

ABSTRACT

The present study on physical violence of Advanced Level students is a descriptive cross sectional study of a sample of 630 students attending schools in Kalutara Educational Division, which is one of the four divisions of the Kalutara Educational Zone. It was planned with the objective of describing the extent and pattern of physical violence, selected factors associated with physical violence, immediate consequences of violent incidents of Advanced Level students and the perceptions of teachers and parents on this issue.

Information was collected on socio-demographic characteristics, domestic and school related factors, types of violent acts associated with physical violence and immediate consequences of violent incidents. The experiences of the second school term of the year 2003 were recalled from the study subjects using an anonymous self-administered questionnaire, which was the main study instrument. Focus Group Discussions were conducted with help of Focus Group Discussion schedules to determine the perceptions of teachers and parents on the issue of physical violence among Advanced Level students. A multistage cluster sampling technique was used to select the study sample. Data processing and analysis was done using the Epi Info version six and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software.

The study revealed that more than 50% of the study population have been either 'victimized' by physical violence or have 'committed' physical violence or both, male sex being the dominant sex in all types of violent incidents, most

vulnerable age for engaging in physical violence was 16 years, students who were attending mixed schools have engaged in physical violence to a higher degree and most frequently cited place of occurrence of physical violence for boys was out side the school premises while it was inside the school premises for girls. It was also revealed that the children who received parental assistance regularly in solving problems were less inclined in getting involved in physical violence. When parental assistance was minimal or nil there was a sharp increase in students getting involved in physical violence and who were subjected to physical hurt by parents and elders were also more prone to get involved. Further, students with no siblings or with a higher number of siblings, who consume alcohol and / or who are smokers and students whose mothers were employed too were more prone to get involved in physical violence.

Parents, teachers and health care personnel were found to be the main confidants of the students in preventing physical violence among them. Taking all the above factors into consideration it is recommended that educational programmes directed at preventing physical violence, on the demerits of smoking and alcohol consumption should be undertaken among Advanced Level students. Finally, parents and teachers should provide more regular assistance in solving problems of these children and physical hurt of them by parents and elders should be eliminated.