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**ACCIDENTAL INJURIES AMONG
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN
11-17 YEARS OLD**

by

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ABSTRACT

Injuries are enormous public health problem, but they are both understandable and preventable. The impact of childhood injury is immense in terms of direct medical costs, economic costs to society and tremendous emotional toll of health and disability.

This descriptive study was conducted in the hope it will contribute towards the setting up of guidelines for a strategy in prevention of accidental injuries among Palestinian children and youth. This in turn will hopefully lead to a decrease in mortality, morbidity and disability among school children.

For this reason self reported data on the incidence of non fatal injuries over a 12 months period among school children in W.B and G.S study come from the office of planning and Research Center of Al-Quds University which were part of the H.B.S.C survey. The HBSC study is a collaborative cross-national study sponsored by the W.H.O . The goal of the HBSC study is to increase the understanding of the health-related attitude and behaviors among young people and the context in which they develop.

Four grades (6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade) were selected as targets for data collection with approximately 1360 students.

About one third of the respondents have reported that they have sustained accidental injuries which required medical treatment the year preceding the interview, with a total number of 343 injuries. Nearly (37%) of these children reported that they have suffered injuries that required significant treatment and (47%) reported that they had missed at least one school day as a result of their injury. Across all age group, boys tend to be injured more frequently than girls. The 10th graders had reported the highest rate of injuries that required medical treatment (36.7%), while the highest rate of injuries that required significant treatment were reported among the 8th graders (32.8%).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As we approach the year 2000, it is time for us, the Palestinian people to look for ways that ensure improvement of the health status of our children, especially in the field of injury prevention. In general, there is always risk of sustaining injury and most people sustain some significant injuries during their life time.

Scheidt et. al (1995) believe that non-fatal injuries account for a large proportion of hospitalization and days lost at school, as well as an unacceptable level of life time disability.

Accidental injuries usually have a tremendous effect on the health of people especially children. So, as ripples appear in wider and wider concentric rings when a pebble is thrown in the water, so do injuries have a similar effect. Non-fatal injuries can be the cause and development of other problems. They are not only understandable and preventable but they are also an enormous problem in the public health sector.

The problem is exacerbated by the way the media cover injuries. Injury is everywhere, but nowhere at the same time. Car crashes and house fires may be staples for newspapers and broadcast news reports, but each incident is reported as a separate unique event-an "accident". Little attempt is made to look beyond that day's headline to patterns of injury or to prevention. The realization that injury is a significant problem for public health, that it can be understood with the same tools that have been directed against disease, and the elements underlying all injuries make possible broad prevention and control strategies are relatively new in Palestine.

Statement of the Problem

Accidental injuries are a leading cause of death and long term disabilities among children. The incidence of accidental injury is disproportionately high, in comparison to cancer, cardiovascular disease and other chronic diseases found among young persons.

Often the physical, mental and emotional pain suffered by children and young people can mark them for life. This is not the only consequence of injury, often the economic consequences can be high.

In Palestine, data are insufficient regarding accidental injuries among children and youth. Whatever data available is rather limited and invalid. Therefore, the actual size of the problem is underestimated and as a result, preventative measures are undermined.

Significance of the Problem

Injury-focused research is necessary in order to improve preventative strategies in regard to accidental injuries. Research will also contribute to improvement in care and management of persons affected with accidental injury.

Studying the prevalence and distribution of accidental injuries among school children will show an estimate of the actual size of this problem in Palestine.

The result of this study, and future studies in the same field, will be the basis for the establishment of legislation and public health education programs concerning the importance of injury prevention in terms of human and financial costs. Therefore, understanding the nature of such injuries will help decrease mortality, morbidity and disability among children and youth.

Assumptions:

1. School boys are at greater risk of injury than girls.
2. The cross section of those studied will give a general picture of the type of injuries children encounter.

Limitations:

1. Possibility of bias or underestimation as a result of recall over a 12 month period.
2. The percentage of children who drop out from school is not represented.
3. The Data were supplied by The Office of Planning and Research Center at Al-Quds University and were not gathered directly by the researcher.

Purpose of the Study:

The main aim of this study is to contribute towards the setting up of guidelines for a strategy in prevention of accidental injuries among children and youth. This in turn will hopefully lead to a decrease in mortality, morbidity and disability among school children.

Other Specific Objectives:

1. To establish baseline data in Palestine for further studies on injured children.
2. To incorporate health education in injury prevention as part of holistic nursing practice.

Research Questions

There are two research questions:

1. Do differences exist in the pattern and severity of accidental injuries among school children based on demographic and socio-economic variations?