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## Impact of Growing Violence Among Students Against Teachers

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**Dr. P. Karthikeyan**

*Principal*

*Durai Vidhyalakshmi College of Education  
Keelpudur village, Chennangkuppam -632 209  
Vellore District. Tamilnadu.*

### **Abstract**

Violence directed against K-12 teachers is a serious problem that demands the immediate attention of researchers, providers of teacher pre-service and in-service training school administrators, community leaders, and policymakers. The growing problem despite the broad impact teacher victimization can have on schooling, recruitment, and retention of highly effective teachers and on student academic and behavioral outcomes. Psychologists should play a leadership role in mitigating school violence, including violence directed toward teachers.

### **Introduction**

School violence such as student-to-student victimization and harassment remains a national concern for schools and communities across the country. Whereas some research indicates that extreme forms of school violence are decreasing in prevalence, school violence in general and its aftermath continue to be significant problems for students, teachers, staff, and schools. Most scholars agree that school violence is a multi-systemic problem that manifests from community, school, school personnel, and student characteristics and processes. As a result, school violence, as it relates to students, has received significant media, research, and policy attention.

An important component of school violence that has received surprisingly limited attention is educators' perceived threats and/or actual experience of violence in school systems. Information on the rate and scope of teacher victimization is critical for increasing awareness, developing effective supports and interventions, and promoting positive school/classroom climate, student learning, and recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers into the education profession.

### **Defining and Describing School Violence Against Teacher**

School violence takes on several forms and can include bullying, intimidation, gang activity, locker theft, weapon use, assault. School violence defined as "any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder". Other forms of violence

include malicious insults, acts of racism, bias based hate crimes, racial profiling, assaults, theft, and racketeering.

### **Impact of Violence on Teachers**

Educators' perceived victimization has been found to be associated with fear, physical and emotional symptoms, impaired personal relationships, and impaired work performance. Teacher reports of anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms were related to lower professional functioning, lower efficacy in the classroom, and lower emotional and/or physical well-being. Among several investigations, teachers reported a lack of support services and training for preventing and managing school violence. Whenever teachers are unprepared to manage potential classroom violence effectively, not only does the quality of student achievement deteriorate, but the occurrence of violence against teachers in schools can also lead to a multiplicity of harmful emotional and physical effects.

On the other hand, teachers who are well equipped with evidence-based techniques to mitigate and manage potentially violent behaviors may experience not only an enhanced sense of self-empowerment but reduced levels of job-related stress. Other costs associated with teacher victimization include lost wages on the part of victims, increased workman's compensation payments due to acute psychological distress, trauma, and/or injury; greater use of substitute teachers; lost instructional time/productivity; litigation costs; negative publicity for the school; and negative student behavioral and academic outcomes.

### **Teacher Preparation**

It is likely that violence directed toward teachers within teacher preparation programs is not a prioritized area of professional development training. However, given the global prevalence of teacher victimization, it is possible that many preserves teacher preparation programs do not prepare teachers adequately as effective classroom managers and offer little training in applied behavior analysis principles. Therefore, many educators have insufficient expertise and skills to prevent challenging behavior from occurring and to respond effectively when undesirable behaviors do occur. It is likely that violence toward teachers has an impact on teacher recruitment and retention by discouraging potential educators from entering the field of education.

### **Teacher Victimization Prevalence**

In general, higher rates of violence directed toward teachers were associated with disorganized school structures, negative school climates, lack of administrative and collegial social supports, and high residential crowding. Further, lower rates were associated with balanced school organizational structures and support systems, clear school disciplinary policies/rules, and positive school relationships.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The complexity of all relevant factors involved in this phenomenon and the possible interactions, a multi systems approach is best suited for attaining a comprehensive understanding. Multi system models are needed to effectively study the early detection and prevention of student disruptive and aggressive behaviors directed at educators and to target school-level contexts that focus on students, teachers, staff, and community.

### **Student Level**

Although teachers have limited control at the student level, there are several effective strategies they can implement in order to ease the risk of violent outbreaks. Effective interventions can be tailored to reduce or eliminate individual youth aggressive behavior patterns directed toward teachers and other school personnel by using a three-tiered service delivery prevention model i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary systems of intervention. In this three-tiered approach,

**Primary prevention strategies** focus on the 80% of students of a school population who do not have serious behavior problems.

**Secondary intervention strategies**, such as mentoring programs, target the 5%-15% of students in a school who are at risk for behavior problems because they are starting to display behavioral or academic problems.

**Tertiary strategies** are directed at the 1%-7% of the student population who have intense and chronic behavioral and/or academic problems.

### **Teacher Level**

Teachers play a powerfully pivotal role in reducing school violence through teacher and classroom practices. Teachers should engage in deliberate evidence based practices to reduce the likelihood of aggression or violence in their classrooms. These practices can be used for prevention of student violence and aggression against both fellow students and school personnel. Teachers could play a more proactive role in mitigating variances in student mood and behavior, avoid public confrontations, and avoid unwarranted assumptions about the causes of student problems. Finally, building on student strengths, such as ethnic identity, rather than focusing exclusively on weaknesses or using punitive methods, can also have a variety of benefits

### **Classroom Level**

At the classroom level more specifically, implementation of effective classroom instructional and management strategies not only allows the teacher to have direct control at the “teacher-level” but also puts the teacher in a strategic position for control at the classroom level. Teachers may implement social/behavioral programs at the classroom level to provide students with clear expectations and appropriate social and behavioral skills to manage anger, resolve conflict, and improve classroom norms and environment. Indeed, greater student-reported violence prevention knowledge and skills are associated with fewer aggressive and more pro-

social teacher-reported behaviors over time. Programs that facilitate effective classroom management, as well as social and emotional learning, can enhance academic engagement and achievement and reduce violence and aggression in the classroom.

### **School Level**

We recommend that schools design comprehensive, integrated, multi tiered service delivery models of prevention that promote academic and social success through clear expectations for behavior. Psychologist violence prevention programs were found to be generally effective at reducing the more common types of aggressive behavior seen in schools, including fighting, name calling, intimidation, and other negative interpersonal behaviors, especially among higher risk students.

### **School Personnel Preparation/Training**

Using a developmental approach, violence prevention and intervention strategies should be infused throughout the curriculum for in-service and pre-service programs for K-12 teachers—taking into account both student- and teacher-directed violence. However, teacher candidates should not be frightened into thinking they will experience violence but should understand that violence in schools emerges most likely from individual, school, and community risk factors.

### **Ways of Reducing Students' Violent Behaviour**

1. Prepare a school policy for prevention of violence in school.
2. Based on the policy, draws a violence control programme as a part of discipline management.
3. Implement a fair system of discipline control using positive techniques.
4. Encourage each class to draw a code of conduct and maintain it.
5. Refer students found in vicious aggressive behaviour to counseling.
6. Keep the school under surveillance during intervals, especially in those areas where bullying and other anti disciplinary behaviours could occur.
7. Implement school timetable effectively so that students find no time to engage in anti disciplinary activities,
8. Organize a surveillance system to check students' movements after school is over, e.g. on their way home up to a certain limit.

### **Conclusion**

Violence against teachers is a significant yet under investigated problem in the country that has profound implications for schooling, teacher retention, and overall student performance. To prevent the development of student aggression and violence toward teachers, the following broad agenda is suggested by the current knowledge base: First, administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to recognize that the problem of school-based violence is everyone's problem and responsibility. Second, teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities

need to address a broad array of theory and practice in classroom management strategies and to support realistic opportunities for field experiences in the classrooms throughout their programs. Third, teachers' attitudes and classroom practices are variables that may impact some levels of aggression in the classroom, which in turn predict aggression toward teachers.

*I believe that every person has the potential to be a perfect embodiment of non-violence. If you generate the quality of non-violence within you it will spread out to the world from you like a mighty storm.*

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

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