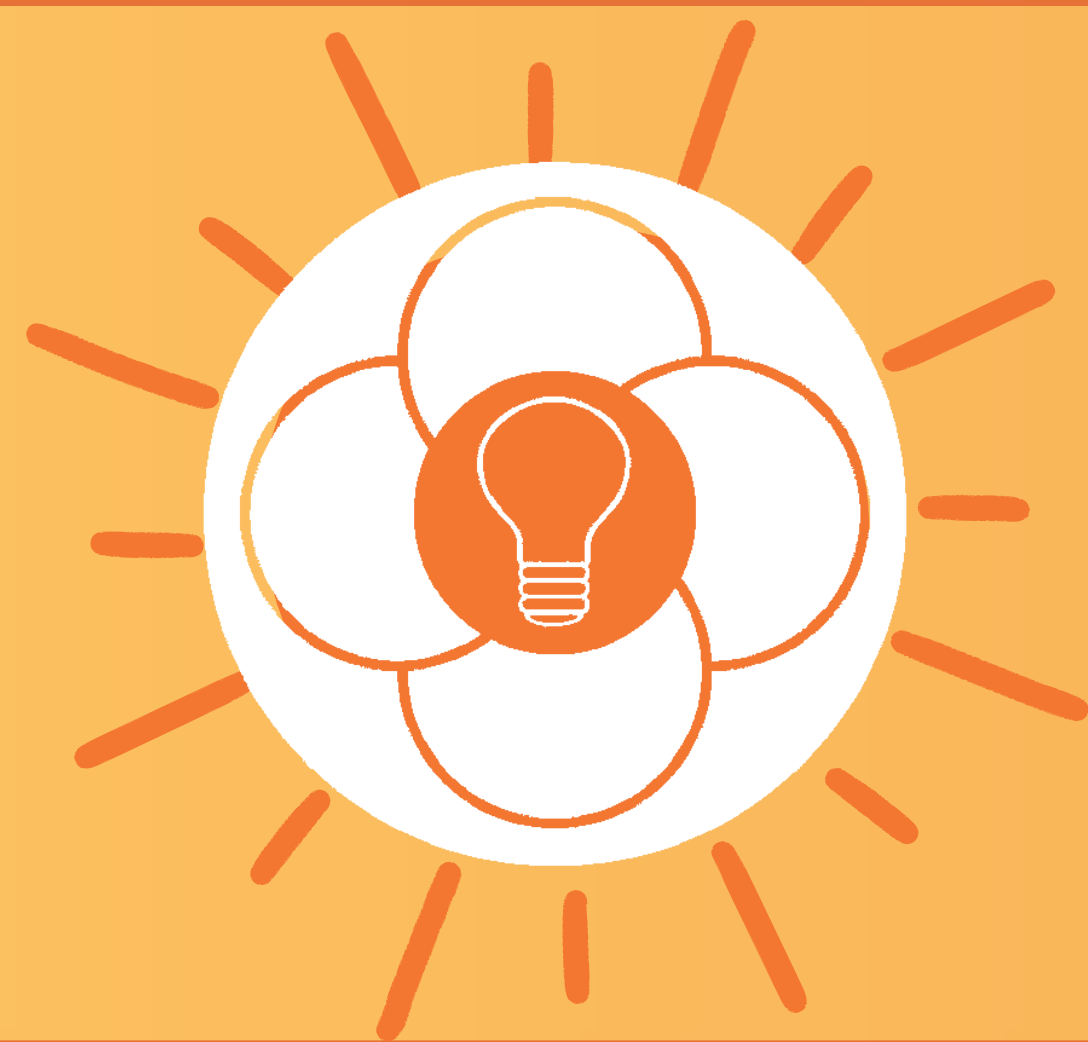




GUN VIOLENCE USA

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INTRODUCTION

Gun violence has rapidly increased among American adolescents within the past two decades (Harris, 2025; Katsiyannis et al., 2023). Higher rates of gun violence in the U.S. are linked to the easy availability of guns, high levels of gun ownership, and lenient gun laws (Kwon & Cabrera, 2019; Lee et al., 2017). Approximately 2.6 million American teenagers carry or have been in contact with firearms before the age of 18 (Taylor et al., 2025). Many bio-psycho-social-cultural factors can play into a person becoming a school shooter, such as inherited traits/genetics, psychopathic disorders, social rejection, and ideologies of power to name a few (Langman, 2023). A significant discovery from a previous study found that most school shooters had at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), over half were bullied in-person or online, and outcomes of the shooters were associated with posts/messages on social media (Dowdell et al., 2022). Other factors such as suicidality and substance abuse may influence a perpetrator to become a school shooter; however, the combination of factors differ from each shooter (Lankford & Silva, 2025).

For this study, we examined the factors that contribute to school shootings and the common psychological disorders endorsed by school shooters. We also examined how life stressors can predict whether a school shooter dies by suicide or does not. There will be an in-depth explanation of warning signs and stressors provided on the poster. Implications from this study will be reviewed in the discussion section.

METHOD

Data consisted of variables collected from articles reviewing gun incidents:

Race/ethnicity
Psychological disorders
SES
Life stressors
ACEs
Relationships (friends, support)

RQs:

1. What factors predominately contribute to school shootings perpetuated by minors?
2. Does experiencing a life stressor predict if a shooter will die by suicide?
3. What are the most frequent psychological disorders common among school shooters?

ACES

Distressors
Psych disorders - warning signs

TABLE 1.

Variable	Frequency endorsed (N)	%
Family stressors	17	4.27%
Work/School performance stressors	19	4.77%
Religious affiliation	6	1.51%
Warning signs	112	28.14%
Mental health history	60	15.08%
Anxiety	4	1.01%
Depression	17	4.27%
PTSD	5	1.26%
Bipolar	3	0.75%
Schizophrenia	6	1.51%
Autism	4	1.01%
Other disorders	19	4.77%

RESULTS

RQ #1:

- Descriptive statistics revealed the following information:
 - Religious Affiliation was frequently endorsed by perpetrators (N = 6, 1.51%).
 - Almost 10% of perpetrators (N = 36) experienced familial or work/academic stressors prior to the shooting.
 - Over 80% (N = 319) use some form of a firearm.
 - About 70.10% (N = 279) of the weapons used by the perpetrator were easy to conceal and hidden in clothing.

RQ #2:

- A chi-square test of independence revealed that life stressors and suicide attempts were significantly associated with one another, $\chi^2(1, N=398) = 23.21, p < .001$, Cramer's V = .241.

RQ #3:

- Descriptive statistics revealed that depression (N = 17; 4.27%) and other disorders (N = 19; 4.77%) were the most commonly endorsed psychological disorders by perpetrators.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated both common factors, and psychological disorders associated between two distinct dimensions of gun violence and school perpetrators. Notably, our analysis revealed that a perpetrator who experienced a life stressor were more likely to complete suicide after committing their crime. Similarly, over ¼ of the participants tended to have shown warning signs before committing a violent act. Approximately 15% of participants reported having previous severe mental health history (e.g., hospitalizations, medications, psych evaluations). This is consistent with previous literature that highlights different factors influence the outcome of school shooting perpetrators (Lankford & Silva, 2025).

Limitations

- A key limitation to the findings was the absence of criminal records that constrained the analysis. Another limitation of this study was the lack of geographical data in correlation with the laws and their gun flexibility. This information would've provided more contextualization of the data. Along with this, this study's data appears to be skewed in a way where instead of finding a definite race on certain perpetrators, a significant amount is shown to be 'unknown.' This limits our ability to accurately examine the race of perpetrators and what backgrounds they may come from. The last limitation of this study was that many of the variables were either categorized as "yes" or "no evidence of." This was limiting because it did not show how strongly or how each factor affected the perpetrator. Future researchers should better define the variables and use a Likert scale.

Future Directions

- For this study, finding thorough and accurate data proved to be difficult due to the nature of the data. Specifically, studying perpetrators of school shootings limit the pre- and post-test analyses that provide stronger results. Therefore, future research could aim to focus on prevention and warning signs, rather than experimental designs, in regard to school shooting research. Along with this, the data signaled that previous attempts and expressions of suicidal threads had been made; therefore, conclusions were made that more preventions can be put in place to reduce the amount of mass shootings in schools. Finally, future research should focus on using more sources to gather data on race to produce more efficient results.

To see our references and tables:

