

Sponsored Teachers Training College, Purulia
Study Material on
Peace and Value Education
Course-1.4.11(optional)
Unit-1.4 (Violence in School)

School violence:

It encompasses physical violence, including student-on-student fighting and corporal punishment; psychological violence, including verbal abuse; sexual violence, including rape and sexual harassment; many forms of bullying, including cyber bullying; and carrying weapons in school. It is widely held to have become a serious problem in recent decades in many countries, especially where weapons such as guns or knives are involved. It includes violence between school students as well as physical attacks by students on school staff.

School violence is any activity that can create a disturbance in an educational system. It's not just school shootings. It includes verbal and physical altercations. It is also bullying through electronic means or social media, threats, weapon use, or gang activity.

School violence can also be defined as a physical or verbal altercation on the way to school, on the way home from school, or at a school-sponsored event that can cause physical or psychological harm to another individual, school, or community.

School violence has occurred at the grade school and high school levels. School violence also occurs at the collegiate level, with the deadliest school shooting occurring at Virginia Tech.



Figure -1: Sample image on School Violence

Causes for School Violence:

There is no clear-cut reason or cause for school violence. However, there are factors that can increase a student's likelihood to commit a type of school crime. Some of these factors include:

- An impoverished community

- Poor academic success
- A history of violence
- Poor family structure
- The use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Being bullied by others
- Biological factors (something present in a person's genetic makeup)
- Behavioral factors, such as impulsiveness, attention deficit disorders, or hyperactivity

Different Forms of school violence and different types of bullying:

School violence is widespread, occurs in all countries and affects a significant number of children and adolescents. It is mostly perpetrated by peers but, in some cases, is perpetrated by teachers and other school staff. School violence includes physical, psychological and sexual violence.

Bullying

Bullying is characterised by aggressive behaviour that involves unwanted, negative actions, is repeated over time, and an imbalance of power or strength between the perpetrator or perpetrators and the victim.

Different types of bullying include **physical, psychological, sexual and cyberbullying**.

- **Physical bullying** includes repeated aggression such as being hit, hurt, kicked, pushed, shoved around or locked indoors, having things stolen, having personal belongings taken away or destroyed, or being forced to do things. It is different from other forms of physical violence such as physical fights and physical attacks.
- **Psychological bullying** includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse and social exclusion and refers to being called mean names, being teased in an unpleasant way, being left out of activities on purpose, excluded or completely ignored, and being the subject of lies or nasty rumours.
- **Sexual bullying** refers to being made fun of with sexual jokes, comments or gestures.
- **Cyberbullying** includes being bullied by messages, i.e. someone sending mean instant messages, postings, emails and text messages or creating a website that makes fun of a student or by pictures, i.e. someone taking and posting online unflattering or inappropriate pictures of a student without permission; it also refers to being treated in a hurtful or nasty way by mobile phones (texts, calls, video clips) or online (email, instant messaging, social networking, chatrooms) and online hurtful behaviour.

Physical fights

According to the **Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS)**, a physical fight “occurs when two students of about the same strength or power choose to fight each other” and therefore is a form of physical violence between peers. The **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)** does not refer specifically to school-related violence or to violence between peers, as it can occur between a student and “a total stranger, a parent or other adult family member, a brother or sister, a boyfriend or girlfriend or date, a friend or someone known by the student”.

Sexual violence

According to **Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)**, sexual violence is forced sexual intercourse or any other sexual acts against one’s will. **Violence Against Children Survey (VACS)** defines it as completed non-consensual sex acts (such as rape), attempted non-consensual sex acts, abusive sexual contact (such as unwanted touching), and non-contact sexual abuse (such as threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, and verbal sexual harassment).

Physical violence perpetrated by teachers

This is defined as the intentional use of physical force with the potential to cause death, disability, injury or harm, regardless of whether it is used as a form of punishment.

Corporal punishment perpetrated by teachers

In school, corporal punishment is defined as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort. Most involves hitting children, with the hand or with an implement, but it can also involve kicking, shaking, throwing or scratching children.

Factors responsible for violence in school:

Internalizing and externalizing behaviors

A distinction is made between internalizing and externalizing behavior. Internalizing behaviors reflect withdrawal, inhibition, anxiety, and/or depression. Internalizing behavior has been found in some cases of youth violence although in some youth, depression is associated with substance abuse. Because they rarely act out, students with internalizing problems are often overlooked by school personnel. Externalizing behaviors refer to delinquent activities, aggression, and hyperactivity. Unlike internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors include, or are directly linked to, violent episodes. Violent behaviors such as punching and kicking are often learned from observing others. Just as externalizing behaviors are observed outside of school, such behaviors also observed in schools.

Economic factors

It address economic and social exclusion, poverty, inequitable educational and job opportunities; jobless youths ; insufficient educational expenditure ; under-equipped and overcrowded class- rooms; shortage of school counsellors; lack of means to transport students to school on time (causing trouble between students and gatekeepers); poor living conditions (insufficient food and/or clothing, and lower quality of life);

Other individual factors

A number of other individual factors are associated with higher levels of aggressiveness as compared to children whose antisocial conduct begins in adolescence, and other antisocial activities. An individual personality factor, such as motives for power, cruelty and curiosity, as causes of violence, is an exception. It is interesting to note that such individual factors as personality problems, aggressive attitudes, poor human communication skills, etc., which are often cited as the causal factors of violence by studies in the developed countries, do not yet seem to draw the full attention of researchers in the developed countries. This is probably a future topic for research on school violence there.

Home environment

The home environment is thought to contribute to school violence. The Constitutional Rights Foundation suggests long-term exposure to gun violence, parental alcoholism, domestic violence, physical abuse of the child, and child sexual abuse teaches children that criminal and violent activities are acceptable. Harsh parental discipline is associated with higher levels of aggressiveness in youth. There is some evidence indicating that exposure to television violence and, to a lesser extent, **violent video games** is related to increased aggressiveness in children, which, in turn, may carry over into school. Many researches indicates that exposure to parental **corporal punishment** increases the risk of aggressive conduct in children. Corporal punishment is related to poorer outcomes in children and youth.

Neighbourhood environment

Neighbourhoods and communities provide the context for school violence. Communities with high rates of crime and drug use teach youth the violent behaviors that are carried into schools. Children in violent neighborhoods tend to perceive that their communities are risky, and that these feelings of vulnerability carry over to the school environment. Exposure to deviant peers is a risk factor for high levels of aggressiveness. **Poverty and high population** densities are associated with higher rates of school violence. Many researches indicates that children's exposure to community violence during the early elementary school years increases the risk of aggression later in elementary school, as reported by teachers and classmates and exposure to gun violence in early adolescence is related to the initiation of serious physical violence in later adolescence. Neighbourhood gangs are thought to contribute to dangerous school environments. Gangs use the social environment of the school to recruit members and interact with opposing groups, with gang violence carrying over from neighbourhoods into some schools. Alternatively, many children who grow up in violent neighborhoods learn to deliberately find and make "street-oriented" friends as an instrumental tactic used to avoid being victimized.

School environment:

School environment is directly linked with school violence. High levels of disciplinary problems in the school, high student to teacher ratios. In students lack of academic attachment to school is associated with increased risk of antisocial conduct. School factors point to poor school performance, existing violent incidents and aggressive behavior models in schools; aggressive and destructive peer relations; unmanageable class-sizes; poor teacher-student relationships; teachers punitive attitude; predetermined and inflexible curricula irrelevant to the interests and needs of pupils etc.

Societal and political factors:

It refers to political violence associated with wars and armed conflicts; the media's indiscriminate violent and anti-social programmes; street gangs who disturb in schools, and steal and damage school property; alcohol and drug abuse.

Family related factors:

Lack of adequate parental supervision and child-rearing practices; punitive parents with unclear disciplinary orientation; break-up of the family; lack of family values with good moral and religious guidelines.

Effect of School violence:

The following consequence of violence in school shows very negative impact on students future development, achievement, behavioral pattern:

- Innocent children joining gangs
- Increased corporal punishment by parents and teachers
- Disrupted family relationships
- Development of fear and insecurity in children
- Development of the false idea that violence is a viable means to solve conflicts
- Weakening of school discipline and breakdown of school rules and regulations
- Moving away from home
- Vandalism in schools, causing enormous financial loss
- Changing schools by pupils, increase drop out of school and absenteeism
- Creating group conflicts
- Disruption of teaching learning process in classroom
- Physical injury and death and detrimental psychological damage to pupils
- Transferring acts of violence to local communities and families
- Girls tend to be the main victims of all types of violence, including rape at school
- Predisposing young people to grow into adolescent

Prevention and intervention

The goal of prevention and intervention strategies is to stop school violence from occurring. According to the CDC, there are at least four levels at which violence-prevention programs can act: at the level of society in general, the school community, the family, and the individual. ***Society-level prevention strategies*** aim to change social and cultural conditions in order to reduce violence regardless of where the violence occurs. **Examples include reducing media violence, reshaping social norms, and restructuring educational systems.** The strategies are rarely used and difficult to implement.

- Now Is the Time is a federal initiative developed in 2013 in response to the growing number of gun related school violence incidents. The initiative will provide funding and resources to schools in an effort to reduce gun violence in schools. Funding will be provided for implementation of school interventions and training teachers and staff, programs that will support the mental and

physical health of students, conflict resolution programs to reduce further school violence, and restoration of school environment after a violent incident.

- **School-wide strategies** are designed to modify the school characteristics that are associated with violence. An avenue of psychological research is the reduction of violence and incivility, particularly the development of interventions at the level of the school. The CDC suggests schools promote classroom management techniques, cooperative learning, and close student supervision. At the elementary school level, the group behavioral intervention known as the Good Behavior Game helps reduce classroom disruption and promotes prosocial classroom interactions. There is some evidence that the Second Step curriculum, which is concerned with promoting impulse control and empathy among second and third graders, produces reductions in physically aggressive behavior. Other school-wide strategies are aimed at reducing or eliminating bullying and organizing the local police to better combat gang violence.
- The implementation of **school-wide early-warning systems**, the school equivalent of a DEW Line-like surveillance operation designed to "prevent the worst cases of school violence," has been problematic. Recent developments in early threat assessment, however, show promise. Violence-prevention efforts can also be usefully directed at developing anti-bullying programs, helping teachers with **classroom-management strategies, applying behavioral strategies** such as the Good Behavior Game, implementing curricular innovations such as the Second Step syllabus, developing programs to strengthen families (see below), and implementing programs aimed at enhancing the social and academic skills of at-risk students.
- Teachers are the professional group who works directly where schools bullying takes place and who spends the most time with bullies, victims and bystanders. Thus, whether and how teachers intervene in the case of bullying is of great importance. Research has shown that teachers prefer authority-based interventions towards bullies but seem to neglect to support the victims. Unfortunately, most teacher training curricula do not include preventive and interceptive skills regarding school violence.

Not only does physical violence in schools affect its victims, it also affects the witnesses. In elementary schools, young students tend to copy their peers actions in schools, which may lead to more physical harm towards other students.

- Some intervention programs are aimed at **improving family relationships**. There is some evidence that such intervention strategies have modest effects on the behavior of children in the short and long term. Patterson's home intervention program involving mothers has been shown to reduce aggressive conduct in children. An important question concerns the extent to which the influence of the program carries over into the child's conduct in school.
- Some prevention and intervention programs focus on **individual-level strategies**. These programs are aimed at students who exhibit aggression and violent behaviors or are at risk for engaging in such behaviors. Some programs include conflict resolution and team problem-solving. Other programs teach students social skills. The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, while developing and implementing a universal anti-aggression component for all elementary school

children, also developed and implemented a separate social-skills and academic tutoring component that targets children who are the most at risk for engaging in aggressive behavior.

Challenges in measuring violence in schools:

Research on violence affecting children in schools is challenging for a variety of reasons.

Methodological issues

When trying to measure the scope of violence in schools and to find out about the types of violence experienced by students, some key issues include: from what categories of the school community to collect the data; what data should be collected from each categories; and using which methods. For example, should there be studies or surveys where researchers ask students directly about violence in school, through self-reports about the violence they experienced as targets or perpetrators? Or should they be asked about incidents of violence that they have witnessed as bystanders? Should any of these questions be asked via self-administered questionnaires or questionnaires administered by researchers in schools? Does it make more sense to collect this data outside of schools, for example, through household surveys? Or through online surveys where students have access to the internet? Or is it better to rely on mechanisms for reporting incidents of violence in educational institutions when they are available, either in the schools themselves or outside schools (governmental hotlines, internet-based reporting systems, police and justice sectors, etc.)? What questions can be asked of children, using terminology that is easy to understand, age-appropriate and culturally sensitive?

Legal and ethical issues

In most countries there are strict rules related to research involving children, as they are under the age of consent. Therefore, requesting informed consent from the children in a study involves their parents and guardians. Asking children about violence, and particularly violence they have experienced themselves, can be traumatic. Finally, researching issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity/orientation in education and in relation to children has additional challenges. In some contexts it is not legal to discuss these issues either in schools or even outside of schools. Where it is legal, it may be considered as a very sensitive topic to be discussed with children and young people. Asking children and young people questions related to their sexual orientation and gender identity in the school setting is ethically questionable, as it could embarrass them and expose them to stigma and discrimination, unless questions are asked in strict confidence and anonymity is granted by independent researchers external to schools.