

# On school violence in Korean middle school, prevention and reaction measures

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This study is aiming to explore the practical and realistic measure in more variable way, which enables us to manage the problems about school violence we are currently facing as well as to overcome limitations in the current situation where we react only with punishments, mainly in the form of the law enforcement, supported by the police. This study was conducted on male and female students (n=424) and teachers (n=136) attending at the seven middle schools located in Seoul. The frequency analysis, one way ANOVA F-test, t-test, the multiple regression analysis were applied. Students recognize 'harmful environmental cleanup' as an important variable or factor to reduce school violence.

Also, both teachers and students are aware that 'regular survey on school violence' could reduce school violence. In conclusion, it is considered that as an effective and viable prevention measure against school violence, more attention and affection efforts need to be activated and addressed, on the part of home, school, and government, which will enable our young generations of students to be brought up, and take up the future of our country.

**Keywords:** Korea, School violence, Prevention, Consideration, Attention

## INTRODUCTION

School violence, which is becoming a controversial issue relating to education in today's societies, has displayed changes in the patterns and severity of group or organized violence, with a shift towards younger ages and more diverse patterns of violence, including the emergence of harassment with force as a new pattern; therefore, strengthening fundamental humanity education is considered a very urgent issue. This phenomenon has emerged due to the interactions of the uniform entrance-exam-oriented education, ignoring holistic education, and the factors affecting school violence, such as the nuclearization of family, the adverse effects of the mass media, and harmful facilities, which have caused school violence to become a serious social problem. Furthermore, school violence has broadened in scope, from higher grades to lower grades and from boys to girls, above all, with the features that most of the victims tolerate the painful and abusive situations out of fear of reprisals from the offenders, or of criticism and the 'bullying' of friends for

ratting on peers (Siegel et al., 1989). In addition, with the atmosphere in which teachers don't want the occurrence of school violence to become known outside due to the burden of damaging the school honor and facing accountability, the invisibility of school violence is becoming increasingly intensified, allowing a vicious cycle to be created (Zillmann, 1988). As a result, the parents of the victims suffer mentally from the violence, while the victimized students sometimes refuse to attend school or run away from home, which leads to the litigations, which stresses the importance of making collaborative efforts, as well as the urgent requirement of the attention of the entire society, including homes, schools and communities (Conklin, 1992).

As for the recently occurring school violence, considering that the offenders do not even recognize what they are really doing wrong, the violence has become an act of ignoring the importance of human dignity and life. It can be said that the violence has developed into crime beyond the level of misconduct that is likely to temporarily be performed during the school days, making it is a serious

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social problem. Although the police are conducting diverse operations and activities such as the honor-police boy scouts, the child-safety guardian house, the school-road-safety patrol, the one-to-one guidance of problem students, and the crime-prevention classroom in an effort to eradicate school violence, there are limitations in the prevention efforts due to the increasing seriousness and broadening scope of the violence occurring. From the results of a survey conducted by the Youth Violence Prevention Foundation on 4,073 students of 64 schools in Korea, including elementary schools, middle schools and high schools, 22% of the students responded that they had been victims of violence, while 16% of these students responded that they suffered from deadly pain, which indicates that school violence is not a problem that can be passed off as 'the simple fights between children', but is a problem requiring urgent prevention education on the level of entire schools. In this context, this study will attempt to identify the practical and realistic measures which can be taken against school violence by examining how the students perceive the real situation of school violence, the attitudes with which they see it, and the violence-prevention status and measures taken on the part of the students and teachers while overcoming the limitations in the current situation wherein we react only with punishment from the police in accordance with the law.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Data collection

Male and female students and teachers from 7 middle schools were selected as the sample population for this study. The survey period was from November 27, 2012, to December 21, 2012, during which time data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The socio-demographic characteristics of the teachers and students used in this study are shown in Table 1.

### Measurement

The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding general information, status of school violence, school violence awareness, and school violence prevention and eradication.

### Analysis method

The collection rate of the questionnaire was 97% for the teachers (146 copies collected out of 150 distributed), while the rate was 96% for the students (424 copies collected out of 440 distributed). Therefore, the surveys from 570 participants were used in the final analysis. For statistical analysis, the frequency analysis, *F*-test and *t*-test by one way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis were

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of teachers and students

Variables	Classification	Teachers (n, %)	Students (n, %)	Total (n, %)
Sex	Male	29 (19.9)	207(48.8)	236 (49.1)
	Female	117 (80.1)	217(51.2)	334 (50.8)
Male/female school distinction for students and teachers	Male school	3 (2.1)	6 (1.4)	9 (1.5)
	Female school	38 (26.0)	70 (16.5)	108 (18.9)
	Coed school	105 (71.9)	348 (82.1)	453 (79.4)
Age	20s	22 (15.1)	-	22 (15.1)
	30s	51 (34.9)		51 (34.9)
	40s	59 (40.4)		59 (40.4)
	50s	14 (9.6)		14 (9.6)
Grades	First grade	-	62 (14.6)	62 (14.6)
	Second grade		242 (57.1)	242 (57.1)
	Third grade		120 (28.3)	120 (28.3)
Home education	Good	-	76 (17.9)	76 (17.9)
	Middle		313 (73.8)	313 (73.8)
	Bad		35 (8.2)	35 (8.2)
Years of work as teacher	0-9 yr	59 (40.5)	-	59 (40.5)
	10-19 yr	38 (26.2)		38 (26.2)
	20-29 yr	43 (29.5)		43 (29.5)
	Over 30 yr	6 (4.1)		6 (4.1)

performed using the SPSS WIN 18.0 program.

## RESULTS

### Perceptions of students and teachers about the status of school violence

The school violence status was examined in terms of the following: whether or not the subject had experience with the victims of violence, the frequency of the violence, changes in the state of mind of the victims, attitude of the offending students, the time at which the violence occurred, the type of offenders, the place at which the violence took place, and the presence or absence of a group perpetrating the violence. The results of examining the school violence status as perceived by the students and teachers are presented in Table 2.

### The consciousness status of the students and teachers about school violence

The consciousness status of the survey subjects about school violence was identified by examining what the subjects think about the following question items: the extent of the school violence, the types of violence, the reasons for the violence, the characteristics of the offenders, people the students ask for help from, the reason some students do not ask for help, the level of the help obtained when asking for help, and the institutions which should

**Table 2.** Perceptions of students and teachers about the status of school violence

Variables	Classification	Teacher (n, %)	Students (n, %)		
			Total	Male	Female
Experience with the victims of violence	1-3 times	36 (25.0)	123 (29.0)	69 (33.3)	54 (24.9)
	4-6 times	34 (23.6)	50 (11.8)	32 (15.5)	18 (8.3)
	7-9 times	13 (9.0)	21 (5.0)	13 (6.3)	8 (3.7)
	10-12 times	13 (9.0)	3 (0.7)	2 (1.0)	1 (0.5)
	Over 13-15 times	34 (23.6)	18 (4.2)	14 (6.8)	4 (1.8)
	None	14 (9.7)	209 (49.3)	77 (37.2)	132 (60.8)
Frequency of the violence	1-2 times a week	21 (14.8)	119 (28.1)	71 (34.3)	48 (22.2)
	1-2 times a month	50 (35.2)	139 (32.9)	73 (35.3)	66 (30.6)
	1-2 times per 6 month	25 (17.6)	46 (10.9)	21 (10.1)	25 (11.6)
	1-2 times a year	35 (24.6)	34 (8.0)	10 (4.8)	24 (11.1)
	1-2 times every two years	6 (4.2)	12 (2.8)	7 (3.4)	5 (2.3)
	None	5 (3.5)	73 (17.3)	25 (12.1)	48 (22.2)
Changes in the state of mind of the victim student	Dislike going to school	107 (75.4)	225 (54.1)	89 (43.2)	48 (22.2)
	Want to be transferred to another school	17 (12.0)	48 (11.5)	73 (35.3)	66 (30.6)
	Want to run away from home	-	8 (1.9)	21 (10.1)	25 (11.6)
	Want to revenge	6 (4.2)	74 (17.8)	10 (4.8)	24 (11.1)
	Don't care	2 (1.4)	37 (8.9)	7 (3.4)	5 (2.3)
	Other	10 (7.0)	24 (5.8)	25 (12.1)	48 (22.2)
The attitude of the offender students	Regretted and stopped the violence	22 (15.8)	31 (7.6)	14 (6.9)	17 (8.3)
	Regretted but continued to join in the violence	39 (28.1)	68 (16.7)	37 (18.2)	31 (15.1)
	Justified the violence and continued to participate	7 (5.0)	69 (16.9)	36 (17.7)	33 (16.1)
	Justified the violence but stopped participating	12 (8.6)	32 (7.8)	14 (6.9)	18 (8.8)
	Continued the violence without thinking.	53 (38.1)	196 (48.0)	98 (48.3)	98 (47.8)
	Other	6 (4.3)	12 (2.9)	4 (2.0)	8 (3.9)
Time at which the violence occurred	On the way to school	-	2 (0.5)	-	2 (1.0)
	During school	30 (20.7)	73 (17.6)	38 (18.6)	35 (16.7)
	During rest hours	19 (13.1)	131 (31.6)	100 (49.0)	31 (14.8)
	During lunch hour	4 (2.8)	30 (7.2)	13 (6.4)	17 (8.1)
	On the way home	23 (15.9)	36 (8.7)	11 (5.4)	25 (11.9)
	After school	52 (35.9)	120 (29.0)	33 (16.2)	87 (41.4)
	Other	17 (11.7)	22 (5.3)	9 (4.4)	13 (6.2)
Type of offender	A lone student	21 (14.6)	76 (18.4)	53 (26.0)	23 (11.0)
	2-3 students	53 (36.8)	114 (27.6)	72 (35.3)	42 (20.1)
	4-5 students	46 (31.9)	92 (22.3)	35 (17.2)	57 (27.3)
	Over 5 or a group	23 (16.0)	124 (30.0)	40 (19.6)	84 (40.2)
	Others	1 (0.7)	7 (1.7)	4 (2.0)	3 (1.4)
Violence place	Inside of the school	24 (16.6)	141 (33.9)	98 (47.8)	43 (20.4)
	On the way home after school	32 (22.1)	97 (23.3)	45 (22.0)	52 (24.6)
	Nearby private study centers	8 (5.5)	30 (7.2)	12 (5.9)	18 (8.5)
	Game room, PC room	18 (12.4)	54 (13.0)	18 (8.8)	36 (17.1)
	Playgrounds, parks	36 (24.8)	54 (13.0)	24 (11.7)	30 (14.2)
	Karaoke	1 (0.7)	7 (1.7)	-	7 (3.3)
	Friend's house, rented rooms	-	2 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)
	Other	26 (17.9)	31 (7.5)	7 (3.4)	24 (11.4)
Group participation in the violence	Yes	2 (1.4)	21 (5.2)	11 (5.7)	10 (4.8)
	No	141 (98.6)	380 (94.8)	182 (94.3)	198 (95.2)

**Table 3.** The consciousness status of the students and teachers on the school violence

Variables	Classification	Teacher (n, %)	Students (n, %)		
			Total	Male	Female
The extent of violence	Very serious	15 (10.3)	47 (11.1)	21 (10.2)	26 (12.0)
	Rather serious	68 (46.9)	128 (30.3)	54 (26.2)	74 (34.3)
	Moderate	50 (34.5)	180 (42.7)	97 (47.1)	83 (38.4)
	A little serious	11 (7.6)	45 (10.7)	25 (12.1)	20 (9.3)
	Never serious	1 (0.7)	15 (3.6)	6 (2.9)	9 (4.2)
	Other	-	7 (1.7)	3 (1.5)	4 (1.9)
Violence type	Teasing	24 (16.6)	55 (13.0)	36 (17.5)	19 (8.8)
	Light violence	7 (4.8)	37 (8.8)	28 (13.6)	9 (4.2)
	Bullying	36 (24.8)	120 (28.4)	54 (26.2)	66 (30.6)
	Ripoff	28 (12.4)	51 (12.1)	26 (12.6)	25 (11.6)
	Sexual violence	6 (4.1)	43 (10.2)	16 (7.8)	27 (12.5)
	Verbal, psychological violence	23 (15.9)	54 (12.8)	18 (8.7)	36 (16.7)
	Collective violence requiring medical treatment	15 (10.3)	42 (10.0)	20 (9.7)	22 (10.2)
	Other	16 (11.0)	20 (4.7)	8 (3.9)	12 (5.6)
Reasons for Violence	Without any reason	64 (44.1)	188 (44.8)	91 (44.4)	97 (45.1)
	To steal money	33 (22.8)	85 (20.2)	41 (20.0)	44 (20.5)
	Due to a promise	2 (1.4)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)
	Just because of looking at the offenders	5 (3.4)	30 (7.1)	15 (7.3)	15 (7.0)
	Due to speaking carelessly	20 (13.8)	62 (14.8)	38 (18.5)	24 (11.2)
	Because of not saying hello	-	-	-	-
	Due to smiling	-	10 (2.4)	7 (3.4)	3 (1.4)
	Other	21 (14.5)	43 (10.2)	12 (5.9)	31 (14.4)
Characteristics of the offenders	Seniors of the same school	18 (12.6)	72 (17.3)	18 (8.8)	54 (25.4)
	Classmates	106 (74.1)	285 (68.3)	168 (82.4)	117 (54.9)
	Seniors of another school	2 (1.4)	34 (8.2)	6 (2.9)	28 (13.1)
	The same-grade students of another school	3 (2.1)	6 (1.4)	3 (1.5)	3 (1.4)
	Other	14 (9.8)	20 (4.8)	9 (4.4)	11 (5.2)
The subject of help requests	Teachers of the school	40 (28.4)	95 (22.7)	49 (24.0)	46 (21.4)
	Parents, Family	42 (29.8)	179 (42.7)	73 (35.8)	106 (49.3)
	Education office	1 (0.7)	6 (1.4)	4 (2.0)	2 (0.9)
	Police officers	-	47 (11.2)	33 (16.2)	14 (6.5)
	Friends, seniors, juniors	35 (24.8)	56 (13.4)	26 (12.7)	30 (14.0)
	Will not say to anybody	16 (11.3)	21 (5.0)	12 (5.9)	9 (4.2)
	Other	7 (5.0)	15 (3.6)	7 (3.4)	8 (3.7)
Whether or not victims asked for help	Yes	86 (59.7)	65 (15.5)	35 (17.0)	30 (14.0)
	No	58 (40.3)	355 (84.5)	171 (83.0)	184 (86.0)

(continued to the next page)

make the most efforts for removing school violence. The results are presented in Table 3.

### Perceptions of the students and teachers on the reasons for school violence and the necessary eradication measures

Regarding the reasons for the persistence of school violence, the test statistics and mean values of the differences between the reasons perceived by teachers and by students are shown in Table 4.

In order to identify the differences between male and female stu-

dents, a test of the difference was conducted, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

### The most urgent measures needed for eradicating the school violence.

The differences in the mean values for the teachers and students regarding the most urgent measures required for eradicating school violence were tested, the results of which are shown in Table 6.

**Table 3.** continued

Variables	Classification	Teacher (n, %)	Students (n, %)		
			Total	Male	Female
The reason for not asking for help	Thinking that it would be of no use to tell	19 (14.4)	73 (17.8)	45 (22.5)	28 (13.3)
	Fear of the offender's reprisals	93 (70.5)	234 (56.9)	104 (52.0)	130 (61.6)
	Trying to resolve it by oneself	3 (2.3)	15 (3.6)	10 (5.0)	5 (2.4)
	Thinking that it has nothing to do with him or her	9 (6.8)	39 (9.5)	20 (10.0)	19 (9.0)
	Feeling troublesome and shameful	1 (0.8)	20 (4.9)	11 (5.5)	9 (4.3)
	Because of loyalty to the offenders	2 (1.5)	6 (1.5)	4 (2.0)	2 (0.9)
	Other	5 (3.8)	24 (5.8)	6 (3.0)	18 (8.5)
Degree of help obtained upon asking	Never helpful	1 (0.7)	26 (6.2)	9 (4.5)	17 (7.9)
	Not very helpful	16 (11.1)	90 (21.5)	49 (24.3)	47 (19.0)
	Moderate	43 (29.9)	126 (30.1)	51 (25.2)	75 (34.7)
	A little bit helpful	70 (48.6)	84 (20.1)	40 (19.8)	44 (20.4)
	Very helpful	14 (9.7)	39 (9.3)	27 (13.4)	12 (5.6)
	Other	-	53 (12.7)	26 (12.9)	27 (12.5)
The institutes that should strive to prevent the school violence	Home	97 (67.4)	66 (15.8)	22 (10.8)	44 (20.5)
	School	25 (17.4)	203 (48.6)	99 (48.8)	104 (48.4)
	The police	2 (1.4)	43 (10.3)	31 (15.3)	12 (5.6)
	Community organizations	-	4 (1.0)	4 (2.0)	-
	Residents	-	7 (1.7)	3 (1.5)	4 (1.9)
	Child protection organizations	1 (0.7)	60 (14.4)	35 (15.8)	28 (13.0)
	Education office	-	10 (2.4)	8 (3.9)	2 (0.9)
	Others	19 (13.2)	25 (6.0)	4 (2.0)	21 (9.8)

\*Violence prevention institution was allowed multiple responses (n = 712).

**Table 4.** Differences between teachers and students in the perceived reasons for the persistence of school

Variables	Classification	Teachers (n)			Students (n)			F-test
		n	M	SD	n	M	SD	
Reasons for the persistence of school violence	Lack of interests from teachers and parents	141	3.23	1.09	408	3.03	1.18	95.72***
	Focus of education system on entrance-exams	143	3.64	0.94	406	2.89	1.18	65.21***
	Lack of cultural facilities and leisure activities for the students	143	3.85	0.8	408	2.87	1.21	138.27**
	Lack of professional school counselors	143	3.31	0.85	409	2.67	1.13	104.74***
	Harmful environments around the school	143	3.83	0.71	408	3.13	1.17	58.61***
	Home environmental impacts (Remarriage, divorce)	142	4.55	0.6	408	3.17	1.25	315.16***
	Influences of peers, culture and the media	143	4.28	0.65	409	3.34	1.16	115.30***

**Table 5.** Tests on gender differences in student perception of the reasons for the persistence of school violence

Variables	Classification	Students						t-test
		Male			Female			
		n	M	SD	n	M	SD	
Reasons for the persistence of school violence	Lack of interest from teachers and parents	196	2.97	1.24	212	3.09	1.11	-1.07
	Focus of education system on entrance-exams	194	2.75	1.2	212	3.02	1.15	-2.29*
	Lack of cultural facilities and leisure activities for the students	196	2.98	1.27	212	2.77	1.15	1.72
	Lack of professional school counselors	197	2.64	1.17	212	2.71	1.09	-0.61
	Harmful environments around the school	196	3.09	1.26	212	3.16	1.09	-0.59
	Home environmental impacts (Remarriage, divorce)	196	2.82	1.29	212	3.5	0.12	-5.76**
	Influences of peers, culture and the media	196	3.14	1.29	213	3.52	1	-3.33**

**Table 6.** Differences in the perceived most urgent measures for eradicating school violence

Variables	Classification	Teachers (n)			Students (n)			F-test
		n	M	SD	n	M	SD	
The most urgent measures for eradicating school violence	Frequent consultation with the students by counseling teachers	144	3.72	0.7	391	3.23	1.06	56.09***
	Conducting regular surveys on school violence	145	3.39	0.78	390	3.24	1.06	9.81**
	Installing victim-reporting boxes inside the school	145	3.6	0.79	390	3.43	1.07	3.72
	Activating the student-counseling room	145	3.83	0.79	389	3.37	1.1	30.22***
	Strengthening teacher patrol of the school	145	3.62	0.76	390	3.52	1.11	15.27***
	Reforming the entrance exam-oriented education	145	3.9	0.97	390	3.34	1.08	33.13***
	Clean up of the environments harmful to the students	145	4.26	0.71	389	3.51	1.04	59.77***
	Supporting healthy group activities for the students	145	3.98	0.75	389	3.4	1.02	60.93***
	Treating the offenders harshly	145	4.24	0.77	389	3.96	1.08	33.58***
Developing programs for victim protection and offender guidance	145	4.29	0.75	390	3.56	1.09	79.44***	

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results found in this study, in order for school violence prevention measures to have an effect, the following interventions should be considered.

First, for effective school violence prevention activities, the professionalism of the school staff who respond to the violence should be enhanced (Williams et al., 2004). The current measures against school violence are not effective due to the common structural problems of insufficient personnel and budgets, as well as insufficient professionalism of the school staff who deal with the violence.

Second, the current control-driven polices need to be stopped, and the effort needs to be switched to focus on prevention-oriented policies. To this end, the clean-up of harmful environments should be done in conjunction with civilian organizations, and ongoing preventive patrol and control is necessary around crime-ridden places with the high possibility of crime occurrence (Hunter, 2000). In addition, since the concerns of teenagers are shared between peers, peer-counseling leadership training programs, as a precaution, should be activated, and more active action programs such as field visiting activities should be created (Adler et al., 1993).

Third, ongoing violence prevention education and human rights education should be carried out. Human rights education should be provided for teenagers who are exposed to violence-related cultures, as well as for the students, teachers, and parents facing the repressive culture of entrance examination-oriented education (Shoemaker, 1984). Therefore, efforts to spread human rights education programs across the board are needed (Moon,

2006). While school-violence reaction measures and case-centric lectures have recently been made through crime prevention classrooms, institutional schemes to ensure more professional and practical education are needed with human-rights education counseling and violence-prevention curriculum (Becker et al., 1993).

Fourth, community networks need to be organized solidly (Bartol and Anne, 2008). The role of community networks is to ensure the operation of a comprehensive and systematic program within the community, with the established databases of school consultation results and police receipts, and the processing of school violence while building a 'School Violence Surveillance Network.' This can be accomplished by formulating networks among the associated entities based on cooperative links between homes, schools, education offices, and local governments. To do this, a professional organization which can manage school violence scientifically and systematically needs to be established (Borum, 2000).

Finally, since the biggest reason for difficulty reporting the occurrence of school violence was found to be fear of reprisal, appropriate protection for whistleblowers needs to be ensured. Measures of the alliance system to provide support for the victims to adapt to school and social life should be prepared, while motivating victim reporting through the strictly assurance of maintaining identity secrecy of the victim students and whistleblowers, as well as the designation of dedicated police-supporting systems for the continued protection of the victims and operation of a school-wide support system (Anderson, 1997).

This study examined the prevention activities and reaction measures regarding school violence. Overall, resolution of the

problem of school violence should start with the efforts of society to identify the fundamental causes surrounding the violence, based on an understanding of the realities faced by the students. This should be followed by the persistent practices of education, focusing on prevention and guidance, while the joint efforts of entire societies are needed concurrently, with the leading roles of the home, schools, and communities, as well as institutional support of the government.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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