
Role of Teachers in Prevention of Domestic Violence against women in India

¹Mohd. Waqar Raza

¹Assistant Professor B.Ed., SSSVS Govt. P.G. College Chunar, Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Received: 25 September 2023 Accepted and Reviewed: 15 October 2023, Published : 01 Dec 2023

Abstract

Family violence, specifically domestic violence, has been identified by the medical community as a serious, no remitting epidemic with adverse health consequences. World Health Organization(WHO) has stated that violence against women is a priority issue in the fields of health and human rights. This article examines how domestic violence impacts the lives and education of young children, children, and young people and how they can be supported within the education system. Schools are often the service in closest and longest contact with a child living with domestic violence; teachers can play a vital role in helping families access welfare services. Teachers hold the key to preventing violence against girls in and around schools and need more support to keep children safe, writes Plan International's Leila Asrari. So teachers are very much bound up in the problem but they can also be a huge part of the solution. They can be allies in stopping this abuse. Schools are perfectly positioned to create an environment of non-violence, tolerance and gender equality and teachers have a central role to play in this transformation, through their own actions and through the materials they teach. This paper presents all the possible ways a teacher can help in preventing violence among women.

Keywords- Indian Family, Role of Teachers, Domestic Violence, women in India

Introduction

Schools can be a breeding ground for violence. Roughly 246 million school children are harassed and abused in and around school every year. And this is a global issue. Incidents of school-related gender-based violence cut across cultures, regions and economies. Education has a central part to play in challenging the negative social norms that drive gender-based violence. Yet schools are frequently places where this kind of violence prevails. Additionally, female teachers are themselves vulnerable to violence, experiencing harassment and abuse at the hands of students, fellow teachers and school management. At the same time, teachers are frequently unable to speak out about violence, either against them or against students, for fear of retribution. So teachers are very much bound up in the problem but they can also be a huge part of the solution. They can be allies in stopping this abuse.

Family violence, and domestic violence specifically, has been increasingly recognized by the medical community as a serious, non-remitting epidemic with adverse health consequences. This awareness, and the need to seek long lasting solutions have been the major focus of international congresses, conferences and meetings around the world . Women need to be empowered through education, employment opportunities, legal literacy, and right to inheritance. In addition, education and information on domestic violence should be provided for them.

“If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?” *Mary Astel 1668-1731: Some Reflections upon Marriage (1706 ed.)* Violence against women is a social, economic, developmental, legal, educational, human rights, and health (physical and mental) issue.

- It is a preventable cause of morbidity and mortality in women
- The relationship between violence against women and mental illness has not been adequately explored.
- Application of laws related to violence in the setting of mental illness is difficult
- Despite the social and religious sanctions against it in all cultures, it has continued.

Domestic violence, unfortunately, doesn't restrict itself to adults. Sixty-five percent of adults who abuse their partner also physically and/or sexually abuse their children. It's heart-wrenching to read statistics like these and realize the trauma children endure when experiencing domestic violence. Evidence demonstrates that one in four women will experience some form of domestic violence during their lifetime. What is often overlooked is the impact of this abuse on the thousands of children and young people who witness, experience and in some cases perpetuate this violence. We know that the experience of domestic violence manifests itself in the behaviour of school pupils in a variety of ways. Children and young people who live in domestic abuse situations may have an increased risk of being bullied or be unable to fully participate in school life. Their anger and distress may also lead them to bully other pupils, and educational attainment often suffers.

How can we transform teachers into allies in the fight to end gender-based violence in and around schools?

Value teachers

Teachers are the most important education resource globally and should be valued. Teachers must have respect and dignity in their work and as such must have safe working conditions. No teacher should experience physical abuse in the workplace.

Train teachers

Teachers must be trained to respond to violence in schools. High-quality training on all forms of gender-based violence, effective prevention strategies and positive discipline methods must be mandatory for all teachers and school administrators and adequately funded by governments.

Support teachers

Teachers who are victims of abuse should be able to access safe reporting mechanisms, expect prompt, adequate responses and be supported throughout the process of reporting violence and be able to access justice where needed.

Listen to teachers

Teachers' unions can play a key role in both hearing the views of teachers and influencing their behaviour. Unions should support their members to access appropriate training and

support on gender-based violence in schools. They can help raise awareness, reinforce codes of conduct and positive discipline practices and advocate at a national policy level.

Hold teachers to account

Schools must have clear codes of conduct and ethical guidelines in place to ensure everyone is aware of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and understand how to report it. Repercussions for violence must be clear, strict and enforced in order to avoid a culture of silence. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based violence are an opportunity to reflect on the issue globally, to give space to activists who are working tirelessly to end violence and to raise discussions about parts of the problem that receive less attention. This year we stand with teachers to #EndViolence, so that nobody has to feel unsafe at school because of their gender.

How teachers can help identify domestic violence

Teachers can play a critical role in preventing and reducing the impact of exposure to violence on children. They can help children by creating a predictable environment, listening to students' stories, and assuring children and adolescents that whatever happened was not their fault.

Specific ways to help children exposed to violence

Knowing and watching for signs of possible exposure to violence. No single behavior proves that a child has been exposed to violence, but teachers can watch for:

- Physical signs such as bruises
- Unexplained changes in behavior
- Emotional signs such as depression, mood swings, and fearful or anxious behavior. Depending on the age of the child, teachers can observe if a young child is crying more than usual, is difficult to calm, startles easily, or screams and panics during sleep. School-age children may become more aggressive and fight a lot, return to old fears or develop new ones, become apprehensive about going home, express a wish that the teacher were the parent, or become overly active.

Teenagers may use violence to get what they want, rebel in school, stop being concerned about their appearance, or refuse to follow rules.

Responding appropriately to children's disclosures. A teacher's willingness to listen to a child's story can provide the foundation on which to increase resilience and personal strength. The most meaningful assistance teachers can offer children exposed to violence is a safe and comfortable environment where children can talk. Students may talk about exposure to violence all at once or in bits and pieces and "test" the teacher's responses. The teacher's first responsibility is to follow school policies and procedures and refer the child to specialized professionals such as the school social worker or psychologist.

Supporting the healing process

Experts agree that a child's relationship with a caring adult is critical for developing resilience and beginning the healing process. It is very important that students have an opportunity to talk about what they have witnessed and how they feel with caring teachers who can listen and understand. Another important priority for teachers is to create an emotionally safe place for all children to learn. These safe spaces will enable children who have been exposed to violence to begin their healing journey.

How do you know if more help is needed?

Children exposed to violence may need specialized assessment and interventions that teachers cannot provide. If that is the case, teachers should refer children to other professionals within or outside the school system. Psychologists, social workers, or school counselors can help children and their families by looking at ways to keep current problems from getting worse. In some instances, they may help families find ways to stop the cycle of violence.

Three ways to identify domestic violence in your students

It's important to note that domestic violence is more than physical abuse and is not always noticeable without further investigation. Victims also may not see their partners or household members as abusive or violent. So, it's common for students to protect their abuser or be less than willing to come forward about abuse. You'll need to be patient, caring, and intentional about creating a safe space for students to seek support. It starts with learning the warning signs for domestic violence and being conscious of them in your students. Here are three ways to identify if a student is experiencing domestic violence.

Keeping a close eye on school performance

Children suffering from domestic violence face obvious challenges at home but also noticeably so in the classroom. While you should always keep a close on how well each of your students is performing in school, a sharp decline in grades, attendance, or engagement could be a sign of domestic violence. Children experiencing any form of domestic violence have isolation issues and trouble focusing on tasks in front of them, completing assignments, and forming healthy relationships with educators and classmates. When a student's performance is suffering, schedule some one-on-one time with them to explore potential challenges. Ask questions surrounding their home life and see if you can identify any potentially abusive situations. Reach out to colleagues such as the school counselor for some questions you can ask that will glean more information. Also, be sure to ask them how you can further support them.

Paying attention to physical signs of abuse

Teachers are in an excellent position to be especially mindful of physical signs of abuse because of how much time they spend with their students. Early detection of and prevention of any future domestic violence can be attributed to how fast you notice something is wrong with a student's physical well-being.

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Physical signs of maltreatment are those that are readily observable. They may be mild or severe, such as numerous, deep bruises or broken bones, or more subtle, such as malnutrition or the wearing of inappropriate clothing (e.g., a lack of warm clothing in winter)." If you see consistent physical signs of abuse, initiate a conversation with your

student to identify the source of those signs. Gauge how willing they are to share the story of what happened and if it makes sense. If physical abuse is confirmed or you're highly suspicious this is the case, you're required to report it to authorities. As a teacher, you're classified as a mandatory reporter because of your frequent involvement with children. Mandatory reporters are required to report the facts and circumstances that led them to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. Be sure you're following your institution's internal guidelines for suspected child abuse and your state's guidelines for reporting with the help of the next level of leadership.

Recognizing extreme emotional reactions or moods

Take note of any students acting out emotionally, displaying aggressive behavior, or showing extreme mood swings throughout the day. All these behaviors are related to domestic violence exposure in the home. Emotional responses in students experiencing domestic violence vary by age. Preschool-aged children could cry uncontrollably, startle easily, or have trouble with nightmares. Elementary-aged children can be physically aggressive with other children or become overly-attached to an educator. Teenagers usually rebel, participate in risky behavior, and have a hard time with authority. When you notice a student is displaying any of the above behaviors, battling heightened anxiety and depression, or disproportionately responding to specific situations, ensure that you're taking it upon yourself to find out more about why these things are happening.

Actionable tips for helping students heal

If you expect a student may be experiencing domestic violence, use the above identifiers as a base to begin a more thorough investigation. Ensure that you're ready to help students heal from domestic violence and cope with its emotional and physical scars by educating yourself on resources available to domestic violence survivors. Enlist the help of social workers, police services, Child Protective Services, counselors, therapists, and other experts who could influence the healing process for students surviving domestic violence. Attend any domestic violence training, classes, or appropriate support groups. Further your education on identifying warning signs, safely transitioning a student out of a violent home, and how to actively participate in a student moving forward from domestic violence.

Suggestion as a guide

- Respect the information the student has given you and do not tell those who do not need to know; however, secrecy on behalf of the teacher does not aid in 'helping' the student. Appropriate 'others' will need to be told / consulted according to your school's policies and procedures and legislative requirements.
- Depending on the student's age and maturity, let them know what you need to do with the information they have given you (eg. mandatory reporting). This shows respect and will ultimately build trust.
- Ask the student what they would like to see happen; however, do not make promises you cannot keep. The student may discover that simply sharing this 'secret' is enough for now
- Do not feel you have to 'rescue' the student or stop the abuse. Never underestimate the power of a student being able to 'just talk' to someone who does not judge. "It is important that the student feels

you will be able to deal with the information they disclose in a way that is respectful, nonjudgemental and that will not put them in danger ”

- Always re-enforce that violence or abuse is not their fault.
- If you feel comfortable enough, discuss a safety plan with the child or enlist other members of staff, such as a welfare or social worker, to assist you and the student in making the plan.
- Offer to link them in with the school counsellor. If your school does not have one, find out what is available in your community (contact the Department of Community Services).
- Address practical issues, you may be able to arrange a ‘tension free’ place to study.
- Use your judgement to make allowances regarding extensions for assignments.
- Ensure your school has a zero tolerance to bullying and address bullying at school appropriately. Do not dismiss bullying as ‘typical masculine behaviour’.
- Never approach the parents, particularly the offending parent without consulting a trained professional as this could place your student and the partner in greater danger. Domestic violence will be present in the lives of some of the students at your school. Therefore, it is vital that teachers be able to recognise and respond to domestic violence in ways that will assist in the protection of students and enhance their ability to learn and reach their full potential.

References:

- <http://www.uninstraw.org/mensroles/background.html>
- United Nations Children's Fund. Vol. 6. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre; 2000. Jun, Domestic Violence against Women and Girls. Innocenti Digest.
- Kyriacou DN, Anglin D, Taliaferro E, Stone S, Tubb T, Linden JA, et al. Risk factors for injury to women from domestic violence against women. *N Engl J Med*. 1999;341:1892–1898.
- Hall M, Becker V. The front lines of domestic violence. Training model for rural EMS personnel. *J Psychosoc Nurs Ment Health Serv*. 2002;40:40–48.
- Boyd MA. *Psychiatric Nursing, Contemporary practice*. 2th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2002.
- Arefi M. [Descriptive investigation of domestic violence against women in Orumiyeh city] *Women studies*. 2003;2:101–120.
- Augenbraun M, Wilson TE, Allister L. Domestic violence reported by women attending a sexually transmitted disease clinic. *Sex Transm Dis*. 2001;28:143–147.
- Acebes-Escobal BC, Nerida MC, Chez RA. Abuse of women and children in a Philippine community. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2002;76:213–217.
- Mohr WK. *Johnson's psychiatric-mental health nursing*. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins; 2002.
- Muthal-Rathore A, Tripathi R, Arora R. Domestic violence against pregnant women interviewed at a hospital in New Delhi. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2002;76:83–85.
- Krug EG. *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002.