Crime-Political Violence Nexus among Adolescents

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**Abstract**

Youth involvement in violence and delinquency has received widespread attention in the research and theoretical literature. However, little is known about youth involvement in political violence, especially for youth in minority groups. The current study examined the mechanisms that underlie youth involvement in serious physical and political violence. We explored the similarities and differences in the association between both individual factors (including religiosity and school commitment) and parental factors (including family socioeconomic status and parental control), and the two types of violent behaviors. A large representative sample of 814 male students from East Jerusalem, aged 12–18 years, completed a structured, anonymous, self-report questionnaire. Over half of the participants reported that they had been involved in political violence (55.1%) or serious physical violence (58.8%) during the previous year. Youth involvement in serious physical violence was positively associated with involvement in political violence. However, the two types of violence were associated with different risk and protective factors. For example, while greater parental control predicted lower levels of political and physical violence, parental education was not associated with involvement in political or physical violence. The results of the current study show that Arab youth from East Jerusalem are highly involved in political and serious physical violence. The risk and protective factors identified here should inform the design of specific intervention strategies.

*Keywords*: Adolescents, Serious physical violence and political violence, religiosity, parental control, impulsivity

**Introduction**

Extensive theoretical and empirical research has attempted to identify the risk and protective factors for violent behavior among majority and minority groups throughout the world (Eldering & Knorth, 1998; Henry et al., 2001; Mesch et al., 2008; Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen, 2008). However, the research on youth as perpetrators of political violence is limited (Baier, 2018; Pauwels & De Waele, 2014). Most studies investigating young people and political violence focused on the effects of living in war and conflict zones on the physical and psychological wellbeing of children (Abdel-Khalek, 1997; Abu-Kaf et al., 2017; Dubow et al., 2019; Ferguson & Cairns, 2002; Haj-Yahia, 2008; Kar, 2019; Lavi & Slone, 2012; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014).

While many studies examined factors that may lead youth to violent behavior (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015; Loeber & Farrington, 2012; Massarwi & Khoury-Kassabri, 2018), little is known about the factors that predict youth participation in political violence. For example, in one of the few studies conducted among Arab male youth from East Jerusalem (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015), participants reported a high level of involvement in political violence. Contrary to what might have been expected, the study found that greater religious commitment was associated with lower involvement in political violence. A positive association was found between involvement in political violence and other “traditional” violent behaviors, including physical violence and violence against property.

The current study investigates involvement in severe physical violence and political violence in a large and representative sample of Arab male adolescents from East Jerusalem. The study aims to identify the mechanisms that underlie the two types of violence by exploring the effects of risk and protective factors on the antisocial behavior. The factors we tested were derived from an integration of the social bond theory (parent-child association, attachment to religion, commitment to school and work), the general strain theory (family socioeconomic status), and the general theory of crime (level of impulsivity).

**Youth Involvement in Traditional and Political Violence: What Is Known?**

During the last several decades, many studies have explored the effects of exposure to traditional (Covey et al., 2020; Haj-Yahia et al., 2021; Stansfeld et al., 2017) and political violence (Abdel-Khalek, 1997; Dubow et al., 2019; Lavi & Slone, 2012; Smith et al., 2002) on the physical and psychological wellbeing of children and youth. The studies found that children and youth exposed to violence – both traditional and political – suffer from anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, among other adverse symptoms (Dvir Gvirsman et al., 2014, 2016; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996; Huesmann et al., 2017; Lavi & Slone, 2012; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006, 2014; Siegel et al., 2019; Slone, 2008). In extreme cases, exposure to violence leads to impaired moral development (Ferguson & Cairns, 2002; Garbarino & Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Furthermore, exposure to ethnic-political violence increases the tendency to behave more aggressively toward everyone (Boxer et al., 2013; Dubow et al., 2019; Huesmann et al., 2017).

Research and theoretical study of the active involvement of youth in political violence is limited, as researchers mainly focused on motivations and attitudes (see also, Frounfelker et al., 2019). One study of active involvement in violence was published by Pauwels & De Waele (2014), who determined risk and protective factors for involvement in interpersonal, political violence, and political violence against property (political vandalism) in a large sample (2,879) of Flemish adolescents. The study did not examine the involvement in other types of violence, and therefore cannot be used to compare mechanisms that underlie traditional and political violence. An investigation of a group of students in Germany (Baier, 2018) is among the few that examined both youth extremist attitudes and behavior (right-wing or left-wing extremism, and Islamic radicalization) and the perpetration of general violence. However, because only a small number of participants reported active involvement in political violence, the predictive factors were tested only with respect to attitudes. The results showed that factors associated with violence-accepting and extremist attitudes in adolescents confirm that the risk and protective factors for violence and radicalization overlap, although for Islamic extremism there are in part also different findings (Baier, 2018).

Political violence and armed conflicts represent global threats to children and youth, and this is even more prominent in conflict zones like Israel. Children and youth in Israel are exposed to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The circumstances in which Jewish and Arab children grow up in Israel allow for an in-depth examination of factors that affect youth participation in political and other types of violence. Several studies focused on youth involvement in political violence in Israel. Slone (2003) investigated the motivations for political violence among 348 Jewish and 277 Arab adolescents from northern Israel. The Arab youth were more motivated than the Jewish youth to express themselves politically through the nonviolent and violent acts explored in the study. A stable motivation-activity (reaction in riot situation) pattern was found for most of the participants. Shechory & Laufer (2008) studied 262 Israeli Jewish adolescents who participated in legal and illegal activities during the resistance to the Gaza evacuation. The study found that higher parental control levels were associated with greater participation in illegal ideological activities. This positive association is the opposite of what is known for youth involvement in traditional violence, where parental factors play a protective role. Another important study was conducted by Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2015). This study was among the few that examined the prevalence of youth involvement in delinquency and political violence simultaneously and compared the predictors associated with each type of violent behavior. The study focused mainly on the effect of parental control and religiosity, two variables that were related to each other. Traditional and political violence were negatively associated with parental control, and this association was mediated by religiosity for all violence types explored.

**Risk and Protective Factors for Participation of Youth in Physical and Political Violence**

The current research examines whether characteristics that have been identified as key predictors of delinquent and violent behavior of youth can also predict youth participation in political violence. Our study aims to determine whether youth involved in serious physical violence is more likely to be involved in political violence and to examine the similarities and differences in the contribution of individual factors (age, religiosity, impulsivity, employment) and family factors (parental control, parental education) the violent behavior. Our investigation is based on the suggestion that youth who use violence and aggression for conflict resolution, thus demonstrating a dissocial personality, may be at a higher risk for involvement in political violence and radicalization (Baier, 2018). The predictive factors tested in our study are detailed below.

**Parental control:** One element of the social control theory is the level of the adolescent’s attachment to agents of positive socialization (Hirschi, 1969). According to this theory, the level of parental involvement and parental attachment can be significant factors in a child’s pathway to delinquency (Statland-Vaintraub et al., 2012). Many studies found that a high level of parental involvement and positive parental attachment are associated with normative behavior (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015; Lederman et al., 2004; Pearce et al., 2003; Sousa et al., 2011).

**Attachment to the school:** Positive attachment to the school and commitment to its goals form a focal point for adolescents and can positively affect their lives (Hirschi, 1969). The association between a lack of commitment to the school and delinquency has been established in a large number of studies (Jenkins, 1995; Statland-Vaintraub et al., 2012; Unal & Cukur, 2011), and a similar association was reported for political violence. A study of Muslim youth found that low school grades were associated with a stronger agreement with violence and acceptance of extremist attitudes (Baier, 2018).

**Employment:** Work can fill the days of anadolescent with a positive, meaningful activity. The research literature suggests that youth employment has a positive effect, or at least no negative effect, on delinquency. Gottferdson (1985) found that youth employment was not associated with delinquency and lack of social involvement. Other studies found that under certain circumstances, employment reduced delinquency and antisocial behavior (Chan, 2019; Modestino, 2019; Monahan et al., 2013). Studies of Black adolescents in England found that unemployment and lack of social engagement were associated with criminal activity (Achinewhu-Nworgu et al., 2013; Cotte Poveda & Martinez Carvajal, 2019; Karyda & Jenkins, 2018). Only a small number of studies explored the relations between youth unemployment and political violence (Bhatia & Ghanem, 2017; Caruso & Schneider, 2011; Shrestha & Jenkins, 2019). Similar to traditional violence, involvement in political violence was positively associated with unemployment. Caruso & Gavrilova (2012) found that Palestinian youth unemployment was positively associated with political violence (Benmelech et al., 2012; Saleh, 2004, 2009). These findings are consistent with the routine activity theory, which proposes that employment protects individuals from participation in criminal activity and reduces the opportunity for involvement in antisocial behavior.

**Religiosity:** Religion plays a meaningful part in the lives of many young people. Whether religiosity is associated with delinquency in general, and political violence in particular, remains a controversial question, although it appears that such association mostly exists. Studies have shown that increased religiosity was associated with lower involvement in criminal activity, including political violence and drug use (Chu, 2007; Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015; Salas-Wright et al., 2012). Religiosity was also found to protect adolescents from engagement in illegal activity as a result of peer pressure (Desmond et al., 2011). The effect of religious beliefs on youth problem behavior appears to be stronger when the religious practice is not only private but involves engagement in the religious life and additional extrinsic religiosity factors (Salas-Wright et al., 2012).

**Impulsivity:** Impulsive behavior is characterized by four elements: acting on strong impulses, lack of consideration of consequences, lack of perseverance, and sensation-seeking behavior. The research literature identifies a strong association between youth impulsivity and behavior. Greater impulsivity is associated with criminal behavior (Vitulano et al., 2010), antisocial behavior (Moffitt, 1993), and bullying (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2019). In criminological theories that focus on self-control, impulsivity reflects a dimension of low self-control that increases the likelihood of risk-taking and antisocial behaviors in young people (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990). A study by Pauwels & Schils (2016) found a positive association between youth impulsivity and involvement in political violence against people and property.

**Age:** Age is strongly associated with criminal activity. There is a wide consensus that criminal behavior peaks during adolescence and steadily declines in later years (Steffensmeier et al., 2020). Pioneer researchers in this field were Hirschi & Gottfredson (1983), who found that the strong association between age and criminal activity is not confounded by other social and cultural variables. In studies conducted in Israel, younger adolescents reported higher engagement in violent acts against their peers (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2009). Students in middle school reported a higher incidence of victimization than high school students (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2004).

**Economic status and parental education:** According to Agnew’s general strain theory, low economic status is perceived by youth as a stressor and can lead to negative emotions, especially anger and frustration, which in turn may lead to the use of violence as a coping mechanism (Agnew, 1992). The association between low economic status and youth aggression, crime, and political violence has been well established (Fergusson et al., 2004; Heimer, 1997; Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015). The effect of parental education on delinquency has not been studied extensively, and the small number of studies on this topic were inconclusive. Several studies suggested that higher parental education is associated with lower delinquency amongst children (Stattin & Magnusson, 1989). The presence of an educated parent, even with a basic level of education, reduced the likelihood of a child’s violent offending (Loureiro et al., 2009). Other studies found no association between parental education and child delinquency (Levitt & Lochner, 2009), and in one study, higher levels of parental education were associated with higher levels of delinquent behavior (Harris-McKoy & Cui, 2013). A possible explanation for the inconsistencies is that parental education may affect the perpetuation of specific types of offenses differently (Eitle, 2006).

Our literature review identified a paucity of studies that investigated both political and physical violence and examined the overlap between the risk and protective factors for engagement in these two types of violent behaviors.

The current study uses an integrated theoretical framework to explain the involvement of Arab youth from East Jerusalem in general and political violence. The study is predominantly based on the social control theory by Hirschi (1969). This theory suggests that an individual’s violent and delinquent behavior is negatively related to their positive bond with meaningful people (such as their parents), connection to religion, and commitment to studies. The holding of beliefs that do not support criminality, for example, religious beliefs that forbid violence, also reduces the risk of violent and delinquent behavior. Additional predictors evaluated in our study were derived from the routine activity theory (employment), personal control (impulsivity), and the general strain theory (economic status).

To better understand the significance of our study, it is important to consider the current trends in youth involvement in violence in general and in political violence in particular. According to Israeli police reports, criminal incidents involving youth were declining before 2017. However, in 2017, there was an increase of 7.3% in the number of youth criminal incidents, which amounted to 7.4% of the total criminal incidents reported in Israel that year. Arab male youth are overrepresented in the population involved in criminal activity. According to police reports, Arab youth committed 54% of juvenile delinquency incidents in 2011, whereas their proportion in the Israeli youth population is only 27% (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015).

East Jerusalem has a population of approximately 300,000 Arab residents, most of whom are Muslim. This population comprises just over one-third of the total population of Jerusalem. Arab Muslim children aged 10-14 years comprise 40% of that age group in the city. Arabs from East Jerusalem identify as Palestinians, but unlike other Palestinians living in Israel, they do not hold Israeli citizenship (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015).

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had detrimental effects on social, economic, and political aspects of the lives of Israeli Arabs, and particularly on the residents of East Jerusalem. Compared to the Jewish population, the Israeli Arab population has higher poverty and unemployment rates and receives less government funding for education, health, and social welfare (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015). The Arab population in East Jerusalem is even more disadvantaged, having poor educational attainment, high rates of dropout from schools, poor sanitation, and limited access to economic resources (Choshen et al., 2012; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014; Yair & Alayan, 2009). These circumstances, together with the volatile political events of recent years, including military operations in Gaza and rocket attacks on towns in southern Israel, increased the exposure of Arab residents of East Jerusalem to crime. Arab youth became more vulnerable to being involved in criminal activity and political violence (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015).

Incidents of stone-throwing in East Jerusalem are one example of the escalation of violent behavior. According to police records, the number of stone-throwing incidents was just over 1,000 in 2008. Since then, the number has increased each year, reaching a peak of 5,562 incidents in 2015. The act of stone-throwing is a double-edged sword, posing a threat to public safety and often leading to negative consequences for the perpetrators. Participation in stone-throwing can indicate the development of antisocial behavior in other aspects of life and the initiation of a life of crime.

**Summary of Hypotheses**

1. A positive association exists between youth involvement in serious physical violence and political violence.
2. Higher levels of parental control, higher levels of parental education, and better socioeconomic status are associated with lower involvement of youth in serious physical violence and political violence.
3. Religiosity, school commitment, and employment are negatively associated with youth involvement in serious physical and political violence.
4. Age and impulsivity are positively associated with youth involvement in serious physical and political violence.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

The sample was designed to represent Arab-Palestinian male students in grades 7 to 12 from East Jerusalem, Israel. Two-stage cluster sampling was used. At the first stage, 11 out of the 26 schools in East Jerusalem were selected, and at the second stage, two classes were selected randomly from each grade level. All the students in the selected classes were invited to participate.

The total sample comprised 814 male students aged 12–18 years (M = 14.48 , SD = 1.48). The approximate response rate was 93%.

**Data Collection**

 Information was collected from the students through a structured, anonymous self-report questionnaire, which they completed in the classroom under the guidance of a research assistant. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured for all participants. The questionnaire, informed consent forms, and instructions were reviewed by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and by the Israeli Ministry of Education. Before the study began, school principals sent consent forms and letters informing the parents of the study goals and the questionnaire. Parents had the option to refuse participation on their child’s behalf. The approximate refusal rate of parents was two percent. The students were free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. The approximate refusal rate by the students was five percent.

**Measurements**

**Dependent Variables**

**Political violence**. This variable was assessed using a modified version of the scale developed by Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2015) to measure Arab youth involvement in political violence in East Jerusalem. The scale includes seven items (α = .90) (such as “You have thrown stones at police or army vehicles”).

**Serious physical violence.** This variable was assessed using three items (α = .77) (such as “I threatened someone with the idea of seriously hurting him/her”) from the self-report delinquency (SRD) scale originally developed by Elliott & Ageton (1980). We used the Arabic version of the scale, which was used by Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2015).

Participants were asked to indicate how many times they had perpetrated serious physical violence and political violence against others during the last year. Responses ranged from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*more than 10 times*). Both scales were based on the means of their items.

**Independent Variables**

The current study examined youth individual factors (age, work, religiosity, commitment to the school, and impulsivity) and family factors (social control and family socioeconomic status).

**Religiosity:** Religiositywas measured using 13 items of the scale developed by Pickering et al. (2011) and used by Eseed & Khoury-Kassabri (2018) among Arab students in Israel. Five items referring to relationship (such as “Reading my faith’s book of truth assists me in developing a bond with God”) were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = very often. Eight items referred to retribution (such as “God will make my life difficult if I misbehave”) and request (such as “I pray as often as I can”). Respondents indicated their level of agreement on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). A composite religiosity measure (α = .90) was created by standardizing the items and computing their mean score.

**Impulsivity:** Adolescents’ impulsivity was measured using three items from the teen conflict survey (Bosworth & Espelage, 1995). These items measure the frequency of such impulsive behaviors as lack of self-control, difficulty sitting still, and trouble finishing things. Respondents indicated how often they engaged in certain impulsive behaviors using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), and the scale was based on the mean of the items (α = .73).

**Commitment to the School:** The scale developed by Hirschi (1969) and used among Israeli youth by Fridman-Teutsch & Attar-Schwartz (2019) was used to measure students’ commitment to the school. The scale included five items (such as “How important to you personally is getting good grades?”). The response scale was a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = to a large extent. The scale was based on the means of their items.

**Parental Control (Attachment and Involvement):** The scale developed by Hirschi (1969) and used among Israeli youth by Shechory & Laufer (2008) was used to measure youth’ relationships with their parents. The scale consisted of 10 items (such as “To what extent do you spend time with your parents?”). The response scale was a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = to a large extent. The scale was based on the means of the 10 items.

**Socio-demographic characteristics:** We measured age, work (0 = No and 1 = Yes) and family’s economic situation (ranging from 1 = *very low* to 5 = *very high*). Mother’s and father’s education levels (ranging from 1 = *elementary school* to 5 = *undergraduate degree or above*) were composited to create a parental education measure.

**Data Analysis**

Using SPSS 21, we first examined the descriptive data related to youth involvement in serious physical violence and political violence. Second, bivariate analyses were conducted to test the relations among participants’ involvement in serious physical violence and political violence and each of the independent variables. The correlations among all other variables were also tested and are presented in Table 1. A series of hierarchical multivariate regression models were estimated to predict the dependent variables: serious physical violence (Table 2) and political violence (Table 3). We added the predictors to the regression model in a sequential manner, following a hierarchy from the adolescents’ individual factors (age, work, religiosity, and commitment to the school), followed by child risky behavior factors (impulsivity and violence), and family factors (social control and family socioeconomic status) in the third step.

**Results**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Over half of the participants indicated that they were involved in one type of political violence (55.1%) or serious physical violence (58.8%) during the previous year. On a scale ranging from 1 (*never)* to 5 (*always*), the mean impulsivity was 2.44 (*SD* = 0.95). On a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*)to 5 (*strongly agree*), the mean perceived parental control was 3.60 (*SD* = 0.79), and commitment to the school was 3.71 (SD = 0.99). The mean of youth contact with the police was 0.34 (SD = 0.59) on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 2 (*three times or more*). Most of the participants indicated that they do not work (86.6%). The average scores for father’s and mother’s education were 3.05 and 3.37 (*SD* = 1.20 and *SD* = 1.22), respectively, on a scale ranging from 1 (*elementary school*) to 5 (*undergraduate degree or above*). The average score for the family’s economic situation was 3.27 (*SD* = 0.79), on a scale ranging from 1 (*very low*) to 5 (*very high*).

**Bivariate Analysis**

The results of the bivariate analyses are presented in Table 1. We found that involvement in the two types of violence was correlated, such that political violence was higher among youth involved in serious physical violence. Six of the eight independent variables tested showed the same direction of association with both political and serious physical violence. Work and impulsivity were positively associated with both types of violence. Religiosity, commitment to school, and parental control were negatively associated with both types of violence. The variable that had different effects on the two types of violence was age, which was positively associated with serious physical violence but not with political violence.

**Multivariate Regression**

Tables 2 and 3 present a multivariate hierarchal regression for predicting adolescents’ involvement in political violence and serious physical violence.

Parental control was negatively associated with adolescents’ involvement in political violence (Table 2). Impulsivity was positively associated with political violence, and youth work had a marginally positive effect (p=.055). Overall, the independent variables explained 17.8% of the variance in adolescents’ involvement in political violence.

The variables associated with involvement in serious physical violence (Table 3) varied from those associated with political violence. Youth involvement in serious physical violence was negatively associated with the level of commitment to the school and positively associated with impulsivity. In contrast to political violence, parental control and education were not associated with youth involvement in serious physical violence. The predictors in this model explained 19.9% of the variance in youth involvement in serious physical violence.

**Discussion**

Risk and protective factors associated with physical violence have been studied extensively (see, e.g., Gottfredson, 1985; Hirschi, 1969; Jenkins, 1995; Moffitt, 2003; Salas-Wright et al., 2012). However, only a small number of studies investigated the involvement of youth in political violence and the relations between involvement in physical violence and political violence. The current study focused on the involvement of Arab Muslim youth in these two types of violent behaviors. Overall, over half of the participants in our study reported they had been involved in both serious physical violence and political violence. This result is consistent with previous findings in Arab youth from East Jerusalem (see, Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015) and with police records for this population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). However, the proportion of youth involved in violence in our study group is higher than the proportion found among Arab youth living in other parts of Israel. For example, Massarwi & Khoury-Kassabri (2017) found that 28.4% of Arab youth from schools in Israel’s northern and central regions had perpetrated serious physical violence against others during the previous month. The substantial difference between the findings of two studies could be explained by the length of time investigated – a month in the study by Massarwi & Khoury-Kassabri as opposed to a year in the current study, and could also be related to the low socioeconomic status and other characteristics specific to the Arab population in East Jerusalem.

**Political and Serious Physical Violence - Similarities and Differences**

As expected, the results of the current study showed that youth who are involved in serious physical violence are more likely to be involved in political violence (r=0.756). This finding is consistent with previous studies of the association between involvement in the two types of violent activities or motivations for being involved in them (Baier, 2018; Benmelech et al., 2012; Fergusson et al., 2004; Loureiro et al., 2009; B. Saleh, 2009; Vitulano et al., 2010; Pauwels & De Waele, 2014). Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2015) suggested that youth involvement in political and serious physical violence is part of their general involvement in risky behaviors, including violence and delinquency.

**Youth Individual Factors and Violence**

We found that impulsivity was positively associated with involvement in both political and serious physical violence. This finding is consistent with our hypothesis and many previous studies of violence and delinquency (see, Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1990; Pauwels & Schils, 2016). Impulsive youth act in the spur of the moment, without thinking of the consequences. The association between impulsivity and violence is one of the key findings of our study, as it suggests that youth perpetration of political violence can often be an impulsive act carried out without prior planning.

Previous studies and Hirschi’s social bond theory suggest that youth who are committed to school and think positively about their academic achievements are less likely to commit violent acts. Here, we found that although school commitment was negatively associated with serious physical violence, it was not associated with involvement in political violence. This unexpected finding may reflect the positive attitude of the Palestinian society toward political violence. Youth participation in acts of political violence may be perceived as an expression of resistance to the Israeli occupation. Youth who are involved in political violence might be highly regarded by their peers and society and could perhaps be led to believe that schooling is less relevant to their future. This interpretation should be tested in future studies.

The literature identifies underemployment as a risk factor for young people radicalization (Bhatia & Ghanem, 2017). Underemployment is related to feelings of collective relative deprivation and discrimination (Agnew 2016; Wikström & Bouhana 2017) and leads to radicalization and involvement in political violence (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014). The current study found that youth who were working in addition to attending school were more likely to be involved in political violence than those who only studied. A possible interpretation is that Arab school students who work might come from families of lower economic status, and therefore employment is a risk factor related to family stress and poverty. It is also possible that unemployment is only a relevant risk factor for political violence in adults and not school students.

Another key finding of our study is that after controlling for all other individual and family factors, religiosity was not associated with either serious physical violence or political violence. This is in contrast to previous studies, which argued that political violence is carried out in the name of religion or religious values (Bar-Tal, 2000; Zaidise et al., 2007). Khoury-Kassabri et al. (2015), who studied a small sample of Arab youth at risk from East Jerusalem, found that political violence was related to religiosity. Our results show that involvement in political violence was common in a large representative sample of Arab youth from East Jerusalem but was associated with individual and familial factors and not motivated by religiosity.

**Family Factors and Youth Violence**

Our findings are congruent with the results and theoretical arguments of previous research, emphasizing the important role of parents in affecting the child’s behavior (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2015; Lederman et al., 2004; Pearce et al., 2003; Sousa et al., 2011; Statland-Vaintraub et al., 2012). Consistent with our hypothesis, we found that youth who are under higher levels of parental control are less likely to be involved in political violence and serious physical violence. According to Hirschi (1969), children who have close relationships with their parents and have good parental communication and supervision might be less involved in delinquency because they do not wish to jeopardize these important relationships (Kravets-Fenner et al., 2013; Pickering & Vazsonyi, 2010; Vowell, 2007; Wong, 2005). Because increased parental control reduced youth involvement in both physical and political violence, we suggest that interventions aimed at improving parental control could have a significant impact on limiting these two types of antisocial behavior.

**Limitations**

Our study has several limitations. First, the results of the study are based on self-report questionnaires alone and were not validated by additional sources, such as official police records or parents. Therefore, it was impossible to verify the data by cross-checking them with additional sources. Information from additional sources would be an important addition to future studies. Second, the current study included only male participants. We chose to focus on males because previous studies have shown that males are significantly more likely to participate in serious physical violence (Khoury-Kassabri, 2019) and political violence (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014) than females. In the future, it would be interesting to test our research hypotheses among Arab females. Furthermore, the study focused on a set of individual and family factors to explain the outcomes. Individual motives and attitudes may underlie youth political participation and involvement in violence. Such factors should be included in future studies.

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