Violence in Brazilian schools: Analysis of the effect of the #Tamojunto prevention program for bullying and physical violence

Júlia D.S.P. Gusmões, Adriana Sañudo, Juliana Y. Valente, Zila M. Sanchez*

Departament of Preventive Medicine, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Rua Botucatu, 740, 4° Andar, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
School violence
Bullying
Prevention
Adolescence
Substance use
Brazil

ABSTRACT

A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 6637 7th- and 8th-grade students in 72 public schools in 6 Brazilian cities to evaluate the effects of the European drug prevention program Unplugged, called #Tamojunto in Brazil. This article evaluates the effects of #Tamojunto on the prevention of bullying and physical violence. Baseline data were collected from both intervention and control groups prior to program implementation. Follow-up data collection was performed 9 and 21 months later. Generalized estimating equations were used to evaluate changes in the reporting of receiving or practicing bullying and physical violence over time. The program was found to reduce the likelihood of receiving bullying, particularly in the stratum of girls aged 13–15 years at the 9-month follow-up time point. The effect was not sustained at 21 months. There was no significant effect for practicing bullying and for receiving or practicing physical violence.

1. Introduction

Violence is a social and public health issue related to the violation of rights and the reduction and limitation of quality of life (Gontijo, Alves, Paiva, Guerra, & Kappel, 2010). Included in this issue is the occurrence of violent events in schools, which are becoming increasingly common and accepted as normal adolescent behavior (Charlot, 2002). Violence threatens adolescents’ integrity and jeopardizes the quality of their education (Eyng, Gisi, & Ens, 2009).

Among the various forms of school violence, bullying deserves attention. It is a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon defined as an intentional ‘harm doing’ that occurs repeatedly and over time and is related to an imbalance of power between students (Cecen-Celik & Keith, 2016; Jankauskiene, Kardelis, Sukys, & Kardeliene, 2008; Olweus, 1993; Volk, Dane, & Marini, 2014). Bullying includes patterns of offenses such as making fun of others, excluding others and spreading rumors, but it does not include physical harm (Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010; Cecen-Celik & Keith, 2016; Cowie, 2000). This type of injury is widely prevalent among Brazilian students. According to a national survey, 7.2% of 9th-grade students in Brazil reported being victims of this type of bullying every day or nearly every day in the past 30 days (Malta et al., 2014).

Another type of school injury highly prevalent in Brazilian schools is physical violence; 12.9% of 9th-graders in Brazil reported being involved in physically violent episodes within the past month (Malta et al., 2010). Physical violence can be any form of physical aggression with intention to hurt and includes corporal punishment in which physical force is used and that is intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, [SRSG on Violence...
Physical violence can be differentiated from bullying because the former considers isolated episodes and not a pattern of behaviors that involves mocking, which considered bullying (Chirila & Constantine, 2013; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017).

School violence is a worldwide problem that notably affects adolescent development and wellbeing (Nansel et al., 2001). During this particular period of life, the brain is still undergoing a maturing process (Spear, 2013), and adolescents are shaping their own personality (Steinberg, 2005) and are thus less able to address emotions and distress (Fisher et al., 2012). Because adolescents naturally display higher reactivity and susceptibility, the effects of school violence victimization and perpetration on mental health might be amplified during that phase of life (Hong et al., 2016; Troop-Gordon, 2017) and might consequently show an association with the development of low self-esteem (Brito & Oliveira, 2013). It is also known that children who are victims of school violence display a tendency for experiencing a life marked by further victimization (Arsenault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2009), resulting in later depression (Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeb, 2011). In contrast, violence perpetration is associated with delinquency behaviors and suicide (Farrington, Loeb, Stallings, & Ttofi, 2011).

Another behavior that is widely considered a predictor of school violence victimization and perpetration is the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs (Andrade et al., 2012; By & Rossow, 2009; Gomes et al., 2006; Ttofi et al., 2011). Compounding the problem, antisocial attitudes, such as fighting and breaking rules, indicate a predisposition for alcohol and drug use (Young, Sweating, & West, 2008). Thus, the use of substances can support transgressive behavior because the opposite phenomenon also occurs: transgressive behavior can reflect a predisposition for alcohol and drug use and a disruptive behavior pattern (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2013). This two-way phenomenon makes it difficult to define the etiology of the independent behaviors by identifying which one is the cause and which one is the effect but reinforces the association between them and the need to consider that they are grouped.

Considering that substance use and violence tend to co-occur among adolescents and appear to have similar etiologies, studies have indicated that prevention components of these programs can achieve both outcomes (Botvin, Griffin, & Nichols, 2006; Cox et al., 2016; Hahn et al., 2007). Fagan and Catalano (2012) studied the effective components of youth violence prevention programs and showed that school-based programs include components related to the enhancement of students’ emotional abilities, the improvement of their communication with others, decision-making skills, coping with stressful situations, and conflict resolution. Such components are also included in drug prevention programs, such as Unplugged, even though it is a substance use prevention program (Kreft et al., 2009). This fact might reinforce that life skills training in drug prevention programs can be effective in preventing school violence and vice versa.

The European prevention program Unplugged, which is called #Tamojunto in Brazil (Pedroso, Abreu, & Kinoshita, 2015), was adapted for implementation in Brazilian public schools according to international guidelines and the General Coordination of Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs of the Brazilian Ministry of Health in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This program seeks to prevent the use of alcohol and other drugs based on the Global Social Influence Model (Sussman, Arriaza, & Grigsby, 2004) with an approach that focuses on building skills to control social influences, deconstructing normative beliefs and reducing drug use (Faggiano et al., 2008).

This program has been effective in reducing the use of tobacco and marijuana among European students (Faggiano et al., 2010). However, its effect on violence has not been evaluated. The results of the first evaluation of the pilot version of the Unplugged program in Brazil suggested a possible effect on the reduction of school violence based on reported improvements in students’ interpersonal relationships and the relationships between students and teachers (Medeiros, Cruz, Schneider, Sanudo, & Sanchez, 2016). This possible effect on violence based on the improvement of relationships was considered since both drug use and school violence may be reinforced in the school environment by extrapersonal relationships that induce these behaviors (Reid, Peterson, Hughey, & Garcia-Reid, 2006). Consequently, a good relationship with peers may be a protective factor when considering adolescent violence (Hart, O’Toole, Price-Sharps, & Shaffer, 2007).

Given the previous results, the present study seeks to evaluate the effect of the #Tamojunto prevention program on the prevalence of reports of physical violence and bullying engaged in and victimized by public school students in Brazil over a 21-month period.

2. Method

2.1. Study design

A randomized controlled trial was conducted using 7th- and 8th-grade students from 72 public elementary schools in six Brazilian cities (São Paulo, Federal District, São Bernardo do Campo, Florianópolis, Tubarão and Fortaleza) between 2014 and 2015, with trial registration at the Brazilian Ministry of Health “Brazilian Register of Clinical Trials - REBEC”, number RBR-4 mnv5 g and approval from Universidade Federal de São Paulo Ethics Committee (CEP protocol: #473.498).

The schools were randomized and separated into intervention and control groups. Students in the intervention schools received 12 #Tamojunto lessons during the first semester of 2014, whereas the control schools did not offer any prevention programs. The initial patterns of violence, drug use, sociodemographic data and other variables were evaluated in both groups using a structured, anonymous and self-reporting questionnaire. Baseline data were collected simultaneously in the control and intervention schools two weeks before the beginning of the implementation of the program in February of 2014. In addition to baseline data collection, two follow-ups with the same questionnaire were completed by students from both groups. The first follow-up was 9 months after the initial data collection (November 2014), and the second follow-up was 21 months after the initial data collection (November 2015), six and eighteen months after the end of the intervention, respectively.
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات