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School Administrators' Perceptions of School Violence

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Academic Leadership Journal

Across America, waves of violence within the school system have shocked and horrified American society. A generation of young people whose main focus should have been on hanging out with friends, getting homework done, not being late to class, going to the mall, or who their date to the prom was to be, instead, are engaged in a sometimes life and death struggle to survive the school day. The tragedy of Columbine High School, where two high school-aged gunmen took the lives of 13 students and teachers and wounded 23 others (Klein and Chancer 2000), while never to be forgotten, should not eclipse the smaller outbreaks of violence that happen in America's schools on a daily basis.

Many factors may contribute to the trend in violent behavior. Research completed by Kopka (1997) reveals that the chemical make-up of the body, family history, neighborhood environment, peer groups, and negative social forces such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities were all contributing factors to incidents of student violence. Separate studies by the National Education Association ("It Can Happen" 1999) and Riecken (1999) cite factors that include media violence, access to weapons, bullying, and a breakdown of community. The concentration of large numbers of youth who spend most of their day in a school environment only increases the impact of the above mentioned factors, as suggested in a study by Kachur et al. (1996), who found that more violence occurs in schools due to the greater number of hours spent at school as compared to more social venues.

Background Literature

The National Center for Education Statistics (Miller 2003) surveyed 2,270 regular public K-12 schools regarding school crime and safety. The report found that 71% of the schools experienced at least one incident of violent crime in 1999-2000. This report also revealed that one or more serious violent incidents occurred in 20% of the schools surveyed. Campuses that were most likely to report violent incidents included secondary institutions, inner-city schools, schools with the lowest achievement, and schools that incorporated a large number of classroom changes during the school day. Interestingly, only 7% of the schools accounted for 50% of the total violent incidents. Enrollment size was a primary indicator of both violent incidents and serious violent incidents. Dinkes, Cataldi, and Lin-Kelly (2007, iv) found that "from July 1, 2005, through June 30, 2006, there were 14 homicides and 3 suicides of school-age youth (ages 5-18) at school...or about 1 homicide or suicide of a school-age youth at school per 3.2 million students enrolled during the 2005-06 school year."

There were 1.5 million students (ages 12-18) in 2005 who suffered nonfatal crimes (Dinkes, Cataldi, and Lin-Kelly 2007). The Office of Statistics and Programming, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that there were 3,059 violence-related injury deaths for adolescents ages 12-18 in 2006. National School Safety and Security Services (n.d., para. 26) reports that there were 16 school-related violent deaths during the 2007-2008 school year; there were 65 other non-death school-related shootings in 2007-2008. These episodes included "individuals shot but not killed and firearms discharged in schools, on school campuses and buses, at school-sponsored events, to and from school involving students, and as a clear result of school-related incidents/conflicts."

In 2001, Kirkpatrick of the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution reported alarming statistics. In 1976, one student in four said violence was a problem at his/her school; in 1996, approximately half of the students nationwide were afraid to use their school's restrooms; and in 1998, nearly 1500 children under the age of 18 were arrested for murder or manslaughter, while 2,700,000 students aged 12-18 were victims of rape, theft, and other serious crimes (Kirkpatrick).

Research by Furlong and Morrison (2000) indicate that perpetrators of school violence share some common characteristics. Their research revealed that males were more likely than females to be perpetrators of school violence. It was also indicated that perpetrators who engaged in drug use were more likely to be aggressive and violent when at school. A report by Portner (2000) indicates that the most violent attackers came from a variety of racial backgrounds with more than three-fourths of them white. However, according to Portner, there has not been an accurate profile developed of the potential school violence perpetrator. Warner, Weist, and Krulak (1999) reveal other variables such as a dysfunctional family life and failure to succeed either academically or socially as indicators of high-risk students in regard to school violence. According to the U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center (2002, 15), "most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused concern or indicated a need for help. In more than half of the cases, the attacker's behavior caught the attention of more than one person."

There has been much debate whether the trend in school violence has increased or decreased during the last quarter of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Nationally, there has been a view that school violence was on the increase, especially in the areas of assault, sexual harassment, and the use or possession of weapons. While the perception indicated an increase, the research revealed otherwise. School violence, overall, has decreased, while the number of multiple homicides has increased (Wright and Clymer 2000).

Globally, researchers have found that the United States has led the world in violence among young people, with the highest homicide rate of the developed nations studied (Haynes and Chalker 1999). Even though the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) indicates that theft was the most frequent crime, police reports acquired from principals across the country reveal that the most common crime reported by high schools was physical attack or fighting with a weapon.

Perceptions of School Violence

School administrators have varying perceptions of school violence. In a 1998 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (Heaviside et al. 1998), school administrators perceived school violence and discipline as a minor problem. The most serious discipline issues perceived by these administrators were tardiness, truancy, and mutual combat fighting. Only 2% of the administrators considered weapons possession, drugs, or gangs as moderate or serious problems (Heaviside et al.). In the aftermath of the Columbine tragedy, school administrators in Colorado were at a loss on how to predict an onslaught of violence (Amole and Foster 1999).

Many school administrators and school districts have underplayed the extent of violence in their schools. Trump (2005) reveals that some school officials believe that the public will perceive them to be incompetent leaders and poor managers if the extent of school violence was known. This report also indicates that fear of voter funding requests and less parental/community support drove many of these

administrators to deny the severity of school violence. On the national level, Trump states that accurate reporting would change the perception of the public and would create the need for more federal funding in a time when less funding was being voted on by Congress. Other school administrators, however, have taken a tougher stance on school violence and have perceived it to be a serious problem. Cited in a report by the National Education Association ("It Can Happen" 1999), Goff advises fellow colleagues not to let denial or fear be a barrier in creating safe schools.

Methods

The study was a regression/correlation analysis that examined the relationship between school size and school violence, as well as relationships between other factors including gender, grade level, and socioeconomic level within Texas public high schools. The study was based on a sample of 1,075 Texas public high schools within 1,041 school districts in 20 geographical regions. In addition, a survey of 100 Texas high school administrators was conducted to assess whether the perception of these administrators in regard to school size and school violence correlated to the data collected.

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was utilized to determine the correlation between the predictor variables (school size) and the criterion variable (school violence). The research design for this study utilized data previously collected by the Texas Education Agency. A descriptive research design was used as the design basis for the statistical analysis. A regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the five size classifications established by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) for Texas high schools and incidents of school violence. School violence encompassed eight categories, which were simple assault, terrorist threat, weapons possession, gang activity, aggravated assault, mutual combat fighting, sexual assault/aggravated sexual assault, and bomb threat. A second regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship within each size classification of select subgroups of gender, grade level, and socioeconomic level, to incidents of school violence.

The survey that was sent to a random sample of Texas public high school administrators evaluated perceptions in regard to school violence and school size. This survey was developed based on questions that directly related to the research questions of this study. Survey questions consisted of eight questions five of which were forced-choice questions that used a Likert scale of critical, serious, moderate, minor, and not a problem.

Findings

In receiving data from the state, there were some instances in which the total number of incidents may have differed from other recorded totals of incidents due to the reporting and recording of the numbers. This was due in part to situations where students may be involved in more than one type of incident of school violence, or may be included in one or more factors in regard to school violence, such as gender, grade level, or socioeconomic level. In some cases, schools or districts may report the overall number of incidents of school violence, but not report by subcategories of gender, grade level, or socioeconomic level.

Is There a Correlation of School Size to Incidents of School Violence in Texas Public High Schools?

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the correlation between the predictor variable

of school size and the criterion variable of incidents of school violence. The plot for the two variables, as shown in Figure 1, indicated that the two variables are linearly related such that as overall school size increased the overall incidents of school violence increased.

The regression equation for predicting the overall incidents of school violence is *Predicted Incidents of School Violence = 24.46 Overall School Size - 36.86 Incidents of School Violence*. The 95% confidence interval for the slope, 22.21 to 26.70, does not contain the value of zero, and therefore overall school size is significantly related to incidents of school violence. The correlation between school size and incidents of school violence was .547. Approximately

30% of the variance of incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship with school size.

A further analysis of the data indicated that the positive correlation between school size and incidents of school violence also increased as a percentage of each school's overall population. A statistically significant difference of $F(1, 1073) = 47.956, p < .01$, was found between school size and the percentage of school violence. The criterion variable of percentage was calculated on the number of reported incidents and the school's overall population for each school. Using a second linear regression, as shown in Figure 2, the indication was that the two variables were linearly related such that incidents of school violence increased as a percentage as the school size increased.

The regression equation for predicting the overall percentage of school violence is *Predicted Overall Percentage of School Violence = .006 School Size + .013 Percentage of School Violence*. The 95% confidence interval for the slope, .004 to .008, does not contain the value of zero, indicating that school size is significantly related

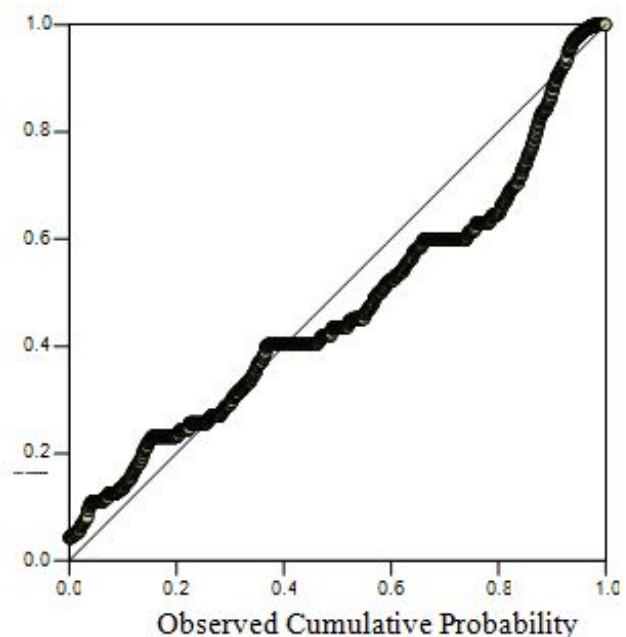
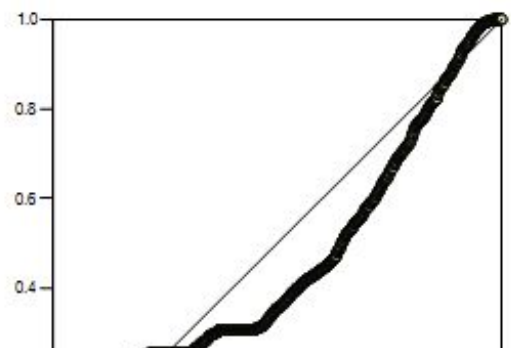


Figure 1. Total discipline incidents and school size.



to incidents of school violence as a percentage. The correlation value between school size and incidents of school violence as a percentage was .206. Approximately 4% of the variance of the percentage of incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size.

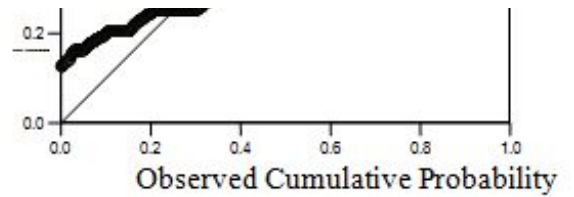


Figure 2. Percentages of school violence and school size.

Is There a Correlation Within the Various Size Groups of Public High Schools Between Gender and Incidents of School Violence in Texas Public High Schools?

Analysis indicated a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 1073) = 394.76, p < .01$, between school size and school violence in regard to females and a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 1073) = 530.06, p < .01$, between school size and school violence in regard to males. A linear regression analysis was run to evaluate the relationship between the predictor variable of school size and the criterion variable of incidents of school violence in regard to females. The regression equation for predicting incidents of school violence in regard to females is *Predicted Incidents of School Violence by Females = 5.75 Overall School Size - 8.66 Incidents of School Violence by Females*. The 95% confidence interval for the slope, 5.18 to 6.32, does not contain the value of zero, and therefore school size is significantly related to incidents of school violence in regard to females. The correlation between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to females was .519. Approximately 27% of the variance of female gender in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size.

To evaluate the relationship between the predictor variable of school size and the criterion variable of incidents of school violence in regard to males, a second linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression equation for predicting incidents of school violence in regard to males is *Predicted Incidents of School Violence by Males = 9.67 Overall School Size - 15.01 Incidents of School Violence by Males*. The 95% confidence interval for the slope, 8.85 to 10.49, does not contain the value of zero, and therefore school size is significantly related to incidents of school violence in regard to males.

The correlation between school size and incidents of violence in regard to males was .575. In regard to males and incidents of school violence, approximately 33% of the variance was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size. Table 1 demonstrates the correlation between the two genders in regard to school violence. It can be observed that males have a slightly higher correlation than females in regard to school size and incidents of school violence.

A more in depth analysis of school size and incidents of school violence in regard to gender was conducted for each size classifications. In the 1A classification, females did not have a statistically significant difference with $F(1, 138) = 1.93, p = .083$, nor did the males show a statistically significant

Table 1
Gender and school violence

Variables	Size	Discipline Incidents	
		Female	Male
Size	1	.519(**)	.575(**)

difference with $F(1, 138) = 3.29, p = .072$. Females in classification 2A also did not show a statistically significant difference with $F(1, 224) = 1.46, p = .228$, but a statistically significant difference was found for the males with $F(1, 224) = 11.03, p < .01$, and a correlation of .217. Approximately 4% of the variance of class 2A males in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by linear relationship to school size.

Discipline Incidents Female	.519(**)	1	.848(**)
Discipline Incidents Male	.575(**)	.848(**)	1
N	1075	1075	1075

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

In classifications 3A, 4A, and 5A, both genders showed a statistically significant difference with $F(1, 227) = 29.60, p < .01$, $F(1, 227) = 30.49, p < .01$ female/male in class 3A, $F(1, 259) = 13.03, p < .01$, $F(1, 259) = 18.09, p < .01$ female/male in class 4A, and $F(1, 216) = 6.54, p < .01$. $F(1, 216) = 10.37, p < .01$ female/male in class 5A. The correlation values for each of these classes for female/male were 3A .340/.344, 4A .219/.256, and 5A .171/.214. The approximate variances in regard to gender and incidents of school violence, indicated by r^2 values for female/male of .115/.118, .048/.065, and .029/.046 for size classifications 3A, 4A, and 5A respectively, were accounted for by the linear relationship to school size. Table 2 shows that the correlation of school size and incidents of school violence in regard to gender was slightly higher for males than for females.

Is There a Correlation Within the Various Size Groups of Public High Schools Between Grade Level and Incidents of School Violence in Texas Public High Schools?

Perception surveys were mailed to 100 randomly selected administrators from across the state of Texas, with 20 randomly selected from each size classification. Of these 100 surveys, 41 were returned.

There was an even distribution of returned surveys across all five size classifications. Question four of the survey pertained directly to grade level and incidents of school violence. The question was answered on a perception survey scale of critical, serious, moderate, minor, and not a problem for each grade level. For each grade level, the types of school violence were specified as simple assault, terrorist threat, weapons possession, gang activity, aggravated assault, mutual combat fighting, sexual assault/aggravated sexual assault, and bomb threat.

As can be seen in Table 3, most respondents indicated that grade level was not a significant factor in cases of school violence. Responses for Grade Level 9 indicated that 33% of school administrators across all size classifications considered Grade Level 9 a minor to serious factor in regard to incidents of school violence. Most respondents indicated that Grade Level 12 was the least factor in regard to incidents of school violence, with only 13% considering Grade Level 12 a minor factor and less than 5% indicating that Grade Level 12 was a serious or moderate factor in regard to school violence.

Table 2

Gender and school violence per UIL classification

Size Classification	F-value Female	F-value Male	p-value Female	p-value Male	Correlation Female	Correlation Male
1A	1.934	3.294	0.083	0.072	0.118	0.153
2A	1.459	11.031	0.228	<.01	0.083	0.217
3A	29.606	30.489	<.01	<.01	0.340	0.344
4A	13.028	18.094	<.01	<.01	0.219	0.256
5A	6.54	10.369	<.01	<.01	0.171	0.214

It was also revealed that as the size of the school increased in most cases, so did the number of administrators who considered grade level at least a minor factor in regard to incidents of school violence. Class 1A responses indicated that 13% of the administrators considered grade level a minor to serious factor in regard to school violence. In Class 2A, the surveys revealed that 21% of the school administrators considered grade level a minor to moderate factor in regard to school violence.

For Class 3A, the responses indicated that 40% of school administrators considered grade level to be a minor to serious factor. The responses for Class 4A revealed a dip in the number of school administrators who considered grade level a factor in regard to school violence with only 17% indicating that grade level was a factor. Class 5A survey responses indicated that 41% of school administrators considered grade level a minor to critical factor in regard to school violence.

The surveys revealed that 74% of the responders considered school grade level not to be a factor in regard to incidents of school violence. Respondents from 3A and 5A schools indicated the highest level of impact of grade level on incidents of school violence, with approximately 40% of the responses indicating that grade level was a minor to a critical factor in regard to school violence. Survey results revealed that as the age of the student increased, school administrators who considered grade level as a factor in regard to incidents of school violence decreased.

For Grade Level 9, 67% of survey responses indicated that Grade Level 9 was not a factor in regard to school violence. The responses for Grade Level 10 indicated that 71% of school administrators considered Grade Level 10 not to be a factor in school violence. Grade Level 11 survey responses indicated that 75% of school administrators considered Grade Level 11 not to be a factor in regard to school violence. Survey responses for Grade Level 12 revealed that 81% of school

Table 3

Grade level and incidents of school violence survey results

All Surveys	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9	1	15	46	45	221
Grade Level 10		11	39	45	233
Grade Level 11		4	19	58	247
Grade Level 12		3	14	44	267
1A Schools	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9			5	2	49
Grade Level 10			5	3	48
Grade Level 11			5	2	49
Grade Level 12		2		4	50
2A Schools	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9			6	15	59
Grade Level 10			4	18	58
Grade Level 11			2	12	66
Grade Level 12			2	7	71
3A Schools	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9		6	20	15	39
Grade Level 10		7	9	15	48
Grade Level 11		4	11	14	51
Grade Level 12		1	12	14	53
4A Schools	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9		3	7	4	50
Grade Level 10			8	2	54

administrators considered Grade Level 12 a factor in regard to incidents of school violence.

These results were based on school administrators' perceptions of grade level as a factor in regard to incidents of school violence.

Whereas unmasked data from the TEA might have proven otherwise, the results from the survey indicated

that grade level was not a significant factor in regard to school size and incidents of school violence. Therefore, the overall indication from the surveys was that grade level does not have a significant correlation between school size and incidents of school violence.

Grade Level 11				14	50
Grade Level 12				5	59
5A Schools	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Grade Level 9	1	6	8	9	24
Grade Level 10		4	13	6	25
Grade Level 11			1	16	31
Grade Level 12				14	34

Is There a Correlation Within the Various Size Groups of Public High Schools Between Socioeconomic Level and Incidents of School Violence in Texas Public High Schools?

Analysis indicated a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 1073) = 362.93, p < .01$, between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to low socioeconomic level. An evaluation of the correlation between the predictor variable of school size and the criterion variable of incidents of school violence in regard to low socioeconomic level was conducted using a linear regression. This analysis indicated that the two variables were linearly related such that as overall school size increased, the incidents of school violence in regard to low socio-economic level increased as well.

The regression equation for predicting the overall incidents of school violence is *Predicted Incidents of School Violence in Regard to Socio-economic Level = .014 Overall School Size + 1.099 Incidents of School Violence by Low Socio-economic Level*. The 95% confidence level for the slope, .012 to .015, does not contain the value of zero, and therefore overall school size is significantly related to incidents of school violence in regard to low socio-economic level. The correlation between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to low socio-economic level is .503. In regard to socioeconomic level and incidents of school violence, approximately 25% of the variance of socio-economic level in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size.

To evaluate the correlation between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to low socioeconomic level for each size classifications, linear regressions were run for each size category. In class 1A, a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 138) = 4.07, p < .05$, was found with a correlation value of .169. Approximately 3% of the variance of class 1A low socio-economic level in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size.

A statistically significant difference of $F(1, 224) = 8.72, p < .01$, was found for class 2A, with a correlation value of .194. Approximately 4% of the variance of class 2A low socio-economic level in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size. Class 3A had a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 227) = 30.21, p < .01$, with a correlation value of .343. The variance of class 3A low socio-economic level in regard to incidents of school violence was approximately 12% and was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size.

For class 4A, a statistically significant difference of $F(1, 259) = 13.19, p < .01$, was found with a correlation value of .220. Approximately 5% of the variance of class 4A low socio-economic level in regard to incidents of school violence was accounted for by its linear relationship to school size. In the 5A classification, there was not a statistically significant difference between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to low socio-economic level. The values for class 5A were $F(1, 216) = 1.997, p = .159$, with a correlation value of .096.

Does the General Perception Among Administrators of Texas Public High Schools Accurately Reflect the Actual Calculations with Collected Data?

Survey data were used to answer this research question. The majority of the respondents indicated that school violence was not a factor in their schools. Survey results indicated that 68% of the school administrators considered school violence as not a problem, and another 24% a minor to moderate problem (see Table 4). None of the respondents replied that it was a critical or serious factor, and 8% indicated it was a moderate factor. With the exception of Class 4A, the larger the school size, the more likely the school administrator indicated that school violence was a factor in his or her school. The results from this part of the survey indicated that 20% of Class 1A respondents, 31% of Class 2A respondents, 33% of Class 3A respondents, 30% of Class 4A respondents, and 52% of Class 5A respondents considered school violence a minor to moderate factor in their schools.

Population as a factor in school violence was addressed with question two. Responses for population as a factor were spread across the scale from critical to not a problem. In one instance, a school specifically indicated that the choice to mark “critical” was based on the respondent’s belief that his/her small size kept violence at a minimum. Survey results indicated that 35% of Class 2A schools and 44% of Class 3A schools considered school population size as more of a factor than at the larger schools. This could be attributed to a perception that size was a positive factor, instead of a negative factor. Nonetheless, as Table 5 reveals, approximately 79% of the responses indicated that population size was seen as not a factor or a minor factor.

In question three, socioeconomic level was queried. While 64% of participants continued to respond with “not a problem,” as can be seen in Table 6, there was a noticeable increase in the respondents that indicated that socio-economic level was a minor,

Table 4
Violence as a factor in schools

Size	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
1A	0	0	0	11	45
2A	0	0	9	16	55
3A	0	0	7	19	54
4A	0	0	4	15	45
5A	0	0	7	18	23

Table 5
Population as a factor in school violence

Size	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
1A	8	0	8	0	40
2A	8	4	2	14	52
3A	8	8	3	16	45

13%, to a moderate, 14%, factor in regard to incidents of school violence. There were 13 respondents that replied that socioeconomic level was a serious factor. The results from the Class 3A respondents revealed that socioeconomic level is more of a factor in medium sized schools than in the other size classifications, indicated by the higher numbers in the critical and serious categories.

Size	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
4A	0	0	0	4	60
5A	0	2	3	12	29

The final forced-choice question addressed gender as a factor. Results of the surveys indicated that 71% of the respondents considered gender as not a factor in regard to incidents of school violence. Of those who did consider gender a factor, the responses fell into the minor, 13%, moderate, 9%, and serious, 7%, categories. As shown in Table 7, none of the schools indicated it was a critical factor in regard to incidents of school violence. The respondents from Class 2A, Class 3A, and Class 5A schools indicated that gender was a greater factor than respondents from schools of other size classifications, with respondents from Class 3A having a 51% response rate that gender was a factor in regard to incidents of school violence.

Table 6

Socioeconomic level as a factor in school violence

Size	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
1A	0	0	2	6	42
2A	0	3	6	11	60
3A	1	7	12	10	50
4A	0	3	12	11	30
5A	0	3	11	5	29

The overall results of the forced-choice questions indicated that the majority of school administrators do not view violence as a problem in schools, as can be seen in Table 8. The survey results also revealed that school administrators do not consider population size, socioeconomic level, or gender as significant factors in regard to incidents of school violence. There was a large gap between those administrators who do not believe that any of the factors impact school violence, which comprised the majority of the respondents, and the ones who believe that these factors have at least a minor impact on incidents of school violence.

Table 7

Gender as a factor in school violence

Size	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
1A	0	0	0	3	53
2A	0	6	4	9	58
3A	0	10	10	21	39
4A	0	0	8	3	53
5A	0	7	7	7	27

Discussion

The study indicated that overall

Table 8

Overall survey results for forced choice questions for all school size classifications

school size was significantly related to incidents of school violence, so that school violence increased as school size increased. This was also true in regard to school size and incidents of school violence as a percentage, whereby the larger the school size, the higher the percentage of incidents of school violence.

Factor	Critical	Serious	Moderate	Minor	Not a problem
Violence in School	0	0	27	79	222
Population size	24	14	18	46	226
Socio-economic Level	1	16	43	43	225
Gender	0	23	29	43	230

School size was significantly related to incidents of school violence as it related to gender. Across all size classifications, there was a significant relationship between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to males. Females had a significant relationship between school size and incidents of school violence in regard to gender in size classifications 3A, 4A, and 5A, but not in size classifications 1A or 2A.

Survey results were used to examine school size and incidents of school violence in regard to grade level. The majority of responders indicated that school grade level was not a factor in regard to incidents of school violence on the high school level. Respondents from 3A and 5A schools indicated the highest level of impact of grade level on incidents of school violence. Of those that considered grade level as having an impact on school violence, the weight of that factor decreased as the grade level increased, indicating that these administrators considered older students as less likely to be involved in incidents of school violence.

Results indicated that overall school size was significantly related to incidents of school violence in regard to socio-economic level. In the breakdown by size classifications, there was a significant relationship between school size and incidents of school violence as it relates to socio-economic level in all size classifications except Class 5A.

Responses from the forced-choice survey questions indicated that school violence was not seen as a major factor in schools regardless of the size of school. It was also noted that the factors of gender, grade level, and socioeconomic level were not seen as significant factors in regard to school violence by the majority of respondents.

Conclusions

Conclusions from the findings included that a significant relationship exists between school size and incidents of school violence. These findings encompassed school violence data as raw numbers and as a percentage of the overall population. Having higher incidents of school violence in a higher population school might naturally be expected. Therefore, it is significant that incidents of school violence also increased as a percentage of the school's population as the size of the school increased. The conclusion drawn from this data is that school size does significantly impact school violence.

Statistical data showed that in the categories of gender and socioeconomic level, school violence increased as school size increased. These findings lead to the conclusion that gender and socioeconomic level are significant factors in regard to school violence. Analysis also revealed that

males showed a slightly higher tendency than females to be involved in incidents of school violence. This conclusion mirrors research discussed in the review of the literature that indicates that male students are at a higher risk to commit school violence than females (Furlong and Morrison 2000).

Conclusions from the survey responses included that a large number of high school administrators believed that school violence was not a serious problem and that factors such as gender, grade level, and socioeconomic level did not greatly impact school violence. An interesting aspect revealed by the survey data was the wide discrepancy between the large number of administrators who thought that school violence was not a significant problem and those who considered it was at least a minor problem. This gap was apparent across all size classifications. A gap of this nature could indicate that there is a practice of downplaying the extent of school violence, or that a few administrators are overreacting to a minor problem.

The findings from the forced-choice survey data were directly opposite to the findings using state data, in which a significant relationship was indicated. Conclusions from this relationship would indicate that school administrators are downplaying the extent of school violence. This result reinforced what Trump (2005) outlines was a failure of school administrators to come to grips with the problem of school violence.

The results of the statistical data showing a significant relationship between school size and incidents of school violence were found, even though 258 schools from a total of 1,075 high schools across all size levels reported zero incidents of school violence. While the majority of these schools were from the smaller size classifications, there were 25 schools that reported zero incidents of school violence from Class 4A and Class 5A. Inasmuch as many of these schools might not have had any incidents of school violence, recent research has shown that many schools are either failing to report incidents of school violence or underreporting these incidents (Trump 2005).

Implications for Practice

It was evident in comparing the responses from the surveys to the collected data from the state that many high school administrators do not see school violence as a major threat to the learning environment. There could be many reasons behind this discrepancy between actual data on school violence and school administrators' perceptions of school violence. Whether is it due to lack of knowledge in regard to what is and is not school violence, fear of negative publicity, or a state of denial (Trump 2005), it is imperative that school administrators take an honest accounting of the status of their school in regard to school violence.

It would benefit high school administrators if they would utilize action research to collect data and to evaluate whether school violence is a significant factor at their schools. This must be an honest assessment of the number of incidents of school violence at a school and the security measures already in use. School boards and school districts are extremely conscious of their budgets (Trump 2005), therefore this type of research is necessary to justify the expense of security systems and prevention programs. It might also be necessary to provide professional development programs to train school administrators, as well as faculty and staff, on what school violence is and what is just an infraction of the rules.

Prevention programs and security systems will not succeed unless the administration considers the

problem of school violence to be significant enough to find value in these measures. When school administrators are supportive of prevention programs, then these programs are more likely to succeed (Fagan and Mihalic 2003). Once a prevention program is in place, a plan for continuous monitoring and improvement should be established to ensure that the system is producing intended results.

Research has shown that schools that stay abreast of current trends and programs for the prevention of school violence have a better chance of maintaining a safe environment for students (Canady 2000). According to the National School Safety Center (2005, para. 10), "when school leaders make a conscious decision that safe and welcoming schools are a high priority, that commitment provides the basis for the development of plans and strategies to achieve this goal." School leaders, however, must first recognize the presence of a problem.

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