

Ethical Implications of the Growing Crisis of Violence Among School Children

In recent years, shocking **incidents of violence** involving children have left society grappling with uncomfortable questions. In New Delhi, a 12-year-old strangled his classmate over a minor issue. In another city, a class monitor's excessive punishment led to the tragic death of a fellow student. Globally, similar incidents such as **school shootings and violent altercations** paint a disturbing picture of **escalating aggression among children**.

These episodes, though **geographically diverse**, reflect an alarming uniformity in the **normalization of violence** among the young. Factors such as **exposure to violent media**, **aggressive role models**, and **unresolved conflict** at home and school have contributed to this crisis. This discourse examines the **ethical and societal implications** of this troubling trend and explores ways to foster a culture of empathy and nonviolence among children.

What Are the Ethical Concerns of Normalising Violence Among School Children?

- Desensitization to Violence: Exposure to violence in media, games, and real life can desensitize children, making them view aggression as acceptable and influencing them to imitate violent behavior as a way to handle conflicts or frustrations.
- Impact on Mental Health and Emotional Development: Normalizing violence can harm a child's mental health, causing aggression, fear, anxiety, depression, and a loss of empathy.
- Erosion of Social Cohesion: Exposure to violence can foster a "survival of the fittest" mentality, where children become more focused on their own self-interest rather than cooperation and shared well-being.
 - This can lead to **social fragmentation**, where children struggle to form healthy, supportive relationships and communities are less cohesive.
- Increased Risk of Self-harm or Suicide: Exposure to violence can make children more susceptible to feelings of hopelessness and isolation, which are closely linked to self-harm and suicidal tendencies.
 - Children who experience or witness violence may struggle with internalized aggression and feelings of worthlessness, increasing the risk of self-destructive behavior.
- Destruction of Trust in Institutions: When children witness or experience violence within
 institutions like schools, families, or communities, it may erode their trust in these systems
 meant to protect and nurture them.
 - This loss of trust can lead to a cycle of distrust in societal structures, making children more resistant to accepting guidance from educational or social institutions and hindering their overall growth.

What is the Role of Educational Institutions in Instilling Values in Children?

- Using Co-Curricular Activities for Value Building: Co-curricular activities such as sports, cultural events, and community service projects can play a big role in teaching values.
 - These activities allow students to practice teamwork, leadership, and kindness.
- Creating a Positive Learning Environment: For values to be effectively taught, schools need to create an environment where students feel safe and respected.

 It's important that schools foster inclusivity and equality, celebrate diversity, and offer opportunities for students to learn from different perspectives. Schools should encourage children to appreciate their differences and build stronger connections with one another.

Role of Teachers in Teaching Values:

- Leading by Example: A teacher's actions, both inside and outside the classroom, have a
 lasting impact on students. Teachers must understand the importance of their role in
 shaping the moral development of their students and strive to embody the values they
 teach.
- Ongoing Training for Teachers: Teachers should receive regular training on values and ethics to better understand how to address the moral development of their students. Teachers must also stay updated on how to deal with the changing needs and challenges students face today.
- Being a Positive Influence: The teacher's job is not just to teach but to
 guide students in their personal growth. Through their teaching and guidance, teachers
 can help children develop positive qualities like integrity, empathy, and social
 responsibility.

What are the Challenges Faced by Educational Institutions in Imparting Values?

- Conflicting Value Systems: Children are exposed to various value systems from family, media, peers, and schools. These conflicting values, such as materialism and violence from the media, make it difficult for schools to teach positive values.
- Diverse Student Backgrounds: Students come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, often facing personal struggles. These challenges can lead to behavioral issues, making it harder for schools to create a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Focus on Academic Achievement: Many schools focus primarily on academic success, neglecting emotional and moral development. This limits students' growth as well-rounded individuals, as essential life skills and values are often overlooked.
- Impact of Media and Technology: Constant exposure to violent media and social media can influence children's behavior negatively. Schools must teach students to critically engage with the media and understand its impact on their values and actions.
- Commercialization of Education: The increasing commercialization of education shifts the focus
 from student well-being to profits. This trend can lead to stress, competition, and neglect of
 emotional and moral development, undermining the true purpose of education.

Way Forward

- Collaborative Approach Between Home and School: Parents, teachers, and communities should collaborate to provide children with consistent guidance on emotional well-being and conflict resolution, with schools engaging parents to build a supportive system at home.
- Understanding the Root Causes of Aggression: Instead of punishing disruptive behavior, schools and parents should focus on understanding the underlying causes. Children often act out due to unresolved emotional issues. By providing a safe space for them to share their struggles, we can address these root causes effectively.
- Teacher Training and Awareness: Teachers should be trained to recognize early signs of aggression and emotional distress in students. This will enable them to intervene proactively and prevent violent behaviors before they escalate.
- Integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Social-emotional learning (SEL) should be integrated across the curriculum to foster emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution, as demonstrated by Finland's successful education model in building emotionally resilient students and reducing aggression.
- Building Emotional Vocabulary: Schools should help children build a robust emotional vocabulary, so they can express their feelings clearly rather than resorting to physical aggression. Offering counseling and emotional support can empower children to manage their emotions healthily.

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