

## Short Communication

# School Violence: Awareness and Prevention

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### Abstract

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School violence is an emerging threat to the safety of the students, teachers, school staff, and the community as well. Hence, it is necessary to promote awareness on the factors influencing violence, which may have originated from individual, family, and academic difficulties. Violence could be prevented in several ways including establishment of a good relationship and communication among the students, teachers and the parents. Everyone is encouraged to create a sound environment for the children.

**Keywords:** School, violence, awareness, prevention, accountability, safety, threat, protection

## INTRODUCTION

School aged children spend a significant part of their time in schools. Therefore, schools play a crucial role in emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children. As such, schools should be safe and free of activities that hinder development of children. However, based on the collected data of the Institute of Education Sciences (2014), in 2011, 20% of high school students were bullied at school and in 2013, it was noted that 33% of the students were involved in a physical fight. Acquiring safety at schools allows students and staff to work towards the achievement of academic goals, thus, safety at school is a prerequisite for staff and students.

Recently, there has been a large number of news regarding violence in schools, particularly regarding cyberbullying and the consequences of student threats and desperation. Upon occurrence of disasters similar to the Columbine or Virginia Tech strike, attention is commonly given to the many pressures and threats the students are exposed to. Everyone desires to protect children, but there is another aspect of school violence that needs to be corrected (Gerler, 2006). For example, based on the statistics of ConsumerReports.org in 2011, one million children were harassed, threatened, or subjected to several forms of cyberbullying on Facebook. Along with the actual fears that many students have at school, everyone should also be aware of the dangers that educators confront every day.

Peer-to-peer violence can be associated with a variety of causes including familial, individual, and academic factors. Therefore, these factors should be taken into consideration and addressed in intervention programs for the programs to be truly effective. Generally, many programs whose aim was to reduce school violence, were often limited in scope and were only applicable to individual and academic factors (Cowie, Hutson, Oztug & Myers, 2008). These programs did not consider that domestic factors could also contribute to peer violence in schools, which could be why it was barely addressed. Coincidentally, studies showed that aggressive behavior was prevalent in children exposed to domestic violence. In line with this, familial factors must be accounted in each intervention program so the affected students could develop interpersonal skills and self-esteem.

Violence in schools is a major worldwide problem, particularly in public schools. For instance, violent school threats have increased by 158% from 2010 to 2011 (Trump, 2015) and could be in the form of bullying, drugs, weapons, and bands. Cooperation among families, administrators, and students to find a solution are the key towards eliminating school violence (Gerler, 2005). Schools should therefore implement policy and intervention strategies that seek to acquire safety. Similarly, staff should be aware of incumbent empirical and theoretical issues encompassed in school violence to

enhance safety. The following study presents an analysis of a systematic approach to school violence prevention through the adoption of holistic violence prevention strategy.

### Strategies to Reduce School Violence

1. Talk to your children: Parents must maintain a good line of communication between their children (McLaughlin and Miller, 2008). They should encourage the children to be more involved with their friends, in sports, or even in postgraduate programs. It is never too early to start a serious discussion regarding the use of drugs and alcohol (CDC, 2017). Parents must always consider the potential effects of violence. It is important for the parents to recognize the symptoms or signs of depression, low self-esteem, or other related factors in their children. They should also consider training their children on how to properly handle physically violent students. Moreover, it is necessary to remain calm during difficult situations, locate services that alleviate stress, and strategize ways to protect students and those around them. Most importantly, parents must ensure that they have a good system of communication with the school administration should this problem arise.

2. Set limits: Boundaries should be set at home and make sure that the children did their part of the work. These boundaries may include basic tasks and chores, or establishing a curfew. The older the children will be, through this practice, parents can eventually relax without keeping them under full control.

3. Encouraging the social skills needed to build positive relationships: Acquirement of personal skill sets such as conflict resolution and mediation, peer resistance, personal safety, and healthy personal boundaries will help reduce violence and promote better mental health.

4. Spot warning signs: Oftentimes, there are indications or cries for help. Warning signs can be manifested in a variety of ways including isolation from friends, or loss of interest in sports and student organizations. When strange behaviors begin, it is important to communicate with the child first to understand his or her thought process.

5. Stay involved: Parents should show their children that education is important. They should be involved in identifying and knowing their children's teachers and observe their work ethic. Additionally, if problems occur in the classroom, arrange a meeting with the teacher and discuss how to handle specific situations.

6. Provide a sense of belonging: Teachers should pro-

vide a sense of belonging: Teachers should develop class unity through cooperative learning and acceptance, ensuring that each student believes in his or her value as an individual. On the other hand, parents should develop their children's self-esteem through great expectations and provision of positive support.

7. Zero tolerance: Most schools have zero tolerance policies concerning weapons and drugs. This same regulation should also be applied at home. For instance, if the parents have a gun, ensure to keep it locked away where it is inaccessible to the children. In "minor" accidents, many administrators are expected to maintain the school's reputation. This includes remaining silent, then adjustment. No school is perfect. Hence, it is important to be proactive in identifying opportunities beneficial to the evasion of future cases related to school violence.

8. Develop a school environment that promotes acceptance and peace: School administrators and teachers should not allow physical or emotional threats in the school whether in the form of mobbing, bullying, or teasing. Teach the students how to resolve the conflict, which can be through self-defense techniques. Teachers should provide adequate supervision of the students by actively monitoring their behavior and performance as well as by building rapport with every student.

9. Provide an organized and predictable environment with rules and restrictions: Rules and regulations ensure safety, consistency, and comfort in the school. Hence, it should be implemented in every educational institution. In addition, the school must be transparent in dealing with success and failures.

10. Set a good example: Leading by example allows educators to teach respect to their students as well as respect each other's differences. It is also good to demonstrate and teach safe, solid ways to express feelings through communication, art, music, literature, and movement.

11. Practice decision-making: Encourage independence among students and provide them with new opportunities. Give each child the feeling of being a unique individual outside of his or her family. This will provide them with courage to overcome failures and persist through the challenges.

12. Be honest: Teachers should inform the students on what they can or cannot do (Crosse, Cantor, Wright, and United States, 2002). Most importantly, do not make any promises you cannot fulfill. The students' behavior should not be damaged further due to the small amount of trust that might have originated from the teachers.

13. Stress management techniques: Reduce stress in the classroom by creating a safe and peaceful atmosphere (Gerler, 2004). In addition, healthy humor relieves stress and increases the ability to rejuvenate. Teachers may offer recreational activities that can promote fun and enjoyment for the student. Encourage the students to participate in extracurricular activities, and hone their skills and talents.

14. Determine when to give or ask for help: Be ready to listen, and provide help and support to the students, but students should also know when to ask for help. This encourages students and parents to acquire resources from the school and in the community, particularly the use of individual or group counseling.

15. Proper care of oneself: Working with difficult students is emotionally exhausting for the teachers, so they must be careful not to devote all of their time to these students. Teachers must develop their own self-care techniques to reduce stress. Recognize own symptoms of tiredness for compassion and do whatever necessary to stay healthy and emotionally connected.

16. Be active: Through voicing out and supporting the local community and public policy, it will be clear that violence is unacceptable and thus, the need to promote the safety of the victims and their children.

It is good to promote community education for school staff, social workers, law enforcement agencies, and others so that people surrounding the families and children may recognize the symptoms and understand the effects of domestic violence.

Also, teachers must consider the symptoms of domestic violence among colleagues and students. Having early awareness can be fundamental for prevention and accountability among schools.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is imperative to have proper communication and collaboration among school officials, parents, and students. When all parties are informed of appropriate measures to take, whether disciplinary or academic, it is important to meet students where they are

at and create an environment conducive to learning. Providing positive re-enforcement both inside and outside of the classroom helps re-enforce positive behavior among students. Therefore, it is important for both educators and parents to stay proactive in understanding what is going on in the students' lives.

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