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Submission date: 06-Nov-2020 09:18AM (UTC+0800)

Submission ID: 1437509957

File name: school_shooting.edited.docx (28.44K)

Word count: 1598

Character count: 9451

The Impacts of School Shooting on Mental Health

Name

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2. Abstract

I am applying for the “improved community connections and access to mental health support” grant from the Brewer Foundation to fund my research on “The Impacts of School Shooting on Mental Health.” I will use data obtained from *National Center for Education Statistics*, *Institute for Economic Policy Research* (SIEPR) and *Mother Jones* to examine the impacts of the school shooting on the mental health of survivors such as the development of ³ post-traumatic stress disorders and other mental health disorders. Individuals examined after the school shooting will be analyzed from 1984-2008 obtained from *National Center for Education Statistics*, while that of individuals using antidepressants before and after the school shooting obtained from *Institute for Economic Policy Research*. Similarly, the data for mental health effects on Newtown school shooting will be obtained from *Mother Jones*. I believe the data will discover that more individuals will be experiencing mental health disorders after school shootings because most of the individuals will have immediate feelings of fear, anxiety and hopelessness.

3. Introduction

School shootings have increased significantly since 2009, however, while more research is conducted towards understanding the cause of the escalated shooting. Limited research is available concerning the impacts school shooting has on the mental health of survivors. According to Gerard et al. (2016), mass shootings that happen in educational institutions are occasional activities concerning those of gun violence. Nevertheless, immense casualty shootings may have substantial effects on the whole institution's fraternity as well as communities and families. Most of the time, these educational institutions are closed indefinitely to fully recondition to reduce the traumatic prompts that community and individuals may have.

Moreover, families vacate from the school perimeter where the shooting took place and anguish infuses the attitude of all individuals. Therefore, while every school shooting always records the number of deaths in the event as well as injured individuals, no one concentrates on the mental health of individuals and students after the event. Gerard et al. (2016), emphasized that students execute majority of the education institutions shootings who were in the school some years ago or those who are currently enrolled. Furthermore, it was reported that 80% of the school shootings were performed with individuals who had mental problems (Towers et al., 2015). The same source stated that 28% of students who happened to witness school shooting experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and almost a third of them had acute stress disorder. Furthermore, individuals who are in school shootings are at a high risk of developing mental health disorders compared to those in natural calamities. Thus, funding this research will ensure there is improved help of community connections as well as access to mental health support in schools.

4. Background/ Literature Review

In this research, I look to evaluate how school shooting has impacted mental health survivors through post-traumatic stress disorders and other mental health conditions. One of the variables to be included in the research is nonfatal violence in schools where the data is obtained from *National Center for Education Statistics*. Specific data to be analyzed will include all the school shootings that happened between 1984-2008 and the locations as well as context, perpetrators and fatalities will be assessed (Lowe & Galea, 2017). Post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) were observed to have been in prevalence for many shooting events. Although the study conducted by Lowe & Galea (2017), reviewed several pieces of literature, they recognized forty-nine peer-reviewed articles that involved twenty-seven autonomous samples in the repercussion of fifteen school shooting events. The authors realized that school shooting is

related to several antagonistic psychological consequences and on survivors and individuals residing around the school. However, the study was limited as it did not present the impacts of the school shooting on circuitously exposed individuals, but it noted that they experience temporary surges in fears and reduces the feeling of safety.

Another variable to consider is the prescription data ranging from 2006 to 2015 which is obtained from Institute *for Economic Policy Research* (SIEPR) (Rossin-Slater et al., 2020). The data was obtained directly from pharmacies around the forty-four school shootings on student's antidepressant utilization. The article found out that more than two hundred and forty thousand students were involved in school shooting between 2006 and 2015 and therefore, the study related the number of antidepressant prescriptions provided by physicians who are within 0-5 miles from where institution where the shooting took place. The data used in the analysis comprised of month-by-year and institution-by-area static impacts in all requirements, hence managing the inclinations in antidepressant utilization and the invariant challenges within the regions. The results included that the local experience of lethal institution shooting intensifies student's antidepressant utilization by 21.4% in the subsequent two years. Moreover, the impacts presented are slightly less in regions with augmented mental health physicians who are involved in behavioral intercessions.

Rosenberg (2014), researched the effects of Newton school shooting on the mental health of the survivors. The event left twenty-seven individuals dead including twenty school children, six adults and one shooter. The data for the research was obtained from mother jones, and comprised of data from Sandy Hook Elementary school. Furthermore, according to the research, Rosenberg found out that school shooting results in mental health stigma, strengthen typecasts that individuals with mental health challenges are violent and inspires public policy.

Additionally, although majority of the individuals involved in school shootings show resilience, most of them who are worried about their lives, as well as that of their loved ones, do not get social support hence end up suffering from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression and substance abuse.

5. Data

I will use the *National Center for Education Statistics* to collect data for the research. As stated above, the data for school shootings between 1984-2008 will be obtained from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/key.asp> while the prescription of antidepressant use from 2006 to 2015 will be obtained from *Institute for Economic Policy Research* (SIEPR) indicating a local encounter to a school shooting as well as youth using antidepressants, ² <https://siepr.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/19-036.pdf>. Finally, data from ¹ the **Newtown school shooting** is obtained from *Mother Jones*, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/what-happened-newtown-connecticut-elementary-school-shooting/>. This data will allow me to test the relationship between school shooting and mental health disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders. Each data set contains time-series data of the United States but is then divided into state levels. Besides, having a wide range of data from 1984-2008 and from 2006 to 2015 on antidepressant use allows me to hold a large population during the analysis as well as understanding ⁵ **the impacts of a school shooting on mental health**. Similarly, **the** relationship between the data sets can be attained and conclusions made.

6. Proposed Methodology

I plan to use my data to realize the mental health results of those who witnessed the school shooting. Furthermore, accomplishing a varied recognition technique is important considering this is an acclimatized experiment. Although the results of the school shooting will not provide an opportunity to analyze an individual's mental health before the shooting occurred, the Newtown school shooting will provide the information for easy analysis between the two groups. Similarly, the data will have two groups under analysis, with the first group being the controlled group which is those before the shooting event takes place and the treated group are those after the shooting has already happened. Notably, the first group will be used to individuals who use antidepressants between 2006 and 2015, as well as those in the Newtown school shooting event. However, the second group will comprise all the individuals in the data sets including those within 1984-2008. Nevertheless, part of the research data is outdated as it cannot present the true connection between the variables.

7. Conclusion

The funding awarded from the grant will be utilized in supporting the research and data used. While most ⁴ research on school shootings has focused on the causes of a school shooting, the money will help in accessing the data to realize the impacts of a school shooting on the mental health of survivors. Similarly, the process of locating the school shooting data is expensive while the focus on their impact on mental health is not determined. Therefore, upon completion of the research, the relationship between variables will be realized and thus present a program that will help in improving community connections and continuing access to mental health support in school as well as the community. After completion of the research, I would like to present it to the National Center for Education Statistics because it is the main body that deals

with the collection and analysis of data associated with education. I will be sure that it will bring an impact on reducing post-traumatic depression and other mental health disorders.

8. References

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