



Research Article

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Violence in teaching establishments in the western central part of Senegal

Mohamed Maniboliot Soumah¹, Mor Ndiaye¹, Ababcar Sidibé Diallo¹, DEI Hadj Oumar Ndoye¹, Mamadou Lamine Sow¹

¹ Forensic medicine and occupational health service, Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Odontology, University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal

Abstract

Objectives: The objectives of this work were to clearly determine the frequency and nature of the violence, to identify the main risk factors, to identify the impact of this violence on the health of the victims and finally to suggest a course of actions which could bring about solutions. **Material and methods:** A descriptive study of violence in the teaching establishments in the Department of Bambey, (Region of Diourbel, in the western central part of Senegal), conducted between December 2014 and June 2015 with a self-filling survey. The population studied was made up of school children, students, teachers and support staff of the different teaching establishments at middle school, secondary school and higher education. The information gathered is analyzed in Epi info 2000, version 3.3.2. **Results:** The average age of the population studied was 24.12 years with the youngest being 13 and the oldest 57 years of age. The sample gathered was 71% male and 29% female. All the parties of teaching establishments are represented with the majority of respondents being students (60%). Verbal aggression accounted for 53.48% of the incidents recorded. The aggressors in 98.56% of the cases either studied or worked in the teaching establishment concerned. **Conclusion:** In Senegal, there are insufficient records of violence in teaching establishments. This fact drew our interest to this multi-faceted issue and allowed us to discover the profile of these victims of violence. To this effect, preventive measures need to be put in place in the teaching establishments, notably the setting up a working group composed of the different actors of the institutions.

Keywords: Verbal, Aggression, Victims, School.

INTRODUCTION

Violence in teaching establishments has long been considered as an increasingly public health problem, considering its media attention, its seriousness and its important impact on health. For each person who dies following an act of violence, many others are injured or confronted with a range of physical, sexual, reproductive or mental problems. The extent of this phenomenon has caused some countries to multiply their plans to combat all forms of violence ^[1]. The high level of violence in teaching establishments and the major impact this has on pupils, students, the employees of teaching establishments, their families, communities and society in general explains the interest that such a study has. At USA, Kevin J. Vagi and al, showed that « all health-risk behaviors were most prevalent among students who experienced both forms of teen dating violence (physical and sexual) and were least prevalent among students who experienced none ^[2]. In India, a cross sectional study covering adolescents revealed that 52.4%, 25.1%, and 12.7% adolescents suffered psychological, physical, and sexual violence in 2015 ^[3]. In Senegal the violence increases on the university campus and we recently knew the death of a student during a police intervention in Dakar.

The objectives of this research were to define, the frequency and characteristics of the violence, to identify the main areas of risk, to evaluate the consequences of this violence on the health of the victims and finally to propose forms of intervention which could bring about solutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is a descriptive study on violence in the teaching establishments in the department of Bambey, which is in the region of Diourbel, situated in the western central part of Senegal. The Department of Bambey includes the Alioune DIOP University of BAMBEY, the High School of Bambey, The Diéry FALL Middle School, The DVF Middle School, The LEONA Middle School, The ANNEXE Middle School.

***Corresponding author:**
Prof. Mohamed Maniboliot Soumah
Forensic medicine and occupational health service, Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Odontology, University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal. PoBox 7080, Dakar, Senegal

The study was carried out between December 2014 and June 2015 with a self-filling questionnaire. The population studied was composed of pupils, students; the teaching personnel and administrative staff of the different teaching establishments at Middle, High School and University level. We included workers and students of these establishments who consented to respond to our questionnaire. Others such as service providers and temporary staff were excluded from the study. The survey, which comprised five pages, ranged from socio-familial data, socio-professional data, the type of aggression and the motives, the consequences of the aggression through to the establishment of a medical certificate of the injuries and the measures of protection of the organization. The data were collected on a mask developed from the software Epi info 2000, version 3.3.2. Their analysis was made with the software Epi info 2000, version 3.3.2. The descriptive study allowed to determine the frequencies, the averages, the reliable intervals and the standard deviations. The analytical study allowed to make the comparison of the frequencies with tests of the χ^2 .

RESULTS

We distributed 420 questionnaires, 50 questionnaires for each of the 4 Middle Schools, 50 questionnaires for the High School plus 170 for the University. We collected 310 questionnaires out of the 420, a return rate of 73.8%. All returns were anonymous.

Social- Demographic characteristics of the population studied

The average age of our population study was 24.12 years with extremes of 13 years and 57 years. The median age was 23 years. The most represented age group was between 20 and 29 years of age, comprising 47% of the total (Figure 1).

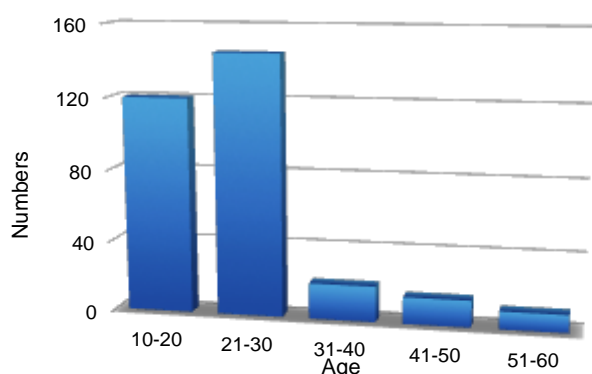


Figure 1: Breakdown of individuals by age

The study population was composed of 71% men and 29% women. The vast majority of the participants were single. We counted 20 married people (6.45%), 280 single (90.32%), 3 divorced persons and 1 widow. In addition, 71% of the people questioned lived on a social campus. All attendees of the teaching establishments were represented with a predominance of students (60%) followed by school pupils (26%), teachers (10%) and administrative personnel (4%).

Of the 6 teaching establishments visited, 54.83% of the responses were collected at the Alioune DIOP University of Bambey (Table 1).

Table 1: Breakdown by place of study or workplace

Place of study or workplace	Number of answers	Percentage
UADB	170	54.83%
Lycée Bambey	45	14.51%
CEM Diéry FALL	25	8.06%
CEM DVF	30	9.67%
CEM Léona	22	7.09%
CEM Annexe	18	5.8%

Most of the people questioned (172) that is 55.48% had been victims or witnesses to violence in the teaching establishments. Verbal violence represented 53.48% of the total violence reported (Table 2). In descending order of frequency, we find physical violence, harassment, vandalism and theft /hold up. No sexual violence was reported.

Table 2: Breakdown based on type of violence

Type of violence	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal	92	53.48%
Physical	42	24.41%
Moral	18	10.46%
Sexual	00	00%
Theft / Hold up	05	2.9%
Vandalism	15	8.72%

The aggressors in 98.56% of cases either studied or worked in the teaching establishments. The violence was mainly linked (81%) to the social conditions of the learners. Problems linked to pedagogy comprised 13% of the motives of the violence. In 6% of cases the violence was linked to other causes.

This violence led to a full inability to work of 74 days spread across 9 people representing 2.9% of the individuals in the study.

The violence was statistically linked to age ($p < 0.001$) with a predominance of verbal and physical violence occurring between 20 and 29 years of age. The violence was linked to the sex of the aggressor with a predominance of physical and harassment originating from men and verbal violence from women. The violence was also statistically linked to matrimonial status ($p < 0.001$), Single people were more likely to be the victims of the different types of violence. Violence is also linked to profession ($p < 0.001$) students being particularly affected by verbal violence, physical violence and harassment.

DISCUSSION

The average age of our population study was 24.12 years with a median of 23 years and the most represented age group was between 20 -29 years (47%). The lower and upper age limits respectively were 13 and 57 years. This population is relatively young. Several reasons can explain the youthfulness of our population study. First, the study was undertaken in middle schools where the pupils are aged between 13 and 17 years of age, in High School where the students are between 18 and 21 years of age and at the University where in general the students are between 20 and 30 years of age. Second, the teaching personnel and administrative staff that were included in the study only accounted for a small part of the population studied (14%). No Age group is spared from violence. A study conducted by Montariol P. [4] shows an average age of the victims of violence in teaching establishments of 13.5 years and a further study undertaken at Nice where the results were higher with an age around 16 years. These results which are contradictory to ours can be explained by the fact that in our study pupils from kindergarden and primary school were not taken into consideration.

The breakdown by sex notes a clear masculine predominance. This can be explained by the low rate of scholarisation for girls despite the different strategies undertaken by Senegalese's government. In addition, girls tend to finish education after primary school due to the fact that there may be a lack of Middle schools in their locality and some parents do not want them to travel farther to continue their studies. In USA and Canada there was no gender difference between in violence exposure among university students [5]. Violence was correlated with heavy drinking patterns or depressive symptoms.

In our study it was seen that men are more often exposed to certain types of violence such as physical violence and vandalism. Women

were more the victims of harassment, verbal and in some cases theft. A study conducted in the teaching establishments of Geneva ^[6] found that 48% of women had been victims or witnesses to violence in these establishments. The same conclusions were also drawn in France ^[4] where 50% of women had been victim or witnesses to violence in teaching establishments. These two studies show results that are very close to our own and highlight that men are more exposed to violence than women.

This predominance of violent acts can be due to the often-difficult learning environment, social difficulties often linked to late payment of student grants and poor food and accommodation. The long distance from their parents who consequently have less visibility and control on their children could also be a factor that breeds violence.

The student group occupies an important place in the incidents of all types of violence except in the case of theft which occurred more among schoolchildren with a rate of 92.3%. In another study conducted by Farreil A. ^[7], the incidents of violence are more frequent among students and pupils than the teaching staff. A similar study carried out in Switzerland ^[6] came to the conclusion that learners were more likely the victims of violence than the different personnel of the establishment. These results indeed correspond with our findings and confirm that for the most part it is the learners in the teaching establishments who are the victims or witnesses to violence.

In the past, teaching establishments were reputed to be a place of study where silence reigned, a place where students could come to find knowledge and understanding in order to better serve their nation later on. Today they are becoming a place where violence is more and more present. Verbal violence was the most frequent aspect encountered in our study followed by physical violence. The frequency of these two types of violence can be explained by the huge numbers of pupils and students in a class, the impulsiveness linked to these age groups and the feeling of increasing domination of students and pupils in academic life reinforced by political tensions. The same results were observed in Burkina Faso ^[8] and in Senegal in a previous study ^[9].

The aggressors studied or worked in these teaching establishments. The violence is particularly present in Middle Schools, High Schools and public Universities. In studies conducted in France ^[10] it was also stated that the violence came from within the establishment. These studies confirmed the results of our research that show that someone from within the establishment committed the violent acts in all cases.

In our study, 81% of the violent incidents can be attributed to the difficult social conditions of the learners. At the CEM Annexe School, we noted high rates of theft and vandalism. This can be explained by the regular late payments of student grants that are often the source of vandalism and repetitive strikes and the poor living conditions of the students who are sometimes forced to live in close conditions. The work of Sy H. ^[11] on student strikes presented the same results as our study.

In our study we had 9 people who took a full inability to work, which represented just 2.9% of our population study with a total of 74 days.

This low rate can be explained by the fact that it is rare that repercussions get as far as the judiciary and it is often verbal violence often perpetrated by a group from which it can be difficult to identify the culprit.

CONCLUSION

Violence without doubt has always been part of human life. The phenomenon of violence in school in Africa is becoming less and less hidden. The study of violence has identified a range of problems across the world but also some that are specific to Africa. Concerning common problems one should think about the media aspect which

tends to tackle the subject in a sensationalist way. School being an ideological tool of the state, any action on this ground can risk bringing political pressure and repercussions. The specific problem facing Africa is the lack of statistical data on the multi-faceted dimensional problems, which are social-economic, medical and medico-legal. This descriptive survey was carried out between December 2014 and June 2015 on a population of 310 students, pupils, teaching personnel and the administrative staff of 6 teaching establishments at Primary, Secondary and Higher education levels. The typical profile of the victims of violence in the teaching establishments were of masculine sex, aged 24, single in 93 % of cases with a statute of student in 60% of cases. It is typically a student who lives on the social campus and who declared to be a victim or witness of violence in the course of the last 12 months often cases of verbal violence. The other types of violence in descending order are: physical, harassment, vandalism and theft / hold up with an absence of rape. This physical violence comes from people who are inside the teaching establishment with motives relating to the social and pedagogical conditions. To this effect, preventive measures must be put in place in the teaching establishments, particularly forming a working group composed of the different actors of the establishment (ombudsman, mediator), the organization of information and awareness campaigns, early interventions in potential conflict situations and cases of violence and the promotion of a participative and inclusive movement in conflict resolution.

Conflicts of interest

None declared.

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