

Workplace Violence Among Young Black Workers Ages 18-24 in Southcentral Kentucky



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Background

Workplace violence is a significant health problem with as many as 40% of US workers experiencing some form of violence or aggression at work [3]. Workers under the age of 25 have an increased risk of workplace violence compared to all workers combined [4, 5]. In a metropolitan study conducted by Sabri et. al [6] on racial and ethnic differences in factors related to workplace violence, blacks are less likely to use resources to address workplace violence.

Despite these statistics, there is little research on violence among black youths nationally, or in Kentucky. Young workers in general may find themselves in jobs where cash is present, working night shifts, working alone or even interacting with customers/clients in these work settings [8]. Additionally, due to factors such as minority identity, young black workers may be reluctant to speak up when faced with risk or abuse at work. Given their predominant employment in the high-risk retail and service industries [7], the lack of violence prevention programs in these industries [7-9], and the fact that youth may be uniquely affected by workplace violence due to their ongoing cognitive and psychological development, young black workers are a vulnerable group in need of further study.

What is Workplace Violence?

Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment (sexual or other forms), intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behaviors that occur at the work site. This includes but not limited to threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and electronic attacks such as social media posts, stories, emails, and text messages.



Criminal Intent	Customer/Client	Worker-on-Worker	Personal Relationship
85% of Fatalities	7% of Fatalities	5% of Fatalities	3% of Fatalities
Perpetrator has no direct or previous relationship with the employer or organization	Perpetrator is a client, customer, or patient of the employee or organization	Perpetrator is a current or former employee, vendor or contractor of the organization	Perpetrator has a direct relationship with the victim outside of work that spills into the workplace

Figure 1: Workplace Violence Typology

Specific Aims

- Identify risk factors for workplace violence among young black workers
- Characterize employer-provided workplace violence prevention and response training received by young black workers
- Describe the employment and educational consequences of workplace violence victimization among young black workers.



Figure 2: Participant Recruitment Sources

Study Area - BRADD Region

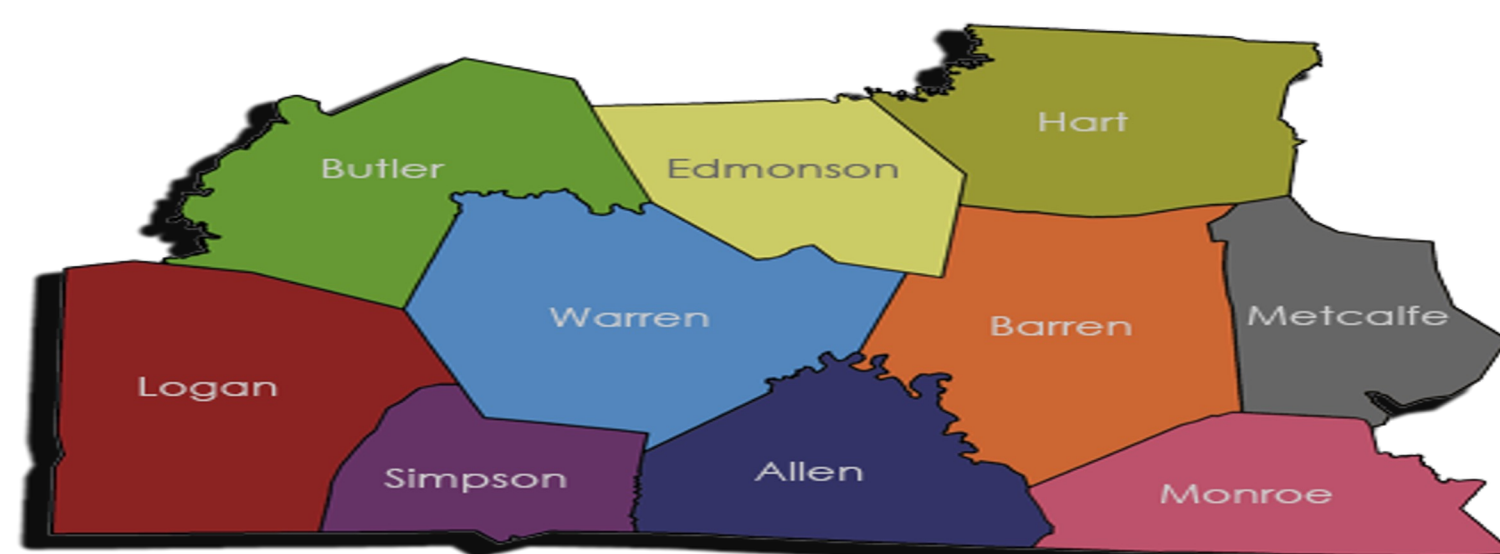


Figure 3: Southcentral Kentucky Counties used for participant recruitment <https://www.bradd.org>

Methods Overview

This is a qualitative study, using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to solicit information from respondents who must be black and between the ages of 18 and 24. The recruitment for this research uses a multilevel approach including the use of social media platforms. The Qualtrics survey was designed to collect information on participants' age, gender, identities (Black/African, American/African, or not), employment status (employed in the last 12 months, or not), and have experienced workplace violence or witnessed someone who was victimized (yes, no). Participants who responded "Yes", were asked their phone numbers and email address to invite them to participate in KII. To have a clear and common understanding of workplace violence, participants were provided with a definition as part of the survey. Participants were recruited from ISEC, WKU SSS TRIO, and SKYCTC SSS TRIO. Within these organizations, emails and flyers were distributed to students which included a brief description of the research, the benefit of participating, inclusion criteria, and confidentiality statement. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions, and PI and research assistant contact information were included in all the recruitment tools.

To gather qualitative data, open ended questions with additional stems were used among young black workers who identified themselves as victims of workplace violence and held a formal job with a company at the time of the violent event. Participants were given the option to zoom or come in person and choose who should interview them. Transcription and analysis was conducted using the NVIVO 12® Software.

14 Broad Categories Emerged from Analysis

- Face of workplace violence (event triggers)
- Employment systems
- Supervisor/employer-employee relations
- Safety devices used
- Discriminations
- Perpetrator types
- Location of violent event
- Weapons used
- Violent event outcomes
- Support received from general manager/supervisor
- WPV prevention training received
- Conflict resolved (Yes/No)
- Conflict resolution strategies used
- Overall effects on productivity (education/employment)



Figure 4: Iceberg



Figure 5: Word Cloud Analysis

Table 1: Participants Characteristics (n = 8)

Age (Yrs.)	
Mean	20.5
Min - Max	20 - 21
Gender (n)	
Male	2
Female	6
College Level (n)	
Freshman	2
Sophomore	0
Junior	4
Senior	2
Industry Type (n)	
Retail	2
Fast food	4
Healthcare	1
Manufacturing	1

Preliminary Results

Objective 1: Identify risks for workplace violence against young black workers in Southcentral KY.

- Age and tone of skin.
 - "Being watched as if I was a thief." (Interview #5)
 - "Yes, she talked down to me like I was a child." (Interview #6)
 - "They just see that's a black girl. Why does she bring a book to work, that automatically doesn't make sense?" (Interview #3)
 - "He called me a redbone." (Interview #5)
- Overwhelming supervisor powers
 - "This was not the first time this has happened. Management should have warned the supervisor giving out the job to not give somebody their work, then take it away from them and give it to somebody else." (Interview #2).
- Location of the violent event.
 - "I tend to prepare the food, meaning I was in the back...he put his hands on both of my thighs and moved me without saying excuse me or anything. I was just like, Oh my gosh, I never had anyone to touch me at my lower part or torso before." (Interview #5)
 - "I heard the manager because she didn't know I was still in there. She thought I left. She said, where the fuck is (my name)? It was in the back, in our little square that we had, behind customers." (Interview #7)
- Lack of safety net to anonymously report perpetrators.
 - "Talk to supervisors and obviously a difference in the bias here in that case. They always say talk, but I also know that nothing's going to come from them." (Interview #3)
 - "Something anonymous should exist." (Interview #5)

Objective 2: Characterize employer-provided workplace violence prevention and response training received by young black workers.

- Employer training on workplace violence is grossly lacking; two of the eight respondents mentioned some level of safety training received.
 - "No, nothing on violence. We haven't had a discussion on violence, and I feel like we should." (Interview #2)
 - "If there's a customer yelling at you, then you just ask for backup. But it wasn't explicitly stated. It's as expected." (Interview #3).

Main sources of soft skills used to navigate around in a workplace.

- Parents (most common, mothers).
 - "To keep it professional and stuff like that. That's how I was raised." (Interview #6)
 - "I learned this in school and from my mother." (Interview #5)
 - "I guess from my mom. Stuff happens to her all the time, and she works in a high-profile clerical job." (Interview #3)
- Personal intuition
 - "To me, it's common sense." (Interview #6)

Objective 3: Describe the employment and educational consequences of workplace violence victimization among young black workers.

- "I feel like it did collide just because of what was going on at work, I was just mentally exhausted. I would just come home and shower, sometimes eat, and then just sleep. I wouldn't have any energy or the job to even try to do my schoolwork." (Interview #6)
- "I still worked at the amusement park even up until this past summer. It just doesn't feel the same. They looked at me like I was an outsider, as a criminal." (Interview #3)
- "Even still being employed there, I don't feel included because they saw me as someone with ill intentions." (Interview #3)
- "You don't want to be a victim and be going to school on that type of energy. I had a lot going on already." (Interview #5)
- "I love my job for all three years. When I transferred to that one, my fourth year, I hated it. I did. I didn't like it. I dreaded going into work." (Interview #6)

Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Directions

Limited data on workplace violence among young workers in rural Kentucky.

- Conduct statewide comprehensive workplace violence study among young workers:
 - Question 1: What safety training modules are in the industry in Southcentral Kentucky? Do these modules include workplace violence prevention, which are appropriate for young workers?
 - Question 2: What kind of workplace violence prevention trainings are there for supervisory roles?

Workplace violence training for young black workers is lacking.

- Provide a content area to include in workplace violence prevention training curriculum.
- Design workplace violence prevention workshops in partnership with WKU and KCTCS TRIO Programs to support young minority workers.
- Evaluate training or workshop targeted to young workers in the TRIO Programs.

Workplace violence hotline is non-existence in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

- Initiate legislative discussions to create workplace violence anonymous reporting mechanism.
- Provide technical support to industries and services wanting to establish a workplace violence reporting mechanism.

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