

Violence and Bullying among High School Students and Recommendations for School Nurses

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Background: High school students experience bullying at an alarming rate. Violence has been associated with bullying in schools and has been associated with devastating health outcomes. Prevention efforts must be implemented across school systems.

Purpose: The purpose of this research was to explore relationships between YRBS variables of personal characteristics, violence, and experiencing bullying among high school students from 2011 through 2017.

Methods: Secondary analysis of Youth Risk Behavior Survey dataset from 2011 – 2017 conducted. Global violence variable measured missing school due to feeling unsafe going to, from, or at school; fighting in community or at school, being threatened or injured with weapon at school, and carrying weapons (e.g. gun, club, or knife). Bullying was operationalized as students having power over another, threatened, spread rumors, hit or hurt another student at school or online. Chi Square and regression analysis computed using SPSS Complex Samples. Total of 59,397 students (49% female) responded to YRBS surveys between 2011 to 2017. The grade distribution was 9th (26%), 10th (25%), 11th (25%), and 12th (24%), Race and ethnicity variables were collapsed to White (42%) and All Others.

Results: Students in ninth grade were more likely to experience violence behaviors compared to students in 12th grade. Male students more likely to report being threatened with a weapon (e.g. gun, club, knife) at school and female students more likely to report feeling unsafe at school. Ninth grade students more likely to engage in violence behaviors and older students more likely to carry a gun.

Conclusion: School nurses have a unique relationship with students, providing a necessary link between students and school health policies. School nurses should conduct screenings, referral, and follow-up for bullied students (Maughan et al, 2016). Planned mental health interventions by school nurses can target individuals or the school community (Bohnenkamp et al., 2015). School nurses, administrators, lawmakers, and other health practitioners can benefit from findings and data-driven recommendations for their violence and bullying prevention programs.

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