

Risk Behaviors of Selected High School Students in Tabuk City

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ABSTRACT

Risk behaviors play a very significant role in health and social problems among adolescents. This study aimed at determining behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; and alcohol and marijuana use among high school students in Tabuk City, Kalinga. The data on this were gathered from 133 randomly selected high school students in Tabuk City. It made use of descriptive research design where data was gathered through a questionnaire lifted from the 2017 Standard High School YRBS of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The result of the study revealed the following significant findings: 52.63% student-participants were physically attacked, most (55.71) of them were female; 44.36% student-participants were in physical fights, most (55.93%) of them were female; 33.08% student-participants were seriously injured, most (59.09%) of them, female; a very limited number of student-participants admitted having carried weapon, most were males; carrying a weapon on school property is also not common with 14.29% prevalence; students who had not gone to school because of safety concerns was low with 20.30% only, and there was 33.08% who dated or went out with someone who had been forced to do sexual things they did not want to by someone they were dating or going out. A minimal number of student-participants admitted using alcohol and marijuana.

Keywords

Risk Behaviors, Marijuana, Alcohol, High School, Sexual Things

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Introduction

Road accidents account for many deaths and injuries all over the world. Statistics show more and more minors involved in such accidents. In Great Britain, road accidents account for a third of accidental deaths among 0 -14 years old and over half of the accidental deaths for 5 -14-year-old [4].

The level of youth violence in society can be viewed as an indicator of youths' ability to control their behavior and the adequacy of socializing agents such as families, peers, schools, and religious institutions to supervise or channel youth behavior to acceptable norms. In addition, youth who commit violent crimes tend to exhibit multiple problematic behaviors that affect their well-being, including drug use, risky sexual behaviors, and problems in schools. One measure of youth violence is the rate of serious violent crimes committed by juveniles [27].

In 2015 in the United States, the serious violent crime offending rate was eight crimes per 1,000 juveniles ages 12–17, with a total of 188,000 such crimes involving juveniles. This was similar to the rate in 2014. In 2015, about 14 percent of all serious violent crimes reportedly involved a juvenile offender [27].

In the Philippines, the Department of Health identifies in its official website that one among the leading causes of mortality in the Philippines is accidents, among others [26]. All the identified causes are types of illnesses. In the presentation of Mendoza (2018) during the re-echo seminar, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse were listed as one of among the ten illnesses of the nation which drives the restoration of Filipino values. This indicates that there is indeed a nationwide problem on delinquency and substance abuse that needs to be addressed by the concern offices or agencies.

In the City of Tabuk, records of Tabuk City Police Office show that there were less than 10 cases of reported incidents

wherein students of Tabuk City National High School were involved, including the stabbing to death of a grade 9 student of the school after he bullied an out-of-school youth on a nearby park [13]. With these, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study that will show the presence of risky behavior that can be an indicator of mortality or propensity of the students to criminality, be as victims or as perpetrators. Behaviour (specifically sexual behaviors) of the students that may also be a factor to unintended pregnancy was also included as pregnancy among high school students is already surfacing.

Since the study is focused on a survey of the risk behaviors of high school students in the selected private and public high schools, this was delimited on the responses to the questions on the questionnaire used. Thus, no further questions were asked to verify or provide a further description of the risk behaviors.

The sampling design used in this study is non-scientific; thus, the result is representative only to the respondents of the study.

Objectives

Determine the following:

- 1) Manifestations of aggressive behaviors among the high school students of Tabuk City;
- 2) Behaviors that contribute to violence among the selected high schools in Tabuk City; and
- 3) Incidence of alcohol and marijuana use among the selected high school students in the city of Tabuk

Methods

Research Design

This study made use of a descriptive research design which is appropriate in describing the risk behaviour of the high school students in Tabuk City (private and public high school).

Population and Locale

The study was conducted in Tabuk City. Specifically, two high schools (private and public) were selected to be the source of respondents of this study. The name of the school selected was not divulged in order to abide with research ethics guidelines on confidentiality which was given and agreed upon by the researcher and the respondent-school prior to the gathering of information. Since the study is focused on a survey of the risk behaviors of high school students in the selected private and public high schools, this is delimited on the responses to the questions on the questionnaire used. Thus, no further questions were asked to verify or provide a further description of the risk behaviors.

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Respondents were high school students officially enrolled for Academic Year 2017-2018. One hundred thirty-three were chosen as respondents using a convenient random sampling method.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the gathering of the needed data, the researcher asked permission from the Division Superintendent of the City Division Office. When granted permission from the principal of the two respondent schools was also asked prior to the floating of the questionnaire. During the request for permission to gather data from the respondent schools, the researcher informed the head about the purpose, methods, methods and intended possible uses of the research. This is to comply with the research ethics on consent [5].

The questionnaire was self-administered. The consent of the respondents was first ensured by informing them that their participation is not mandatory and that they may refuse to participate if they don't want. They were also informed that they may stop answering the questionnaire at any time and may silently go out from the room leaving the uncompleted answer sheet which will be torn in their presence to ensure that their response will no longer be used for the study. Thus, before distributing the questionnaire, a minute was given for them to decide whether they want to participate or not. Should they decide not to participate, they were informed that they could just leave. After answering, they were instructed to fold their answer sheet into two before putting it on the brown envelope held by the researcher. They were given the assurance that the researcher or anybody will have no way to know their identity, and thus they should answer the questionnaire comfortably and honestly. This is to ensure the anonymity of the students and the school they are studying. This was also in compliance with the basic ethical principles in research requiring voluntary consent of the research participants. After the giving of instructions and assuring that the respondents gave their implied consent by not leaving the room, the

questionnaire, together with the answer sheet where they placed their responses were then distributed.

When the questionnaire was already distributed, an explanation of the key terms used on the different parts of the questionnaire was made by the researcher. Specifically, an explanation of what are physical attacks and physical fights. The researcher also clarified acts which are covered by the part on drinking alcohol.

The procedure followed by the researcher made sure that the respondents participated in a voluntarily, thus abiding with the principle of consent as required by ethics in research.

Results and Discussion

Manifestations of Aggressive Behaviors among High School Students of Tabuk City

Involved in a Physical Attack and Physical Fight

There were 52.63% selected high school students who admitted having been physically attacked during the past 12 months. The most frequent (35.71%) attack happened two or three times. Most (52%) of those who experienced this were female student-participants while male victims are not far with 48%.

Knowing that injury is the leading cause of death and disability among young adults [7], the occurrence of physical attack among high school may raise awareness on the harm or danger that it may cause not only on the academic performance of the students but also on its long term effect on their socialization and criminal propensity. According to a longitudinal study conducted by Marsiglio and associates [15] individuals who have been exposed to violence during childhood are more likely to have arrest records during adolescence or adulthood.

The question was only limited to the determination of the number of times the student-participants were physically attacked during the past 12 months. Thus, the study wasn't able to determine who might have attacked, nor where the attack was committed. However, the data gathered provided enough information that students from the two selected high schools experienced physical attacks which further suggests that the youth are exposed to experiences that may affect how they perform in school or socialize with other people.

There were 44.36% of student-participants who were in physical fights during the past 12 months. Most (55.93%) of them were female.

The presence of physical fights among female student-respondents implies that the fight between two students of about the same strength or power is remote, considering that the period covered in the question was 12 months. Most (70.83%) of these students who engaged in physical fights were female. This suggests that physical fights are more common for females than for males as there were only 29.17% males who said they had physical fights for the past 12 months. This is a slight contradiction with the argument of Lombroso that women are naturally passive [3]. Biological Theory of Lombroso claimed that men were born to be more predisposed to violence than women as women are naturally passive [21].

The study suggests that violence involving women being the aggressor is towards women who are of the same strength or power. This assumption was based on the definition of a physical fight which was explained to the student-respondent prior to answering the part of the questionnaire that asks on physical fights and physical attacks. In addition, this study somewhat served as an example of Rational Choice Theory which claims that all human weighs the benefits and consequences of a certain action before deciding to do it. Thus, in this study, female student-participants may have chosen to pick a fight knowing that they have a better chance of winning.

Although the result of this study was from very limited high school students, the result showing that the students physically attack others and some are engaged in physical fights, this can already provide awareness on the risk behaviors that may affect physical as well mental health of high schools. According to Ford and associates [7], victims of this may use coping mechanisms that would result in the loss of empathy, inability to self-regulate, distorted cognitions, lack of impulse control, and other characteristics that can increase an adolescent's tendency toward delinquent behavior.

Were Seriously Injured

Most (72.97%) of the students who responded to the study said that they were not seriously injured during the past 12 months. There were. However, 32.31% of students admitted being injured seriously.

The prevalence of serious injury is higher among females, with 25 out of 77 experiencing it.

Among those who admitted being seriously injured, 44.44% said they experienced it once during the past 12 months while 55.56% experienced it two or three times. The limited number of times student-participants experienced serious physical injury suggests that security and monitoring within their school are efficient; thus, an incident that may cause serious injuries is very limited. It should be noted, however, that there were no further queries conducted to determine the relationship of security and monitoring and prevalence of serious injury among students. Further, most (59.09%) of those who experienced serious injuries were female student-participants. This is contrary to the result of the research conducted by Shi and associates [21], which states that male students were more likely to be injured than female students. The most common injury the student-participants suffered from was not determined as most (44.44%) said that something else caused their injury. This means that the cause of their injury was not among the choices that were enumerated in the questionnaire. Since the data was based only on the response to the survey questions and the observance of the anonymity of the student-respondents, there was no means of conducting follow-up questions to the student-respondents who said something else happened to them.

A most serious injury suffered

The least (15.90%) common injuries identified by the student-respondents was a cut or stab wound. This is again

is a contradiction of the result of the study of Shi and associates, which stated that the most common injuries among secondary schools were unintentional injuries falls and burns [24]. A stab wound is not an unintentional injury as it refers to a wound that is by knife or other sharp or pointed instrument and appears to have been inflicted by another person [22].

Least common injury experienced by the female student-respondents was broken bone or a dislocated joint and cut or stab wound (6.82% respectively), while the male is a concussion or other head or neck injury, knocked out or couldn't breathe (6.82%).

As opposed to the leading cause of injury identified by the study of Shi and associates, which fall [21], in this study, however, the leading cause of injury cannot be specifically identified as 36.36% said something else happened to them. On the other hand, the least common cause of injury for females was poisoning and attack/abuse/fighting while fire or being too near to a flame for males.

The least common cause of injury for females was poisoning and attack/abuse/fighting while fire or being too near a flame for males.

It is also evident that the number of female and male student-participants who were injured was very close. This is a contradiction of the result of the study of Shi and associates [21] saying that male students were more likely to be injured than female students.

Behaviors that Contribute to Violence

During the past 30 days (prior to the time the study was conducted), most (80.18%) of the student-participants said that they had not carried a weapon (such as gun, knife or club). However, there were 9.91% carried any of these weapons on school property.

For the past 12 months, there was 1.80% who admitted to bringing a weapon. Most (70.83%) of them were male. This supports the study of Tugli [23] wherein there were 2% males of the 334 randomly selected students of rural schools in South Africa admitted ever carrying a knife to school. However, it would also be noteworthy to mention that 7.8% of female student-participants also carried a weapon.

From the two respondent-schools, 20.30% of the students who participated had not gone to school on at least one during the 30 days before the survey because they felt that they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. The prevalence of having not gone to school because of safety concerns is the same for both males and females and from public and private schools. This implies that both sexes consider safety when going to school. The physical strength that differentiates males and females is therefore not a determinant on whether to go to school or not.

This study negates the data on the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance in the United States in 2017 [18] where the prevalence of not going to school because of safety concerns was higher among females.

There were also 2% who said they were threatened or injured with a weapon once during the past 12 months. This is of similar weight with those who admitted they experienced this once.

On the experience of being forced to have sexual intercourse and doing sexual things, they were asked whether they were forced to have sexual intercourse when they don't want to and whether anyone forced them to do sexual things (kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse) when they did not want to. There were 10.52% student-participant who admitted to having been forced to have sexual intercourse, 57.14% of them were male while 42.86% were female. This study surveyed only on the incidence of being a force to have sexual intercourse; thus in-depth information on who forced them, how many times this happened and if there were interventions or any actions addressing this issue was not provided by this study.

The result of this study corroborates the study Unwanted sexual experience among middle and high school youth which said that females were more likely than males to have had experience in forced sexual intercourse [6].

Student participants who said they were forced to do sexual things in terms of sex are the same. The difference lies in the frequency of this incidence. Female student-participants who said they experienced this once were 80% compared to 60% male.

Incidence of alcohol and Marijuana Use

Alcohol Use among Selected High School Students in Tabuk City

This part presents information gathered from the selected high school students in Tabuk City to questions about drinking alcohol. These students received an explanation from the researcher that drinking alcohol, as used in this study includes drinking beer, wine, and liquor such as rum, gin, vodka, or whiskey. However, it does not include drinking a few sips of wine for religious purposes.

There were 33.08% of student-participants who are drinking alcohol. Most (45.46%) of them were male. This supports Lewinsohn and associates [10], who said that boys are more likely to have a greater quantity of drinks and drink earlier than girls. This was also supported by the study of Grant and his colleagues [9] who said that abuse and dependence were more common among males and among younger ones. Further, Lum and associates' study revealed that Filipino students reported a higher level of alcohol consumption compared with other Asian subgroups [12]. One of the possible factors associated with this as identified by them is living away from home.

The highest frequency of having at least one drink by males was for one or two days with an average of 45.46% while females are close with 42.86%. This is contrary to the result of the study done by Lewinsohn and associates (1996), which states that boys, in general, had greater usual frequency and quantity of alcohol consumption than girls. However, according to the study of Miller and her colleagues [17], binge drinking rates among boys and girls are similar.

There is also a very close gap between the male and female on the age they first drank alcohol. Most (52.27%) of those who admitted drinking alcohol started it when they were 13 or 14 years old, and the majority (27.27%) of them were female. This is again, contrary to the study of Lewinsohn

and associates [10] that boys, in general, began drinking at an earlier stage.

Participants of the study were asked to identify the number of days they had at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days prior to this study. Most (86.96%) males said one or two days, while 42.86% were female. However, the presence of a very limited number of student-participants who said they had at least one for 40 or 99 days (4.76% female and no male) and 8.70% male admitted having at least one drink for 100 or more days is alarming. Although this involves only three students, the frequency implies that the drinking was done regularly or every day. Excessive alcohol use, including underage drinking and binge drinking (drinking five or more drinks on occasion for men or four or more drinks on occasion for women), can lead to increased risk of injuries or violence [1], unintended pregnancy, accidental injuries, and even violent crime much so if this involves as young as 13. Further, excessive alcohol has no benefits [2].

In addition, this study seems to provide an explanation to the result of the study on the drinking behaviors of Asian College students which shows that Filipino students reported higher levels of alcohol consumption compared with other Asian subgroups [11]. Presence of heavy drinkers as early as a high school may therefore possibly lead to being alcohol abusers when older.

Those students who admitted to being drinking alcohol said that they usually get the alcohol they drank in a store (12.03%). There were also 6.78% of them who said that the alcohol they drank during the past 30 days was given by someone else or that they just join the drinking group. It is, however, alarming to know that there were 4.51% who said they got it some other way. This is alarming since this implies that the manner of acquiring might have involved an offense since all the choices that were given in the questionnaire were all ways which are normally considered to be allowed if it is done by adults such as buying it, giving money to someone for him to buy alcohol and receiving alcohol from someone. In the Philippines, buying alcohol is okay if done by an adult, but if it is done by minors, then this already prohibited [14].

Further, the identified manner of obtaining alcohol in this study supports the study of Miller and associates [17] who said that the most common manner of obtaining alcohol among underage drinkers was through adults of legal drinking age.

The students were also asked about how many drinks of alcohol they had in a row, that is, within a couple of hours. There were eight male students who admitted having five drinks of alcohol in a row during the past 30 days. There were also four students who had it 20 or more days which is an indication that their drinking results to intoxication.

On the question about the largest number of alcoholic drinks the respondents had in a row, most (38.55%) of those who admitted drinking alcohol had one or two drinks in a row during the past 30 days. Most (62.5%) of them were males while the remaining (37.5%) were females. This corroborates the study of Lewinsohn and associates [10] that the quantity of alcohol consumption of boys is greater than girls.

The result of this study is still alarming situation considering that this involves minors who are not supposed to be having alcoholic drinks as large as ten or more drinks in a row. This suggests that the law prohibiting the selling of alcohol to those below 18 years is not being implemented. This is because minors continue to have access to alcohol even if Presidential Decree 1619 [14] prohibits selling it to minors.

Marijuana Use among Selected High School Students in Tabuk City

There were 8.27% of student-participants who admitted using marijuana. It was, however, evident that the gap between females and males is close. This somewhat contradicts the study of Nguyen [19], which said that more male adolescents used marijuana than their female counterparts.

Most (45.46%) student-participants who admitted using marijuana first tried marijuana when they were 11 or 12 years old.

Three of them were female, while the remaining two were male. It was, however, alarming to know that four started using marijuana when they were eight years old or younger. This contradicts the study of Warren and associates [25] which revealed that male students initiate marijuana use earlier than female students

When asked how many times they had used marijuana during the past 30 days, 36.36% admitted using it one or two times, and all of them were female. Considering the regency of their use, it implies that the participants were still using marijuana.

The most frequent use of marijuana was 20 to 39 days. This frequency was admitted by 18.8%. This is alarming because, as a result of a study published by the National Institute on Drug Abuse [15], adolescents who used marijuana regularly were significantly less likely than their non-using peers to finish high school or obtain a degree. They also had a much higher chance of developing dependence, using other drugs, and attempting suicide.

Conclusion

High school students involved themselves in physical attacks and physical fights manifesting aggressive behavior among them. High school displays behaviors that contribute to violence which threaten or cause injury to other students. There were high school students who are already consuming alcohol or marijuana, which started early. This is a reality that needs to be address not only by the academic community but also by the community and the government agencies concerned. Thus, a school-based intervention program that focused on behavior modification that involves the community (parents, NGOs, church, DOH, and other concern agencies), academe (school administration, guidance counseling), and students may be initiated or maintained in order to deal with discipline, violence-related issues, marijuana, and alcohol use among students.

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