Prevalence and Correlates of Victimization and Weapon Carrying Among Military- and Nonmilitary-connected Youth in Southern California


SUMMARY: Military-connected and nonmilitary-connected public school students participated in a study examining the rates and correlates of school victimization and weapon carrying. Youth with a military-connected parent had higher rates of physical victimization, nonphysical victimization, and weapon carrying compared to those with siblings serving in the military and with nonmilitary-connected youth.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Almost half of the sample reported some type of physical victimization at school in the previous year, including 30% being pushed/shoved, 26% had property stolen, 28% had seen someone with a weapon, and 20% were afraid of being attacked.
- Approximately 62% reported some type of nonphysical victimization, with 46% reporting sexual jokes/gestures, 41% had rumors spread, 39% were made fun of for their appearance, and 22% had rumors spread on the internet.
- Students with parents and siblings in the military had higher rates on all physical victimization measures, overall nonphysical victimization, and any weapon carrying compared to those without a parent or sibling in the military.
- Number of deployments and changing school many times predicted physical and nonphysical victimization and weapon carrying. Two or more family deployments was associated with a 71% increase in the odds of reporting physical victimization and a 54% increase in weapon carrying. Having a parent in the military was associated with increased odds of weapon carrying by 29%.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:
- Provide education to military parents about the increased risks of physical and nonphysical victimization among their children and effective means of helping their children manage these stressors
- Offer mentoring programs to military youth struggling with victimization issues in school
- Disseminate information to military youth regarding ways to deal with victimization in school

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:
- Continue to support programs that aim to prevent bullying in school, specifically towards military youth
- Encourage collaboration between military family programs and schools to identify students who are being victimized and to offer supportive services when appropriate
- Encourage the development of youth support groups for military youth coping with bullying victimization at school or within their neighborhoods

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METHODS

- Data were taken from the California Healthy Kids Survey of 7th, 9th and 11th graders in six military-connected districts in Southern California.
- Students and parents were asked to consent, and interested students completed a paper and pencil survey during class; 87% of students completed the survey.
- Students completed demographic questions and measures of being the victim of school physical violence, non-physical victimization, and weapon carrying at school (gun or knife).

PARTICIPANTS

- Fourteen thousand five hundred twelve students in Southern California (7th, 9th, and 11th grade) participated.
- Thirty-five percent were in 9th grade, 33% in 7th grade, and 32% in 11th grade.
- Eighty-seven percent of the youth reported no military connection; 9% had a parent in the military and 4% had a sibling in the military.
- The majority of the sample was female (52%) and Latino/Latina (49%).

LIMITATIONS

- The data are cross-sectional, and causal conclusions are inappropriate.
- Important possible confounding variables (e.g., socioeconomic status) were not included and may bias the results.
- The majority of the sample was female and Latino/Latina; therefore, results may not be generalizable.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:
- Assess the risk factors that mediate the relationship between victimization and weapon carrying
- Include assessment of family members to measure how their attitudes and behaviors influence weapon carrying
- Continue to examine rates of victimization among military and non-military youth, including online victimization

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS

Design
Appropriate Research Plan and Sample

Methods
Appropriate Measurement and Analysis

Limitations
Few

For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
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