

Teen Violence – Is there a solution?

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ABSTRACT

This essay will contain the most important facts about teen violence. Teen violence is our reality, and is a huge part of a teenager's life in the society we live in today. The potential impact, and more notably, the dangers that different types of violence can have on us, attract a lot of attention in the news and the medical profession, which is one of the reasons that made me choose this subject. It can include things like school bullying, fights, gang violence, violence at home and suicide. These kinds of teen violence I will further explore in the essay. Some children see violence in their school every day; many teens use drugs and alcohol and become very depressed. This can be dangerous because they do not think clearly and may bring a gun or knife to school. If a teen is in a bad enough state, they could shoot other students or themselves, or maybe a teacher that they feel has been unfair to them. Depression can cause anyone to become violent especially a teenager.

Key words: violence, teens, reality, depression

REZIME

Ovaj rad će sadržati najznačajnije činjenice o nasilju između tinejdžera. Nasilje između tinejdžera je stvarno i veliki je deo tinejdžerskog života u sredini u kojoj živimo danas. Potencijalni uticaj i još značajnije, opasnosti koje različite vrste nasilja mogu da imaju na nas, su dobili puno pažnje u vestima ali i u medicini što je jedan od razloga koji su me nagnali da odlučim da pišem o ovoj temi. Nasilje može da uključuje stvari kao što je maltretiranje u školi, tuče, nasilje bandi, nasilje kod kuće i samoubistva. Ove vrste nasilja između tinejdžerima će bolje objasniti u radu. Neka deca vide nasilje u svojim školama svaki dan; mnogi tinejdžeri uzimaju drogu i alkohol i postaju veoma depresivni. Ovo može biti opasno zato što ne razmišljaju jasno i mogu da donesu pištolj ili nož u školu. Ako je tinejdžer u dovoljno lošem stanju može da upuca druge studente ili sebe, ili čak profesora za kog misli da nije fer prema njemu. Depresija može da uzrokuje bilo kog da postane nasilan a naročito tinejdžera.

Ključne reči: nasilje, tinejdžeri, stvarnost, depresija

Teens and violence generally speaking



A teenager is a person between the ages 13 and 19. That is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development. These are fun but scary years when they are treated like children but expected to act like adults. Teenagers usually have everything they want but nothing they need. That can be painful sometimes, so all teens look forward to their 18. birthday when they will become adults, because they will finally be able to get a driving license, have legal sexual relations and consume alcohol. Coming from a teenager, adult life will apparently be restless, emotional and very, very confusing. They are a diverse group of people, affected mostly by their 3 environments (school, social, home) and their ever-changing emotional state will determine how they are in those environments. Many elders look on this group as nothing but a group of “smoking, drinking, lazy, noisy good for nothing” but they make mistakes because it depends on individual. Because of this, misunderstood teenagers often become violent. There are different ways of violence in which teens show their dissatisfaction; they include rape, assault, and theft. However, teens face the highest risk of being the victims of violence. Besides committing violence to release feelings of anger, violence is used as a way to control other. Nevertheless, the worst way of violence is when they direct violence toward themselves. The final expression of this kind of violence is suicide. Suicidal thinking comes from a wish to end deep psychological pain. Death seems like the only way out. However, it is not. Violence is preventive, so teens have to learn how to deal with anger. What is more, violence is a learned behavior and can be changed. The best teens can do is to learn to recognize the warning signs of violence and to get help when they see them in their friends or themselves.

School bullying



School bullying has long been a problem among children and teenagers, but new technology has increased the types of bullying that occur, making it harder to recognize. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or emotional and is usually repeated over a period of time. In schools, bullying occurs in all areas. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, but mostly occurs in hallways, bathrooms, classes and after school activities.

Bullying in school usually consists of a group of students who scares, hurt, push, hit and slap another teenager. Targets of bullying in school are often pupils who are considered strange or different by their peers. There are many factors that cause school violence, but it is often caused by a combination of physical, behavioral and learned factors. Some of the physical factors are birth complications that can trigger changes in a person's body that can manifest later in violence. Other factors can include babies that are born addicted to substances. Head injuries later in life can also alter the way the brain responds to certain situations, and that can lead to violence. But the most common physical factor include the physical changes that take place to the body and in the brain as a result of substances, including alcohol and illegal drugs. Being deprived of some substances, which a person is addicted to, can also make person anxious and violent.

Behavioral factors are often different for every person. Some persons are shy, so they cannot fit into with other classmates. They become seditious trying to get attention. Concerns about future or problems at home can also cause violence in school. Another problem is that of learned violent behavior. Teens learn violent behavior by watching characters on television, in videos, and in movies and above all, they learn by watching their parents. They also learn from their peers how to respond to conflict and other situations with violence. The last, but not the least important factor, is availability of weapons. Some teens know where to find weapons at home and some of them know how to acquire knives and guns legally and illegally.

Usually victims of bullying feel helpless and they may also suffer long-term negative effects from being bullied, like poor performance in school, feeling unsafe, physical injury, skipping school each day to avoid being bullied, but what is the worst consequence they can copy negative behavior, such as acting out in violent ways or withdrawing . Bullying can also have serious consequences for the teens that bully, they are more likely to use drugs or alcohol, get into fights, vandalize property and even abuse their children.

According to the results of my survey on this subject:

Twenty seven percent (27%) of students in my school were involved in bullying, as bullies, victims or both.

Sixteen percent (16%) students do not want to admit even though they were involved in school bullying.

Gang violence



Gang violence among teens is a growing concern. Gangs have been in existence every since the rise of humanity and it is usually a group of teens and young adults who spend much of their time together. Gangs have always provided a way for people to more effectively get what they want, especially if it comes to force. They often plan how to carry out activities that usually involve violence. Gangs are known by particular names. They are organized with leaders and followers. Gangs usually claim a particular area of a city or town which they call their “turf” and they also have a common symbol and special signs, rituals to help identify other members and create their own tight-knit society. It is not unusual for gangs to have "wars" with each other.

There are various reasons that teens choose to join gangs, but joining a gang is like stepping into the terror zone-a world where beatings and shootings happen all the time. To join and prove themselves teens have to fight, to beat up innocent person, rob a store or even shoot

someone. Some of the reasons teens join gang includes opportunity to earn money, to become popular and get protected from bullies. These are not good reason. Gang members usually do not get any education, so they cannot find well-paid jobs. They often end up in prison. However, employers do not like to hire people who have arrest records. Over a lifetime, gang members make far less money than those who are not in gangs. You will also not become popular because most other kids will think that you are too dangerous to hang out with. Moreover, the only friends you may have will be some of the kids who are in your own gang. You will have many enemies - all the members of rival gangs. Joining a gang for protection is another bad reason because being in a gang increases your chances of being injured or killed, most of the teens that were shot were gang members. Some teens realize this but usually it is too late. When they become a member, it is very hard to quit a gang and continue with normal lifestyle.

For example, in Serbia, there are many kinds of groups, but most popular are fan groups. The most prominent groups of hooligans are associated with Belgrade and two main clubs FK Partizan and Red Star Belgrade. They are known as the *Grobari* (Gravediggers) and *Delije* (the name means heroes in Serbian), respectively. FK Rad is a less-successful Belgrade club, whose associated hooligans, known locally as "*United Force*", have notoriously been involved in many violent incidents. Of course, we should differentiate the fans who love their club and sport, from the hooligans who under the fan groups prove violence to realize their unfulfilled desires. Significantly, more people are real fans. A minority of hooligans cannot be so serious security challenge, but media contributes to create the opposite impression, some of them are doing that purposely, to make larger circulation and ratings that are more sensationalistic.

However, sometimes there are fights between supporters of rival teams before or after football matches at pre-arranged locations away from stadiums, in order to avoid arrests by the police, or they can erupt spontaneously at the stadium or in the surrounding streets. Football hooliganism can range from shouts and small-scale fistfights and disturbances to huge riots where firms attack each other with deadly weapons such as sports bats, bottles, rocks, and knives. Most extreme events of fans violence were on 2 December 2007, when a plainclothes police officer was seriously injured when he was attacked during a match between Red Star Belgrade and Hajduk Kula. On 14 April 2008, a football fan was killed near Novi Sad after clashes between FK Partizan's *Grobari* and fans of FK Vojvodina. That same week, after a Red Star Belgrade-Partizan cup match, three people were injured and a bus was destroyed by hooligans. Most recent accident was on 12 October 2010 when Serbia's Euro 2012 Qualifying clash with Italy was abandoned after only 6 minutes after several Serbian fans threw flares and fireworks onto the pitch and caused severe trouble in and out of the ground.

Statistic from my research shows that twenty five percent (25%) of teens are members of some group.

Peer pressure



When we were younger, our parents usually chose our friends, putting us in playgroups with children they knew and liked. Now that we are older, we decide who our friends are and what groups we spend time with. With them, we make many decisions every day and we influence each other choices.

Teenagers often spend more time with peers than with parents and siblings. Some peers become our close friends and they are like extended family. Other peers who are not so close to us also influence our behavior. For teenagers it is very important to “fit in”. They worry about what other teens think about them. Often teens do what their peers do, not to stand out. Peer pressure has both positive and negative sides. Peers set plenty of good examples for each other. Having peers who are committed to doing well in school or to doing their best in a sport can influence other teen to be more goal-oriented, too. Peers who are kind and loyal influence others to build these qualities in themselves.

Even peers we have never met can be role models. For example, watching someone our age compete in the Olympics, give a piano concert, or spearhead a community project might inspire us to go after a dream of our own. Peers are also there for us when we do not have who to talk with. They can give us useful advice on different kinds of problems. For example, whether to get hair cut or not and for some family arguments. They are usually honest and will tell us if they think we are making a mistake. Peers may get us involved in clubs, sports or some other interesting groups. Teen’s world would be much emptier without peers.

However, as already mentioned, peer pressure can also have its bad side. Sometimes peers may pressure other teens into doing something bad, such as shoplifting, drinking or taking drugs, with clues given to teens that they will not be "cool" if they do not participate, even without the overt pressure to do what everyone else is doing. When teens are unsure of what to do in a social situation, they naturally look at the others. Those ones who are most easily influenced will follow someone else's lead first. Then others may go along, too — so it can be easy to think, "It must be OK. Everyone else is doing it. They must know what they're

doing.” Using alcohol or drugs increases anyone's chances of giving in to peer pressure. Substance use impairs judgment and interferes with the ability to make good decisions.

Here are some statistics about peer pressure. It is not always easy to resist negative peer pressure but often it just takes one person to speak out or take a different action to change a situation. In addition, you may even be a positive influence on your peers who feel the same way. Unfortunately, statistic says that eighty percent (80%) of teenagers were involved in some kind of violence because of the peer pressure.

Suicide



Suicide has always been a problem and always will be. Each year all over the world, thousands of teenagers commit suicide, which is one of the leading causes of death for 14 to 24 year olds. Teenagers have strong feelings of stress, pressure to succeed, confusion and different fears of growing up. For some teens, suicide appears to be a solution to their problems. Events from everyday life that might trigger depression are for example: a death of a family member or a close friend, suddenly love lost, constant bullying that is not prevented on time or something that happened in school like failing on a very important exam. Sometimes teens feel happy, in some period of life they feel bad, but teen depression can last much longer than any other feeling. This kind of depression can cause serious problems if it is not recognized on time and it is a very important factor in teen suicides. It is the most common mental illness among teens. Depression is not just a bad mood or a phase; it is a serious medical condition. In most cases depression and other mental illnesses can be treated, but the problem needs to be diagnosed by a professional. Those who suffer from mental illnesses, as well as their family and friends, may not recognize the symptoms of a mental illness. The risk of suicide increases dramatically when teens have access to firearms at home, and most of the suicides in the world are committed with gun.

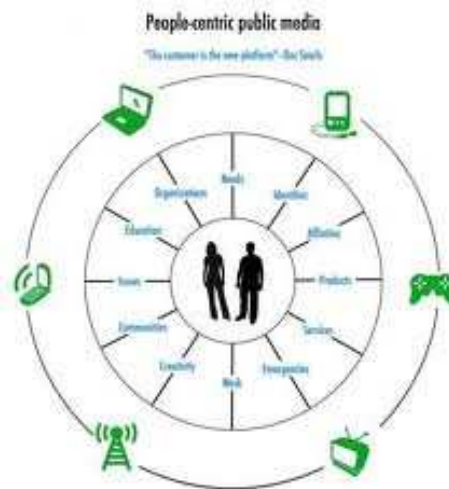
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports the following:

- Males are four times more likely to die from suicide than females.
- Females are more likely to attempt suicide than males.
- Firearms are used in over half of youth suicides.

On the other hand some teens commit suicide to release feelings of anger or frustration. They think there are no answers to their problems and turn to self-hurting to express their out of control emotions.

My research shows that even eighty percent (80%) of teens have a problem with anger control, which should be taken seriously.

Media influence



Teenagers all over the world use the media every day. Whether it is using a computer, watching TV, talking on the phone or listening to the radio, media is a way to communicate. Through the media, we can find out about important news, listen to our favorite music or watch our favorite TV show. However, there are also negative sides of the media that can be especially harmful to teens.

The media teaches kids that violence is acceptable. Children who watch a lot of TV are learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors, becoming desensitized to real world violence and developing a fear of being victimized by violence. In video games, the way to beat an opponent is to punch, kick or knock him out. In some video games, you might even kill your opponent. In movies, the good guy wins when he violently defeats his enemy. Media violence often fails to show the consequences of violence. This is especially true of cartoons, toy commercials and music videos. As a result, children learn that there are few if any repercussions for committing violent acts. Influence of media can be noticed in teens vocabulary, teens who spend a lot of time in front of TV and computer have a lower test marks in school.

Unfortunately, most of the media you are exposed to do not show people in a realistic way. Characters on TV are often shown with unrealistic "perfect" bodies. Many males are becoming insecure about their physical appearance as advertising and other media images raise the standard and idealize well-built men. Researchers see an alarming increase in obsessive weight training and the use of anabolic steroids and other supplements that promise bigger

muscles and more stamina for lifting. Studies are also finding that boys, like girls, may turn to smoking to lose weight.

What's more, TV shows and movies make it seem normal for teenagers to have sex. Teens are twice as likely to have sex or engage in sexual acts if they see similar sexual behavior in the media. Nevertheless, TV is not the only media that does this. Music videos contain more sex per minute than any competing media genre. Just because you are growing up in a world run by media does not mean you have to be one of the media's statistics!

Prevention



-Social problem solving

Problem solving does not just mean doing arithmetic or figuring out how to fix a leaky faucet. Many of the toughest problems, sometimes involving strong feelings, occur between people. Adults and children who can manage the strong feelings and resolve conflicts reasonably, without hurting someone, have good skills for social problem solving.

-Media influence

Here are some things that parents can do to prevent violence in the media from having such a strong influence on their children:

Watch TV with your children and talk about what happens in the shows.

Monitor what your kids watch or play.

Limit the number of hours your children watch TV or play video games.

Insist that schoolwork and family responsibilities are done before TV is allowed.

Prevent the children from watching violent shows.

Help them select shows that promote learning and positive development.

-Caution about weapons

If parents own a gun, they should never leave it out where a child might get it. They should always lock their unloaded guns and bullets separately, in secure places that children cannot reach.

-Successful prevention is happening

It is important for parents to know that many organizations, institutions, and communities are already responding to the problem of youth violence with a variety of effective strategies, programs, and services.

Conclusion

To sum up, teen violence has become an appalling problem in our society today. The blame should not be put on one group or one person. The government should help teens in situations where violence is necessary to survive as best as possible. I hope that when my children are in school this type of essay will only be written in their history classes. It is up to the adults of this generation to stop the teen violence of this and the next generations.

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