

Safety in Schools: A Foundation for Nurturing Children's Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

School safety is an essential aspect of children's well-being, influencing physical & mental health, academic outcomes, and all-around development. This review paper explores the multifaceted impact of school safety on children's well-being and evaluates existing literature and practices. It highlights the importance of physical, psychological, and emotional safety in school settings, supported by relevant studies and evidence. A secure environment helps in reducing bullying, abuse, and violence while promoting confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. conversely, a lack of safety results in stress, poor performance, and developmental delays. The review concludes that ensuring school safety is a shared responsibility of schools, parents, and communities to foster children's holistic development.

Keywords: School safety, wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

School safety is not just an administrative requirement but a fundamental element for fostering students' growth and development. The concept goes beyond the mere absence of violence and extends to creating an environment that supports learning, nurtures trust, and builds emotional resilience. Rose & Gallup (2018) emphasized that safety is one of the most pressing issues in the education sector. In the context of Indian schools, challenges like overcrowding, infrastructure issues, rising incidents of bullying, and lack of mental health support have raised concerns about safety standards (Sindhi, 2016). This paper aims to review and analyse the relationship between school safety and children's physical, emotional, and social development. It also examines the consequences of inadequate safety and evaluates strategies adopted to mitigate these risks. By reviewing literature and current practices, the paper aims to identify gaps and offer recommendations for creating safer school environments.

School Safety Dimensions

School safety refers to the policies, procedures, and measures implemented to create a safe and secure environment for students, teachers, and staff in educational settings. It encompasses physical, psychological, emotional, and social safety to protect children from hazards and ensure a favourable learning environment.

Physical safety	Psychological safety	Emotional safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Infrastructure• Emergency preparedness• health & Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freedom to express• Mealth health awareness• Prevention & Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive relationships• Supportive Enviornment• Accessible support system

Figure 1.1: Dimensions of School Safety

Physical safety: This refers to the protection of children from physical injuries or accidents. It ensures the absence of bullying, violence, abuse, and any physical threats in educational settings. Safe and well-maintained

infrastructure, safe transportation, emergency preparedness, safe physical activities, and regular health & hygiene practices are some examples of physical safety measures.

Psychological Safety: It is an essential component of a constructive and effective learning environment. Psychological safety involves creating an environment where children feel free to ask questions, take risks, and make errors without fear of harm and punishment. A psychologically safe and secure environment encourages academic success, fosters student engagement, and supports the overall well-being of children.

Emotional Safety: It refers to the environment where children feel respected, valued, and supported, allowing them to express themselves without fear of judgment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Amsterdam (2013) revealed that schools with better infrastructure and safety protocols report higher student satisfaction and lower injury rates. **Neser et al. (2002)** found that students exposed to bullying or violence show higher levels of emotional distress. **Jenkins & Nickerson (2019)** concluded that students in secure environments exhibit stronger social behaviour and cooperative learning.

Sindhi (2016) highlighted that in Indian schools, lack of regular safety audits, insufficient teacher training, and poor disaster preparedness contribute to unsafe environments. **Albashtawy (2015)** emphasized that hygiene and basic facilities directly impact physical health outcomes.

Mayer et al. (2021) emphasized the need for integrated safety models combining physical protection with mental health services. This supports the notion that safety should be holistic, encompassing both preventive and developmental approaches.

Impact of school safety on children's well-being

Physical Health: The safety measures provided in schools directly affect students' physical health or well-being. **Amsterdam (2013)** stated that children who feel safe & secure in school premises are likelier to participate in physical activities and maintain healthy lifestyle choices. Similarly, **Albashtawy (2015)** also reported that a safe and well-maintained school environment reduces the risk of physical harm or injury, prevents the spread of diseases, promotes participation in school activities, and nurtures emotional well-being that further improves physical health. A safe & secure school environment allows children to focus on learning and growth without fear for their physical safety, hence it is essential for the overall development of children.

Emotional & psychological well-being: The impact of the school environment on students' emotional and mental health is intense and multifaceted. A safe & secure school environment not only reduces the risk of physical injury but also fosters their emotional & psychological health. **Neser et al. (2002)** concluded that a positive school environment enhances a sense of security, confidence, and belonging whereas a lack of safety increases stress, anxiety, depression, academic failure, and long-term emotional difficulties. **Matthew et.al (2021)** found that students who experience violence or abuse in school have lower self-esteem, poor mental health, and face difficulties forming healthy relationships on the other hand, children who experience a secure & supportive environment have high confidence level, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to form healthy relationships. Schools that create a physically & emotionally secure environment by promoting a culture of inclusion, support, and respect empower children to thrive physically, emotionally, psychologically, and academically.

Social well-being: Children spend a huge amount of their early years in school, where they receive support for their social growth, interaction skills, and sense of belonging. Children can build strong social bonds and relationships in a safe & supportive environment as it encourages trust, and cooperation among children. **Jenkins & Nickerson (2019)**, stated that children are more likely to interact socially, work with peers, and take part in group activities when they feel safe in their environment. These social interactions facilitate the development of empathy, communication skills, and the ability to solve problems or conflicts. A safe & secure environment encourages mental stability, emotional development, and healthy peer relationships. Conversely, unsafe acts like

abuse, bullying, and violence create an environment of mistrust and fear. In such settings, students may isolate themselves which can lead to loneliness, emotional distress, social isolation, and long-term mental health issues.

Risks Associated with Unsafe School Environments

An unsafe school environment can significantly hinder a child's academic, emotional, and social development. Exposure to risks such as bullying, verbal abuse, physical violence, discrimination, or neglect creates a sense of fear and insecurity that directly impacts students' ability to focus, participate, and perform well in school. Studies indicate that children who do not feel safe at school are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism and reduced academic engagement. **According to Neser et al. (2002)**, victims of peer victimization often demonstrate lower academic performance and high levels of emotional distress.

Unsafe environments also contribute to long-term psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems. **Mayer et al. (2021)** found that students who face violence or abuse in school settings are at increased risk of developing poor mental health and difficulties in forming positive relationships. Socially, students in unsafe settings tend to isolate themselves, avoid group interactions, and struggle with communication and trust. **Jenkins and Nickerson (2019)** highlight that a lack of perceived safety reduces prosocial behaviour and peer collaboration. If not addressed in time, these risks may contribute to school dropout, long-term emotional trauma, and weakened capacity for resilience in adulthood. Hence, ensuring school safety is not just a procedural requirement but a foundational necessity for lifelong well-being.

Strategies for enhancing safety in schools

Policy Implementation: A multifaceted strategy that includes government regulations, safety protocols, and systematic or consistent safety audits is needed to ensure children's safety in educational settings. Government policies and safety protocols set the standards or guidelines and provide the required resources for implementing safety precautions in school. Continuous evaluation and improvement of school safety measures or protocols to deal with new threats & difficulties are ensured by regular safety audits. Schools can create a safe and secure environment by implementing various policies or protocols such as anti-bullying laws, zero-tolerance policies for violence or abuse, and disaster preparedness regulations.

Mental health support: The significance of mental health for children's safety and overall well-being has gained increased attention in recent years. Providing mental health support in schools is an effective approach to improving children's well-being. Mental health support includes various components such as counseling services, early intervention programs, and mental health education. Implementation of these strategies creates a positive school environment that enhances emotional stability and reduces mental health and behavioral issues among children. These strategies also help to early identification and treatment of mental health issues and provide support to deal with emotional & mental difficulties.

Collaborative approach: collaboration between schools, parents, and the community is key for enhancing children's safety and maintaining safe & secure school settings. This collaborative work makes sure that schools remain places of progress, learning, and security for children and staff by encouraging mutual trust, shared responsibility, and continuous & open communication. They can develop a cohesive safety plan that deals with the psychosocial and emotional needs of children in addition to addressing and preventing potential risks. Children feel safe, valued, supported, and empowered when they see that everybody inside or outside of school has their safety as a priority. This group approach creates a positive and supportive environment where children can concentrate on their social & academic growth.

Use of Technology: The integration of technology, such as safety applications, surveillance systems, and communication tools, into safety measures is needed to promote school safety. These technologies provide a safe & secure environment for students & teachers by preventing accidents and improving response times to any harm or threat. Safety applications enable people to actively participate in reporting and handling problems, surveillance systems offer regular monitoring and communication tools to facilitate the rapid exchange of information. Integration of these technologies ensures a safe learning environment and creates awareness of school incidents.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring school safety is essential for encouraging children's development and well-being. A safe school environment promotes physical, psychological, and emotional health, allowing students to engage in academic and social activities with confidence. Schools that prioritize safety build trust and improve outcomes. However, creating and sustaining such an environment requires ongoing collaboration among educators, parents, policymakers, and the community.

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