Chapter 4

Impact of Gun Violence on Students' Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how gun violence affects students' mental health, highlighting the need of comprehending the perspectives of both direct and indirect victims. It highlights the complicated issue's significance for public health by addressing rising rates of anxiety, despair, and PTSD among students. Less than 1% of firearm-related deaths in schools are caused by school shootings, despite an increase in these incidents. Economic instability, inequality, COVID-19, and gun suicides are all contributing issues. The chapter emphasises how critical it is to address issues related to mental health, particularly the racial disparities in treatment availability. School counsellors are essential in putting ideas into action, helping traumatised children, and encouraging academic achievement. To improve school safety, recommendations include tightening gun laws, involving the community, and providing mental health care. In reaction to gun violence, the chapter promotes a holistic strategy that gives students' mental health top priority.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, many children and teens are exposed to direct and indirect gun violence in their neighborhoods, homes, schools, and on the media. Childhood exposure to gun violence is the next associated mental and physical health issue that can persist into adulthood (Reeping PM, et al, 2022). Exposure to violence in childhood or adolescence is a common finding indicating a high likelihood of negative outcomes. The traumatic effects of gun violence extend beyond individual lives, and the impact affects immediate communities, communities, and support networks (Tracy BM, 2019). Although gun violence tends to involve older youth, the increased incidence involving minors has made it difficult to ignore the pervasive impact on this population (Cohen JS, 2021) Guns violence can have a profound and long-lasting impact on children's mental health and adolescents. Children who experience or encounter gun violence in their neighborhoods, schools, or families can experience severe trauma. Witnessing violence can trigger symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) such as nightmares, details, anxiety, and depression. These symptoms can interfere with their daily lives and last for a long time. Even if a young person does not experience gun violence directly, he or she may live in areas where such incidents are common. This constant fear of violence can lead to long-term stress and anxiety, negatively affecting their mental health. Chronic anxiety can prevent a child from concentrating in school and can lead to long-term mental health problems. Parents keep their children at home to protect them from potential harm, which can lead to isolation. Isolation hinders a child's social development and can lead to loneliness and depression. Children exposed to gun violence are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, behavioural problems, and substance abuse. These illnesses can have long-lasting effects throughout a person's lifetime.

Gun violence in the United States is a serious social problem with far-reaching consequences, especially for students, who are often at a vulnerable point and exposure to Students who witness or commit a victims of gun violence are at increased risk for mental health outcomes. According to Copeland-Linder et al (2007), individuals who experience or witness violence are more likely to suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and depression. The emotional impact of such traumatic situations can impair students' cognitive and emotional development, affecting their ability to learn and develop healthy relationships. Fear of gun violence creates insecurity for students. According to Turner and Nickerson (2019), this chronic anxiety can lead to chronic anxiety, negatively affecting students' overall well-being. Routine activities, such as going to school or participating in community events, can cause stress and disrupt the adolescent's normal life. Gun violence often results in tragic deaths or serious injuries. According to Bonanno (2004), bereavement can be intense and prolonged, affecting both academic achievement and mental health.

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