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Youth Violence in Urban Ethiopia: Forms, Risk Factors and Preventive Mechanisms in Hawassa and Shashemene Cities

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*Youth Violence,
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Risk Factors,
Preventive
Mechanisms,
Mixed-Method
Approach.*

Youth violence negatively impacts physical, emotional, and social well-being, hindering development, decision-making, learning, and relationships. Holistic and interdisciplinary approaches are needed to mitigate this issue. This research aims to investigate forms, risk factors, and preventive mechanisms of youth violence in Hawassa and Shashemene cities. The research utilized a cross-sectional descriptive design with a mixed-method approach. The study included 400 survey respondents, 16 focus group discussants across two sessions, and 7 in-depth interviewees. As the findings reveal, youth involvement in violence spans from perpetration to victimization. Among the total respondents, 289 self-reported that they have perpetrated various forms of physical, verbal, sexual, economic, and media violence within the past 12 months. The primary reported risk factors for youth violence include attitudes that condone violence (64.25%), insufficient parental control (59%), elevated rates of unemployment (67.25%), and a fragile rule of law (81.25%), which respectively represent the leading factor from the individual, relational, community, and societal risk domains as per the social-ecological model. The findings indicate that institutional and community-based efforts to address and mitigate the issue remain in their early stages. The study areas lack nearly all essential elements of youth violence prevention and intervention programs. The study concludes that youth violence is a more visible issue that affects both society and the youth in the study areas. Without preventive efforts, the highlighted risk factors may further increase the likelihood of youth engagement in violence. Thus, the study recommends the establishment of integrated and inclusive programs and strategies to effectively address the problem such as community awareness campaigns, parental counselling services, school-based interventions, and strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions among others.

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INTRODUCTION

Various nations and cultures perceive violence in diverse ways, and there is no universally accepted definition of youth violence. WHO states that it is the purposeful or negligent infliction of bodily or psychological injury on others, including young people as offenders, victims, or both, or posing a potential risk to the youth (WHO, 2015).

Violent behaviour is intricate. Numerous circumstances can either augment or diminish the probability of violence. The communities in which individuals reside can either safeguard them from violence or heighten their vulnerability to it. Risk factors denote elements that elevate the probability of encountering violence. On the other hand, protective factors serve to lessen the likelihood of experiencing violence (Wilkins et al., 2014). Youth violence is one of the most conspicuous manifestations of violence. Every day, newspapers and broadcast media worldwide report on acts of violence committed by gangs, within schools, or by youth in public spaces. Adolescents and young adults are predominantly both the victims and perpetrators of such violence globally (WHO, 2003).

The majority of research on risk variables isolates and quantifies each element in isolation, disregarding the interplay of other risk factors. The aggregation of risk variables is more significant than any singular element; yet, it is the accumulation of risk factors that is paramount. Risk factors typically manifest in clusters rather than in isolation (Office of the Surgeon General, 2001).

The WHO study on selected developing countries found that almost fifty percent of males reported participation in physical altercations. This analysis indicates that girls in Myanmar exhibited the lowest incidence of physical fighting and bullying among the twenty nations analyzed, with rates of 8% and 16%, respectively, whereas males in Samoa reported the highest rates, at 73% and 79%, respectively (WHO, 2015).

A significant number of young individuals are questioning the conventional frameworks that govern connections and transitions among family, education, and employment. Social interactions for effective socialization are deteriorating; lifestyle trajectories are increasingly diverse and unpredictable. The modification of the labour market, the extension of the maturity gap (the duration of young adults' reliance on their families), and, arguably, the diminished prospects for achieving independence are all factors affecting familial and social relationships, educational opportunities and decisions, labour market engagement, recreational activities, and lifestyles among the youth (UN, 2003).

A college-based study in Ethiopia reveals that about 16% of male undergraduates are engaging in physical abuse. Around fifteen million youth females between 15 to 19 ages globally have gone through forced sexual experiences at some stage in their lives, with 9 million of these individuals having faced victimization in the past year (Philpart et al., 2017).

Despite the increasing prevalence of youth violence in urban Ethiopia, there has been little scholarly

endeavour to undertake thorough research that systematically identifies risk and protective factors, therefore aiding in the development of enduring and comprehensive interventions. In this regard, Hawassa and Shashemene cities are not exceptions. Consequently, this research endeavours to partially address the existing gap.

Research objectives

- To describe the major forms of youth violence in the study areas.
- To examine risk factors for youth violence in the study areas.
- To investigate existing youth violence preventive and intervention mechanisms in the study areas.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study design

Because the topic of youth violence received minimal attention in the study areas, the research employed an exploratory design. In terms of time reference and approach, the study employed a cross-sectional mixed-methods approach that converged quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The researcher preferred this approach because it is better aligned with the research topic and objectives. As stated by Cresswell (2014), the concurrent procedure combines both approaches to deliver a thorough overview of the study issue.

Study participants

Subsequent to the identification of the study areas, the researcher determined the research participants. The researcher has only engaged youngsters located in the designated sites. The study has also included persons from pertinent organizations, namely experts, police officers, judicial officials, prison officers, and councillors.

Sample

The survey utilized a multistage sampling method. Initially, the researcher identified two sub-respective sites: *Meneharia* and *Tula* sub-cities from Hawassa, and *Awasho/kebele 01* and *Dida Boke/kebele 02* from Shashemene, selected from a total of eight sub-cities and 17 kebeles, respectively. Owing to temporal and financial limitations, it was unfeasible to encompass all kebeles. The researcher chose the study sites because they had substantial population sizes. Consequently, the researcher sampled adolescents from the designated areas as follows: Using a 95% confidence interval and the total young population of 199,045 (Hawassa) + 96,000 (Shashemene) = 295,045 (Plan and Development Bureau, 2024), the researcher first calculated the sample using the formula $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(E)^2}$ (Yemane, 1967).

n = is the sample size to be selected

e = is the accepted sampling error

N = the total population size and 95% confidence level and $P=0.05$

$$n = 295,045 / 1 + 295,045 (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 295,045 / 1 + 295,045 (0.0025)$$

$$n = 295,045 / 1 + 737.6125$$

$$n = 295,045 / 738.6125$$

$n=400$ (the total sample for the two cities' population)

Consequently, since the study comprises two different cities, a proportional allocation formula has to be employed to select a proportional sample from each group. Therefore, according to Pandey and Verma (2008), to select proportional samples we could use this formula: $n_i = nN_i/N$, where n_i represents the sample size of a group, n denotes the total sample size, N_i designates the total population of a group, and N signifies the total population of the study.

Table 1 proportional sample for each city

No	Cities	Total Population	Sample Size
1	Shashemene	96000	130
2	Hawassa	199045	270
	Total	295,045	400

Upon identifying the exact study sample, the researcher collaborated with key individuals from chosen sub-cities and kebeles to recruit enumerators who facilitated and performed the data collection.

Methods of data collection

Survey method

Survey questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data from the youth respondents. The questionnaire had closed-ended and open-ended questions and was conducted by selected enumerators. A pretest was conducted using Cronbach's alpha model (0.8 result) to maintain the instrument's reliability before administering. The researcher adopted risk and protective factors from the four domains of the social-ecological model (WHO, 2022).

In-depth Interview

The researcher used in-depth interviews to gather richer information from the interviewees. Accordingly, experts and youths were interviewed. The researcher conducted interviews with selected officers, experts, and youths from the concerned offices. Specifically, interviews were conducted with police officers from the Shashemene Kebele Zero One and Hawassa Menaharia sub-city. The interview also included two judges from the first instance courts, experts from the Hawassa and Shashemene correction centres, and counsellors from the youth centre. Youths from the cities 'youth centres' were also interviewed.

Focus Group Discussions

The researcher also employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to substantiate the data collected through other tools. The researcher undertook two FGDs in each study area. The

researcher made a concerted effort to establish a free environment where participants could freely share all their information without any hesitation. Youths from the study areas participated as focus group discussants.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed descriptive statistics to evaluate the quantitative data using SPSS version twenty-eight, while the qualitative data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The analysis employed a concurrent procedure.

Ethical considerations

The researcher was careful and meticulous in protecting the psychological, bodily, and social welfare of the study participants, as they were the fundamental prerequisites of the investigation. The researcher emphasized informed verbal consent and guaranteed that each participant comprehended the study's objective.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The results section comprises four subsections. The initial subtopic delineates the sociodemographic attributes of the study participants. The second subtopic provides an overview of forms of youth violence in the studied areas. The third subtopic examines the risk factors for youth violence in the research locations. The final subtopic addresses the preventive methods of youth violence used in the studied locations.

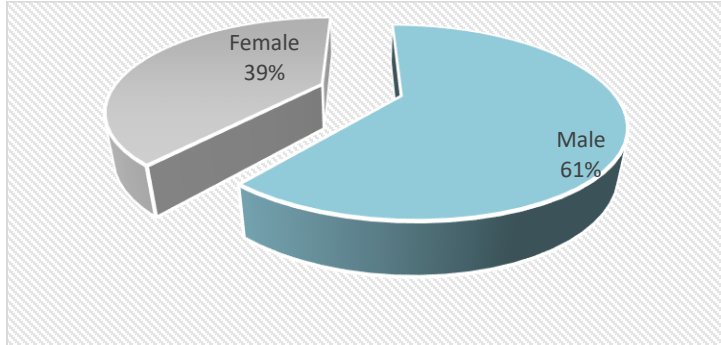
Socio-demographic characteristics

Sex

The first depiction of the sociodemographic profile of youth respondents was their sex distribution. The data below indicates that 61% (n = 244) of the

juvenile responders were male, while 39% (n = 156) were female, from a total of 400 participants in the survey.

Figure 1: Sex distribution



Source: own survey, 2024

Age

Table 1: Age distribution

No.	Age	Frequency	Percent
1.	15-19	95	18%
2.	20-24	203	51%
3.	25-29	102	31%
Total		400	100%

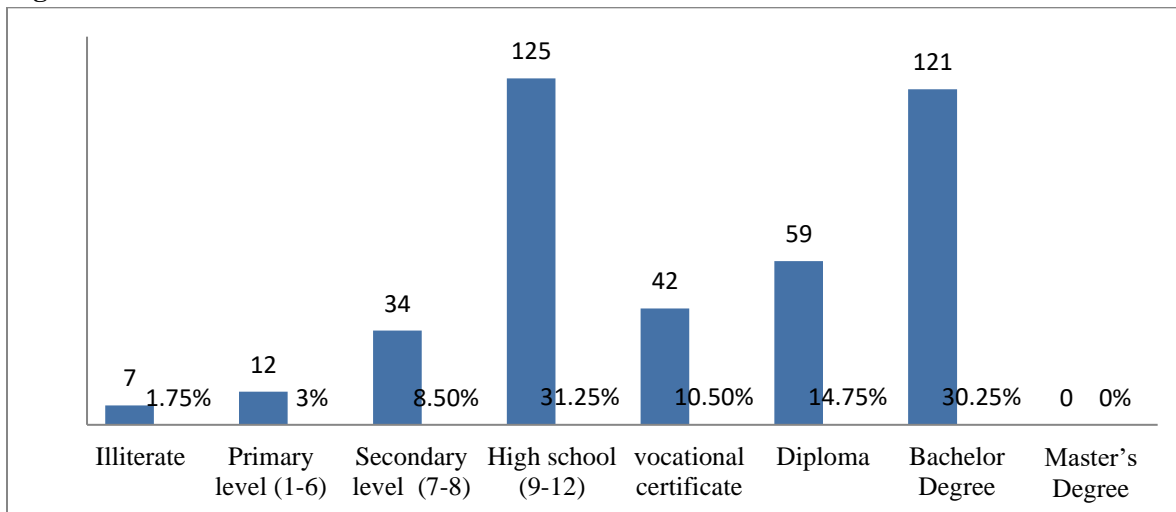
Source: own survey, 2024

The table above shows that half, i.e., 51% (n = 203), of the youth respondents fall in the age category of 20-24, followed by 31% (n = 102), who fall between 25-29. The remaining 18% (n = 95) of the youth

respondents fall between the age categories of 15 and 19.

Education

Figure 2: Educational status



Source: own survey, 2024

The data indicates that the predominant educational attainment among the youth is high school education at 31.25%, followed by 30.25% with bachelor's degrees, 10.5% holding diplomas, and

10.5% with occupational certifications. Only 1.75 percent of the participants reported being illiterate.

Marriage

Table 2: Marital status

Marital status			
No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	unmarried	377	94.25%
2	Married	23	5.75
3	Separated	0	0%
4	Widowed	0	0%
	Total	400	100

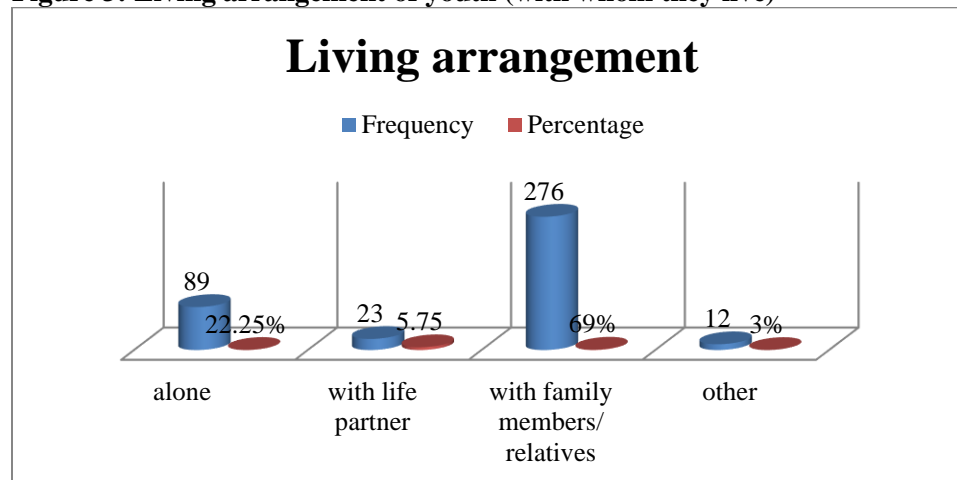
Source: own survey, 2024

In the examined youth population, a significant majority (94.25%, n = 377) were unmarried, while 5.57% (n = 23) were married. The youthful

demographic may have contributed to the lack of respondents indicating separation or widowhood.

Living arrangement

Figure 3: Living arrangement of youth (with whom they live)



Source: own survey, 2024

Academic literature on youth violence consistently demonstrates that the living arrangements of young individuals are pivotal in supplying essential sociodemographic data to enhance the comprehension of youth involvement in violence. As indicated in the table above, over half of the respondents (69%) live with their family or relatives. Approximately 23% of respondents reside independently, whereas 5.75% cohabit with a life partner, forming a family unit.

Forms of youth violence in the study areas

The first purpose of this research is to describe the major forms of youth violence in the designated study areas, specifying the modes of engagement, the types of violence committed, and the frequency and intensity of involvement. The questions stated in the subsequent tables are derived from various youth violence-related studies and literature. The following section presents the study's findings:

Respondents' forms of involvement in youth violence

The researcher posed the following question to the respondents to understand their type of involvement in violent acts.

Table 3: Youth's forms of involvement in violence

Question	Perpetrator Only		Victim Only		Both Victim and Perpetrator		Neither the Victim nor the Perpetrator		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
What forms of engagement have you had in the major violent acts (physical, verbal, sexual, economic, and media violence) in the past 12 months?	56	16	21	78	127	90	0	12	400
	14%	4%	5.25%	19.5%	31.75%	22.5%	0	3%	100%
Total	18%		24.75%		54.25%		3%		100%

Source: own survey, 2024

The above table classifies the youth's involvement or experience with violence as either *perpetrator-only*, *victim-only*, *both*, or *neither*. 18% and 24.75% of the respondents reported being 'perpetrators only' and 'victims only', respectively. The data indicates that female respondents are more likely to have been victims than male respondents. The majority (54.25%) of the youth reported that they have been *both perpetrators and victims* of youth violence. However, a small percentage of respondents (3%) reported that they have neither perpetrated nor been victims of youth violence in the last twelve months. Overall, 289 out of the 400 respondents have perpetrated one form of violence in the last 12

months, which implies that three-fourths of them have participated in youth violence, though the degree and type might vary.

Types of violence perpetrated by the youth

The researcher specifically asked the youths (i.e., 72.25%, n = 289) who were perpetrators only and victim-perpetrators to report the most common forms of violence they had committed in the past 12 months. The section below separately presents each category of violence (physical, verbal, sexual, economic, and media) to the respondents, acknowledging that a person may perpetrate different forms of violence.

Table 4: Types of violence perpetrated by the youth

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE	YES		NO		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Have you participated in any type of physical violence, including individual or group altercations, assaults involving sharp weapons, or physical attacks such as pushing, shoving, punching, thrashing, slapping, beating, or choking, in the past 12 months?	146	87	19	37	289
	50.51%	30.1%	6.57%	12.8%	100.0%
TOTAL	80.61%		19.37%		100.0%

VERBAL VIOLENCE	YES		NO		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Have you participated in any type of verbal aggression (including severe insults, bullying, threats, humiliation, harassment, or the employment of pejorative terminology) in the preceding 12 months?	164 56.7%	90 31.14%	14 4.84%	21 7.26%	289 100.0%
TOTAL	87.84%		12.1		100.0%
SEXUAL VIOLENCE	YES		NO		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Have you participated in any acts of sexual violence, including sexual harassment, stalking, or making inappropriate sexual jokes, comments, or gestures in the past 12 months?	96 32.21%	62 21.45%	51 17.64%	80 27.68%	289 100.0%
TOTAL	53.66%		45.32%		100.0%
ECONOMIC VIOLENCE	YES		NO		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Have you participated in any sort of economic violence, including theft, appropriation of another's property without consent, robbery, seizure of property, or deliberate destruction of another's property, within the past 12 months?	8 2.76%	3 1.03%	102 35.29%	176 60.89%	289 100.0%
TOTAL	3.79%		96.18%		100.0%
SOCIAL MEDIA VIOLENCE	YES		NO		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Have you participated in any sort of social media violence, including defamation, the distribution of hate speech that incites conflict, the propagation of false information, or the sharing of private photographs, in the last 12 months?	118 40.83%	106 36.67%	23 7.95%	42 14.53%	289 100.0%
TOTAL	77.5%		22.48%		100.0%

Source: own survey, 2024

As responses on physical violence in the table above show, 80.61% of the respondents perpetrated one or more forms of physical violence in the last 12 months. Sex-wise analysis confirms that male youths (i.e., 50%) have shown more physical violence than female counterparts (30.1%). Gender norms and biological factors may contribute to this, necessitating further in-depth investigation.

The IDI and FGD participants further clarified that high schools, stadiums, soccer game centres, gambling centres, and bars occasionally witness physical fighting. One male in-depth interviewee from Shashemene Town asserted:

"I recently graduated from university and am currently unemployed. If we have money, my friends and I typically spend the entire Friday

night in nightclubs and small alcohol-dealing establishments. Often, I witness intense group fights between intoxicated youths from various kebeles. Occasionally, the fights cause severe physical harm such as bleeding and stabbing, and they may persist until the police intervene.”

As item 2 in the table above shows, 87.84% of the youth respondents perpetrated one or more forms of verbal violence in the last 12 months. Sex with analysis confirms that male youths (i.e., 56.7%) have shown more verbal violence than female counterparts (31.14%). The IDI and FGD results also corroborate that male youths are largely involved in the use of strong verbal violence, including gender-based violence, while female youths perpetrate soft verbal violence, including name-calling, ridiculing, ostracizing, and insulting.

As item 3 in the table above indicates, 53.66% of the respondent youths perpetrated one or more forms of sexual violence in the last 12 months. Sex-wise analysis confirms that male youths (i.e., 32.21%) have shown more sexual violence than female counterparts (21.45%). As further elaborated by the IDI and FGD participants, less serious/nonphysical sexual violence is more prevalent during the day, whereas serious sexual violence, including forceful touching of private parts, kissing, etc., especially against females, takes place in the evening.

As item 4 in the table above reveals, only 3.79% of the respondent youths perpetrated one or more forms of economic violence in the last 12 months. Sex-wise analysis confirms that male youths (i.e., 2.76%) have shown more economic violence than their female counterparts (1.03%). On the other hand, data from IDI and FGD participants revealed that exclusive youth categories, such as drug abusers and jobless youth, perpetrated most of the economic violence. For instance, one in-depth interviewee revealed: *“In our neighborhood, there are youths who stole motorcycle and faced prison sentences, with two of them being high school students.”*

As item 5 in the table above indicates, 77.5% of the respondent youths perpetrated one or more forms of social media violence in the last 12 months. Sex-wise analysis confirms with a slight distinction that male youths (i.e., 40.83%) have shown more social media violence than their female counterparts (36.67%). Data obtained from IDI and FGD participants also reported that the majority of young people use mobile phones and heavily rely on social media. Evidently, the primary purpose of a mobile phone is communication, but the youth primarily use it for information gathering, posting, and sharing. In this regard, some youths, both knowingly and unknowingly, engage in various forms of social media violence. During the focus group discussion, it became clear that ethnic-based conflict is currently the primary driving force for social media violence among the youth, with a large majority of youths participating by sharing and posting pro- or against related ideas and images.

The above results clearly show that a significant number of youths engage in various forms of violence. In addition, male youths appear to be more violent than female youths in the study areas, indicating a need for gender-specific intervention from relevant bodies.

Youth Engagement in Serious Violence

Regarding the perpetration of violence, the data gathered from IDI and FGD participants reveals that some youths in the study areas are involved in serious acts such as rape, homicide, robbery, and extreme physical attacks. In this context, an IDI police officer from the Hawassa Correction Center made the following observation:

“Several young delinquents reside in our correction centre, with the majority of their convictions stemming from violent theft, robbery, and sexual assault. Some others have been found guilty of using a sharp instrument to inflict an impairing physical attack on others.”

Similarly, the police officer from Shashemene town, Dida Boke Kebele, confirmed that youth

engagement in serious violence, particularly street violence, is on the rise. As the interviewee stated, helpless street-dwelling youths are posing a serious challenge to street-by-passers by snatching mobile phones and handbags, as well as other properties.

As the data obtained from in-depth interviewees further reveal, youths are also engaging in occasional bloody fights in relation to football hooliganism, nightclub conflicts, and gambling. The police officers' data revealed a direct correlation between alcohol consumption in liquor houses and group fights they witnessed. Since the youths can easily get alcohol from any restaurant in the cities, they easily indulge themselves in group drinks, which occasionally result in fights and misconduct.

Risk factors of youth violence in the study areas

The study's second particular purpose was to investigate risk factors that may enhance the likelihood of youth engaging in violence.

In this section, the researcher employed the social-ecological model of violence, (WHO, 2022). The model emphasizes that no singular cause may elucidate why certain individuals or groups are at an elevated risk of severe youth violence while others are comparatively safeguarded. This paradigm perceives violence as the result of the interplay of several factors across the individual, relationship, community, and societal domains (Krug et al., 2002).

Individual Risk Factors

Table 5: Individual Risk Factors

Factors in the individual domain <i>*Adopted, WHO (2022).</i>		Responses					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Seeing or suffering violence as a child.	Count	48	104	0	186	62	400
	% within the individual domain	12 %	26%	0%	46.5%	15.5 %	100.0%
Attitudes that promote violence	Count	64	77	2	177	80	400
	% within the individual domain	16%	19.25%	0.5%	44.25%	20.0%	100.0%
Poor behavioural control and impulsiveness.	Count	76	83	11	140	80	400
	% within the individual domain	19%	20.75%	2.75%	35%	20%	100.0%
Isolation and lack of social connections.	Count	97	179	8	71	45	400
	% within the individual domain	24.25%	44.75%	2 %	17.75%	11.25 %	100.0%
Reported psychological/mental health concerns.	Count	156	203	13	25	3	400
	% within the individual domain	39%	50.75%	3.25%	6.25%	0.75%	100.0%
Alcohol/substance abuse	Count	101	68	0	152	79	400
	% within the individual domain	25.25%	17%	0%	38%	19.75%	100.0%

	Count	120	81	24	113	62	400
Low academic accomplishment	% within the individual domain	30%	20.25	6%	28.28%	15.5%	100.0%

Source: own survey, 2024

The above table shows that from the individual factors, 'Attitudes supportive of violence' (agree = 44.25% and strongly agree = 20%) are the first-ranking individual risk factor for potential youth violence in the study areas, followed by 'Witnessing or experiencing violence as a child' (agree = 46.5%, and strongly agree = 15.5%) as the second-ranking individual risk factor for potential youth violence in the study areas. The study areas rank 'psychological/mental health problems' (disagree = 50.75% and strongly disagree = 39%) as the least

significant individual risk factor for potential youth violence. These findings generally suggest that concerned bodies should focus more on developing strategies to decrease childhood exposure to violence and changing youth attitudes towards violence. Therefore, concerned bodies can meaningfully reduce the potential effects of the identified primary risk factors.

Relationship Risk Factors

Table 6: Relationship Risk Factors

Factors in the relationship domain		Responses					Total
<i>*Adopted, WHO (2022).</i>		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Affiliation with aggressive or destructive peers	Count	59	116	0	133	92	400
	% within the relationship domain	14.75%	29%	0%	33.25%	23%	100.0 %
Inadequate supervision of adolescents by guardians	Count	20	121	23	149	87	400
	% within the relationship domain	5%	30.25%	5.7%	37.25%	21.75%	100.0 %
Marital instability, divorces, or separations	Count	81	137	16	131	35	400
	% within the relationship domain	20.25%	34.25%	4%	32.25%	8.75%	100.0 %
Weak parent-child relationships	Count	67	113	0	128	92	400
	% within the relationship domain	16.75%	28.25%	0.0%	32%	23%	100.0 %
Conflict, discord, or strife among family members	Count	75	120	0	167	38	400
	% within the relationship domain	18.75%	30%	0 %	41.75%	9.25%	100.0 %

Source: own survey, 2024

Based on the above table, the finding indicates that from the relationship risk factors, 'Inadequate supervision of adolescents by guardians' (agree = 37.25% and strongly agree = 21.75%) is the first-ranking relationship risk factor for potential youth violence in the study areas, followed by 'Affiliation with aggressive or destructive peers' (agree = 33.25% and strongly agree = 23%) as the second-ranking relationship risk factor for potential youth violence in the study areas. On the other hand,

'Marital instability, divorces, or separations' (disagree = 34.25%, and strongly disagree = 20.25%) is the least ranking relationship risk factor for potential youth violence in the study areas. These findings generally suggest that proper parental supervision of youth and the development of mechanisms to address youth's association with delinquent peers require more attention.

Community risk factors

Table 7: Community Risk Factors

Factors in the Community Domain <i>*Adopted, WHO (2022).</i>			Responses					Total
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	
High unemployment	Count		31	101	0	153	116	400
	% within the community domain		7.75%	25.25%	0%	38.25%	29%	100
Residential instability	Count		55	162	30	142	11	400
	% within the community domain		13.75 %	40.5%	7.5%	35.5 %	2.75%	100.0%
Weak institutional support	Count		64	86	10	154	86	400
	% within the community domain		16%	21.5 %	2.5%	38.5%	21.5 %	100.0%
Deep poverty	Count		43	110	13	130	104	400
	% within the community domain		10.75%	27.5%	3.25%	32.5%	26%	100.0%
Poor community sanctions	Count		94	121	0	140	45	400
	% within the community domain		23.5%	30.25%	0%	35%	11.25%	100.0%

Source: own survey, 2024

The findings indicate that 'High unemployment' is the foremost community risk factor for possible youth violence in the research locations, with 38.25% in agreement and 29% in strong agreement. The respondents identified 'Weak institutional support' as the second most significant risk factor, with 32.25% in agreement and 21.5% in strong agreement. In contrast, 'Residential instability' (disagree = 40.5% and strongly disagree = 13.75%)

is the least prioritized community risk factor for potential adolescent violence in the studied areas.

The primary conclusion from these findings is that increased focus is necessary to alleviate adolescent unemployment and formulate ways to bolster institutional capacity for minimizing and treating youth violence.

*Societal risk factors***Table 8: Societal Risk Factors**

Factors in the societal domain <i>*Adopted, WHO (2022).</i>		Societal risk factors					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Cultural norms that endorse violence	Count	89	161	34	78	38	400
	% within the societal domain	22.25%	40.25%	8.5%	19.5%	9.5%	100.0%
Gender, economic, and ethnic inequality	Count	58	99	0	189	54	400
	% within the societal domain	14.5%	24.75%	0%	47.25%	13.5%	100.0%
poor rule of law	Count	22	50	3	187	138	400
	% within the societal domain	5.5%	12.5%	0.75%	46.75%	34.5%	100.0%
Violence promoted by social media	Count	57	119	0	149	75	400
	% within the societal domain	14.25%	29.75%	0%	37.25%	18.75%	100.0%

Source: own survey, 2024

The aforementioned findings reveal that the societal risk factor of 'poor rule of law' ranks highest for potential youth violence in the study areas, with 187% in agreement and 138% in strong agreement. 'Gender, economic, and ethnic inequality' ranks second, with 47.25% of respondents agreeing and 13.5% strongly agreeing. Conversely, 'cultural norms that endorse violence' (disagree = 40.25% and strongly disagree = 22.25%) is the lowest-ranked social risk factor for possible youth violence in the studied areas.

These findings underscore the need for a stronger focus on the rule of law and the creation of systems that alleviate pronounced gender, economic, and ethnic disparities, thereby facilitating the early prevention of potential youth violence hazards.

Preventive Mechanisms of Youth Violence in the Study Areas

The study's final purpose was to investigate existing preventive mechanisms for youth violence in the study areas. As cited in Lynn (2007), the Health and Human Services Department of America primarily emphasized the significance of preventative and intervention programs, arguing that rescuing youth from a life of violence is preferable to incarcerating them in prisons and training schools. The researcher raised the following questions with the respondent youths to understand the availability, types, and natures of youth violence prevention and intervention programs and practices.

Table 9: Preventive Mechanisms

Preventive Mechanisms <i>*Adopted, WHO (2022)</i>	Yes		No		Unsure		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
School-based programs exist to prevent and address youth violence.	0	0	214	145	30	11	400
	0%	0%	53.5%	36.25%	7.5%	2.75%	100.0%
Programs for social and behavioural skills training aimed at youth violence are accessible.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	244	156	0	0	400
	0%	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%	100.0%
Community-wide initiatives exist to prevent and address youth violence.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	244	156	0	0	400
	0%	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%	100.0%
There exist institutions, programs, facilities, and services specifically aimed at adolescent offenders.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	205	140	39	16	400
	0%	0%	51.25%	35%	9.75%	4%	100.0%
Rehabilitation programs are designed for dangerous young offenders.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	244	156	0	0	400
	0%	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%	100.0%
There are correctional facilities specifically for youth offenders.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	244	156	0	0	400
	0%	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%	100.0%
provision of structured and accessible counselling services in correctional camps, educational institutions, and sub-cities	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	100	112	0	0	144	47	400
	25%	28%	0%	0%	36%	11.75%	100.0%
Programs, policies, and legislative actions to mitigate youth violence are accessible.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	0	0	244	156	0	0	400
	0%	0%	61%	39%	0%	0%	100.0%
provision of youth-friendly environments, including free recreational facilities, collaborative skill development centres, experience-sharing platforms, and youth-oriented organizations	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
	44	39	200	117	0	0	400
	11%	9.75%	50%	29.25%	0%	0%	100.0%

Source: own survey, 2024

Appallingly, as it can be seen from the above table, almost all components of youth violence prevention and intervention programs are not available in the study areas. I.e. School-Based Programs to prevent

and intervene youth violence (90% not available); Social and behavioural skills training programs designed for youth violence (100% not available); Community-Wide Programs to prevent and intervene youth violence (100% not available); institutions, programs, facilities, and services that particularly targeted youth offenders (86.25% not available); rehabilitation programs targeting violent youth offenders (100% not available); youth-offender designated correctional centres (100% not available); organized and accessible counselling services at detention centres, schools and health centres cities (47.75 no available); program, policy and legislative measures to prevent youth violence are available(100% not available); and youth friendly environment such as free recreation, mutual skill development and experience sharing centres and youth-oriented associations.

The above table suggests a general neglect of key components of youth violence prevention and intervention methods, programs, and experiences in the studied areas. Though Ethiopia is dominated by a youth population, and youth violence is becoming an objective and mounting challenge, the inability to come up with violence reduction and intervention mechanisms results in complex consequences.

The Researcher posed the same questions to IDI and FGD participants to gain a deeper understanding of the investigated issue. The participants indicate that most youths and concerned bodies (youth and sports offices, correction centres, police and legal bodies, counsellors, and schools) have a limited understanding of youth violence prevention. To this end, the participants boldly stated that, except for the presence of some youth centres and correction-based counsellors in the two cities, there are no other available preventive mechanisms. Schools mostly employ punishments to address violent behaviours, while legal institutions also sanction and arrest serious violent youth offenders yet, they are negligent in providing special detention centres and rehabilitation support for youth offenders.

DISCUSSION

In terms of perpetration and victimization rates, this study aligns with the findings of Obradovic-Tomasevic et al. (2019). 18% of the respondents identified themselves as perpetrators, while 24.75% identified themselves as victims. Notably, 54.25% experienced both roles, indicating a high overlap in youth violence experiences. Female respondents are more likely to be victims than males, aligning with findings that suggest females report higher rates of victimization and social aggression (Tisak et al., 2019).

Regarding forms of violence perpetrated by the youth, a study by David-Ferdon et al. (2015) shows how violence involves direct harm, such as fighting or bullying. According to statistics, the present study aligns with the treatment of approximately 547,260 youths for nonfatal physical assault-related injuries in 2013. Verbal violence largely includes bullying, threats, and derogatory language. This form of violence can have lasting psychological effects on victims, contributing to mental health issues (David-Ferdon et al., 2015). Foshee et al. (2007) reported sexual violence, which includes acts such as sexual assault and coercion. Research indicates that dating violence is a common occurrence among adolescents, often driven by various motivations that do not align with the findings of the current study. With regard to youth's involvement in serious violence, a study by Swahn et al. (2012) claims Factors such as parental neglect, substance abuse, and hunger link both victimization and perpetration of violence in urban settings like Kampala, Uganda. The prevalence of violence among youth in slums underscores the impact of socio-economic challenges on violent behaviour (Swahn et al., 2012), showing more similarities with the present study in terms of the patterns.

The investigation of risk factors contributing to youth violence reveals a complex interplay of individual, relational, community, and societal elements, as outlined by the social-ecological model. This model emphasizes that no single cause

can fully explain the heightened risk of violence among certain youth populations. The following sections detail the various risk factors identified across multiple studies.

A history of victimization or exposure to violence significantly increases the likelihood of youth engaging in violent behaviour (Smith et al., 2021). Research links low parental education, poor family functioning, and lack of parental involvement to increased youth violence (ibid, 2021). The study by Tahre et al. (2022) identified risk factors for youth violence as economic challenges, academic apathy, seeking pleasure, self-other differentiation, family disorganization, school inefficiency, environmental conditions, cultural diversity, peer pressure, and puberty, highlighting a multilevel mechanism based on social relationships. This result robustly reinforces the findings of the previous study. Additionally, the findings of Smith et al. (2022) confirm the similarity of this pattern. Risk factors for youth violence encompass individual factors such as personal victimization and emotional stress, family factors such as low parental education and involvement, and community factors such as poor economic opportunities and social disorganization, which are particularly prevalent in high-violence areas.

The alarming lack of youth violence prevention and intervention programs in the study areas highlights a significant public health concern. The absence of school-based programs, social skills training, community initiatives, and rehabilitation services severely limits the capacity to address youth violence effectively. This situation necessitates a multifaceted approach to develop and implement comprehensive strategies. As Ivuša (2016) shows, 90% of school-based programs are unavailable, despite evidence that such programs can foster a safer school environment and reduce bullying.

McCarthy & Hutz's (2006) study aligns with this study's findings. McCarthy & Hutz (2006) also asserted that there was a complete absence of social and behavioural skills. Training indicates a critical

gap, as these programs are essential for equipping youth with conflict resolution skills. At last, a study by Hoffman et al. (2011) shows that the complete lack of community programs (100%) undermines collective efforts to address violence.

CONCLUSIONS

The study findings indicate that youth violence is a distinctly recognizable problem in the studied areas, posing a multifaceted burden for both perpetrators and victims among the youth. The survey revealed that youth-perpetrated violence, along with other criminal categories and violent behaviours, is becoming a significant problem. Thus, the study concludes that juvenile violence is an escalating issue affecting society at large and youth in particular.

The research revealed that 289 out of 400 youth respondents had engaged in some form of violence in the past 12 months. Besides, male adolescents in the studied areas exhibit higher levels of violence than females, primarily manifesting physical, sexual, verbal, and economic violence.

The principal risk factors for youth violence include mindsets that endorse violence, insufficient parental supervision, elevated unemployment rates, and a fragile rule of law. The study indicates that without prompt preventive actions, numerous risk factors—individual, relational, communal, and societal—may lead to youth involvement in violence in the studied areas.

The findings indicate that relevant entities neglect essential elements of strategies, initiatives, and practices aimed at mitigating and addressing youth violence due to insufficient resources and attention.

The research unequivocally indicates that institutional and community-based initiatives designed to alleviate the escalating juvenile violence and its detrimental impacts are in their incipient stage.

Recommendations

- **Parents and families**

Parents should take a more active role in preventing and reducing youth violence by paying close attention to their children, understanding the close relationship between youth violence and the family environment, and understanding the importance of having open and logical discussions with their children about violence and its relationship to various factors, including age.

- **Schools, colleges, and universities**

Academic institutions, as secondary forms of socializers, need to develop youth-friendly legal and infrastructural setups in their respective contexts. This includes preparing an anti-violence code of conduct, providing life skills training, offering consistent and standard counselling services, facilitating youth debate/discussion forums for better and logical expression of ideas, and connecting the youth with other care and support providers.

- **Communities**

The community plays a crucial role in preventing and intervening in youth violence. This includes using local moral standards to counteract violent tendencies, challenging pro-violence and gendered norms, and applying normative methods like customary and religious practices to effectively address perpetrated violence.

- **Formal Institutions**

Strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions at the national and local levels is crucial to address the fundamental gap in institutional readiness and commitment to addressing youth violence, thereby facilitating the identification, prediction, and intervention of youth violence.

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