Previous studies showed substance abuse was positively associated with violent behaviors among children (Ellickson & Mcguigan, 2000). Using drug had greater likelihood of exhibiting physical violent behaviors (Brennan & Moore, 2009; Logan et al., 2016). Children who showed history of any drug use had higher likelihood of exhibiting physical violent behaviors (Hohl et al., 2017). Consuming alcohol was also highly related to violent behaviors among students examined by different studies (Shetgiri et al., 2016). Moreover, stress was a significant factor related to violent behaviors among school-aged children (Bernat et al., 2012; Shetgiri et al., 2016). Research showed that high level of stress was one of the most important risk factors contributing to the high violence rate in schools (Burdick-Will, 2013). Another similar study demonstrated that mental health problems, such as posttraumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideation, were also related to the physical violence, especially for carrying weapons among adolescents (Shetgiri et al., 2016).

In the previous study, computer/video game playing was a controversial exploratory factor in terms of physical violent behaviors among school-aged children. A prior study revealed that violent video games were not significantly associated with physical violent, aggressive, and bullying behaviors among adolescents (Ferguson, Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2014). On the other hand, other studies found that violent video games were positively associated with individual delinquent behaviors (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Exelmans, Custers, & Van den Bulck, 2015). In addition, recent research also demonstrated that the volume of videogame usage was a significant risk factor associated with delinquent and aggressive behaviors among children (Exelmans et al., 2015). Similarly, another study demonstrated that students involved in physical violence were more likely to spend more time in playing computer games (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004).

The purpose of the present study was to examine the school-aged children's physical violent behaviors applying the research theoretical framework of multiple disadvantages model. The present study hypothesized that family income, ethnic minority status, male students, deviant peer affiliation, weak parental monitoring, bullied by physical violence, poor school performance, stress of schoolwork, alcohol drink, and any drug use would be associated positively with physical violent behaviors among school-aged children. (Fig. 1).

## 5. Method

### 5.1. Sample

The sample of present study was extracted from a cross-sectional public used dataset, the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC), 2009–2010. This self-report survey internationally explored

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