

FEELING SAFE AT SCHOOL WITH METAL DETECTORS

Naheed Bi*

*Lecturer,

Department of Education, Teerthanker Mahaveer University,

Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

Email id: nahid.education@tmu.ac.in

DOI: 10.5958/2249-7315.2021.00163.5

ABSTRACT

Metal detectors, according to this report, give schools an organizational stigma. Students' increased dread at school is one sign of this. This research shows that metal detectors are adversely associated with kids' feeling of safety at school, net of the amount of violence at school, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health using a matched-pair design. For urban kids, however, the relationship is different. Kids in urban schools had a 13 percent lower negative connection between metal detectors and their feeling of safety than students in suburban or rural schools. Metal detectors are one method used by American public schools to address the issue of firearms in classrooms. Despite the high financial expenses of purchasing and maintaining metal detectors, many school districts have been able to afford them by relying on state and federal money set aside for school safety initiatives.

KEYWORDS: *Bullying, Mental Illness, Metal Detectors, School Safety, School Violence.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to current data, 6% of public schools use metal detectors to check pupils on a daily or random basis. The vast majority of these institutions are located in cities. Metal detectors are used at 10% of secondary schools, according to pupils aged 12 to 18. There is no apparent agreement on the nature of metal detectors' impacts or efficacy in schools. Metal detectors have been linked to lower weapon carrying rates in schools, as well as being favorably connected with other indicators of school violence[1]. Metal detectors have not been linked to school violence in other research. Metal detectors have also been linked to student anxiety in the classroom[2]. The question of whether metal detectors increase kids' anxiety at school is significant because such an impact may jeopardize schools' goals by inadvertently increasing rather than reducing school violence.

The potential that schools are inadvertently raising dread while attempting to reduce violence via the deployment of metal detectors reminds us that how kids feel and how safe they are at school are both essential but not necessarily mutually exclusive objectives. "What is the connection between the usage of metal detectors and kids' feeling of safety at school?" questions the researchers in this study. This research also looks at whether this connection differs for children in urban schools, who are more likely to be subjected to metal detectors at school[3]. This research examines the idea that metal detectors will have less of an impact on urban kids' school safety than on other pupils. Given the prevalence of metal detectors in metropolitan public schools, this disparity may be attributable to a decrease in the stigma that these kids associate with them. The In-School Adolescent Questionnaire, In-Home Adolescent Questionnaires, School Administrator Questionnaires, and the School Information Survey are all sources of information.

The School Information Survey provides basic descriptive information on schools, such as their location, size, and student, teacher, and staff demographic profiles. Previous research has found

school and student variables that are linked to the probability of children attending schools that employ metal detectors. Metal detectors, for example, are more likely to be found at public high schools with a majority-minority student population[4]. This study utilized school administrators' views of school violence as a proxy for the amount of school violence, which is consistent with previous studies utilizing Add Health data. After matching cases, two school violence correlates were utilized to evaluate the comparability of the treatment and control groups in terms of school violence. These are incidents of violent victimization and delinquency at school that kids have self-reported[5]. The average answer to six questions regarding students' exposure to violence was used to calculate student victimization by violence. The average answer to a series of questions used by researchers to assess delinquency using Add Health data was used to determine student delinquency. Students were asked how often they participated in a series of ten delinquent behaviors during the previous 12 months. Students said that they were only involved one or two occasions[6].

These activities included intentionally damaging property that did not belong to them, taking something from a store without paying for it, stealing something worth more than US\$50, stealing something worth less than US\$50, breaking into someone's home to steal something, injuring someone severely enough to require bandages or medical attention, driving a car without the owner's permission, and using or threatening to use violence. In this research, the indicator variable of interest is children's perceptions of school safety. Students were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statement "I feel secure at school" on a five-point scale. More favorable emotions of safety at school are represented by higher values. In correlational investigations when the treatment and control groups have known strong variables, it is preferable to utilize matched samples[7]. This is the situation with metal detectors in public schools. Module was used to draw the analytical sample, which included one-to-one matching without replacement.

Each kid in the "treatment" group i.e., students who attended schools that utilized metal detectors was matched with a student in the "control" group who was similar in many ways but for the fact that he or she did not attend a school that used metal detectors. Cases were matched based on a predetermined set of student and school criteria, including the students' color or ethnicity, sex, as well as the student's school's urban city, grade level, and degree of violence. This procedure produced a total of 7,618 instances for analysis. Because each kid in the treatment group was matched with a student in the control group, 50 percent of the sample was made up of students who went to schools where metal detectors were used and 50 percent of the sample was made up of children who did not[8].

The descriptive statistics for the analytical sample were computed once the matching was finished. Following that, bivariate analyses were used to investigate the connections between school and student characteristics, as well as kids' perceptions of safety at school and the presence of metal detectors. The treatment variable if a metal detector was utilized at a student's school was then calculated using regression coefficients based on models of kids' feeling of safety at school that included the student and school variables. The hypo thesis relationship between metal detectors in urban schools and kids' perceptions of school safety was also put to the test. A p level of .05 was utilized throughout[9]. Unstandardized regression coefficients and standardized betas were calculated for each model. Even though the variables are assessed on various scales, the standardized betas allow for evaluation of the relative connections between each of them and kids' feeling of safety at school. In recent years, our nation has been rocked by school shootings[10].

2. DISCUSSION

Weapons-related catastrophes have occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Arapahoe High School, Virginia Tech, and Columbine. As students or guests, one or more armed criminals made their way inside the school. The unsettling nature of mass violence is depriving American families

of their peace of mind. School violence has received a lot of bad publicity in the media all around the globe. When metal detectors are near to a metal item or a concealed weapon, an audio signal is produced. Consider the features and advantages of metal detectors for school security. Metal detectors, such as a walk-through metal detector, may be the ideal option for high-volume applications. Walk-through detectors can accommodate a large number of people, guaranteeing that everyone entering and exiting the facility is scanned. They have better metal discrimination and detecting capabilities. Most walk-through security detectors remove electrical interference automatically, ensuring that video monitors in schools and offices do not trigger false alarms. Metal detectors are often used in big cities with a history of violent crime.

A metal detector at a school is an efficient method to prevent or discourage the entry of weapons and knives. A metal detector is just one component of a larger deterrence strategy for decreasing crime in America's schools. School boards must understand that no one approach will ensure the abolition of school violence. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2016, approximately 9% of high schools in the United States used metal detectors to check pupils as they entered the building. Metal detectors have becoming more popular in classrooms. Everyone from educators and administrators to criminologists and psychiatrists is attempting to figure out what is causing the United States' increasing mass violence. Bullying, mental illness, media hype, the thirst for power, domestic abuse, and a lack of spiritual upbringing are among ideas used by criminal profilers. Regardless of the reason, security detecting systems in schools and public spaces are becoming more necessary.

When compared to schools without metal detectors, the number of kids carrying firearms in New York City public schools is lower. Metal detectors at school gates provide the most apparent advantage of detecting firearms when kids and guests enter the facility. Students and visitors have been stopped with firearms and knives at schools that presently employ detectors. By identifying hidden objects on visitors, schools and institutions may take preemptive measures to avoid catastrophic occurrences. Arrests or therapy to avoid future incidents may result from investigations. Depending on the requirements and budget of the school, there are a number of walk-through detectors that may be installed. These detectors will immediately identify a hidden object, making them an excellent general screening tool for the school. A metal detector wand is required to identify the metal target after it has been detected by the walk-through. The most popular kind of contemporary walk-through metal detector is a multi-zone metal detector. These detectors can tell if a weapon is concealed on a person's right or left side, and even where it is hidden from head to toe. This may be a time-saving technique when scanning large groups of individuals.

Despite the fact that weights may be applied with the Add Health data to provide estimates that reflect a nationally representative population of children, these analyses were performed on an unweighted sample due to the sample size changes that happened after matching. As a result, the analyses were conducted on a nationwide sample of pupils, but not a nationally representative sample. In other words, although the kids in the analytical sample come from all parts of the country, they do not statistically reflect the whole youth population in the way that the Add Health data study methodology allows. Both the complete unmatched and analytical (matched) samples have descriptive statistics shown. Prior to matching, there were statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups in terms of kids' race or ethnicity, the degree of violence at their schools, and their geography and level of education. Children who attended schools with metal detectors experienced substantially more school violence than students who did not attend schools with metal detectors. They were also considerably more likely than non-metal detector pupils to attend urban schools and high schools.

African American and Latino students were substantially overrepresented in schools with metal detectors, while White pupils were severely underrepresented. The matching method resulted in an

analytical sample in which the treatment and control groups were more similar across variables than they had been before. In terms of the student's sex and minority status, the treatment and control groups were statistically identical after matching. The lack of pupils in the control group who went to urban schools and high schools was also addressed by matching. As a result, the matched sample improved the balance of those characteristics.

However, the level of violence in metal detector-equipped schools was remained considerably greater than in non-metal detector-equipped schools. This demonstrates how important the amount of school violence is in deciding whether or not to put metal detectors in schools. The matching technique did, however, remove the disparities in victimization and delinquency between the treatment and control groups that existed in the entire sample. This raised confidence that the matching process improved the comparability of the treatment and control groups in terms of the amount of school violence experienced by each group's children. There were 7,618 pupils in the analytical sample. Students in high school made up 85 percent of the sample. Students in urban schools made up 39% of the total. The sample was gender-balanced, with 50 percent of pupils being female. There was considerable variety in terms of race or ethnicity among students: 51% were African American, 30% were Latino, and 19% were White. The typical kid went to a school where the administration characterized school violence as "minimal."

There was no discernible relationship between sex, color, ethnicity, or attending an urban school and kids' perception of school safety in the basic model, which only included the control variables. Kids in high school, on the other hand, were found to feel considerably less safe at school than students in middle school. There was also a substantial and negative connection between the amount of school violence and kids' feelings of safety at school; students attending more violent schools felt less safe at school than students attending schools with lower levels of violence. Model 2 was created by adding the treatment variable to Model 1. The associations between each of the variables and kids' perceptions of school safety were identical to those found in Model 1. There were no significant differences in kids' perceptions of school safety based on their gender, race, ethnicity, or attendance at an urban school. School violence and being a high school student were both positively and adversely related with kids' feelings of safety at school. Kids who attended schools that utilized metal detectors, for example, reported feeling substantially less safe at school than students who did not. Attending a school with a metal detector was the greatest predictor of kids' perceptions of school safety as measured by standardized betas than any of the other factors in the model. Model 3 added an interaction variable that assessed if the relationship between metal detectors and urban kids' feeling of safety at school differed substantially from the relationship between metal detectors and suburban or rural students' sense of safety.

Students' sex, color, or ethnicity were not substantially related with their feeling of school safety in this final model. The school features, on the other hand, proved to be the most useful predictors. Those in high schools reported feeling considerably less safe than students in middle schools. Pupils in urban areas also reported feeling considerably less safe than students in suburban or rural areas. Kids' perception of safety was also linked to the amount of violence at their school; students who attended schools with greater levels of violence reported feeling substantially less safe than their classmates who attended schools with lower levels of violence. When the set of student and school variables were controlled for, attending a school with metal detectors was substantially and adversely linked with kids' feeling of safety at school. Furthermore, in Model 3, the interaction variable was significant and positive. This implies that the negative connection between metal detectors and kids' feelings of safety at school was lower than we would anticipate for urban children. The impact of visiting a school with a metal detector on urban kids' feeling of safety at school would be evaluated using unstandardized coefficients. The usage of metal detectors in schools is linked to a substantial increase in pupil anxiety. Even when the amount of school violence is taken into account, the relationship remains. Metal detectors give schools an

organizational stigma, one manifestation of which is kids' increased dread in such schools. It's possible that this is related to how pupils perceive the usage of metal detectors. More research on how kids perceive and react to metal detectors in their schools is required.

Students may express their emotions and ideas regarding being searched, as well as witnessing their friends and classmates being searched, and how this affects their perceptions of their school. Students may also be sensitive to what their friends, family, neighbors, and others have to say about what having a metal detector at school implies in terms of danger and safety. Metal detectors widespread use in many urban school systems e.g., the School District of Philadelphia has mitigated its impact on urban kids' dread of going to school. Metal detectors are less likely to be regarded as an indication of more severe or unknown dangers since they have regrettably become a part of life for many metropolitan kids. This isn't to suggest that urban schools in general, and those that enroll a significant number of low-income African American and Latino children in particular, aren't branded as being of poor quality. This stigma, however, is not attributable to the presence of metal detectors at such schools, but rather to the fact that they serve an urban student population. As the stigma associated with metal detectors fades as their usage becomes more widespread (e.g., at airports), one proposal is to put metal detectors in all public schools. This would essentially remove the negative impact of metal detectors on kids' perceptions of school safety. However, given the high expense of such a policy and the caution of adopting safe school plans tailored to the specific requirements of each schools, this is neither desirable nor acceptable.

3. CONCLUSION

Despite their role in instilling fear in children, this research does not advocate for the elimination of metal detectors in all public schools. Metal detectors may be useful instruments when used as part of a comprehensive plan to prevent firearms out of schools. This research does, however, point to the need to look at how decisions to install metal detectors in schools are conveyed to children, their families, and the community at large. At the very least, these stakeholders deserve to be informed about the reasons for the decision to bring metal detectors into their schools, how they will be used, for what purpose and by whom, and how and by whom the decision to eventually suspend the use of metal detectors in their schools will be made, if at all. In addition, reasonable effort and resources should be devoted to finding treatments that, unlike metal detectors, have no long-term detrimental impact on kids' feelings of safety at school. The metrics and rubrics used to assess the success of safe school initiatives should take into account the twin goals of decreasing risk and preserving kids' feeling of safety at school. It's critical to align performance measures with this broader set of safety objectives.

REFERENCES:

1. C. Ballard and R. Prine, "Violence Prevention in Georgia's Rural Public School Systems," *J. Educ. Hum. Dev.*, 2017, doi: 10.15640/jehd.v6n2a2.
2. C. Ballard and L. Brady, "Violence Prevention in Georgia's Rural Public School Systems," *J. Sch. Violence*, 2007, doi: 10.1300/j202v06n04_06.
3. C. Ballard and L. Brady, "Violence prevention in georgia's rural public school systems: A comparison of perceptions of school superintendents 1995-2005," *J. Sch. Violence*, 2007, doi: 10.1300/J202v06n04_06.
4. B. Brown, "Controlling crime and delinquency in the schools: An exploratory study of student perceptions of school security measures," *J. Sch. Violence*, 2006, doi: 10.1300/J202v04n04_07.
5. S. Robers, J. Kemp, A. Rathbun, and R. E. Morgan, "Indicators of School Crime and Safety:

2013. NCES 2014-042/NCJ 243299.,” *Natl. Cent. Educ. Stat.*, 2014.
6. S. Robers, A. Zhang, and R. E. Morgan, “Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2014. NCES 2015-072/NCJ 248036,” *Natl. Cent. Educ. Stat.*, 2015.
 7. N. C. for E. S. (ED), “Education Statistics Quarterly. Volume 4 Issue 4, 2002.,” *National Center for Education Statistics*. 2002.
 8. M. R. Hughes, J. S. Gaines, and D. W. Pryor, “Staying Away From School,” *Youth Violence Juv. Justice*, 2015, doi: 10.1177/1541204014538067.
 9. C. P. Bradshaw, A. J. Milam, C. D. M. Furr-Holden, and S. Lindstrom Johnson, “The School Assessment for Environmental Typology (SAfETy): An Observational Measure of the School Environment,” *Am. J. Community Psychol.*, 2015, doi: 10.1007/s10464-015-9743-x.
 10. C. Griffiths and T. Weatherilt, “Creating a safe and friendly school: Using a 360-degree approach,” *Handbook of school violence and school safety: From research to practice*. 2006.