



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Enhancing Youth Engagement in Violence Risk Assessment and Management

Assessing current practices and developmental needs in youth violence risk management and assessment in institutional settings: A qualitative study

Laura Väättäinen

RN, MHS, PhD-student

Nursing Department, Faculty of Medicine,
University of Turku, Finland

Finland

POV: Finland is the happiest country in the world for the 9th consecutive year

Finns

- Finland is in Northern Europe.
- The land of forests, lakes, and long winters.
- About 75% of the country is covered by forest and has over 180,000 lakes.



Data Collection

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Meme by Instagram



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Background

- Violence among youths in institutional settings pose ongoing challenges for safety and recovery.
- Effective **risk assessment and management** are central
- Structured tools such as the **Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression – Youth Versio (DASA-YV)**, are used to predict short-term violence risk
- **Professional judgment dominates**, and **youth perspectives remain marginal**.
- Assessment results are rarely discussed jointly, limiting opportunities for reflection and sharing
- Understanding how youth can **co-assess and co-manage risk** can strengthen accuracy and engagement.



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfronden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression – Youth Versio (DASA-YV)



DASA YOUTH VERSION Rating Form

Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression: Youth Version

Name: Week beginning: / /

| These ratings are based on your knowledge and observations of the young person during the PREVIOUS 24 HOURS. | Monday (Circle one) | Tuesday (Circle one) | Wednesday (Circle one) | Thursday (Circle one) | Friday (Circle one) | Saturday (Circle one) | Sunday (Circle one) |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Irritability The young person is easily annoyed/frustrated, angry or unable to tolerate the presence of others. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Impulsivity Displaying behavioural and emotional instability (i.e. dramatic fluctuations or instability in mood or general demeanour; inability to remain composed). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Unwillingness to follow directions Becoming angry or aggressive when asked to follow routine or participate in programs (e.g. refuses to join in activities – classes/therapy/organised sport, reluctant to follow staff direction). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Sensitivity to perceived provocation Seeing other people's actions as deliberate and harmful; may misinterpret other people's behaviour or respond with too much anger given the extent of 'provocation' (i.e. prickly). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Easily angered when requests are denied The young person tends to be intolerant, or is easily angered when they make a request that is denied or when they are asked to wait (e.g. they are angered when their requests to leave the unit are denied). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Negative attitudes* In the last 24 hours has displayed antisocial or negative attitudes which may relate to violence and aggression (e.g. defiant, antagonistic towards staff and residents). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Verbal threats In the last 24 hours has had a verbal outburst, has been verbally intimidating or threatening. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Anxious or fearful Currently shows signs of significant fear or anxiety. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Low empathy/remorse* Unaffected by or indifferent to the feelings /distress of others. Does not see anything wrong with harming other people (e.g. bullies others, does not care about others' feelings). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Significant peer rejection* Currently isolated as a result of rejection by peers; may be the victim of teasing or bullying. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Outside stressors Stressed due to family, relationships (e.g. girlfriend/boyfriend) or legal problems (e.g. other charges pending, worried about sentencing). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| TOTAL | /11 | /11 | /11 | /11 | /11 | /11 | /11 |

Final risk rating: Low, Moderate or High

Record of aggression: During the previous 24 hours, has the young person behaved aggressively in any of the following ways?
(Please mark with a cross in the appropriate box)

| Physical aggression against OBJECTS | Physical aggression against OTHER PEOPLE | Verbal aggression against OTHER PEOPLE | Physical aggression against OTHER PEOPLE |
|--|---|---|---|
| Slams door, throws objects down, kicks furniture, breaks objects, smashes windows, sets fires, throws objects. | Shouts angrily, insults, curses viciously, uses foul language in anger, or makes clear threats of violence to others. | Shouts angrily, insults, curses viciously, uses foul language in anger, or makes clear threats of violence to others. | Makes threatening gesture, swings at people, grabs at clothes, strikes, kicks, pushes, pulls hair, or attacks others. |
| | | | |

Research Gap & Aim

- Violence risk assessment in institutional care is typically **professional-led**.
- Little is known about **how adolescents can meaningfully participate** in assessing and managing violence risk.
- Existing tools such as the **DASA-YV** are promising, but their **usability and engagement potential** for youth remain underexplored.

Aim:

- Focus on further development of instrument called the **Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression – Youth Version (DASA-YV)**
- To explore current practices and development needs in **youth violence risk assessment and management**,
- To identify ways to **enhance youth participation and co-assessment** using the *Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression – Youth Version (DASA-YV)*.



Study Design

- **Co-design workshops**
 - Co-design enabled both youth and professionals to **co-create knowledge** on violence risk assessment and management practices
 - Suitable for exploring **practical experiences and development needs** of structured tools like **DASA-YV**
- Note: **DASA-YV in early implementation in these units/wards**, and that staff received training before workshops.
- An ethics approval (TY/864/06.01.01/2023)
- **Not yet published**



Data Collection & Analysis

- **Five Finnish units/wards:** 1 forensic mental health, 2 psychiatric, 2 foster/after-care.
- **34 participants:** 10 youths (15+) + 24 professionals
- **7 Workshops:** Separate for youth and professionals
 - The workshops for professionals (n=3) and youth (n=4) were carried out from April 2024 to January 2025
 - The workshops were conducted in person (n=5) and remotely online via Teams (n=2).
 - Semi-structured, note-based (20–60 min)
- 56 codes - 38 subcategories - 10 main categories



Findings: Current Practices in Violence Assessment

- **Structured assessments** (*DASA-YV, SAVRY, and START*)
- **Unstructured documentation** (background info, electronic records, treatment plans, debriefing, observation, interaction, debriefing)

“The assessment is based on assumptions — it’s easy to go in the wrong direction.” (youth)

“Treatment plans include individual instructions to avoid violent behaviour.” (professional)



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Findings: Development Needs in Assessment

- **More person-centred assessment materials** (clear, concise, and youth-friendly; use of visual elements and examples to increase youth comprehension; practical and relevant, including examples, co-designing materials)
- **Improving professional practices** (ongoing dialogue; joint completion; cooperation across professional teams and youth networks; collaborative tools such as safety maps, debrief discussion)

“Forms should be easier to understand and show what they really mean.” (youth)

“We should fill in the form together, not separately.” (professional)

“Information should be clear and useful — not just documentation.” (youth)



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Findings: Current Practices in Violence Management

- **Professional and care interventions** (DBT; ART; Safewards; MAPA; medication; restrictive measures)
- **Social and environmental support strategies** (boundaries; time-out; environmental design; sensory tools; humour; safe words; activities)

“When you’re angry, it’s good to ask directly—it’s useful.” (youth)

“Creating a safe environment—no dangerous objects, calling for help.” (professional)



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfronden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Findings: Development Needs in Management

- ***Youth involvement in service development*** (meaningful activities; consistency; shared oral/written agreements; active partners)
- ***Enhancing interpersonal connection*** (openness; humane and sincere approach; timely help; presence; resources)

“Agreements are made together with the young person...” (professional)

“Help comes too late, they ask when it’s already escalated.” (youth)



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Improving the DASA-YV Tool

- **Assessment form development** (add “Yes / No / I don’t know” response options; separate youth and professional sections for comparison; include debriefing and follow-up parts after scoring)
- **Interface and format improvements** (simplify language and examples for clarity; use larger text, coloured columns, and visual icons; move toward digital, interactive formats integrated into care systems)

“It would be better if you could compare and discuss the results together.” (youth)

“The text is too small and too dense — it should be visual and clearer.” (youth)

“What next? — the form should guide to three concrete actions after scoring.” (professional)

DASA YOUTH VERSION Rating Form

Dynamic Appraisal of Situational Aggression: Youth Version

Name: Week beginning: / /

| These ratings are based on your knowledge and observations of the young person during the PREVIOUS 24 HOURS. | Monday (Circle one) | Tuesday (Circle one) | Wednesday (Circle one) | Thursday (Circle one) | Friday (Circle one) | Saturday (Circle one) | Sunday (Circle one) |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Irritability The young person is easily annoyed/frustrated, angry or unable to tolerate the presence of others. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Impulsivity Displaying behavioural and emotional instability (i.e. dramatic fluctuations or instability in mood or general demeanour; inability to remain composed). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Unwillingness to follow directions Becoming angry or aggressive when asked to follow routine or participate in programs (e.g. refuses to join in activities - classes/therapy/organised sport, reluctant to follow staff direction). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Sensitivity to perceived provocation Seeing other people's actions as deliberate and harmful; may misinterpret other people's behaviour or respond with too much anger given the extent of 'provocation' (i.e. prickly). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Easily angered when requests are denied The young person tends to be intolerant, or is easily angered when they make a request that is denied or when they are asked to wait (e.g. they are angered when their requests to leave the unit are denied). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Negative attitudes* In the last 24 hours has displayed antisocial or negative attitudes which may relate to violence and aggression (e.g. defiant, antagonistic towards staff and residents). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Verbal threats In the last 24 hours has had a verbal outburst, has been verbally intimidating or threatening. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Anxious or fearful Currently shows signs of significant fear or anxiety. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Low empathy/remorse* Unaffected by or indifferent to the feelings /distress of others. Does not see anything wrong with harming other people (e.g. bullies others, does not care about others' feelings). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Significant peer rejection* Currently isolated as a result of rejection by peers; may be the victim of teasing or bullying. | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| Outside stressors Stressed due to family, relationships (e.g. girlfriend/boyfriend) or legal problems (e.g. other charges pending, worried about sentencing). | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 | 0 1 |
| TOTAL | / 11 | / 11 | / 11 | / 11 | / 11 | / 11 | / 11 |

Final risk rating: Low, Moderate or High

Record of aggression: During the previous 24 hours, has the young person behaved aggressively in any of the following ways?
(Please mark with a cross in the appropriate box)

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Physical aggression against OBJECTS Slams door, throws objects down, kicks furniture, breaks objects, smashes windows, sets fires, throws objects. | | | | | | | |
| Verbal aggression against OTHER PEOPLE Shouts angrily, insults, curses viciously, uses foul language in anger, or makes clear threats of violence to others. | | | | | | | |
| Physical aggression against OTHER PEOPLE Makes threatening gesture, swings at people, grabs at clothes, strikes, kicks, pushes, pulls hair, or attacks others. | | | | | | | |

Discussion

- Youth participation is possible and valuable,
- Structured tools like DASA-YV can be adapted to support it,
- Joint reflection between youth and professionals enhances safety, understanding, and empowerment.
- Ultimately, youth engagement turns risk assessment from a control mechanism into a collaborative, learning-oriented process.

“Future implementation research should investigate ways to integrate co-assessment into routine practice.”



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund



UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Get inspired.

Contact me:



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetarskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund