

Exposure to Violence and Its Association with Mental Health in Swedish Prospective Exchange Students and Campus Students

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Abstract : Swedish students who choose to study abroad are common, but there has been limited research on exchange students. There are indications that some Swedish exchange students have been exposed to violence, but it is not known if they, already before their semester abroad, are more exposed to violence than students who remain on campus. Our aim was to investigate potential differences in exposure to physical, sexual, and emotional violence between prospective exchange students and campus students and between male and female students in general, as well as to determine any associations between mental health and exposure to violence among students in the total sample. Method: Comparative cross-sectional design using an online survey containing the NorVold Abuse Questionnaire and the General Health Questionnaire 12. A total of 565 participants took part in the study. Results: Prospective exchange students were less exposed to emotional violence compared to campus students. About one-half of all the participating female students had been exposed to sexual violence and about one-third of all the male students had been exposed to physical violence. The results also indicated that exposure to more than one form of violence was associated with poor mental health for students as a group. Conclusion: Prospective exchange students as a group do not report more exposure to physical and sexual violence than campus students but do report less exposure to emotional violence. However, the overall frequency of exposure to violence among the students was high. This highlights the need for proactive efforts for everyone, not least for exchange students who will be staying in a new environment unknown to them.

Keywords : sexual violence, physical violence, emotional violence, exchange students, mental health

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